

# INTRODUCTION

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**T**he disintegration of the colonial empires brought about a strange and incongruous convergence of aspirations. The leaders of the independence movements were eager to transform their devastated countries into modern nation-states, while the 'masses', who had often paid for their victories with their blood, were hoping to liberate themselves from both the old and the new forms of subjugation. As to the former colonial masters, they were seeking a new system of domination, in the hope that it would allow them to maintain their presence in the ex-colonies, in order to continue to exploit their natural resources, as well as to use them as markets for their expanding economies or as bases for their geopolitical ambitions. The myth of development emerged as an ideal construct to meet the hopes of the three categories of actors.

For quite a long time, this temporary meeting of otherwise highly divergent interests gave the development discourse a charismatic power of attraction. The different parties to the consensus it represented had indeed their own differences as to the ways development had to be implemented. For an important group, *economic* development was the key to any kind of development. For another, *culture* and the social conditions proper to each country had to prevail in any process of development. On another plane, an animated debate witnessed major differences between people who wanted an expert-based and professionally managed development and others who were for an 'endogenous', 'human-centred', 'participatory', 'bottom-up' or, later, 'sustainable' form of development. These 'policy-oriented' divergences seemed, however, too weak to question the ideology of development and its relevance to people's deeper aspirations. In the 1960s, when an 'outsider' like Ivan Illich set out to challenge the very idea of development as a threat to people's autonomy, his stand was perceived by many as sheer provocation. Development, even more than schooling, was then such a sacred cow that it appeared totally irresponsible to question its relevance.

This almost unanimous support for development was somehow significant of the very gap it had started to produce in societies in which it had been introduced. For now it appears clearly that such a unanimity was far from

being shared at the grassroots level, where it was supposed to reach the suffering populations. Only the 'authorities' who were speaking on behalf of their 'target populations' claimed that such was the case. The voices that, here and there, were heard across the barriers separating the rulers from the ruled, showed that the latter had never been seriously consulted.

It may well be said that when the 'national' leaders of various anti-colonial struggles took over the movements emerging from the grassroots, they succeeded in making them believe that development was the best answer to their demands. As such, for all the victims of colonial rule, it did appear for a while as a promising mirage: the long-awaited source of regeneration to which they had been looking for so long. But the mirage ultimately transformed into a recurring nightmare for millions. As a matter of fact, it soon appeared to them that development had been, from the beginning, nothing but a deceitful mirage. It had acted as a factor of division, of exclusion and of discrimination rather than of liberation of any kind. It had mainly served to strengthen the new alliances that were going to unite the interests of the post-colonial foreign expansionists with those of the local leaders in need of them for consolidation of their own positions. Thanks to these alliances, societies that had invented modernized poverty could now extend it to all 'developing' countries.

This is how, under the banner of development and progress, a tiny minority of local profiteers, supported by their foreign 'patrons', set out to devastate the very foundations of social life in these countries. A merciless war was waged against the age-old traditions of communal solidarity. The virtues of simplicity and conviviality, of noble forms of poverty, of the wisdom of relying on each other, and of the arts of suffering were derided as signs of 'underdevelopment'. A culture of 'individual' success and of socially imputed 'needs' led younger men to depart their villages, leaving behind dislocated families of women, children and older men who had no one to rely on but the promises of often unattainable 'goods' and 'services'. Millions of men and women were thus mortally wounded in their bodies and souls, falling *en masse* into a destitution for which they had never been culturally prepared.

For the development establishment and its beneficiaries, this unprecedented tragedy was interpreted only as the inevitable price to be paid for a good life for all. Even now, when, with a few localized exceptions, the famous economic gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' continues to reach ever more intolerable proportions, development ideologists attribute its failures only to political or other causes external to the development ideology. The very fact that, only recently, on the occasion of the United Nations' fiftieth anniversary, delegates were unanimous in giving it their full support shows that development, like the nation-state it serves and the educational systems it promotes, has become one of the founding pillars of the modern 'global village' programmed for the twenty-first century. Similarly, the majority of books and articles published on development continue to talk about what it

needs to grow rather than the threats it poses to its 'target populations'. For a long time, even students trying to see 'the other side of the moon' had difficulty hearing the voices of the great losers and their friends.

