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Trends in Development Theory

Development in question

Globalization and regionalization are overtaking the standard unit of development, the nation. International institutions and market forces overtake the role of the state, the conventional agent of development. The classic aim of development, modernization or catching up with advanced countries, is in question because modernization is no longer an obvious ambition. Modernity no longer seems so attractive in view of ecological problems, the consequences of technological change and many other problems. Westernization no longer seems compelling in a time of revaluing local culture and cultural diversity. In view of the idea of multiple modernities, the question is modernization towards *which* modernity? Several development decades have not measured up to expectations, especially in Africa and parts of Latin America and South Asia. The universalist claims of neo-classical economics and structural adjustment policies have undermined the foundation of development studies, the notion that developing countries form a special case.

Doesn't all this mean the end of development? Everything that development used to represent appears to be in question, in crisis. There are various views of what this crisis means. One is that since development is in crisis, let's close the shop and think of something entirely different – 'beyond development'. This is the position associated with post-development thinking. A different response is to qualify the crisis, acknowledging the failures of the development record but also its achievements, avoiding simplistic, one-sided assessments. Thus health care and education have improved even in the poorest countries and in countries where growth has been stagnant. Another reaction is to acknowledge crisis and to argue that crisis is intrinsic to development, that development knowledge is crisis knowledge. From its nineteenth-century beginnings, development thinking was a reaction to the crises of progress, such as the social dislocations caused by industrialization. Hence questioning, rethinking and crisis are part of development and not external to it. A related view is not merely to acknowledge questioning as part of development but to consider it its spearhead – viewing development thinking as ongoing questioning, critique and probing alternative options. Development then is a field in flux, with

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rapid change and turnover of alternatives. Precisely because of its crisis predicament, development is a high-energy field.

This chapter maps major trends in development thinking. The subsequent chapters examine these trends in detail, building up to an inventory of current and future directions in the closing chapter. Trends in this discussion refer to long-term and ongoing as well as plausible future directions in the development field. The focus is on development theories, that is, organized reflections on development, rather than on development *tout court* and in its entirety. Since the major development theories are also policy frameworks, this approach includes development strategies; but actual policies are informed by many other considerations so this discussion emphasizes development theories. Trend-spotting is not exactly an intellectually neutral activity so it needs to be contextualized. This treatment opens with general observations on the character of development thinking and the status of development theory. The argument then turns to the different meanings of 'development' over time, which places the discussion of contemporary trends in a historical context. The next section juxtaposes these different understandings of development to changing patterns of global hegemony. Zeroing in on the contemporary setting, I map out different stakeholders and institutions in the development. Against this backdrop we turn to development trends over time, first long-term trends in theory and methodology and next policy changes.

The status of development theory

What is the contribution of development theory to this situation? Theory is the critique, revision and summation of past knowledge in the form of general propositions and the fusion of diverse views and partial knowledges in general frameworks of explanation. What is referred to as 'development theory' largely belongs to the level of grand theories, broad explanatory frameworks. This is part of its limited character. There is a lot development theory does not talk about. Many development problems are addressed by mid-range or micro theories – questions of rural development, industrialization, urbanization, trade policy, etc. Development theory as such concerns the larger explanatory frames. In addition, 'development theory' usually refers to the leading theories and many rival and subsidiary theories do not quite make it to the limelight.

In social science it is now widely assumed that realities are socially constructed. The way people think and talk about social realities affects agendas, policies, laws and the ways laws are interpreted. Just as perception not merely registers but shapes reality, knowledge does not simply reflect but constructs reality. Knowledge is political, shapes perceptions, agendas, policies. If this were not the case then why bother, why research, why hold conferences? Theory is a meeting place of ideology, politics and explanation. Framing, defining the field, the rank order of questions is the business of theory.

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Theory is a distillation of reflections on practice in conceptual language so as to connect with past knowledge. The relationship between theory and practice is uneven: theory tends to lag behind practice, behind innovations on the ground, and practice tends to lag behind theory (since policy makers and activists lack time for reflection). A careful look at practice can generate new theory, and theory or theoretical praxis can inspire new practice. Theories are contextual. While theories react to other theories and often emphasize differences rather than complementarities, the complexities encountered in reality are such that we usually need several analytics in combination.

Is development theory a matter of social science or of politics? Writers have different views on the degree of autonomy of development theory. Some treat development theory primarily as part of social science and thus emphasize the influence of classical economic and social thought (e.g. Preston 1996, Martinussen 1997). Others implicitly view development theory mainly as ideology – like a ship rocked in a sea of political pressures and shifting tides. They consider political leanings, in a broad sense, as more important in shaping development theory than theoretical considerations (e.g. Andre Gunder Frank 1971). The advantage of this view is that it draws attention to the ideological role of development theory – in setting agendas, framing priorities, building coalitions, justifying policies. Its limitation is that it treats development theory as a by-product of political processes and not as an intellectual process as well. Some cynicism in relation to theory is appropriate. How often is a theory in effect a political gesture? What is the politics of theory? Whom does discourse serve? In between these views is a middle position that recognizes the intellectual as well as the political elements in development theory. It doesn't make sense to isolate development theory from political processes and treat it as an ivory-tower intellectual exercise; but neither can we simply reduce it to ideology or propaganda. In the contextual approach to development theory both political contexts and influences from social science count (as in Corbridge 1995, Leys 1996). This is the approach – we can term it the sociology of development knowledge – that this book adopts.

