

- Whose World?

Development, Civil Society, Development Studies and (not only) Scholar Activists

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The current international development discourse focuses much on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as part of a global social contract in support of international cooperation and governance with the debate on the post-MDGs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicating a shift. They are at least in part addressing developmental constraints the world is confronted with as a result of the effects the dominant growth models had on the limited resources and global goods. Rio+20 was a forum, which brought to the fore the conflicting issues at stake and the challenges for any development paradigm seeking to enhance global justice and equality. This article explores the discrepancies between dominant paradigms cultivated in official discourses on the one hand and alternatives for another development presented as anti-hegemonic counter-models for survival strategies. It considers the role of civil society agencies and scholar activists in development studies.

Keywords: Development, Civil Society, Development Studies, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Social Movements.

The poor have sometimes objected to being governed badly. The rich have always objected to being governed at all.

Gilbert Keith Chesterson¹
English essayist (1874-1936)

*Sustainable politics is usually unheroic. [...] the onus will be on our generation to decide or at least debate whether this century's dominant faiths do represent the next century's ideas of sanity and maturity. That is what some of us are trying to do.*²

Introduction

“Whose world?” is of course an entirely rhetorical question, the answer is obvious. It is the world of us all: rich and poor, black and white (or any other pigmentation), old and young (or any other age), straight and queer, women and men, refugees, migrants, indigenous people – feel free to continue the list. It is our world, the world of each one living. But our world is a contested one, and therefore the question remains nonetheless relevant and necessary to be posed. Beyond the rhetorical question is one over the power of definition and over who rules this world. Who dominates, who is able to set the (dis-)course, who occupies the commanding heights, who executes power over inclusion or exclusion of people. Back to the dichotomies just listed, the answer would in many cases still be: the rich, white, middle aged and elderly, heterosexual men. But it is not necessarily any longer a world under the sole decisive influence of the WASP culture (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant), as most visibly the last presidential elections in the United States of America underlined. Another significant indicator for changing global power relations is the shift towards a new multi-polarity, which is signaled not only by the rise of the so-called emerging economies but also by the corresponding new institutional settings of the G 20 and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). The Human Development Report 2013 testified to the shifting focus, welcomed with much fanfare as “The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World”.³

Looking at the modified power structures, hegemonic methods and practices, however, not so much seems to have changed in terms of the pursuance of interests and the execution of power. Davos of today might look at the surface different from Davos of the earlier years in terms of those taking the floor and impacting on the debate. But the annual gathering remains essentially the World Economic Forum (WEF) in what it stands for, i.e. corporate power, capital and control over the majority of the people and the other precious resources of

this world by a minority for securing own interests and gains. The global pact among elites has added new factors to the power equation and moved the North-South dichotomy during neoliberal times into a new divide, where the South has arrived in the North and vice versa. As a slogan painted to the wall of an occupied house in Berlin-Neukölln states: the borderline runs not between the peoples but between top and bottom.⁴ New actors might only add new cladding to an old building, and neoliberal times might offer not so much new, despite their prefix neo (- never mind liberal!). A special issue of this journal investigated at the beginning of this year the new actors and alliances in development. But these new actors are despite the image and branding often not much more than business as usual, though they merit the engagement by critical development studies.⁵

Development – what’s in the term?

“Development” is a frequently used term not only in Davos. Interesting enough, it is also common currency not least in the arena of the World Social Forum (WSF) established as the alter-globalist counter-forum to the WEF. Development obviously remains a contested notion - if not a minefield. It is not easily providing a common denominator, even among those considered to be like- or at least similarly minded. At a closer look even those involved in the academic discipline of Development Studies most likely do not share a common understanding, concept and definition of what this weird animal called development means, implies and describes.

Aram Ziai has tried to offer a navigating tool through this jungle, which left behind the former Eurocentric all-encompassing and hegemonic mainstream concept. He suggests that development could be considered as “a bundle of interconnected and normatively positive processes which took place in some parts of the earth but not in others.”⁶ While he considers this as a pragmatic working definition, he is sensitive enough to suggest at the same time that such an understanding offers reasons for its critique. He therefore resorts to the view of the anthropologist James Ferguson, for whom development “is the name not only for a value but also for a dominant problematic or interpretative grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us.”⁷ But Ziai remains aware that this is also not the full story, as such a characterization tends to blur socio-economic and socio-political as well as socio-cultural phenomena often related to power, privilege and exclusion. The misleading

implication remains, that developmental initiatives and their institutions could solve them. He identifies this as a structural problem:

