

Rethinking Development co-operation?

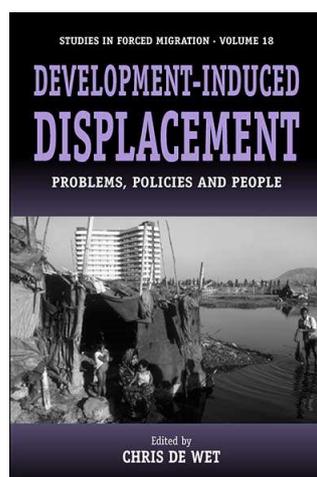
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So, what's the problem?

1) **The effects of development interventions (e.g. infrastructure, dams, mining, large-scale farming) :**

- Displacement of indigenous communities
- Disruption of people's habitats and occupations
- Loss of traditional knowledge
- Environmental destruction
- Landlessness
- Food insecurity
- Cultural/identity uprooting
- Etc.



So, what's the problem?

2) **Focus here:** supporting the consolidation of Northern interests and is legitimized in ways reproduces colonial relations and racist stereotypes

West(North)	Rest(South)
Developed	Underdeveloped
Modern	Traditional/backwards
Democracy	Despotic, authoritarianism
Innovative	Imitative
Active	Passive
Reason	Emotion
Rationality	Irrationality

Focus here: The reproduction of colonial relations and stereotypes

Two, apparently, divergent trends:

An *undoing* of distinctions between a developed North versus an undeveloped South - "factual" and in policy and rhetoric)



A *reproduction* of distinctions between a developed North versus an undeveloped South – reflecting an increasing **marketization**

An undoing of distinctions ("factual")

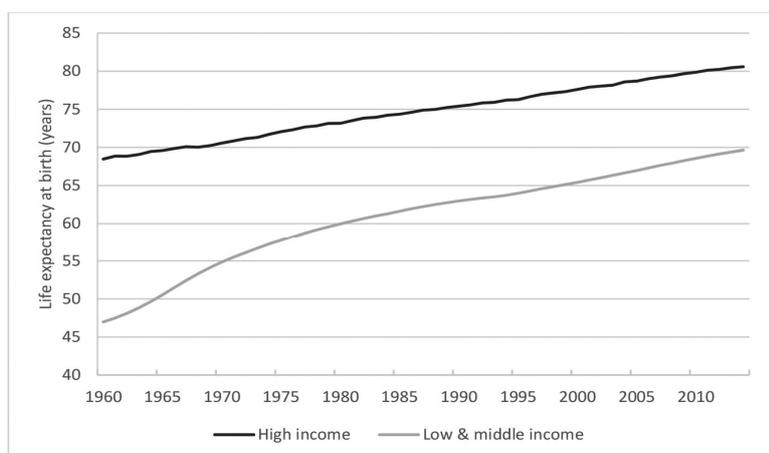
Reflecting recent shifts indicating increasing convergence between North and South:

- GDP growth
- Income levels (growing middle class)
- Life expectancy
- Education
- Decreasing levels of aid dependency
- Increasing inequalities within rather than between countries
- Carbon emissions
- The emergence of new donors

(See, for instance, Horner & Hulme, 2017, From international to global development: new geographies of 21st century development)

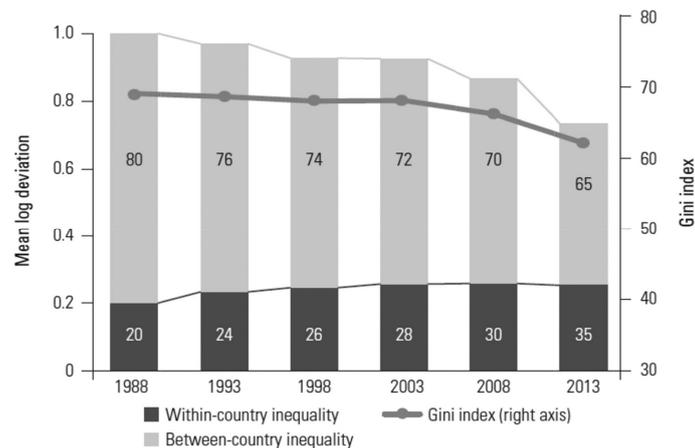
An undoing of distinctions ("factual")