For a development theory to be significant, social forces must carry it. To be carried by social forces it must match their worldview and articulate their interests; it must serve an ideological function. However, to serve their interests it must make sense and be able to explain things. By the same token, explanation is not a neutral function. There are as many ways of explaining things as there are positions from which to view realities. The explanation that satisfies a peasant is not the same as one that satisfies a landlord, a banker or IMF official.

According to Björn Hettne, 'Development in the modern sense implies intentional social change in accordance with societal objectives' (2008: 6). Since not all societal objectives are developmental (some are simply concerned with establishing authority, etc.) I would insert the criterion of *improvement* and define development as *the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement*. What constitutes improvement and

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what is appropriate intervention obviously varies according to class, culture, historical context and relations of power. Development theory is the negotiation of these issues.

The strength and the weakness of development thinking is its policy-oriented character. This is part of its vitality and inventiveness. It is problem-driven rather than theory-driven. It is worldly, grounded, street-smart, driven by field knowledge, not just book knowledge. In part for the same reasons, development thinking ranks fairly low on the totem pole of social science. As applied social science, development thinking has a derivative status. It has more often been a follower of frameworks developed in other sciences than a trendsetter. It has been a net importer of social science theories and has been influenced by other social sciences more often than it has influenced them. Evolutionism, Marxism, neomarxism, Keynesianism, structural functionalism, neoclassical economics and poststructuralism are among the social science paradigms imported by development theories at different times. A major area in which development theory influenced social science generally is dependency theory. Studies in dependency theory were widely read outside development studies and inspired, for instance, world-system theory.

Arguably, development theory is underestimated in social science. The notion that development theory counts for less because it concerns 'merely the south' while major developments in social theory are spearheaded by the west reflects a deep-seated prejudice. It reflects a (neo)colonial division of labour in the production of knowledge according to which theory is generated in the north and data, like raw materials, are produced in the south (Pletsch 1981, Slater 2004). In this schema the advanced societies are supposed to be the mirror and guide of less-developed societies. This cognitive colonialism is passé on several counts. This kind of unilinear thinking is no longer plausible. Besides, development knowledge is increasingly relevant also in the north. The conventional distinction between developing and developed societies is less and less relevant – the 'south' is in the 'north' and vice versa. With the decline of welfare economies there is increasing polarization within countries on account of shrinking public services. In the United States and the UK there is mention of 'two-thirds societies'. Social exclusion nowadays is a problem that is common to north and south, west and east.

Knowledge production in the south has been influential not merely in the past but also under the shadow of western hegemony. A case in point is Gandhi and his influence on the Civil Rights Movement (Nederveen Pieterse 1989). Dependency thinking, Maoism, Guevarism and the Delhi school of development thought (Dallmayr 1996) are other examples. Japanese perspectives on management, production and development have been profoundly influential and so has the Asian developmental state (Wade 1996; Iwasaki et al. 1992).

Development is a strange field. Development practice, policy and studies are all flourishing. Universities open new development schools (particularly in the UK). Yet for quite some time the field has been said to be in crisis,

impasse, or passé. Part of this is a crisis of ideologies, which reflects a wider paradigm crisis – of neomarxism and dependency theory as well as Keynesianism and welfare politics. There have been plenty of critical positions but no coherent ideological response to the neoliberal turn. The crisis is further due to changing circumstances including development failures, the growing role of international financial institutions, and conflicts in developing countries.

According to Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The time has come to change it.' Arguably, the actual power of development is the power of thesis eleven. Nowadays the ambition to 'change the world' meets with cynicism – because of the dismal record of several development decades, doubts about modernism and its utopian belief that society can be engineered – how about social engineering if we look at Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia? – and media triviality ('We are the world').

The status of development theory reflects the theory-lag between development studies and social science generally, a 'colonial legacy' in knowledge and a recurring impasse in the development field. The decolonization of knowledge is a matter of ongoing contestation (Apffel-Marglin and Marglin 1996, Nederveen Pieterse and Parekh 1995, Dahl 2008). As part of accelerated globalization, neoliberal policies impose neoclassical economics on the south, applying western standards of policy and systems of accounting to align economies and financial and credit regimes. It is appropriate to consider this episode as part of the wider historical relations between north and south. In tandem with changing geopolitical relations, 'development' has been changing its meaning over time.