“because of the normative connotation of the concept processes intended to bring about ‘development’ form a common ground for donor institutions, planning ministries, concerned social groups and NGOs. Who could be against ‘development’? It is much more difficult to find support for political initiatives which point to conflicts on the national or international level and side with marginalized, exploited or oppressed groups.”⁸

Ziai’s effort is however still not far reaching enough. It enters the contestation over who holds the power of definition over development. Why not accept instead that development is merely a technical term, only implying changes, no matter in which direction. Setbacks, processes of destitution, climate change, migration, pauperization and marginalization are as much elements of development as what is generally associated with positive effects of development. In the history of the expansion of Europe over the rest of the world in the name of “development” – then often dubbed as “civilization” – the worst atrocities and crimes tantamount to genocide were committed. Development is at times a monstrous cloak or a cloak for monsters.

Let’s look rather into the challenges we are facing to contribute to a better life for as many people as possible in our world, without giving such social struggles any terminological connotation. In doing so, I do of course not suggest some kind of “anything goes”. We should always remain loyal to the fundamental coordinates for our compass as defined by human rights, social justice, equity and equality and not least empathy and solidarity as reference points against which our minds and deeds ought to be measured. In that sense, one opts out of a futile claim over what development means by seeking to remain in compliance with these basic values.

Consequently, being engaged in development studies, we look into social processes and the changes, seeking to find meanings and explanations, maybe even interventions – hopefully for the better. But even for that is no guarantee. The best-intentioned ‘do-gooders’ are often a high risk for causing further damage, if not protected by a constant process of critical self-reflections about what we are doing and how we are doing it – and the purposes and motivations driving us in our engagements. The “securitization of development”, i.e. the

increasingly inter-connected military and civilian components of intervention in the name of “progress”⁹, would be a case in point.¹⁰

“Another Development”, Justice and Solidarity

The Era of Enlightenment was the ultimate point of departure for a ‘modern’ rationality, which in its uncritical belief in man-made progress was the curtain raiser - in the words of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno – for the dark horizon of the myth of a sun of calculating reasonability, under whose icy rays the seed of new barbarism is ripening.¹¹ Ever since this rationality emerged as the European project of hegemonic expansion by occupying the commanding heights of a power of definition pretending to represent an omnipotent universalism to solve the problems of our world (at the ultimate cost of the extermination of millions of species – ultimately including us), this mind set and its resulting life style had been the subject of (self-)critical reflections. It is an integral component of the era of enlightenment that it also produces those who question the dominant paradigm, which it gave birth to. They resist the adaptation to the declared notion of progress. A kind of progress that implies the advancement of power in forms, which turn it into regression: the spell of unstoppable progress is the unstoppable regression.¹²

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation has since the early 1970s been among the idea-based organisations giving priority to explorations challenging the dominant paradigms in search of “Another Development” and providing a forum for these voices to be heard. Their work was not singular but is used here as an exemplary early reference point to illustrate efforts for promoting alternative discourses. In 1975 the Foundation commissioned a number of inputs for a new project in formation, which subsequently focussed as a long-term commitment on the notion of “Another Development”. A wide range of thinkers and activists contributed to the efforts mapping the agenda for a sustainable future already then – including the need to re-consider development also at home.

In one of the published inputs, Johan Galtung presents “four lines of thinking that all lead to the same conclusion - that the present expansion of consumption cannot continue - and hence to a rationale for a discussion of a ceiling to consumption, a social maximum”.¹³ He combines this with the essential point “that there is a limit to how much inequality the world as a whole and the individual country can stand without becoming a caricature of what a society with a minimum of built-in social justice should be like”.¹⁴ In his subsequent

mapping of alternative life styles he sketches a model of a lower-consumption alternative for rich countries with the dialectic between working time and leisure time as a point of departure. He visits a list of material needs ranging from food, clothing, housing, health, education, and transportation to communication, ending with energy and his conclusion that, “the present system is far too centralized and among other things makes for societies in which people increasingly become dependent and ‘clientelized’”.¹⁵ His counter vision puts emphasis not only on the required enhanced degree of self-reliance in all regions and countries of the world in the face of the limits to natural resources and their supply. It also highlights the human aspects of our existence and its reproduction, the ‘immaterial needs’. These include in his reflections ‘togetherness’, ‘creativity’, ‘new experience’, ‘self-actuation’ and ‘happiness’. Galtung further interrogates if the type of society visualised will offer broader scope for happiness and submits:

“Not necessarily in a flat, trivial sense of that word, in the sense of constant euphoria, but in the broader sense of challenges, of possibility to realize one’s own potential in solidarity with others and indeed in solidarity with future generations, of *being*, not of only *having*. In this sense the possibilities should be very rich indeed.”¹⁶

