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Beyond Eurocentrism: International Development and the Success/Failure Binary

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From 'Dead Aid' (Moyo, 2010) to 'Failed Nations' (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) and the 'Bottom Billion' (Collier, 2007): a narrative of failure and doom seems to be omnipresent in Development Studies. However, does this mean that 'Development is a series of failed experiments on the world's poor'? This essay argues that this is not the case, nor can Development be described as a series of 'successes.' Instead, I argue that the question statement's logic and terminology reflect a reductive and Eurocentric understanding of the idea of Development, its practice, and its agents. In other words, it reproduces a conception of the Euro-American global North as a universal marker of 'progress', 'modernity', and the 'universal' as opposed to a regressive global South (Pailey, 2019). A deconstruction of how the statement adopts the socially constructed terms of 'Development,' 'failure,' and 'world's poor' illustrates their varying meanings and destabilises the reductive logic of the question statement. Firstly, 'Development' is a contested signifier that shifts depending on the theoretical approach it is viewed from. This essay will outline three major theories of Development to show how they each socially construct its failure as an issue of implementation, design, or a hidden agenda (Venugopal, 2018). Despite these different understandings of Development, each approach reproduces the Eurocentric idea of Development as an invention and project of the global North. Therefore, the very discourse of its 'failure' in the term 'failed experiments' disregards and reproduces the material conditions and discursive framework of little 'd' development as an unequal relationship between global North and South (Wilson, 2012). Calling for its abandonment as a 'failure' obscures its continuous impact on existing hierarchies and denies the existence of its subjects as already-historical individuals who can have a real and existing desire for development. Finally, the term 'world's poor,' used in line with a Eurocentric perspective of Development theories, further implies monolithic and passive 'objects' as the recipients of Development. This reflects a 'white gaze' of Development that reinforces a dichotomy between global North and South and erases the agency of those deemed to be at the centre of Development. Therefore, rather than claiming Development's 'success,' this essay challenges the reductive position of the question statement by invoking a self-reflexive understanding that builds on a commitment to challenge hegemonic perspectives at its heart and recognise its diverse and contested meanings.

The argument will proceed by outlining how modernisation, human development, and post-development theories define 'Development' and socially construct its failure. Afterwards, I will investigate how 'failure' itself is productive of and obscures hierarchies that reinforce dependency and silence Development's perception beyond the global North. Finally, the essay will show how the statement constructs the 'world's poor' as monolithic and passive, which will be challenged by examples that emphasise the instability of the North/South dichotomy and the denial of agency to the 'poor.' This leads to the consideration of a self-reflexive understanding of Development beyond the binary of success/failure, derived from, rather than imposed upon its agents.

'Development': Three Theories of Failure

'Development', understood as the 'big D' interpretation of "purposive or intentional development" (Venugopal, 2018, p. 240), is employed by different theoretical perspectives with different understandings of its meaning and goals. Due to this protean quality of Development, its success or failure lack an objective criterion and are "notoriously complex to evaluate" (Ibid., p. 239). In effect, Development's main theories socially construct different notions of failure and imply three different arguments in favour of the claim that 'Development is a series of failed experiments on the

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world's poor.'

From the perspective of modernisation theory, societies 'develop' in line with a teleological convergence towards an 'ideal type' (Bhambra, 2007). As Rostow (1960) suggests, Development concerns the progression of nation-states through stages of economic growth from traditional towards mass consumerist societies that share institutions founded on Western-centric Enlightenment ideas, such as the international market, nation-states, and rational bureaucracies (Gilman, 2003; Bhambra, 2007). This process is endogenous to a society and can be triggered through external intervention by promoting foreign aid, investment, and Western-type market economies (Cooper & Packard, 1997). Therefore, Development is linked to the production of knowledge and 'expertise' (Gilman, 2003), which endows its practice with positivist and scientific validity. That is, societies can advance through Development 'experiments' that can produce 'success' as a rational positivist standard in line with the objectively evaluable aim of economic growth. From this perspective, the 'failure' of Development is technical and related to the implementation of its policies and programmes. 'Failed experiments' emerge from interruption by exogenous factors such as corruption and poor management (Venugopal, 2018). In contemporary thought and policy, Bhambra (2007) argues that Development continuously reflects an aspiration for a variation of 'modernity' and 'progress', which signifies the integration into market-based globalisation and its institutions. In effect, frequent and widely read Development Studies literature continues to identify solutions for the implementation of Development and the rectification of technical 'market failures.' For instance, Moyo (2010) argues for a return to free market economics and a reduction of aid, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) see the issue as the lack of 'good' institutions within economies, while the Nobel Prize for Banerjee and Duflo's (2011) use of Randomised Control Trials to alleviate poverty exemplifies the notion that Development requires the implementation of positivist experiments to identify 'successful' interventions.