Meanings of 'development' over time

Over time 'development' has carried very different meanings. The term 'development' in its present sense dates from the postwar era of modern development thinking. In hindsight, earlier practices have been viewed as antecedents of development policy, though the term 'development' was not necessarily used at the time. Thus Kurt Martin (1991) regards the classic political economists, from Ricardo to Marx, as development thinkers for they addressed similar problems of economic development. The turn-of-the-century latecomers to industrialization in central and eastern Europe faced basic development questions such as the appropriate relationship between agriculture and industry. In central planning the Soviets found a novel instrument to achieve industrialization. During the cold war years of rivalry between capitalism and communism, the two competing development strategies were western development economics and central planning (in Soviet, Chinese or Cuban varieties). In this general context, the core meaning of development was catching up with the advanced industrialized countries.

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Cowen and Shenton uncover yet another meaning of development. In nineteenth-century England, 'development', they argue, referred to remedies for the shortcomings and maladies of progress. This involves questions such as population (according to Malthus), job loss (for the Luddites), the social question (according to Marx and others) and urban squalor. In this argument, *progress and development* (which are often viewed as a seamless web) are contrasted, and development differs from and complements progress. Thus, for Hegel, progress is linear and development curvilinear (Cowen and Shenton 1996: 130). Accordingly twentieth-century development thinking in Europe and the colonies had already traversed many terrains and positions and was a reaction to nineteenth-century progress and policy failures, where industrialization left people uprooted and out of work, and social relations dislocated.

The immediate predecessor of modern development economics was colonial economics. Economics in the European colonies and dependencies had gone through several stages. In brief, an early stage of commerce by chartered companies, followed by plantations and mining. In a later phase, colonialism took on the form of *trusteeship*: the management of colonial economies not merely with a view to their exploitation for metropolitan benefit but allegedly also with a view to the interest of the native population. Development, if the term was used at all, in effect referred mainly to colonial resource management, first to make the colonies cost-effective and later to build economic resources with a view to national independence. Industrialization was not part of colonial economics because the comparative advantage of the colonies was held to be the export of raw materials for the industries in the metropolitan countries. Indeed there are many amply documented episodes when European or colonial interests destroyed native manufactures (textile manufacturing in India is the classic case) or sabotaged industrialization efforts in the periphery (as in Egypt, Turkey and Persia; Stavrianos 1981). This is a significant difference between the colonial economies and the latecomers in central and eastern Europe.

In modern development thinking and economics, the core meaning of development was *economic growth*, as in growth theory and Big Push theory. In the course of time mechanization and industrialization became part of this, as in Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* (1960). When development thinking broadened to encompass *modernization*, economic growth was combined with political modernization, that is, nation building, and social modernization such as fostering entrepreneurship and 'achievement orientation'. In dependency theory, the core meaning of development likewise was economic growth or capital accumulation. Its distorted form was dependent accumulation which led to the 'development of underdevelopment', and an intermediate form was 'associated dependent development'. The positive goal was national accumulation (or autocentric development). Alternative development thinking introduced new understandings of development focused on social and community development and 'human flourishing'

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Table 1.1 *Meanings of development over time*

Period	Perspectives	Meanings of development
1800s	Classical political economy	Remedy for progress; catching up
1870 >	Latecomers	Industrialization, catching-up
1850 >	Colonial economics	Resource management, trusteeship
1940 >	Development economics	Economic growth – industrialization
1950 >	Modernization theory	Growth, political and social modernization
1960 >	Dependency theory	Accumulation – national, autocentric
1970 >	Alternative development	Human flourishing
1980 >	Human development	Capacitation, enlargement of people's choices
1980 >	Neoliberalism	Economic growth – structural reform, deregulation, liberalization, privatization
1990 >	Post-development	Authoritarian engineering, disaster
2000	Millennium Development Goals	Structural reforms

(Friedmann 1992). With human development in the mid-1980s came the understanding of development as *capacitation*, following Amartya Sen's work on capacities and entitlements. In this view the point of development, above all, is that it is enabling. The core definition of development in the Human Development Reports of UNDP is 'the enlargement of people's choices'.

Two radically different perspectives on development came to the fore around the same time. *Neoliberalism*, in returning to neoclassical economics, eliminates the foundation of development economics: the notion that developing economies represent a 'special case'. According to the neoliberal view, there is no special case. What matters is to 'get the prices right' and let market forces do their work. Development in the sense of government intervention is anathema for it means market distortion. The central objective, economic growth, is to be achieved through deregulation, liberalization, privatization – which are to roll back government and reduce market-distorting interventions and in effect annul 'development'. In other words, this retains one of the conventional core meanings of 'development', economic growth, while the 'how to' and agency of development switch from state to market. Accordingly, neoliberalism is an anti-development perspective, not in terms of goals but in terms of means. *Post-development* thinking also puts forth an anti-development position. This is still more radical for it applies not merely to the means (the state is accused of authoritarian engineering) but also to the goals (economic growth is repudiated) and the results (which are deemed a failure or disaster for the majority of the population) (Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; discussed in chapter 7 below). An overview is in Table 1.1.