In this lies for him “one of the keys, to the question of ‘meaningful life’ in general, and individual life in particular: a process of inner human enrichment, where such things as insight, joy and happiness are meaningless unless one also contributes to the insight, joy and happiness of others”.¹⁷

With justice and solidarity, Galtung uses henceforth much-neglected key words. Not too often have they of lately been at the centre of attention or contemplation. The reflections of Amartya Sen are among the exceptions. Of particular interest in his arguments is the objection to squarely blame the rationality of the European Enlightenment as the root cause for all evil committed in the name of progress. As he suggests, one should rather investigate where the remedy to bad reasoning is to be found and, maybe even more importantly, what the relationship between reason and emotions is, including compassion and sympathy. Sen suggests the following questions to be raised:

“what is the ultimate justification for reliance on reason? Is reason cherished as a good tool, and if so, a tool of pursuing what? Or is reason its own justification, and if so how does it differ from blind and unquestioning belief?”¹⁸

Rather, as Stephen Chan reminds us with reference to the works of Isaiah Berlin and Paul Ricoeur:

“We might all separately think we get it right, but half the world might think we got it wrong. By a *mélange*, even a *melée*, of different arguments towards different forms of rightness is humanity formed as a crookedly righteous species.”¹⁹

As he reminds us further:

“Even those wedded to a single history must appreciate how that history was influenced by so many others. Globalisation has been around for a long time. Our memories of our histories, our memories of ourselves, need to be crooked. We must imagine ourselves crookedly in order to have a memory to take forward into a true future of a true internationalism.”²⁰

In other words: we rather say farewell to the mono-linearity, all-embracing claim to wisdom to which the era of enlightenment gave birth. A world suffering from an overdose of Eurocentric, culture-bound rationality at the expense of empathy is in its centres of power to a large extent dominated by a consumer-oriented post-modernist ‘whateverish’. It pretends to be open and permissive but risks to neglect if not forget to care about core values and norms, which were the light towers for humanistic engagement with the challenges of our humanity among many different schools of thought ranging from the conservative to the radical socialist and the existential to the spiritual.

In contrast, there is a wide scope for - if not lasting then clearly temporary - alliances in search for “Another Development” based on the shared conviction that our late-capitalist industrial mode of production and its accompanying value and belief system mystifying the technological rationality has already much too far advanced into a dead end street. The point is also, that some of those political and social forces, which seem to be closer to home for many among us, seem to have lost any direct touch with notions such as solidarity.²¹

While “Another Development” became a long term commitment of The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and many others thinking along similar alternatives, the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002) were subsequent markers in a series of top-level global meetings, which were continued in other forums all over the world with a focus on development. They created normative reference points such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change in

order to meet the challenges – with little to no effect in stopping the environmental deterioration and the approaching collapse of our basic minimum requirements for reproduction such as water and air. Never mind the Kyoto Protocol, Copenhagen’s COP 15, the subsequent COPs in Mexico, South Africa and elsewhere, as well as the latest grand finale at Rio+20: When taking stock, this latest global summit actually turns out to be rather Rio-20 instead, bringing us back to the first environment related global conference of its kind in Stockholm 1972, when the major challenges were already diagnosed.

Those engaged in counter-narratives and anti-hegemonic struggles are many, and they have raised ever since then their voices in different ways. The report of the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives²² is among the examples of a wider alliance of civil society agencies and actors mainly initiated by the Global Policy Forum Europe in collaboration with other partners in part inspired by the earlier initiatives of “Another Development”.²³ But as many skeptics – often insulted as doomsday prophets - had predicted, progress has not advanced much beyond square one. Despite more than 300 multilateral agreements negotiated and entered into since the early 1970s, the world’s climate as we know it faces collapse. Political and institutional constraints have stood in the way of a solution. The tendency of governments to place narrow state interests above global survival comes at a life-threatening price. It is therefore not surprising that many concerned persons had few if any expectations or illusions that any of the global summits would actually demonstrate the required problem-solving capacity. Despite all the declarations, declamations and lip service, policy responses and adaptations fall short of addressing the challenges. The logic of the era of the Enlightenment, in which human beings utilize nature for short-term gain without concern for long-term survival, approaches bankruptcy. – It’s high time to move beyond the neo-liberal paradigms, which have added to the fundamental risks of future life on this planet.²⁴

Securing a future for human beings and the many other endangered species requires a change of mindset. Nature has no voice at the negotiation tables and is not counted when votes are taken. Its ultimate power lies in the fact that its domestication, which has been systematically undertaken with an increased degree of determination by the architects of social engineering since the early days of the era of Enlightenment, has limitations. The pseudo-omnipotence of the anthropocentric arrogance of power meets its limitations in the face of the unleashed forces of nature. The grand ideas of rationality, seeking to create a

world of its making, have - despite latest technological advances manipulating the biological diversity and turning it into a global monoculture - to ultimately capitulate when nature rebels or collapses.