The idea of a collection of essays that would make it possible for such students to hear those voices originally started some twelve years ago, when I was invited by the University of California at Berkeley to teach a course on 'The Myth and the Reality of Development'. Thus, a first Reader was put at the disposal of the students, soon followed by a larger one in two volumes, which was compiled from a great number of xeroxed texts. These materials and manuscripts were largely either unknown or inaccessible to students. The papers were all selected with the aim of giving them a view of development and its practices from the perspective of the grassroots populations. The unexpected demand for the two Readers showed that not only Berkeley students but also many outsiders, including development activists, welcomed the idea.

Yet I owe to Robert Molteno, the inspiring editor at Zed Books, the suggestion (in 1991) that a Reader of the same kind be published, in order to reach the growing number of development students who, both inside and outside the universities and other academic centres, were eager to have a view of development from the perspective of the 'losers' and their friends. For various reasons, it took us much longer to implement the idea than we had initially planned. Not only had the number of serious writers witnessing the agonies of development considerably increased in the meantime, but more impressive evidences and reports were now published, so that a complete revision and updating of the materials included in the original Readers was required. Moreover, the first appearance of the word 'Post-Development' some six or seven years ago<sup>1</sup> made it necessary, henceforth, to take into account the practices and thoughts that were actually shaping the period following the demise of the development ideology. Finally, as Robert and I were trying to redesign the entire project, in the light of all those elements, Victoria Bawtree, a dear friend and former editor of *Ideas and Action* (a well-known FAO magazine which was doomed to disappear because of many of its 'subversive' grassroots positions) joined in the endeavour, bringing to the task her valuable knowledge and experience and the contagious energy of an old development insider.

As in the Berkeley Reader, the texts presented here have at least three qualities in common. They are *subversive*, not in the sense attributed to this adjective by modern inquisitors, but as Cardinal Arns, of São Paulo, defined it in his courageous statement before an annual meeting of the Society for International Development, in 1983: 'Subvert', he said, 'means to turn a situation round and look at it from the other side'; that is, the side of 'people who have to die so that the system can go on.'

Hence, the selections are also *human-centred*; that is, they represent a perception of reality from the perspective of the human beings involved in the processes of change. As such, the concern of the contributors to this Reader is not for 'progress', 'productivity', or any other achievement *per se* in the scientific, technological or economic fields. It is rather to find out whom these serve or exclude, and how they affect the human condition and the relational fabric of the society into which they are introduced. If some spectacular technological advance delights a minority of individual 'winners' to the detriment of an increasing number of 'losers', the contributors to this anthology are eager to convey what these losers think about it, and how their lives are affected by it.

Finally, the ideas presented here are *radical*, not in the polemical sense often intended by the use of this adjective to discredit free thinking, but in the etymological sense of the word: that is, going to the roots (Latin *radix*) of the questions, 'pertains to, or affects what is fundamental'.

The contributors to this volume inhabit a vast spectrum of cultures with all their differences. They represent different horizons of thought. They are also persons who have occupied very different 'social positions'. There are, amongst them, not only 'developers' and activists or 'agents of change' but also philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, journalists, anarchists, dreamers, artists, poets, and you name it – Dadacha, for example, one of our most exceptional guests, is an 'illiterate' sage. Yet, not only do the contributors share the qualities just mentioned; they have been requested to present their views because of the particular respect we have towards them, as thinkers and often as friends. In fact, we acted from the beginning as if we were inviting them to a gathering of *friends*, who would come around a table just to enjoy a friendly conversation. It was important for us to think that even when they disagreed with each other, they did so as friends, not as experts or specialists.

One further feature is common to most of the guests at this gathering. They belong to a generation that went quite far to defend the great ideologies that marked the present century, most drawing their strength from the deeply *humanistic* traditions of all the world's cultures. Progress, socialism and development were their names. As a rule, the majority of the contributors to this Reader have, at some moment of their personal itinerary, bitterly experienced the disillusionments intrinsic to such ideologies. Yet, that does not seem to have driven them to discredit the virtues often associated with the birth of such ideologies, but to discover their extraordinarily corrupting possibilities, particularly when they tend to colonize one's autonomous capacity to search for the Truth.