On the other hand, human development theory offers a definition of Development in which its failure occurs not due to poor implementation but poor design of its projects and policies. In other words, the focus on growth and modernisation reflects a fraught 'theory of change' (Venugopal, 2018). Its failure constitutes the prioritisation of nation-state growth rather than a focus on people's freedoms and capabilities (Stewart et al., 2018). Thus, as Sen (1999) poses, a new 'theory of change' requires the redefinition of growth as a means to an end of Development rather than an end in itself with the aim to prioritise "the improvement of people's lives as the central objective of development" (Stewart, 2019, p. 135). For instance, Stewart (2019) illustrates how a continuous 'design failure' of Development has been the neglect of the environmental dimension of human development, which concerns the advancement of future generations' freedoms. In an analysis of human development's dimensions, the progression of the climate crisis reflects the failure by design to seriously reshape Development as 'green' in its current practice (Ibid.). However, while Stewart's critique outlines a failure of Development's design, other critiques question if this approach proves sufficient to achieve environmental sustainability as opposed to challenging Development as an idea altogether (Escobar, 2015; Hickel, 2021). This leads to the third definition of 'failure' as the overall rejection of Development.

According to post-development theory, 'failure' does not lie in implementation or design but, instead, derives from 'Development' itself, which reflects an oppressive term that has failed in its hidden agenda (Venugopal, 2018). In other words, Development shapes a Foucauldian discourse and a 'regime of truth' that produces knowledge and exercises power over people by defining, managing, and controlling the 'Third World' (Escobar, 1984). Development as a discourse is, therefore, a depoliticising narrative that obscures the hidden agendas that promote the expansion of modern state power (Ferguson, 1994). This discourse and practice are inherently Western as Development's 'regime of truth' post-1945 has served to position the West as 'developed' and progressive as opposed to the non-West as underdeveloped and aspiring to become like the West (Escobar, 1988; Esteva, 2019). Taking Development as a Western construct implies that its failure follows the material and moral decline of Western societies in the face of challenges to US hegemony and the failure to deliver on the promise of global convergence. In other words, Development failed as it has become 'self-defeating' and is rife for replacement and "fresh discoveries" (Sachs, 2019, p. xxxii).

The case of the Green Revolution in Latin America illustrates the insight and limits of this perspective. As Escobar (1988) outlines, the 1970s had seen a growth of the recognition of the 'problem' of hunger through the sub-discipline of Development Economics of Food and Nutrition Planning. The knowledge produced about hunger justified the need

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for programmes and institutions that made possible the expansion of modern state bureaucracy to 'modernise' people termed as 'illiterate peasants' and 'small farmers' (Escobar, 1988, p. 433). Esteva (1996) illustrates how this process ostracised indigenous local knowledge in the case of the Mexican farmer Don Fidel. The farmer drafted an 'agricultural manual' on his knowledge of local agriculture but hesitated with its publication until late in his life in 1988. This was because of the gradual hierarchisation of knowledge by government bodies, favouring formal education and technicians and prioritising 'modern techniques' in line with scientific standards imported from Europe (Esteva, 1996, p. 257). In other words: "How to dare, in the setting prevailing from 1940 on, to publish the Manual? The peasant was no longer a source of knowledge" (Ibid., p. 266). Eventually, following the 1980s Latin American financial crisis, the lack of financing saw a return of local farming to 'traditional' practices of planting maize and prompted the local government to ask Don Fidel for the publication of his manual (Ibid., p. 270). This case illustrates the argument proposed by post-development: Western-driven Development constructs 'superior' knowledge, silences indigenous voices, and damages their economies. Its 'failure' to achieve improvement means that a 'return' to the indigenous and the 'local' is needed (Sachs, 2019). However, in adopting a dichotomy between Western 'Development' and indigenous 'local' knowledge, this argument implies that the 'local' is inherently outside of unequal material structures and that one can return to this romanticised idea outside of global capitalism (Matthews, 2017; Nederveen Pieterse, 2000). This view reflects a Eurocentric view that lacks engagement with the extent to which 'Development' is embedded in unequal material structures that have existed since before 1945 as a world-historical process (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). In effect, the next section turns to an analysis of how the claim of Development's failure obscures the unequal structures that it produces.