The Limits of Civil Society

“Civil society” remains a similarly contentious, highly ambiguous if not dubious term, notion and definition as development. - Even more so, if we add the more recent discussions on a global civil society.²⁵ Like development, civil society has manifold different meanings and interpretations. Suffice to say, that civil society agencies can be most uncivil, just like development can mean the opposite to its positive connotation.²⁶ To get beyond the rather polarized academic and public debates over the meaning of civil society it was suggested

“to conceptualise global civil society in *analytical* terms as a political space, in which a diversity of political experiences, action strategies, identities, values and norms are articulated and contested; a space of struggle and conflict over the values, norms and rules that govern global social space(s) – and ultimately over the control of material resources and institutions. Whether global civil society means increasing democratisation or colonisation then becomes empirical questions, to which the answers largely depend on the context.”²⁷

This is an approach, which of course provides also access to assessing and dealing with development in its ambiguity on a case-to-case basis. While already a theme among political philosophers of the 19th century, the notion of civil society gained new value through the theoretical reflections by Antonio Gramsci. Largely disappearing from the social sciences debates for almost half a century, it has since the popular protest movements in Eastern Europe during the 1980s gained new currency as a term (with at times very different definitions). Since then civil society has been taken for granted as a relevant category and political factor through civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations – as reflected by the common use of their acronyms CSO and NGO – both in local and global policy making and norm setting.²⁸

But to which extent is civil society or parts of it involved in social transitions to which the term development is usually applied? As so often, there is a thin line between becoming critically engaged with a system to change it and ending coopted by the system to stabilize it - which, strictly speaking, might still allow on a limited scale for reformist changes, of course,

according to the proclaimed aims, such as for example poverty reduction or peace building or fighting hunger and diseases (or reducing carbon emissions, for that matter). But one should not close one's eyes before the tendencies that:

“In practice most of today's development-oriented NGOs are contracted by international organizations and governments to supplement government efforts at providing services to the poor, to foster the neoliberal paradigm and to take the place of collective social movements and their confrontational politics which seek to change power structures rather (sic!) seeking accommodations within it.”²⁹

It should be added, however, that even those within the social movements suspicious of the global hegemonic structures at times are tempted to seek an impact through engagement with the dominant global players. The risk is ending as a “patzer”.³⁰ This is an idiom from the chess world. It characterizes a move, when one player offers for strategic reasons the opponent a temporary advantage if giving in to the temptation to make the move. But it actually is a fine tuned trap and at the end results in a loss for the one who cannot resist the temptation. But to remain abstinent and cultivate the purity of the radical thought seems to be not a true alternative if one would like to be involved in change. Taking risks is the true challenge, as a life-long activist resumes:

“Those of us who skirmish around the edges of the United Nations must be consistently challenged and made accountable, and we have to know that our ‘gains’ can easily turn out to be losses. We believe the most important work towards necessary and transformational societal change will be done in webs of social movements, but we also believe that CSOs – fragile but agile – have roles to play, if they play them well. The moral? We must always wonder whether, each time, we are the patzers or the patrons.”³¹

The global conferences decade of the 1990s had provided civil society agencies, dubbed as the “third UN” manifold new opportunities to engage within the UN system discussing perspectives. This ranged from Copenhagen and Rio to Cairo and Beijing, to mention only a few of these global arenas discussing and refining normative frameworks based on values to which NGOs and CSOs were invited to contribute. But the impact was limited and at times dubious. Instead, frustrated by the lack of visible influence, civil society activists resorted again to more fundamental counter-movement policies as manifested in the establishment of

the WSF. Organizing since 2001 global, regional and local meetings, the WSF “stimulated and energized, but it also failed to engage with – and transform – systems of power”.³²

Bridging the gaps, reducing the divisions and giving the necessary space to the “third UN” remains an ongoing task, which requires sensitivity and commitment from all sides. Herein, precisely, lies the value of the stocktaking exercise from a citizen-action perspective, presented by Kumi Naidoo, though this might provoke strong sentiments with regard to the “patzer”-trap.³³ Despite his judgment that the UN is, on closer examination, culpable of a deeply disturbing democratic deficit, he later on concedes, that it has become imperative for civil society to participate in global decision-making processes, provided for in the consultations on summit meetings and conventions of the UN, as well as by UN development agencies. This approach, which blends pragmatism with principles, and seeks to have an impact on policy processes, corresponds with the increased participation of all sorts of civil society actors in collective mobilization, the aim of which is to exert pressure on and influence in the dominant socio-political spheres. But such strategies are confronted with dilemmas, as the commitment of these actors “to a progressive agenda at home and abroad is destined to encounter tensions, if not clash, with the realities of political life”, which forces us “to compromise and pursue ideals in the midst of constraints”.³⁴