- *Life Expectancy (years), 1960–2014*



An undoing of distinctions ("factual")

- *Global Income Inequality 1988–2013*



The undoing of the distinctions (in policy/discourse)

- **The SDG:s**

*"The framing of development as sustainable development has arguably been a crucial, although not sufficient, step to moving beyond the classic spatial focus of international development. ...the universal frame of reference of the SDGs, agreed in 2015, marks a sharp contrast with the earlier MDG era when the goals, largely set by developed countries, were almost exclusively for developing countries. The process of formulating the SDGs in 2015 was more inclusive of actors from the global South. **The challenge of climate change and environment thus puts considerable emphasis on the global North and on elite populations in terms of where some of the biggest development challenges must be tackled.**"*

(Horner, R., & Hulme, D. (2017). From international to global development: new geographies of 21st century development. *Development and Change*.)

The undoing of the distinctions (in policy/discourse)

'a new world order with a more diffuse distribution of economic power', a 'new geography of growth'
(OECD, 2015a: 3)

the 'rise of the South' (UNDP, 2013)

A 'great convergence' (Baldwin, 2016; Mahbubani, 2013)

World Bank's removal (from 2016) of the classification of developed and developing countries in the World Development Indicators.

The undoing of the distinctions (in policy/discourse)

- In short: What critical development thinkers have called for (abandoning the terms 'Third World' and 'global South') is partly materializing

Yet, critical development thinkers rarely recognize and criticize recent trends/rhetoric:

- overtly optimistic
- masking continued North/South inequalities
- still relies on a capitalist, neo-liberal developmentalist order

Yet, while there is a change - large part of development co-operation trod on in the same (opposite) direction



An increasing reproduction of the Developed(North)/developing(South) distinctions – partly reflecting the increasing marketization of development aid

(see eg. Ponte, S., & Richey, L. 2014)

Marketization of development aid

- Commercial actors *own engagement* in development related projects (partly through CSR)
- An increasing *outsourcing* to commercial actors in development interventions
- Commercial actors *funding*: direct financial contribution and/or sponsoring.

Marketization of development aid

- Yet, also a marketization of traditional development actors (states and NGOs)
- Increasing competition where (supposedly) noncommercial development actors operate with a marketized logic: branding, market shares etc.

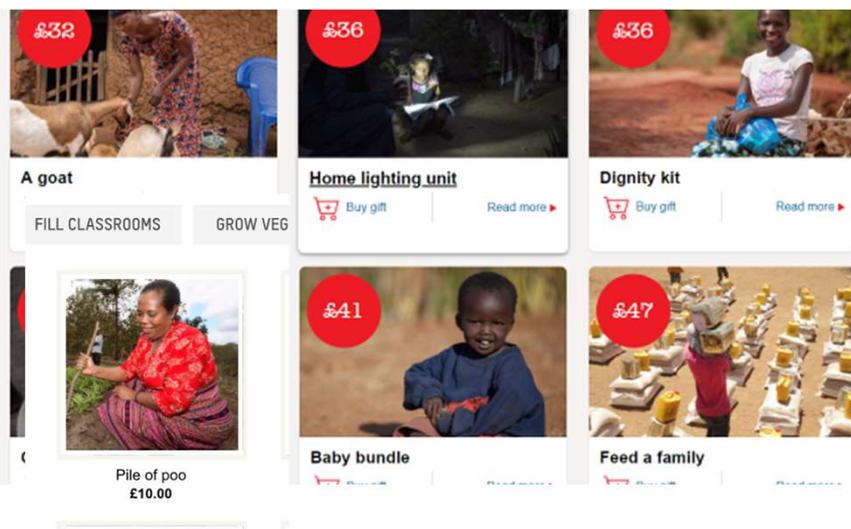
"We (INGOs) are all in the same market and we are all fighting for the same funds."

"In recent years we have increased our market-shares"

"It is obvious that [INGO1] has an advanced organization, working with key figures and indicators, return of invest and so on, there are trained specialist working on that. One can have different opinions regarding it, but the organization is dependent on private funds [...] And the donors look different from before. They want to buy products and services, to save the life of a child costs this and this much. That has nothing to do with the reality, but one adopts the rhetoric and advertisement to society."