The contributions to this Reader have been classified in five parts.

Part One pictures a number of world societies in the pre-development era. It starts with excerpts from Marshall Sahlins' *Stone Age Economics*. In this revolutionary text, which has now become a classic, the author, basing himself

on recent anthropological findings, shows how the economic bias has served to give a totally distorted picture of life in the so-called archaic or primitive societies. According to Sahlins, hunters/gatherers were not *poor*. Rather, they were *free*. They were indeed leading quite a simple and frugal life. Yet, as a rule, the people's material wants were satisfied. The fraction of people who went to bed hungry every night was paradoxically much smaller than in the present world of 'affluence' where it is still one-third to one-half of the population.

Helena Norberg-Hodge shows, in turn, how the preservation of the cultural sap had enabled another society, this time in Ladakh, to continue enjoying a good life until development broke in forcefully. Here again, an unbiased testimony shows how a population, internationally labelled as one of the poorest and least developed of the world, can still give the most 'developed' lessons of wisdom and virtue in every walk of life.

For Hassan Zaoual, a major reason why the development ideology has failed to grasp the rich complexity of the non-economized societies is its blindness to the specificity of their sites, in particular their symbolic dimensions. On the African sites, notices the Moroccan economist, 'the economic logic rests on the native social soils' and 'the rational is nothing but the relational.' These sites, which have been culturally produced with a view to saving the African way of life, are today threatened with total destruction by 'the missiles of development'. People's resistance to development should be studied in the context of their will to protect their local symbolic sites from destruction.

A testimony coming from a totally different geographic site, that of the American Indians of the Ojibway Nation, shows that the cultures of the world, despite their great diversity, have many things in common. Linda Clarkson, Vern Morrisette and Gabriel Regallet describe how, here as elsewhere, great traditions of wisdom and virtue, and millions of individual and group experiences, have converged to develop 'customs, beliefs, institutions and methods of social control' that cannot be dismissed, or worse, replaced from outside.

The taped interview of Gemetchu Megerssa with Dadacha, an elder of the Ethiopian Borana tribe, reveals other aspects of these sites. In this truly extraordinary document, Dadacha points his finger at the heart of the question. What is important to his sisters and brothers is *fidnaa*, a concept based on the 'necessary harmony between God and people', which 'does not end with growth' but with 'something else which we call *gabbina*' (well-being and splendour) and 'is similar to that of a ram's horn growing in a spiral'. The *limaati*, or the new concept of development, that is proposed to the people not only reduces their perception of a good life to an abstract economic formula but threatens to destroy 'the flow of civilized life'.

In the small 'boxes' illustrating the main themes of Part One, many inspiring thoughts articulated by well-known thinkers, from Marcel Mauss to Jerry Mander, as well as less famous but even more significant people like the

anonymous Inuit, show how the rich world of societies labelled as 'underdeveloped' continues to be misrepresented.

Part Two discusses the different aspects of the development paradigm – paradigm being taken here as the sum of the assumptions underlying the concept, and the beliefs or the world-view it both prescribes and proscribes. Teodor Shanin starts the discussion by examining the genealogy of the paradigm, which goes far back to the idea of progress. For Professor Shanin, this attractive ideology soon became 'an immensely "energizing" tool of policy and counterpolicy', 'a particular expert style' which took away from the majority 'the right to choose and even to understand why their own experience was increasingly being negated'.

For Marshall Berman, Faust can be traced as the first developer, after he sells his soul to Mephistopheles and decides, at any cost, to develop an entire region around him. The arrogance that grows with his ambition to develop his services leads him to ask his new friend Mephistopheles to kill Philemon and Baucis, the sweet old couple who were offering hospitality to shipwrecked sailors and wanderers, and who refuse to sell him their little cottage. This tragic blindness to others' feelings leads him ultimately to pronounce his own death sentence.

Using Foucault's methodology to dissect the development discourse, Arturo Escobar shows how the discourse made it possible for the rulers 'to subject their populations to an infinite variety of interventions, to more encompassing forms of power and systems of control', including 'killing and torturing [and] condemning their indigenous populations to near extinction'.