The Kumi Naidoo among us seek to navigate between the pragmatism of alliance building and the risks of compromising on essentials. There are not only gains.³⁵ On the other hand: those being adamant that such risk-taking should not be part of the engagement tend towards cultivating self-fulfilling prophecies, which do not bring advancements either. Rather, they allow one to remain in a somewhat uncomfortable comfort zone through the choice of abstention, and to cultivate further one’s own convictions rather than testing them against other political and social realities through interaction and engagement. This should of course not mean always compromising, or entering into dialogue at all costs. Certain principles cannot be sacrificed or abandoned on the altar of ‘reason’.

Although at times caught between a rock and a hard place, civic-driven change is on the agenda of global governance matters.³⁶ These cannot be left to any superpowers or wannabes with hegemonic ambitions, neither to a G7, G8 or G 20, nor to the first UN in its totality (that is, its member states as represented by governments – often not even elected by the majority of people they claim to represent). Nor can the second UN (the organization as represented by its staff members in the secretariat) be entrusted to respond to the global

concerns of the people, who are not visible or able to express their interests within the UN forums to which the governments of the member states have exclusive access. This touches on the latent tension between national interests and international solidarity, to which a UN system has to respond if it wants to become more meaningful rather than less relevant.

This raises anew the fundamental as well as strategic question with whom to engage for which purpose. Actors within the civil society agencies and social movements hold very different views and testify to the fact stressed at the beginning, that civil society is anything but homogenous and embraces very different if not antagonistic interests and forces. Most importantly, even if civil society proponents at times create the impression that they are the ones who can fix it, this is a naïve illusion we should not fall for. While civil society is an important ingredient to governance, and certainly towards “good governance”, it is at best an influential catalyst and facilitator, but not the panacea for fixing social evils on its own:

“CSOs are not a magic path to development, nor are they a substitute for responsive, effective states capable of delivering tangible and sustained improvements in people’s lives. In practice development requires both.”³⁷

The continued role of states in our globalized, unequal world of the 21st century should not be ignored. We sometimes tend to wrongly assume that state agencies and institutions have been degraded to toothless tigers vis-à-vis corporate and financial power. While the latter definitely plays an eminent role, states through their laws, judiciary, governments and administrations clearly continue to have some say in national and global affairs – if only they want to. Some of those occupying political and administrative commanding heights in societies might be tempted to use proclaimed (and at times indeed also real) limitations to state power as a weak excuse to avoid confrontation with those holding economic power by not taking responsibility and initiatives. – Meanwhile others guided by more autocratic mindsets in despotic regimes have no problems to insist on the holy principle of national sovereignty as the flip side of the evasiveness to accept and deal with social problems both locally as well as globally.

The “Mindset Appeal”, which was drafted as the point of departure by the “Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives” ahead of its work to compile a CSO-input for the Rio+20 conference rightly so demanded (in vain) from the Rio 2012 Summit to “re-affirm the State as the indispensable actor setting the legal frame, enforcing standards of equity and human rights, and fostering long-term ecological thinking, based on

democratic legitimacy.”³⁸ States remain relevant if not decisive entities and battlefields over the future of societies and the wellbeing of the people composing these societies.

Development Studies – *cui bono?*

Given the efforts for “bringing the state back in”, one tends to agree with the warning that “it would be highly premature for development studies to replace the paradigmatic importance of the state by that of civil society”.³⁹ Let us not pretend that development studies were and are not to a large extent also state-centered. After all, they were also originally an integral part of the expansion of Europe over the rest of this world, if only in very fragmented and cryptic forms of early so-called civilizing missions as advocated by missionaries, some colonial administrators and other pioneers of anthropology (maybe more than any other academic discipline the sibling to development studies). From there to development studies was only a small step, which did not require any leaps. Modernization was about “development” and the power of definition what this supposedly entails for people affected by the expansionist project.⁴⁰ Progress was tantamount to civilizing the “savages”, and if necessary, to “exterminate the brutes”, if they objected to their destiny.⁴¹ In this context, the initial developmental studies were strictly speaking more motivated by and serving the promotion of Western development in colonial settings.