'Failure': Sustaining and Reproducing Hierarchies

Failure not only needs to be socially constructed and sustained by the respective Development theories, but Development failure as a narrative has a productive quality itself. As Venugopal notes: "[It] could be said that the narrative of failure has served to reproduce, renew, and sustain development, in the sense that it is success that would make it obsolete" (Venugopal, 2018, p. 245). Referring here to 'little 'd' development' concerns the 'wicked problem' of development (Ibid.), involving the "complex of unequal material relationships and processes which structure engagement between the global South and the global North, as well as the primary discursive framework within which these relationships have been constructed" (Wilson, 2012, p. 4). In effect, the discourse of Development as 'failed experiments' reflects a Eurocentric gaze that obscures the embeddedness of Development in hierarchical dynamics of material extraction and that disregards the subjectivities of those impacted by the failures of Development.

Regarding the first claim, the perspectives of Development as a failure obscure the historical and material processes of extraction and dependency that it is embedded in. In other words, evaluating Development as a failure of technicalities or design de-politicises it to an isolated set of interventions rather than as embedded in a structural process of unequal relations (Ferguson, 1994). Dependency theory illustrates the structural nature of persistent underdevelopment within the South as a historical product of extractive relations between satellite states and the metropolitan core of the global capitalist system (Frank, 1966). Thus, underdevelopment is not only a 'discursive fact' as implied by the post-development hidden agenda failure. It is a material reality that "has been historically and structurally produced" (Kvangraven, 2021, p. 6) and reinforces imperial relations and social practices between classes and states (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979). Chang (2003) provides an example of how Development policies have been reproducing the inequalities described by the dependency critique. In a history of economic development, he outlines how the development of European countries favoured infant industry protection policies to build manufacturing capacity until free trade would be possible between similarly industrialised nation-states. In contrast, Chang outlines how the 'good' Development policies promoted through structural adjustment emphasised "restrictive macroeconomic policy, liberalization of international trade and investment, privatization and deregulation" (Chang, 2003, p. 1). Yet, these policies led to economic stagnation between 1980-98 and delivered poorer growth than the 'bad' protectionist policies. The wider social consequences of structural adjustment policies on increasing inequalities, rising poverty and unemployment, as well as debt conditionalities (Stewart, et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019) support the claim that Development policies served to 'kick away the ladder' of southern countries in the name of progress (Chang, 2003). This reinforcement of inequalities between North and South adds to what Venugopal (2018) terms 'profitable failure', as Development served 'vested national interests' (Chang, 2003) rather than providing a

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more systemic challenge to North-South relations.

Furthermore, by the same logic that Development is structurally embedded in unequal material relations between underdeveloped and developed, its discursive framework shapes subjects that are already-historically embedded in capitalist power relations. In effect, Development reproduces subjectivities, which are shaped by their embeddedness in unequal relations and may already have real desires for Development. Hence, declaring its failure as a 'self-defeating' concept (Sachs, 2019) implies that its recipients are passive objects that are tricked by a 'false consciousness' (Matthews, 2017). Ferguson (1999) shows the impact of the perceived failure of Development as a process of Western-inspired modernisation in an ethnographic study of the Zambian Copperbelt region. The country initially experienced rapid industrialisation and urbanisation due to copper mining after independence in 1969, which created a sense of a "teleological process, a movement toward a known end point that would be nothing less than a Western-style industrial modernity" (Ferguson, 1999, p. 5). However, the celebrated ascension of Zambia to a modernising middle-income country was followed by a steep economic decline from 1974, following a collapse of copper prices and the subsequent growth of Zambian debt to the IMF and World Bank. The associated structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 90s reinforced a process of 'counter-urbanisation' and 'de-industrialisation' of Copperbelt towns (Ibid., p. 11). Beyond this material failure of Development and structural adjustment, Ferguson shows that former mine workers experienced this decline as a form of ejection from modernity, accompanied by "an overwhelming sense of decline and despair" (Ibid., p. 12). While the process of industrialisation had created a "certain ethos of hopefulness, self-respect, and optimism" (Ibid., p. 12), the decline created a sense of betrayal among former miners, described as a "world-shattering life experience" (Ibid., p. 14). Even though the sense of betrayal confirms the perception of the idea of Development as a failure on behalf of the miners, the 'end of development' did not remove the desire for it. One of Ferguson's informants, Mr Mukande, illustrates this point. As a former mine worker who had enjoyed a cosmopolitan lifestyle, he was forced to live his retirement in a village due to lack of means. When asked by Ferguson if he would not like to move to a village with 'traditional' ways of life, he countered Ferguson's question: "Would you like to do that?" (Ferguson, 1999, p. 129). This exclamation shows how the call for the abandonment of Development omits that its recipients are coeval, already-historical subjects that are impacted by real material structures of global capitalism and are always-already shaped by ideas of modernity as a world-historical process (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). Ferguson emphasises that the failure of the Development project meant that Zambians were disconnected, rather than unconnected, from the global economy (Ibid., p. 238). In effect, implying that the failure of Development should lead to its abandonment reflects a Eurocentric bias that silences the individuals at its centre and naturalises the material structures in which Development is embedded. In the next section, the argument will further investigate those at its centre through the construction of the term 'world's poor' as the recipients of Development.