Thus the lineages of development are quite mixed. They include the application of science and technology to collective organization, but also managing the changes that arise from the application of technology. Virtually

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from the outset development includes an element of *reflexivity*. It ranges from infrastructure works (roads, railways, dams, canals, ports) to industrial policy, the welfare state, new economic policy, colonial economics and Keynesian demand management.

There are several ways of making sense of the shift of meanings of development over time. One is to view this kind of archaeology of development discourse as a deconstruction of development and as part of a development critique. Another is to treat it as part of historical context: it's quite sensible for development to change meaning in relation to changing circumstances and sensibilities. 'Development' then serves as a mirror of changing economic and social capacities, priorities and choices. A third option is to recombine these different views as dimensions of development, that is, to fit them all together as part of a development mosaic and thus to reconstruct development as a synthesis of components (e.g. Martinussen 1997). A limitation of this perspective is that it takes history out of development. If we consider each theory as offering a Gestalt of development, a total picture from a particular angle, then the array of successive and rival theories offers a kaleidoscopic view into the collective mirror. By any account, the different meanings of development relate to changing relations of power and hegemony, which is part of the view in the collective mirror.

Development is struggle

Besides different meanings of development over time, there are different dimensions to 'development' at any one time. To each development theory there are, implicitly or explicitly, various dimensions or layers. First, the historical context and political circumstances. Each perspective unfolds in a particular historical setting. Understanding development theory in context means understanding it as a response to problems and arguments at the time. Another dimension is explanation or assumptions about causal relationships. This implies epistemology or rules of what constitutes knowledge. In addition, it involves methodology, or indicators and research methods. Development thinking also performs a role of representation, of articulating and privileging particular political and class interests and cultural preferences. Besides different meanings of development, another register is 'perceptions of development' or how different stakeholders perceive and represent their interests (e.g. Wallman 1977). Development theories also reflect images of improvement or desirable change. A further element is the agenda-setting role of theory, as a set of policy implications and a future project.

Understanding development theory means being aware of these multiple layers (Figure 1.1). Each development theory can be read on multiple levels and in terms of the ongoing and shifting relations among the following components: practice→ research→ policy→ ideology→ image→ theory→ ideology→ policy→ practice→ theory→ ideology→ image→ policy...

- *context* – historical context and political circumstances
- *explanation* – assumptions about causal relationships
- *epistemology* – rules of what constitutes knowledge
- *methodology* – indicators and research methods
- *representation* – articulating or privileging particular interests and cultural preferences
- *imagination* – images, evocations, symbols of development, desire
- *future* – policy, agenda, future project

Figure 1.1 *Dimensions of development theories*

A central issue is the relationship between knowledge and power. That every truth is a claim to power and every power is a centre of truth is the point of discourse analysis and part of postmodern understandings of knowledge. This involves more or less subtle considerations. For instance, one can argue for a relationship between technological capacities and epistemology and politics. ‘Heavy technology’ such as the steam engine then correlates with an epistemology of determinism and a politics of hierarchy; whereas soft or light technology, such as touch-button and ambient tech, implies subtler epistemologies and more horizontal relations (Mulgan 1994).

Broadly speaking, each development theory can be read as a hegemony or a challenge to hegemony. Explanation, then, is not always the most important function of theory – others are agenda setting, mobilization and coalition building.

In line with the neocolonial intellectual division of labour in which ‘theory’ is generated in the west and data are supplied by the south, grand theories have typically been fashioned in the west and therefore articulate western political interests and western intellectual styles and priorities. Reading development theory then is also reading a history of hegemony and political and intellectual Eurocentrism (Amin 1989; Mehmet 1995; and chapter 2 below). Notable exceptions are dependency theory (which was also informed by Marxism, that is, a western counter-hegemony), alternative development and human development thinking, which largely originate outside the west.

We can map the main contours of development thinking in different periods alongside the patterns of international hegemony and the structures of explanation that were prevalent at the time (Table 1.2). Thus we relate global relations of power or international hegemony to intellectual patterns of hegemony (in line with the Gramscian approach to international relations; Cox 1991). The assumption in this schema is that the paradigms that are available in the intellectual market at the time shape the explanatory frameworks that inform development thinking.