Times have changed. With the decolonization processes state sovereignty introduced a new and important element into the North-South relations. It gave birth to bi- and multilateral development aid and collaboration half a century ago, though it then continued to follow patterns of a one-dimensional modernization path. Even the fundamental ideological differences at the height of the Cold War and the polarized East-West configuration could not hide that the fundamental premises for social development in both camps did not really differ as fundamentally in terms of the anticipated needs to ‘modernize’ based on a growth model resembling an imitation of Fordist features of industrial societies as the aspired goal.⁴² Since then, development studies have to a large extent emancipated from being an instrument of further expansion of the West into the rest. Similar to social anthropology, development studies were able to critically revisit and reflect on its premises and the underlying notions and assumptions. Development Studies have shifted their focus from seeking formulas and recipes to understand local processes with the intention to “develop” the people towards analyzing the underlying social – if I may say: class! - structures and the reproduction of

hierarchies, both locally as well as globally, to contribute to the transformation of such structures towards more justice and equality through participation.

By doing so, the earlier North-South dichotomy is in tendency replaced by the globally dominant structures, which operate with local bases and at the expense of people everywhere. Processes of enrichment correspond with those of marginalization and impoverishment. The global pact among elites results in “collateral damage” also in the former metropolis, where destitution becomes a daily phenomenon. Development studies are confronted with new social realities even in those countries, which promoted this discipline as a tool to “help others” in far away places. Those in search of “Another Development” since the early 1970s were not any longer considered as visionaries out of touch with realities, but increasingly respected for being pioneers. “Coming to terms with nature”⁴³ entered the agenda of those seeking emancipation through social struggles. “Metahumanism” challenged the reductionist rationality guiding the dominant discourses since the era of enlightenment as one of the hallmarks of modernity.⁴⁴ The myth of a sun of calculating reasonability, under whose icy rays the seed of new barbarism was ripening, as Horkheimer and Adorno diagnosed, became dismantled in statements such as the following:

[...] “socialism cannot give us our ethics; our ethics give us our socialism. That is, because our foundational moral beliefs and commitments define our perceptual objects for us, they play a crucial role in shaping the specific forms of action that we end up with.”⁴⁵

The moral impetus of such statements might seem to be in contrast, even conflict with an academic discipline. But if “the very essence of development studies is a normative preoccupation with the poor, marginalized and exploited people in the South”, their main focus should be on “inequality of access to power, to resources, to a human existence – in short, inequality in emancipation”.⁴⁶

Development studies as a result translated at least to some extent – like area studies - into global studies. The we-they divide between members of different societies in different parts of the world was increasingly less important than the common grounds for the struggles for emancipation against the monstrosities of the unleashed markets seeking profit maximization at the expense of the welfare state even where it existed before. Human dignity was discovered as a relevant category, applicable to all human beings everywhere.

“The challenge for development studies is to re-establish its continued relevance to study and understand processes of exclusion, emancipation, and development. This cannot be achieved by clinging to its once treasured paradigms, but can be achieved by creatively incorporating the new *Zeitgeist*, without giving up its normative basis, i.e. the awareness that only with a universal morality of justice is there a future for humanity.”⁴⁷

“Opposing the pathologies of globalization”, as a key aspect identified for the work of INGOs⁴⁸ might also be a task for development studies, even as global studies. Their relevance will be ultimately measured against their contribution to a better future for as many people as possible.

So: whose world?

It is of interest that the global shifts and the evolving role of global civil society actors such as the International Advocacy NGOs (IANGOs) have also impacted on the reflections of the WEF, which in mid-2012 established an initiative to explore the rapidly evolving space in which civil society actors operate. As stated in the Executive Summary of the report, released for Davos 2013:

[...] “civil society should be the glue that binds public and private activity together in such a way as to strengthen the common good.

In playing this role, civil society actors need to ensure they retain their core missions, integrity, purposefulness and high levels of trust. [...]

Civil society can play a particularly powerful role in this process as an enabler and constructive challenger, creating the political and social space for collaborations that are based on the core values of trust, service and the collective good.”⁴⁹

This all sounds very enlightened from the point of view of those still continuing to hold and execute the power of definition. After all: who should trust whom and why? Given the historical record of capitalism in this world, we are facing the biggest challenges for the survival of the human species with a global few benefitting from the misery of a whole lot more people in this world, who were never allowed access to any fundamental rights, not to mention privileges. According to recent estimates, some 4 billion people in our world have never had access to justice in the sense of being legally protected through basic rights. The rule of the law has remained in large parts of our world the law of the rulers or at best a rule

by law. This remains a far cry from the global justice, without which the future of the next generations will be more at risk than ever before.