As Ivan Illich was perhaps one of the first thinkers who, as early as the late 1960s, had perceived most of the dangers inherent in the development discourse, 'Development as Planned Poverty' is inserted here as a prophetic message. For him, 'underdevelopment' is 'the surrender of social consciousness to prepackaged solutions', a phenomenon that was actually fostered by development. Focusing on the school system as it was introduced in the 'Third World', he shows how 'schools rationalize the divine origin of social stratification with much more rigour than churches have ever done.'

A quarter of a century later, we see the flowering of Illich's earlier thoughts in the interview he granted us specially for this Reader. The gist of his message, as I understand it, places a totally different type of responsibility, and perhaps a much heavier one, on the shoulders of every one of us: 'The possibility of a city set up as the milieu that fosters a common search for good has vanished... Dedication to each other is the generator of the only space that allows what you ask: a mini-space in which we can agree on the pursuit of the good.'

My own essay on 'Development and the People's Immune System' closes this discussion on the development paradigm by taking up the history of *homo oeconomicus* as one of the main agents of development, and the way he historically introduced himself in vernacular niches, as the HIV does in the

T4 cell, replacing the genetic codes of the latter by its own. In all economized societies, the stage now seems set for *homo oeconomicus* to 'become' his victims. To what extent, and how, could they resist the invasion? Are there 'fields of power' still left to the people exposed to the new 'virus', which may be reinforced in order to help them drive it back or destroy it? What could each of us do in the David-and-Goliath-like struggles that lie ahead? These questions can be better addressed if one gains a clearer notion of the institutions or the vehicles used by development in achieving its goals.

It is in Part Three of the Reader that some of these 'vehicles' are discussed. The articles in this section deal with economy, the nation-state, education, science, the colonization of minds, the hegemony of 'the one and only way of thinking', the media, and the international organizations.

Addressing the role of economy, as one of the most important vehicles of development, Serge Latouche defines development as 'the trickle-down effect of industrial growth'. He submits that, for mainstream thinking, growth has been identified with 'the good'. But the good it claims to represent 'is not the quality of life, but the quantity of gadgets considered as useful by the mere fact that they are being produced and consumed'.

The *problematique* of the nation-state, another fundamental vehicle of development, is described in all its complexities and ambivalences by Rajni Kothari. As a thinker who, through all his writings, has denounced the abuses committed by the modern repressive nation-state in the name of development, he notices that, at a time when the state is being rendered weak and disembodied by the overriding forces of technology and the world market, it is facing another major challenge from a totally opposite direction: the assertion of cultures, ethnicity, nationalities, pluralism and the violence of terrorism and fundamentalism. 'It is also ceasing to be an embodiment of civil society and a protector of the poor, the weak and the oppressed.'

The various aspects of education as a factor of 'cultural defoliation' are then discussed in a 'multi-voice' report by five authors well versed in the impacts of the imported school system on indigenous populations. They include Cheikh Hamidou Kane of Senegal, the author of *The Ambiguous Adventure*, and the Burkinabé historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo.

Vandana Shiva follows with an analysis of science and its 'reductionist and universalizing tendencies' that tend to destroy local knowledge. For her, it is not just development that is a source of violence to women and nature, but 'at a deeper level, scientific knowledge, on which the development process is based [which] is itself a source of violence'.

In societies abruptly exposed to processes which systematically produce at all levels modern needs and expectations, these different vehicles of development have been highly instrumental in extending the old forms of colonization to the mind of their victims. Ashis Nandy's analysis of the colonization of the mind gives a vivid picture of this new and pernicious type of control. At the level of the very societies that have been mainly responsible for such

a colonization, the same processes have led to the institution of 'the one and only way of thinking'. Ignacio Ramonet sees in this phenomenon an 'intimidating force that stifles all attempts at free thinking.' On another plane, James Petras discusses the role of the media in the cultural domination of societies exposed to development. Finally, Pierre de Senarclens discusses the role of the United Nations system and international assistance in prolonging the 'colonial' type of development.

Part Four starts with a forceful demonstration by Susan George of the ways 'the poor are developing the rich', thanks to development practices. Eduardo Galeano follows by telling us the sad story of those who are programmed to die of hunger 'on the altar of productivity', 'during the last chapter of the televised serial of history'. At the end of a poignant testimony on what Latin America has gone through in order to 'be like them', he asks himself whether the Goddess of Productivity 'is worth our lives'.