The development field

Development thinking and policy, then, is a terrain of hegemony and counter-hegemony. In this contestation of interests there are many stakeholders and

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Table 1.2 Global hegemony and development theories

Historical context	Hegemony	Explanation	Development thinking
Nineteenth century	British Empire	Colonial anthropology, social Darwinism	Progress, evolutionism
1890–1930s	Latecomers, colonialism	Classical political economy	Catching up
Postwar boom	US hegemony	Growth theory, structural functionalism	Modernization
Decolonization	Third World nationalism, NAM, G77	Neomarxism	Dependency
1980s >	Globalization Finance and corporate capital	Neoliberalism, monetarism	Structural adjustment
1990s >	Rise of Asia, big emerging economies, BRIC	Capabilities, developmental state	Human development

Table 1.3 Actors in development field: different stakeholders, different development

Institutional	State	IFIs	UN system	Civil society
Structure	Governments, ministries South and North	IMF, World Bank	UN agencies	(I) NGOs
Infrastructure	Bureaucracies, interest groups, parties, factions, citizens	WTO, G7, central, international and development banks, TNCs	UN General Assembly, governments, ILO, WHO, etc.	People. Social movements, trade unions, parties, firms, churches, etc.
Locations	Capitals, etc.	Washington DC	New York, Geneva, Paris, Nairobi, etc.	Dispersed
Development thinking	Economics (neoclassical to Keynesian) and human development	Neoclassical economics, neoliberalism	Human development	Alternative development (and post-development)
Disciplines	Economics, political science, public administration, demography	Economics	Economics, political economy, IR, political science	Sociology, anthropology, ecology, gender and cultural studies

multiple centres of power and influence. Taking a closer look at the contemporary development field, we can schematically map the main actors and forces as shown in Table 1.3.

To the surface structure of dispersed centres of influence we can add the *infrastructure* of forces behind the scenes, that is, those on whom the overt centres of influence depend. Thus what matters are not simply the World

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Bank or IMF but their boards of trustees and other forces that shape policy parameters. Thus the 'Treasury–Wall Street–IMF complex' (Wade and Veneroso 1998) identifies two forces behind the scenes, to which we can add the US Congress, the Federal Reserve, G7 central banks and the Bank for International Settlements in Basel. Further, at some remove (because these relations are not always clear-cut and straightforward) we can add the development thinking that would be congenial to these circles and the disciplines that typically inform their angle of vision. The dispersal of stakeholders in development roughly correlates with the disciplinary sprawl of development studies, so this fragmentation may have not only an intellectual basis in the academic division of labour but also an institutional basis.

This is only a schematic representation. Some provisos are that in the infrastructures of power different ideologies may prevail; NGOs need to be differentiated in various types, etc. From this mapping of the development field several points follow. (1) It isn't really possible to generalize about development – the question is, whose development? Different stakeholders have different takes on what development means and how to achieve it. This is not a minor point but a fundamental circumstance. Development is intrinsically a field of multi-level negotiation and struggle among different stakeholders. (2) Though it is schematic this outline may enable us to fine-tune thinking about the relationship between power and knowledge in development. The field is in flux. Thus the World Bank has been shifting position repeatedly in view of policy failures and political pressures and trends. (3) New concerns and priorities that are broadly shared by development stakeholders – such as globalization, sustainability, gender, diversity, poverty alleviation – prompt new combinations and partnerships that crosscut 'boxes'. Emergencies, such as humanitarian action, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, also make for crosscutting combinations. In this light this kind of map is already overtaken on the ground, which is a reminder that the map should not be mistaken for the territory.

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Obviously, the selection and representation of trends are tricky issues. If it is true that development is a mirror of the times, then a development trend report is a look in the collective mirror – and there are many angles to take and arguments to fit the occasion. There is no methodology to achieve this in a neat and clean fashion. The format adopted here is a concise profile of trends, by way of introduction to later discussion in the book. Limitations of this kind of discussion are the absence of magnitudes or relative values and the fact that everything is contextual. Certain trends may well be significant but without a quantitative analysis this remains inevitably impressionistic. First we will discuss long-term trends in development theory. Because they are long-term changes (over fifty years or more) they have a certain degree of plausibility but, on the other hand, they are also rather general and of a high level of abstraction. Even so a long-term perspective

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in a field dominated by short-termism may be welcome. Next we will look at current trends in development thinking and policy.

Arguably, the long-term trends in development theory parallel general shifts in social science. They may be characterized as a gradual shift from nineteenth-century to late twentieth-century epistemologies. In the first place this involves a shift from structuralist perspectives that emphasize the role of macro-structures towards more agency-oriented views. Classical and modern development thinking were fundamentally structuralist: the emphasis was on the large-scale patterning of social realities by structural changes in the economy, the state and the social system. This also applies to critical development thinking of the time, which was informed by Marxism, which in its orthodox forms is basically structuralist. It further applies to the structuralist school associated with Raúl Prebisch, which preceded the emergence of dependency theory in Latin America, and to neo-Marxism, dependency theory, modes of production analysis, structuralist Althusserian Marxism and the regulation school.