The 'World's Poor': Destabilising Development's 'White Gaze'

The final part of the statement that 'Development is a series of failed experiments on the world's poor' implies a reductive view of who is encompassed within this group. Given the outlined Eurocentrism of the understanding of Development as a failure, the term 'world's poor' in the statement's logic reproduces a hierarchical view of the global South constituted of passive recipients rather than agents who co-constitute Development's discourse and practice. This position reproduces a racialised 'white gaze' of Development which takes whiteness as "the primary referent of power, prestige and progress around the world" (Pailey, 2019, p. 733). This gaze is based on the social construction of the global North and South as artificially fixed and racialised entities with opposite characteristics. These follow Western enlightenment thought that associates the North with universality, modernity, knowledge, agency and complexity in contrast to the South which represents particularity, tradition, exoticism, simplicity and passivity (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). The South here is constructed as a territorial 'object' of difference (Sud & Sanchez-Ancochea, 2022) which offers "reservoirs of raw fact" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012, p. 1). The North, on the other hand, is the subject which has the power to produce knowledge and act upon it. In effect, Development has been the continuous production of knowledge that fixes the 'Third World' as 'underdeveloped' in relation to the North while justifying a set of interventions in the name of Development (Escobar, 1988). 'Poverty' as a postcolonial 'discovery' is, therefore, depoliticised from its structural colonial roots (Biccum, 2002). In this context, the terms employed in the question statement serve as a 'reductive repetition' (Andreasson, 2006) that reiterates the South as the 'world's poor', the inferior 'other', subject to 'failed experiments' from the North.

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Wilson (2012) illustrates the historical roots of how colonial racism accompanied early developmentalist ideas in shaping definitions of the South as a racially inferior 'object' whose poverty needed to be 'managed'. European growth based on colonial extraction created a "material and embodied difference" (Wilson, 2012, p. 17) to the South, which was expressed in the undernutrition of southern colonial subjects. In this context, the construction of the South as 'poor' served to depoliticise poverty from being the consequence of imperialism to being "products of innate inertia and passivity of the colonised" (Ibid., p. 17). Wilson outlines the Indian uprising of 1857 as an example that led to the consolidation of such ideas. Despite reflecting a socially diverse resistance to imperialist extraction, the uprising was interpreted in line with racialised binaries. In its aftermath, it led to a proliferation of constructions of India as a society "insuperably divided along religious, ethnic and caste lines, drawing upon specific and selective interpretations of the region's history, cultures and social practices" (Ibid., p. 23). The uprising was described in the North as a 'mutiny' orchestrated by a small group of, mostly Muslim, elites who controlled a society of passive subjects rather than a resistance to the imperial project itself (Wilson, 2012; Chowdhury, 2014). This narrative served to construct the colonial subjects as apolitical, criminal, and 'savage' (Chowdhury, 2014). In effect, instead of questioning the empire, the uprising led to its expansion as well as the proliferation of the developmentalist idea of colonial 'trusteeship' to 'manage' racially inferior subjects whose poverty is naturalised rather than put in context with the imperial reality (Wilson, 2012). This case illustrates how the construction of 'poverty' in the South has a history of reproducing a depoliticised narrative of the South as passive and regressive, which prevents a questioning of existing material and racial hierarchies.