Well-being has also a component of equity and equality, in as much as justice needs to embrace not only a formal rule of law but also social justice. According to data compiled from reliable sources by the Transnational Institute on “The State of Power 2013”⁵⁰, the 7 billion people in our world share a world GDP of US\$ 70 trillion. 42 trillion of these are controlled by 0.1% of the world’s population, while 0.001% are in control over 14.6 trillion. According to the estimates, this equals the costs for some 250 years of climate adaptation. More than four-fifths (82.8%) of the world’s income is shared among one-fifth of the world population, while 60% live on 7.3%. The belief in economic growth remains the ultimate gospel and cure, but inequalities grow. Such perversion of so-called development, which promotes further inequality and social divides not only between but also within countries is an insult to human wellbeing and security.⁵¹

The alter-globalist movement’s vision that “another world is possible” demands to change the global power relations and transform our current world into a better one. Not by coincidence those mobilizing around such slogan for fundamental alternatives are labeled as “hope movements”.⁵² They seek to transcend the development paradigms beyond those who hold the power of definition within a demarcated arena considered as anything but a level playing field. Their willingness to engage with others is limited by the understanding that it only happens at their terms. They are not considering surrendering the principles on which they based their so-called development. A development, which had such devastating results for the majority of the people and almost any other form of life on our planet, putting the future at risk.

Neither climate nor finances or political and civil human rights featured in the Millennium Declaration. As much as the international trade system, currency transactions, offshore banking system and tax havens as well as related mechanisms and structures used for the benefit of few at the expense of the many these over-arching dimensions affecting our lives should be part of identified obstacles. These require initiatives seeking to regain control over what really matters – to find ways towards a fairer world promoting equity and equality as essential prerequisites for survival. What is required is a pact with nature, if needed not only without, but even against corporate interests, if their ‘green economy’ remains a ‘greed economy’. Roberto Bissio, an activist from Social Watch in Uruguay and a member of the

“Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives”, concluded some critical observations on civil society and the post 2015 process with his personal assumption,

“that the new development agenda we need is one based on human rights, with a high bias towards justice (climate justice, gender justice, social justice and plain old justice with empowered judges and courts) and sustainability, for which we still need to assert the rights of future generations (or of Mother Nature in new/old Latin American jargon). Around that vision, that requires changes in the North and in the South and mostly in current global governance, powerful alliances can be built that include small and medium country governments, small and medium enterprises, small and medium NGOs in the South and in the North... and hopefully also most of the big ones in IANGO.”⁵³

A substantial part of the research community should be another of the allies - not least those involved in this “business” called Development Studies. After all, we do not live in “post-political times”. Rather, the current challenges as posed by manifold crises, can be seen and used “as a possibility for posing counter-hegemonic narratives”.⁵⁴

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Notes

¹ Quoted from: <http://inequality.org/> (accessed on 2 February 2013).

² Nandy, "Shamans, Savages and the Wilderness," 236.

³ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2013*. For a critical review see Melber, "Africa and the Middle Class(es)".

⁴ "Die Grenze verläuft nicht zwischen den Völkern sondern zwischen oben und unten."

⁵ Richey and Ponte, "New actors and alliances".

⁶ Ziai, *Postcolonial perspectives on 'development'*, 4.

⁷ Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, xiii; quoted *ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4f.

⁹ With regard to the social struggles in India see the polemic by Roy, *We Call This Progress*.

¹⁰ See Sörensen and Söderbaum, *The End of the Development-Security Nexus?*

¹¹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 32.

¹² *Ibid.*, 35.

¹³ Galtung, "Alternative Life Styles," 84.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 94; original emphasis.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, 36.

¹⁹ Chan, *The End of Certainty*, 167. Berlin and Ricoeur were for him "perhaps the twentieth century's greatest protagonists of tolerance and the imperfection that, nevertheless, tries to get it 'right'" (*ibid.*). Sen also makes prominent reference to the work of Isaiah Berlin to underline that, "there were also different kinds of counter-rational strands during the 'Age of Enlightenment'" ; Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, 34.

²⁰ Chan, *The End of Certainty*, 179.

²¹ A policy paper drafted by Sida and as official document by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs outlined a commitment to support of civil society actors in the South. Somewhat revealing, the word solidarity is not mentioned once in the almost 30 pages, see Government Offices of Sweden. *Pluralism*. The same phenomenon could be discovered in the EU report on policy coherence for development, which does not mention solidarity (or human rights) in its almost 300 pages; see European Commission, *2009 EU Report on Policy Coherence*. In striking contrast, the philosophy of a shared responsibility in the spirit of solidarity corresponds with the agenda of the Catholic moral and social teaching. Article 4 (The Social Order) engages with Solidarity as an own sub-chapter. It is considered "not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far ... it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all." Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. *The Social Agenda*, para 126. And Article 8 (Poverty and Charity) states under Social Justice: "Thus it is necessary to have the courage to undertake a revision of the relationships between nations, whether it is a question of the international division of production, the structure of exchanges, the control of profits, the monetary system without forgetting the actions of human solidarity to question the models of growth of the rich nations and change people's outlooks, so that they may

realize the prior call of international duty, and to renew international organizations so that they may increase in effectiveness.” Ibid., para 296.