In social science generally this outlook began to change with the growing influence of phenomenology (dating back to nineteenth-century antecedents) and a variety of orientations such as existentialism (and its emphasis on individual responsibility), hermeneutics (involving a more complex epistemology), symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology (in anthropology), new institutional economics and rational choice, public choice and capability (in economics) and feminism (e.g. standpoint theory). In Marxism, it began to change with the influence of Gramscian Marxism. In different ways, these orientations all imply a shift in emphasis from structuralist toward institutional and agency-oriented views. This can also be described as a change from deterministic to interpretative views (cf. Bauman 1992 on the changing role of the intellectual from legislator to interpreter) and from materialist and reductionist views to multidimensional and holistic views. A different account of this shift is from structuralism to constructivism, that is, from an account of social realities as determined and patterned by macro-structures, to an account of social realities as being socially constructed. The lineage of constructivism includes phenomenology – as in Schutz (1972) and Berger and Luckmann (1967); and Max Weber – much of Weber's work is constructivist in outlook. A familiar turning point is Giddens' structuration theory (1984). Poststructuralism and postmodernism, taken in a methodological sense, are further expressions of this reorientation (Rosenau 1992).

In development studies, these broad changes involve various implications. One of the consequences of the emphasis on agency is that development thinking becomes spatialized and more local, or regional. Another implication is the concern for differentiation and diversity. Early and modern development thinking were generalizing and homogenizing; structuralism is intrinsically essentialist. By contrast, the post-impasse trend in development thinking highlights diversity and differentiation (Schuurman 1993, Booth 1994b). Along with this comes a movement away from grand overall

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theories and big schema policies. There are no more general recipes, no development policies that are relevant across countries and regions. The singular makes way for the plural generally – not simply development but what kind of development, not simply growth but what kind of growth. Thus new qualifiers and attributes proliferate, such as sustainable development, people-friendly growth, pro-poor growth, etc. Such qualifiers had always figured in the critical literature; now they enter mainstream discourse. Among the concrete expressions of the agency orientation in development thinking are work on strategic groups, the actor-oriented approach (Long 1994) and the general emphasis on a participatory approach (e.g. Oommen 1998).

The concern with diversity and agency introduces a new kind of tension: what then is the relationship between the local and the global, between the internal and the external, the endogenous and exogenous, between micro- and macro-policies? The shift from structuralism to constructivism and from structure to agency refers to a shift in emphasis and perspective; one does not replace the other but complements it. Structural changes and macro-policies obviously matter, such as structural adjustment lending and the World Trade Organization. What has changed is that these no longer constitute the field but are perceived as only part of the field. Many stakeholders actively negotiate them politically and analytically and feel they can do something about them. The impact of these actors on public debate and policy making can be measured (e.g. Clarke 1998). This is a step towards the democratization of development politics. Constructivism, in this sense, is the methodological expression of a political transformation.

This perspective offers one angle on current trends in development studies. Several trends are linked to these general changes (outlined in Figure 1.2), or follow from it, without being reducible to it. Current trends are discussed further with a view to changes in different spheres. In methodology, what stands out is the trend towards interdisciplinarity and the role of discourse analysis. In general sensibilities, the cultural turn is significant. In development policy, significant themes are intersectoral cooperation, social diversity, human security, gender and environment, and changes in development cooperation and structural reform.

From	To
Macro-structures	Actor-orientation, agency, institutions
Structuralism	Constructivism
Determinism	Interpretative turn, contingency
Generalizing, homogenizing	Differentiating
Singular	Plural
Eurocentrism	Polycentrism, multipolarity

Figure 1.2 *General trends in development theory over time*

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Interdisciplinarity

A significant methodological change is the gradual trend toward interdisciplinarity. Traditionally sectoral theories have dominated development studies. They have been marked by a gap between economic development and social and political development, although in grand theories (such as modernization and dependency theory) these were somehow articulated. A transitional phase has been the shift from disciplinary case studies and policies towards multidisciplinary approaches. Increasingly we now see – although fragmented development economics, politics, etc., also continue as usual – more attention to cross- or transdisciplinary work. Several developments contribute to this: failures in development policies; new problems that require combined approaches; crises and emergencies that prompt new combinations of efforts. Novel disciplinary combinations and themes include, for instance, new institutional economics, sociology of economics, the social economy, development as social process or as public action. Notions such as the embeddedness of economic and market activities in political institutions, social capital, cultural practices and social relations, imply new combinations of disciplinary sensibilities. New methodologies, such as social accounting, require such new combinations. Accordingly there is a new awareness that development requires a multidimensional, holistic approach (Chapter 9).

Discourse analysis

The origins of this methodology are in linguistics and literature studies, while it owes its influence to the general impact of poststructuralism. Here development studies follow a general trend in social science. The upshot is to treat development as story, as narrative, text. This has generated a wave of deconstructions and critiques of development texts (cf. Chapter 2). According to this literature, the power of development is the power of storytelling – development is a narrative, a myth (Crush 1996a, Rist 1997), which has since become a standard genre (Grillo and Stirrat 1997).

