
Sociology of Development

The word "development" is a concept that poses a level of difficulty in ascertaining its extent and impact. This is because of different phases and meanings it may take as regards the situation at any given point in time. We identify development in human social lives and endeavors, economies, technological abilities etc. It suggests a form of increase or advancement; it is a further step from a previous state. Development began in 1949, after the Second World War; then, the issue of reconstruction of countries came up. Countries that have overcome the effects of the wars were the First World Countries, while others were Second and Third World Countries. (Escobar, 1995)

Sadly, the concept of development is tagged to the Western world, giving rise to Developed, Developing and Underdeveloped countries around the world. This has given some sort of definition to development; so much so that other countries cannot define the changes or advancements they experience because the West has set the parameters for measuring development. As development comes in and the third world race to keep up, certain important practices and ways of life are depreciating and consequently eradicated as time goes on. This among others is implications of embracing development as a whole. Hence, there is decline and decrease in morals and values which are essential factors in the culture of any human society. Development has been the parameter for ascertaining global success.

First, we see development earlier, before the wars and how it affected the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America. These effects can still be seen and heard today. One of the solutions offered by the West to cater for persisting problems in these continents is development; however, it did not bring the expected result. It rather set them back the more and created a gap for exploitation and underdevelopment persisted. (Escobar, 1995). Development therefore became a cover name for various forms of exploitation and dependency. Human and mineral resources are extracted from the developing countries due to the demands of the industrialized world, with this on the high side; developed countries keep up with the pace of development, while the developing countries are dragged behind because the possibilities and opportunities of development are limited.

Raw materials and mineral resources are gotten at a petty cost from developing countries and they are being processed and manufactured into costly goods and services in the developed countries with their enormous intellectual and technical manpower. This makes the rest of the world (third world) more dependent on the developed countries. There is a fixed image the developing and underdeveloped countries have. That portrays them as weak and helps seekers; this is as a result of the level of education, scientific and technological knowledge

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which in turn leads to unavailability of progressive ideas to bring about development. This dependent relationship goes beyond the domineering power of the world powers, but also the exercise of power by their elites.

Escobar discussed three axes of development in underdeveloped countries, they are: forms of knowledge, system of power and forms of subjectivity. These all result in: inequality in income distribution, decline in economic importance of the middle class, difficulty in changing family occupation because of social class's barriers, inadequate income, persistent global hunger and poverty, monopoly of business establishment which exploits employees and the consumers, increase per capital income for developed countries.

Another strategy developed by the West to solve the problems of the Third world (poverty reduction, improved standard of living) which further reinforces their dependency level is establishing organizations such as International Bank of Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank. They enhance the domineering and exploitative motive of the Western world through imposition of solutions that do not synchronize with their economies and living standards. (Escobar, 1995)

In the same vein, the rich are getting richer and the poor even poorer. It is easy to trace the flow of money from the developing countries to the developed countries than to trace the flow of money from the developed to the developing countries. That is why they are still developing ; the persistent yearn for more, increased, better, nicer and advanced approaches by the Third World has put the Developed or First world at the edge and they have proven to be ahead always.

Questions have risen on the way forward from the present situation of the developing countries; only if the developing countries would look inwards and harness the potentials embedded in their cultures and traditions. Escobar gave the instance of "Hybrid of Cultures in Latin America. They managed to blend their culture and that of the West; also, increased local and political representations will help develop the minds of leaders.

The terms like gender equality, sustainability, poverty eradication, and scientific advancement technology expansion are the main themes of this power discourse. The capitalist system has enforced a rigid international division of labor which is responsible for the underdevelopment of many areas of the world. The unequal power relations and the discourse of hegemony shows that economic growth in the advanced industrialized countries does not necessarily lead to growth in the poorer countries (Foucault, 1991). Dependency is a historical condition which has shaped a certain structure of the world economy such that it favors some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economics, a situation in which the economy of a certain group of countries (underdeveloped/developing) is

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conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which their own is subjected developed world.

Sen, 1999 proposed another view and idea of development. He sees development as a means of freedom and opportunities opened to the human society. These freedoms are contributory to the society; he explains that contributory freedom includes: political and social freedom, economic opportunities, transparency, protection and security. Development is not described by the level of income, but the will to exercise freedom by humans at any point in time. Freedom goes through processes and opportunities; the processes are the decisions made on developmental issues, while opportunities are the human abilities to make choices at any point in time.

The term of 'development' invokes the idea of more, better and progress by the Global North yet at the same time they don't want it all in real otherwise the world would have witnessed peripheries becoming semi peripheries and semi-peripheries becoming core but on the contrary the global hungry is ever increasing and the developed countries are getting more developed whereas poor countries are becoming poorer.

The underdeveloped and developing countries are often portrayed as those in the need of help because they lack technology, scientific knowledge, ability to manage and above all they lack innovation. This implies the hierarchy or imperial nature of the core of the world which can be the 'only' help. The development and power discourse enforces these unequal power relations and the hegemony of industrialized world over the global South (Robinson, 2002).

In conclusion, the concept of development is multifaceted and diversified. It is also subjective in nature based on the angle one views it from. For the Western world or First World countries; development is entirely different from the experiences of developing or Third World countries. It then appears that the initial aim of development is to achieve the intent of the West rather than the purposeful aid and solutions to the needs of the Third World.

References:

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