

ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

CSPH7010

LECTURE FIVE

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

STUDY EXERCISES

Exercise 1

Consider the following extracts on development and answer the related questions.

a. UN Declaration on the Right to Development (1986):

‘Development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all its inhabitants on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the resulting benefits therefrom’ (Preamble, Para.2, quoted by Dower, 1998, pp. 152-53).

Nigel Dower claims that ‘This is a rich ‘definition’ in many ways, though lacking perhaps because it has no reference to the priority of poverty-reduction or to environmental constraints’ (1998, p.153).

- *How adequate is this definition of development?*
- *Do you agree with Dower?*
- *Note that definitions ought not to include the term being defined in the definition itself. Try re-expressing the UN definition so as to avoid this deficiency.*

b. Harry Truman’s speech (1949):

‘We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development, based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing’ (quoted by Esteva, 1992, p.6).

Esteva: a critic of development:

‘By using for the first time in such a context the word ‘undeveloped’, Truman changed the meaning of development and created an emblem, a euphemism, used ever since to allude either discreetly or inadvertently to the era of American hegemony... A political and philosophical proposition of Marx, packaged American-style as a struggle against communism and at the service of the hegemonic design of the United States, succeeded in permeating both the popular and the intellectual mind for the rest of the century’ (Esteva, 1992, pp.6-7).

- *Can we agree with Esteva without rejecting the entire concept of development?*

c. Vandana Shiva: another critic

‘The UN Decade for Women was based on the assumption that the improvement of women’s economic position would automatically flow from an expansion and diffusion of the development process. Yet, by the end of the Decade, it was becoming clear that development itself was the problem. Insufficient and inadequate, ‘participation’ in ‘development’ was not the cause for women’s increasing under-development; it was rather, their enforced but asymmetric participation in it, by which they bore the costs but were excluded from the benefits, that was responsible’ (Shiva, 1988, p.2).

Note how Shiva uses the term ‘under-development’ without quotation marks in order to express her criticism of development; what she is against is imposed, patriarchal development, not moves away from underdevelopment.

- *In what way(s) might some forms of development be seen as patriarchal?*

d. Robert Garner

‘For most... a quick glance at the gap between North and South is enough to appreciate the inevitability and desirability of Third World development... At present the developed world utilises about 70 per cent of the world’s energy supplies and yet constitutes only about 5 per cent of the world population... But if development is inevitable, it is also desirable to alleviate the poverty and deprivation many peoples of the developing countries endure’ (Garner, 1996, p.125).

- *Do you agree with Garner?*
- *What might genuine development involve in practice?*

Exercise 2

Consider the following questions on sustainable development:

- *What would a world of sustainable development be like?*
- *Is sustainable development a coherent goal?*
- *In light of the current environmental crisis, is sustainable development a much needed concept?*
- *Should nonhuman beings be taken into account in sustainable development policies? Or should we adopt anthropocentric sustainable development policies?*
- *Does Herman Daly supply a clear alternative to Wilfred Beckerman's conception of strong sustainability?*