²² Civil Society Reflection Group, *No Future Without Justice*.

²³ The institutional partners in this initiative were Third World Network, Global Policy Forum Europe, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, DAWN, Terre des homes, Social Watch and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. See also: <http://www.reflectiongroup.org/>.

²⁴ See Brand and Sekler, *Postneoliberalism – A beginning debate*.

²⁵ See i.a. Löfgren and Thörn, *Global civil society*.

²⁶ See Heine and Thakur, *The Dark Side of Globalization*.

²⁷ Thörn and Moksnes, “Global civil society,” 5; original emphasis.

²⁸ See Cheema and Popovski, *Engaging Civil Society*.

²⁹ Singh, “Civil society and the challenge of changing power relations,” 86.

³⁰ Lohmann, “Beyond patzers and clients”.

³¹ Mooney, “Civil society strategies,” 331.

³² Paul, “Civil society and the United Nations,” 77.

³³ Naidoo, *Boiling Point*.

³⁴ Coicaud, “Conclusion: INGOs as Collective Mobilization of Transnational Solidarity,” 300.

³⁵ With regard to Kumi Naidoo’s recent track record representing first CIVICUS and then Greenpeace, there might be interesting test cases seeking common ground with “the other side”. He himself decided, for example, to fly from the WSF in Nairobi to the WEF in Davos to participate in a panel debate there in January 2007, which caused some consternation among those he left behind in and around the football stadium outside of Nairobi. Since then, the “deal” entered by Greenpeace with Coca Cola might be an interesting test case to balance the gains of such engagement in what has been lauded as a “win-win” partnership.

In contrast, the support rendered by Greenpeace to the British initiative to prevent the Chagos islanders to return to their home in mid-Indian Ocean (from where they were forcefully removed and deported when the US military base Diego Garcia was established in 1971) is in my view not really deserving the benefit of the doubt but outright scandalous. That this happens in exchange for declaring Chagos a Marine Protected Area can hardly be seen as a justification to deny thousands of people their return. Fundamental human rights should remain fundamental. As a commentator observed: “Greenpeace shouldn’t be choosing between peace and green and preferring the latter.” Holt, “Greenpeace should not choose green over peace”.

³⁶ See Fowler and Biekarts, *Civic Driven Change*.

³⁷ Green, *From Poverty to Power*; quoted in Singh, “Civil society and the challenge of changing power relations,” 88.

³⁸ ‘Urgent Appeal to Change the Mindset’, Statement by the Reflection Group, New York, 6 March 2011; reproduced in Civil Society Reflection Group, *No Future Without Justice*, 5.

³⁹ Schuurman, “Globalization and Development Studies,” 13.

⁴⁰ See Duffield and Hewitt, *Empire, Development & Colonialism*.

⁴¹ See i.a. Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide*; Melber and Jones, *Revisiting the heart of darkness*; Smith, *Less Than Human*.

⁴² See among the pioneering paradigmatic challenges of this convergence coming from ‘within the belly of the beast’ Bahro, *The Alternative*.

⁴³ Panitch and Leys, *Coming to Terms With Nature*.

⁴⁴ Sanbonmatsu, *The Postmodern Prince*, 203ff.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 206.

⁴⁶ Schuurman, “Globalization and Development Studies,” 9.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 13f.

⁴⁸ Coicaud, “Conclusion: INGOs as Collective Mobilization of Transnational Solidarity,” 284.

⁴⁹ World Economic Forum, *The Future Role of Civil Society*, 6.

⁵⁰ See <http://www.tni.org/report/state-power-2013>.

⁵¹ In his Lustrum Dies Natalis Lecture on occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Institute for Social Studies in The Hague on 11 October 2012 (“Voices of the Poor’ and Beyond: Lessons from the past, agenda for the future”) Robert Chambers stressed that the biggest single cause preventing wellbeing these days is the pathology of the visibly growing social inequality, i.e. the experienced unfairness in the blatant discrepancy between the privileged few and the majority of people as a trend in any society these days.

⁵² Dinerstein and Deneulin, “Hope Movements”.

⁵³ Bissio, *Civil Society and the post 2015 process*, 5.

⁵⁴ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 254.

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