Conversely, the 'white gaze' that underlies the notion of the 'world's poor' as the target of Development is destabilised when considering the 'poor' within societies of the North. Bratman (2011) illustrates the Eurocentric bias in the construction of the South as 'poor' by applying the 'objective' criteria of Development interventions to the city of Washington, DC. By defining the 'Third World' not spatially, but through socio-economic characteristics of "disenfranchisement, socioeconomic inequality, and environmental health issues" (Bratman, 2011, p. 1541) Bratman finds DC to be a paradox. Despite being a centre of the 'First World' and its Development organisations, the city represents the failure of "development scholars and practitioners to engage in nuanced understandings of development problems and to engage in reflexive development practice" (Ibid., p. 1542). The study finds not only prevalent issues along the identified four axes of 'third worldality' within DC's urban landscape, but also identifies severe racial inequalities such as in unemployment, life expectancy, and exposure to air pollution (Ibid., p. 1548). Bratman illustrates that Development has not historically been about 'all' of the 'world's poor.' Hence, constructing Development as a failed experiment confined to the 'world's poor' in the South reflects another epistemic violence of Development's 'white gaze': by omitting the 'poor' in the North, Development as a unidirectional experiment centres whiteness as the 'developed' universal point of reference while disregarding the global "geographies of subalternity" (Bratman, 2011, p. 1542) by failing to consider similar material conditions outside of the constructed space of the South.

Moreover, as Development's 'white gaze' posits agency within the North and passivity among the 'world's poor,' destabilising this perspective means questioning the unidirectionality of 'Development' as a practice. Therefore, counteracting the homogenisation of the 'world's poor' as passive objects of experiments requires the consideration of the South as an agent, as a political subject (Sud & Sanchez-Ancochea, 2022), that shapes and contests the meaning and practice of Development. Li (2007) illustrates this point in an analysis of 1965-98 'New Order' resettlement schemes in Indonesia. As a continuation of early 20th-century Dutch colonial policies, the resettlement schemes by the Department of Social Affairs (Depsos) relocated nomadic, highland and village populations as a mission to 'develop' remote populations. Depsos replaced previous colonial racial divides with a "label for deficient hill farmers, masyarakat terasing, [which] meant 'isolated' or 'estranged people'" (Li, 2007, p. 79). In the words of government officials, 'estranged people' became targets of developmental governmentality as they would "lessen the successful image of national development" (Li, 2007, p. 79). However, rather than being a homogenising force, this intervention produced a myriad of responses. As Li outlines, some informants were disinterested in the underlying narrative, they were "not much concerned about or even aware of the program's civilizing rationale. Many regarded it rather as a straightforward resettlement scheme that provided 'free' land and houses" (Li, 2007, p. 91). Other subjects of the programme were critical, rather than depoliticised or passive: "They [the informants] were insulted by the label Masyarakat terasing but were more concerned about the way it positioned them as subjects without rights [...]. It did not make them abject or depoliticized. Rather, it awakened their critical sensibilities" (Ibid., p. 91).

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Meanwhile, Li found others to share the underlying rationale of improvement (Ibid., p. 91) as opposed to others who decided to resist actively. As one informant noted: “We keep on being chased out. We were chased out of the hills, we come here and they chase us out again. They just chase us hill people left and right. I’m tired of being chased about. It is better to stay and fight” (Ibid., p. 93). This case shows that the recipients of Development do not constitute a passive monolith at the receiving end of experiments. Instead, Development can be simultaneously chosen, desired, and contested. Rather than being a ‘regime of truth’ or a ‘discursive fact’ that is diffused and imposed onto the ‘world’s poor,’ it is a locally negotiated “part of the postcolonial predicament” (Yarrow in Mosse, 2013, p. 231). Hence, since the ‘world’s poor’ constitute agents that shape Development discourse and practice, this suggests that Development needs to be observed from beyond its Eurocentric gaze.

Development Beyond a Eurocentric Gaze

Even though Development is neither a ‘series of failed experiments on the world’s poor’ nor a ‘success,’ it should not be abandoned as a term altogether. Rather than seeking to ‘decolonise minds’ and seek ‘alternatives to’ Development, the term itself needs to be decolonised to take seriously its meanings and practices beyond its Eurocentric hegemonic expressions (Matthews, 2017; Nederveen Pieterse, 2000). This includes recognising the fundamental epistemic violence by Development’s epistemology that prioritises Western knowledge as ‘theory’ while invalidating non-Western ways of knowing and practising Development as either as ‘data’ or as romanticised ‘stories’ (Briggs & Sharp, 2004; Kapoor, 2004). Merely incorporating indigenous knowledge to ‘improve’ technical inputs of Development projects reproduces this existing hegemonic structure. Instead, a self-reflexive approach to Development that allows for the engagement with fundamental challenges and “other ways of perceiving development” (Briggs & Sharp, 2004, p. 661) offers an alternative to conceiving it as unidirectional, scientific experiments. This approach requires the recognition that there is no “simple process of addition of a variety of knowledges to produce a better way of knowing” (Ibid., p. 666). Instead, Development’s epistemology needs to be decentred from Western scientific methods, institutions, and languages that have denied the variety of expressions of development as a dynamic political practice that is spatially and historically embedded in a given context (Mosse, 2013).