"When you look at the organization, how they market themselves and then what they actually do, I believe that one will find huge differences. I think that 60% of the projects are long-time projects ... but that is not sexy and not sellable, so you sell another picture instead"

Increasing reliance on revenue from sales of services and goods (e.g. fictitious goods)



Celebrities



Increased focus on branding and market-shares reproduce the "white savior image"

"well, we know it is an untrue and somehow problematic image, but the simple truth is that it generates more funding"



New gendered images "the girl effect"

- **Tied to marketization ... easy solutions, precious and innocent ... (see eg. Hickel, 2014)**

"Invest in a girl and she'll do the rest", The 'revolution will be led by a 12-year-old girl' (Nike foundation)

"[w]here there's a girl, there's a way' (UN foundation)

"[I]nvesting in women is smart economics, and investing in girls, catching them upstreams, is even smarter economics' (World bank)



International donors

- While relying on tax-payers money, similar trend towards focus on increasing visibility
- Forcing partners to increase visibility



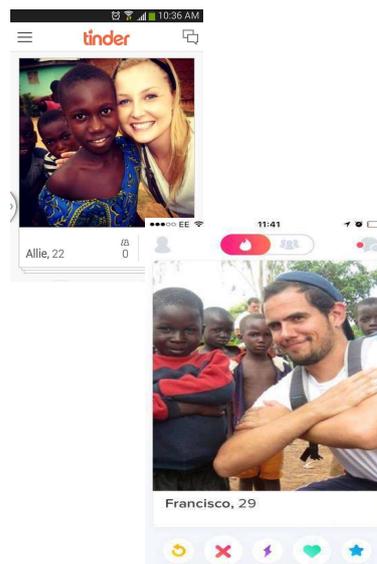
Why problematic?

- Makes 'development' a commodity-transfer, depoliticizing and simplifying development..
- Hide the complexity of poverty and the ways in which market-based solutions often reproduce inequalities and poverty

Why problematic?

- Celebrity charity renders poverty sexy... instrumentalizes the pain of others for (largely) white pleasure (Kapoor 2013; Mason 2016)
- Increasing and commercialization of volunteering
- Humanitarians on Tinder: "the creepiest ticket to laidsville"

<http://humanitariansoftinder.com>



Why problematic?

Reproduces colonial and racist divisions and stereotypes

- Have effects on how development work is conducted (paternalism which undermines “ownership”, “partnership” etc. see Eriksson Baaz 2005)
- But also *reproduces racism in the North*: recreates and uphold various forms of discrimination (schools, labor markets, housing) etc.

Why problematic?

The Girl Effect:

- The dichotomous racialized system is intact (liberated white girls and oppressed brown girls in need of rescue from brown men (see Mohanty, Spivak)
- Responsibility for development – and for undoing the effects of neo-liberal capitalism – is laid on girls (heavy burden ...)
- Instrumentalism, women’s empowerment justified economically: questions of women/girl’s **rights** are relegated to the margins

Why problematic?

A more technocratic consequence:

- Undoes potential for co-ordination between development organizations – with all the problems that entails
- Signs of INGOs co-operating more with commercial actors (compared to other INGOs)

So, rethinking how?

Not advocating post-development:

‘adopting the privilege of being anti-development is not ... politically or morally viable when sitting in an “overdeveloped” social and individual location’. (Fagan 1999: 180)

So, rethinking how?

Need for a fundamental de-marketization of development aid (HUGE challenge...):

- Take responsibility for – and change - the images development cooperation are promoting (through their own channels and media):
- “The end never justifies the means”: poverty and racism cannot be put against each other. Racism creates discrimination, exclusion and poverty.

So, rethinking how?

- Take sustainable development seriously: acknowledge the responsibility of elite populations in the global North.
- Development scholars: stay critical, yet acknowledge changes – otherwise risk overemphasizing the power of the North and (again) attribute passivity and powerlessness to the Global South.

Further readings

- Eriksson, M. B., & Baaz, M. E. (2005). *The paternalism of partnership: A postcolonial reading of identity in development aid*. Zed Books.
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Further Readings

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Thank You!