Other concrete examples of development practices are then given from the perspective of the grassroots populations. James Ferguson addresses the case of development in Lesotho, which, in his view, constitutes an 'almost unremitting failure'. The tragic effects of the transmigration project in Indonesia are then discussed by Graham Hancock. Pam Simmons then shows how recent efforts, particularly by the aid agencies, to integrate women into mainstream development theory and practice constitute a serious threat to much of what the women's struggle for freedom and dignity has stood for, especially in the South. This is followed by Peter Bunyard's testimony on the 'other side of the story' in the case of the Tehri dam in the Himalaya region, and how 'the misguided obsession with prestigious projects, such as large dams, is missing the point that denuded lands urgently need rehabilitation.'

To bring a note of almost black humour into the picture, Leonard Frank gives us, finally, an inside story of how development projects are generally prepared. Consultants familiar with the type of mission he describes would have no difficulty in agreeing in private that Leonard Frank's account is not an unusual one.

The last section of the Reader, Part Five, is intended to give an idea of the arts of resistance that 'losers' all over the world continue to refine in order to build for themselves different and more humane futures. They are designed to show wayfarers that the most promising roads are, to paraphrase Machado, the ones that they discover by themselves as they move ahead. There is no point in taking old roads which lead to undesirable destinations. In such a context, it becomes imperative for all wayfarers to learn, from their own traditions and from each other, the arts of resistance most adequate to the conditions of their journey. It is also important for them not to fall into ideological traps, the false promises of which often prevent their followers from seeing things around them *as they are*, and to learn from their own experiences.

To this end, this last part of the anthology starts with some inspiring thoughts on the ways different cultures have learned to resist domination.

These theoretical reflections are then followed by some examples illustrating the various types of resistance.

Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash open up the discussion by dissecting the fashionable slogan 'Think globally, act locally'. They find it misleading to the extent that it does not prevent the harmful effects of 'thinking big'. Grassroots populations engaged in movements such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) do not deny the reality of the internationalization of economy. But they seek to oppose globalism with radical pluralism. The Zapatista movement in Chiapas reflects people's choice 'to live, to think as well as to act on the human scale'. And that does not prevent them from circulating their news through three different e-mail networks.

For Wolfgang Sachs, after forty years of development, the world has indeed developed, but in two opposite directions. The 8 per cent of the world population who own a car now compose a global middle class that is socially excluding the remaining majority. The demise of development has brought about a crisis of justice and a crisis of nature, in an inverse relationship to each other. Three perspectives are proposed to address the double crisis: the 'fortress perspective', the 'astronaut's perspective' and the 'home perspective'.

The Chiapas rebellion was a historic signal to the extent that it represented this last perspective, as the report by Gustavo Esteva shows. Like the Narmada Valley movement, it signifies that the conventional development idea has to be abandoned in the name of justice. Similarly, the 'efficiency revolution' should be complemented by a 'sufficiency revolution'; that is, a mix of 'intelligent rationalization of means and prudent moderation of ends'. Such a revolution cannot, however, be programmed or engineered. For in the home perspective, the discourse amounts to an invitation, rather than to a strategy.

Mahatma Gandhi's citations remind the reader that the quest for simplicity, advocated by the previous authors, actually belongs to a deep-rooted tradition of vernacular societies. David Shi goes on to indicate how simple living has had similar roots in the history of the West, from the early Greeks to modern Americans. 'Like the family, simplicity is always said to be declining but never disappears.'

The question remains as to how the victims of unjust and dehumanizing regimes go about exercising their power – that is, 'act over other's actions' – as Foucault has defined power. For James Scott, whose book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* is a landmark in the understanding of this subject, it is crucial to decipher the 'hidden transcript' of the subordinate groups's resistance. This is enacted in a host of down-to-earth, low-profile stratagems designed to minimize appropriation. This form of resistance continually presses 'against the limit of what is permitted on stage, much as a body of water might press against a dam'.

Focusing on the grassroots movements in India, D.L. Sheth submits that these movements have now turned their backs on 'received' theories of any kind. What appeals to them is 'concrete and specific struggles' aimed at their

own empowerment and at 'redefining economic demands in terms of political and cultural rights.'