Discourse analysis in development involves a medley of motifs. At a general methodological level it no doubt represents a gain. This is not remarkable; it is simply the 'linguistic turn' applied to development studies. It is the awareness that development is not simply theory or policy but in either form is *discourse*. This means a step beyond treating development as ideology, or interest articulation, because it involves meticulous attention to development texts and utterances, not merely as ideology but as epistemology. Thus it involves sociology of knowledge not only in terms of class interests (as in ideology critique) but also in terms of what makes up an underlying 'common sense'.

An effective use of discourse analysis is as an analytical instrument applied for example to development policy (e.g. Apthorpe and Gasper 1996, Rew 1997). A different application is to argue that since development is discourse it is therefore fictional, untrue, bogus, deceptive. It is a form of western modernism and scientific distortion that sets illusory goals of material achievement and in its pursuit wreaks havoc upon

Third World people. In this mode, discourse analysis turns into anti- or post-development thinking (e.g. Escobar 1992b, Sachs 1992a). In the process methodology turns into ideology – an instrument of analysis becomes an ideological platform, a political position; politics of knowledge turns into knowledge of politics. There have been similar agnostic moves in Foucault and Derrida's work. In development studies this shift from methodology to ideology likewise involves the admixture of outside elements: an *esprit* of anti-modernism with romantic overtones (as in Ivan Illich), or post-Gandhian utopianism (as in Nandy 1989). Development as a discourse that is alien to the Third World (Western), authoritarian (state, IMF), engineering (modern), controlling and steamrolling and perverting local culture, grassroots interests and perceptions: this development critique is the newest critical populism.

A slightly different current is to apply discourse analysis in the sense of 'unmasking' development as 'myth' or 'fairy tale' (Rist 1997); that is, development is 'only a story', only a narrative, only a grand narrative. In a methodological sense this is a contradictory move: the very point of discourse analysis is that discourse matters, talk and representation matter; representation is a form of power, it constructs social realities. Some analysts seem to want to have it both ways: development is a story *and* it is 'only a story'. This confuses two different methodological dispositions: that of ideology critique (which measures ideology, taken as masked interests or false consciousness, against some yardstick of 'truth') and discourse analysis.

The methodological gain of discourse analysis is to add a level of reflexivity, theoretical refinement and sophistication to development studies, and thus to open the politics of development to a more profound engagement. Its weakness and limitation – in development studies just as in literature criticism and cultural studies – is that it may skirt the actual issues of power. It may divert attention from relations 'on the ground'. In that case, from determinism we risk slipping into *discursivism*, that is, reading too much into texts, or textualism, and overrating the importance of discourse analysis, as if by rearranging texts one changes power relations. This comes down to an alternative structuralism: from economic and political macro-structures to linguistic and epistemic structures; or, the order of language as a stand-in and code for the order of social relations.

The emergence of new fields of interest also shapes development studies. Gender, ecology, democratization, good governance, empowerment, culture, communication, globalization now figure prominently in development agendas. Ecology involves not just resource economics but novel syntheses such as ecological economics and ecological politics. Gender plays a fundamental role in development practice and discourse. 'Empowerment' and 'participation' are also ubiquitous in development management. Besides more effective public administration, accountability, democracy and citizenship figure prominently. Globalization is also a major vortex of change in the development arena. These fields of interest generate new theoretical and policy angles but so far not necessarily new overall theoretical frameworks.

Development Theory

Several themes are not new in themselves but the emphasis they receive is novel. Or, some themes acquire a new significance over time. Thus, corruption has been a familiar theme in development work but at each turn of the wheel it takes on a different meaning. In the context of modernization it was taken as a residue of premodern, particularist leanings. In the dependency framework corruption was a symptom of dependent development and of the *comprador* politics of the lumpen bourgeoisie. Kleptocracy, crony capitalism and 'money politics' are variations on this theme. In the context of neoliberalism corruption becomes rent seeking, an ominous sign of state failure and market distortion and 'a hazard to free trade and investment' (Leiken 1996: 55) and the remedy is transparency. From a political angle, corruption is a matter of public accountability and democracy.

Culture and development

Conventionally development has been a monocultural project. Modernization and Westernization were virtually synonyms. As part of 'nation building' development was taken as a homogenizing project. In the context of decolonization struggles this began to change: along with the indigenization of politics and administration, indigenous culture and knowledge became an additional topos. Thus, culture was incorporated into development studies but in a subsidiary fashion ('add culture and stir'). The critique of Eurocentrism generated a concern with polycentrism, cultural multipolarity (Amin 1989) and pluralism. The UNESCO-sponsored World Decade on Culture and Development also resulted in growing regard for cultural dimensions of development. In the wake of the cultural turn in development, culture represents another dimension of development, which is no longer ignored or viewed as just an obstacle, as in orthodox modernization thinking (Chapter 5 below). 'Culture' now figures in several ways. One is regard for cultural diversity – which in an age of ethnicity and religious resurgence is not an entirely innocent theme. A second concern is cultural capital, both as a form of human capital and capability and as political currency (in ethnic and religious mobilization and as an asset in economic relations). A further step is to view cultural diversity as an engine of economic growth (Chapter 5).