For instance, Temin’s (2022) identification of an ‘anticolonial developmentalism’ through the work of Walter Rodney provides an example of a different perception of Development. Defining developmentalism as “the idea that progress entails the temporal movement of societies along a universal trajectory” (Temin, 2022, p. 235), Temin outlines how developmentalism was both central to the language of anticolonialism and, at the same time, was shaped by anticolonial practices (Ibid., p. 235). One example is the practice of ‘grounding’ that Rodney engaged in with the Rastafari community in Jamaica in the late 1960s as part of building the Caribbean Black Power movement. This was conceived as “a radically democratic intellectual practice” (Ibid., p. 242) in the form “of meeting that breaks ... constructed barriers of race, class, and education” (Rodney in Temin, 2022, p. 242). In the context of what Rodney described as ongoing neocolonial white supremacy of the Jamaican state through “state-sanctioned Black dispossession [...], police harassment and repression of poor Rastafari communities, and widespread unemployment and consequence out-migration” (Ibid., p. 242), Rodney’s anticolonial developmentalism involved the constructive aspect of mobilising mass agency and engaging in ‘reflective inheritance’. In other words, the exercise of recognising and challenging the ‘uneven and combined development’ launched by the slave trade and its disruption of the trajectories of postcolonial societies. In consequence, Rodney’s developmentalism sought “a way of reinheriting and reigniting the progressive movement of colonized peoples’ histories” (Ibid., 236). This illustrates an alternative view on Development which, although accepting a premise of Development as a form of progress, seeks to emancipate from its hegemonic Eurocentric understanding, centres agency on the marginalised, and has the ambition of a fundamental challenge to the contemporary world order. Development from this perspective is expressed in Rodney’s thought as well as in the localised practice of ‘grounding’ as an emancipatory challenge to established meanings. While this example cannot offer a holistic or universal account of the inherently limited possibility of engaging ‘subaltern’ indigenous voices (Kapoor, 2004), it offers an illustration of Development as inherently multidimensional, contested, and historically and spatially embedded.

Conclusion

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This essay has shown that the claim that 'Development is a series of failed experiments on the world's poor' reflects a reductive position which reproduces a Eurocentric notion of Development, its practice, and its agents. Instead of proposing Development as a series of 'successes,' I have shown that the key terms of the statement are themselves subject to contestation and deconstruction. While Development can be understood as a failure from the theoretical perspectives of modernisation, human development, and post-development theories, these claims omit that failure itself is socially constructed from a Eurocentric position. Instead, this essay has outlined how the discourse of Development's failure is itself productive and serves to obscure its embeddedness in development as a material structure of unequal relations and dependencies. In addition, Development and its failure were shown to reproduce already-historical subjectivities that can have a real desire for Development. Thus, the call of the post-development argument to abandon the concept as a failed term altogether was shown to deny this desire as a mere 'false consciousness' while disregarding the world-historical processes that Development forms part of. This led the essay to an investigation of how the term 'world's poor' within the question statement reflects a 'white gaze' of Development that fixes the South as a passive 'object' of Development's experiments. This essay has destabilised this notion by illustrating the agency of the 'world's poor' in shaping Development in myriad ways, such as through its simultaneous acceptance and contestation. This led to the final call for a self-reflexive approach of decolonising the term of Development itself to enable an understanding beyond a Eurocentric view and epistemology. Even though engaging different forms of knowledge encounters the challenge of representing subaltern voices, Walter Rodney's developmentalism provided an instance of challenging existing hegemonic representations of Development.

This essay offers an implication for Development theory and practice as debates such as the degrowth research agenda continue the contestation of the meanings and purpose of Development (Hickel, 2021; Escobar, 2015). In order to prevent a reproduction of narratives about Development's failure, this essay suggests that such approaches will benefit from the engagement with alternative ways of knowing and perceiving Development (see Nirmal & Rocheleau, 2019). Therefore, adopting a self-reflexive and decolonial approach in the production of new knowledge about the meanings of Development will be central to avoiding the reproduction of the underlying Eurocentrism of the claim that 'Development is a series of failed experiments on the world's poor.'

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