The 'power of the powerless', particularly under a post-totalitarian system (a term he uses to describe the political regimes of East Europe in the late 1970s) is then forcefully explored in Václav Havel's contribution. Taking up the case of a greengrocer who places in his window, among onions and carrots, the slogan 'Workers of the World Unite!', the president of the Czech Republic imagines the day when the same greengrocer stops putting up the slogan and refuses to submit himself to the 'blind *automatism* which drives the system'. This revolt is for him a crucial decision to *live within the truth*. For that is tantamount to breaking 'the exalted façade of the system' and saying the emperor is naked! No wonder that such simple gestures are actually perceived as a fundamental threat to systems whose main pillar is living a lie.

At the end of his essay, Havel's message, based on his own personal experience, reveals a fact common to many great social changes and takes a prophetic dimension: 'The moment ... a single person breaks the rules of the game, thus exposing it as a game – everything suddenly appears in another light and the whole crust seems then to be made of a tissue on the point of tearing and disintegrating uncontrollably.'

The essay by Karen Lehman reminds us how such novel approaches to the emergence of a world of friendship and gift make it imperative for everyone to focus on more fundamental issues, such as the relationship between the 'space within' and the 'structure around it'. The space within, she notices, is shrinking with the economization of life, as it places a market value on such gifts as childbearing and housekeeping. The post-development era would not be different from the present one if the space within was still forced to fit the economy. A new kind of relation should be imagined in order to create a relation between the two 'that supports both and damages neither'.

Could such a relation lead to what Judith Snow, another contributor concerned with friendship and the preservation of the unique gift incarnated by everyone, calls the 'inclusion society'? For her, one creates the possibility of meaningful interaction by offering one's gift to the community. And the millions who are now trying to regenerate the old ideal of a community under modern conditions do it mainly by creating and broadening such possibilities.

And that is perhaps why they continue singing. We sing, Mario Benedetti tells us,

because the sun recognizes us  
and the fields smell of spring  
and because in this stem and that fruit  
every question has its answer.

Depending on the oppressive regimes to which the subjugated belong – be they developmentalist, totalitarian, 'post-totalitarian' or fundamentalist –

people indeed have their different ways of preparing for the day when they all together cry out 'the emperor is naked!' It remains true, however, that the ends are always affected by the means. That perhaps explains the reason why Gandhiji refused, as early as the 1930s, to invite his fellow companions to 'seize' power, or to choose violence for reaching their ends. Thus did Sunderlal Bahuguna in India, Vaclav Hável in former Czechoslovakia, Subcomandante Marcos and Superbarrio in Mexico, or the Chodak team in Dakar who later learned, from their own experiences, that it was more important to *modify* the nature of political power than to *seize* a power that ultimately corrupts *all* its holders. 'Reinventing the Present', the essay presented by Emmanuel N'Dione and his Chodak team, is a fascinating report on how a relationship of friendly complicity between insiders and outsiders can lead to increasing refinement in the arts of helping each other.

Now, a final word on the 'boxes' that appear throughout this anthology. They have been chosen to represent some of the most interesting thinkers of all cultures, whose insights and words of wisdom illuminate the questions raised in the Reader. We view these as messages from absent friends or teachers who were either too far away or too busy to spend more time around the bigger table where the main conversation was being held. And we welcome their 'messages' as their gifts to us; they add new dimensions to the ongoing dialogue. References to their works have, however, been given in each case so that the more inquiring students can meet their authors at their convenience. We recommend strongly that readers use the boxes of their choice as signposts for the particular roads they are inclined to explore.

I take it as a good omen that the last box contains Fe Remotigue's moving poem on the power of resurrection, that which from the Christ to the smallest, most forgotten 'architects of dream' – like Garitoy – gives life its fullest meaning. 'One body down, one spirit up...'

## NOTE

1. The first international meeting organized under this name was the Colloquium sponsored by the Eckenstein Foundation in Geneva together with the *Institut d'Etudes sur le Développement*, in 1991. A report of the meeting was published the following year in Lausanne. See Gilbert Rist, Majid Rahnema and Gustavo Esteva, *Le Nord perdu: Repères pour l'après-développement*, Editions d'en bas, Lausanne, 1992.