The unit of development

In development thinking from the classics to dependency theory the conventional unit of development was the nation. The key development statistics and measures used by the international institutions are still country statistics. However, while the nation remains the central domain of development it is no longer the only game in town. Gradually development is becoming a multilevel, multiscalar series of efforts, simultaneously taking place at levels lower than the nation, at the national level and at levels beyond the nation.

Below the national level are community development, local economic development (LED) and microregional development. Community development,

a subsidiary theme in colonial times and during the era of modernization, received a new emphasis with alternative development. Local development in its various forms connects with questions of rural / urban disparities, urban development, regional inequality, new regionalism, ethnic mobilization ('ethnodevelopment'), and new localism with a view to endogenous development and in reaction to globalization. Beyond the nation are questions of macroregional cooperation and global macroeconomic policies. Macroregional cooperation concerns the conventional issues of economies of scale, increase of market size, regional standardization and interfirm cooperation as well as the horizons of the regional Development Banks. Besides country statistics, other development statistics are regional, concerning 'Latin America', 'Africa', 'Asia', 'the Caribbean', etc. The region, in other words, is becoming almost as familiar a unit of development as the nation. A third scale of development action is the world: local, national and macroregional decision making interfaces with global macro-policies on the part of international institutions and the UN system.

Hence, development policy is increasingly a matter of decision making dispersed over a wide terrain of actors, institutions and frameworks. Development theorizing, which is habitually centred on the state, needs to accommodate this widening radius. It needs to be renewed by reconceptualizing development as multiscalar public action. Contemporary development policy is incoherent because the different levels of development action – local, microregional, national, macroregional, international, global – are not adequately articulated. Thus a comprehensive, holistic approach to development is not only multidimensional but also multiscalar, such that development efforts at different levels are cumulative and interconnect.

Intersectoral cooperation

After development thinking has been, more or less successively, state-led (classical political economy, modernization, dependency), market-led (neoliberalism) and society-led (alternative development), it is increasingly understood that development action needs *all* of these in new combinations. New perspectives and problems (such as complex emergencies, humanitarian action) increasingly involve cooperation among government, civic and international organizations, and market forces. Human development, social choice, public action, urban development and LED all involve such intersectoral partnerships. For government at local and national levels, this increasingly involves a coordinating role as facilitator and enabler of intersectoral cooperation.

The theme of development partnership at present serves an ideological role as part of a neoliberal new policy framework which papers over contradictions and the rollback of government (e.g. Hearn 1998). However, the underlying significance is much more profound: just as sectoral approaches and disciplinary boundaries have been losing their relevance, sectoral agendas are now too narrow. The ideological use that is being made of this conjuncture should not obscure the significance of the trend itself.

Development Theory

International development cooperation has been changing in several ways. The emphasis has shifted from projects to programmes and from bilateral to multilateral cooperation. The trend is towards, on the one hand, formal channels (particularly multilateral cooperation through international and regional institutions) and, on the other, informal channels (NGOs) (Bernard et al. 1998). A précis of current trends is in Table 1.4.

These themes are elaborated in the chapters that follow. These changes in development thinking, such as interdisciplinarity and discourse analysis, and in policy, such as the changing unit of development and intersectoral cooperation, don't add up to a single pattern, but they significantly change the Gestalt of development. Their overall significance is taken up in chapter 11 on futures of development.

Table 1.4 *Current trends in development theory*

Conventional and recent views	Trend	New themes
Grand theories	Differentiation	Middle-range theories, local knowledge
(i) Unreflexive use of language, indicators, models; (ii) discourse analysis	Reflexivity, self-questioning	Development as social learning, social feedbacks, reflexive development
Sectoral theories. Gap between economic and social/political development. (Multi)disciplinary case studies, policies.	Interdisciplinarity	Bridging approaches (new institutional economics, sociology of economics) and themes (embeddedness, social capital, social economy, holism)
State-, market- or society-led development	Intersectoral cooperation	Intersectoral synergies. Public action
Homogenization, essentialism	Diversity	Politics of difference
(i) Betting on the strong; (ii) humanitarian assistance, from relief to development	Human security	Risks of polarization, global social policy, global social contract
(i) Gender blind; (ii) WID (Women in Development) (add women and stir)	Gender awareness	Gender interests, gendering development
(i) Mastery over nature; (ii) sustainable development (add environment and stir)	Environment	Green GDP, political ecology
(i) Westernization; (ii) homogenization vs. indigenization (add culture and stir)	Cultural turn	Diversity and cultural capital as political currency, (iii) as growth pole
(i) Nation; (ii) local	Unit of development	Regional and world development and multiscalar partnerships