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To cite this article: Tony Fry (2005) Design, Design Development and Questions of Direction, Design Philosophy Papers, 3:4, 265-281

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/144871305X13966254125030>



Published online: 29 Apr 2015.



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Design, Design Development and Questions of Direction

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As the dynamic of globalisation intensifies the reach of a western model of design, more and more designers and design thinkers around the world are becoming concerned about the relation between design and development. The emergence of this concern is to be welcomed, but at the same time, there are serious deficiencies in the way the issue is being approached, this mainly due to a lack of historical perspective. Specifically, the debate is not being sufficiently informed by the history of the critique of development and 'sustainable development' nor by the even longer standing critique of modernity (and the critique of globalisation it implies). The intent of this essay is to go some way toward redressing this absence.

From the outset, we need to acknowledge that the word 'development' has become vacuous. It is constantly mobilised with politically loaded ideological assumptions, and certainly cannot be taken to name a coherent or neutral process. It is not always even inherently desirable.

Of course, the concern with 'design and development' is not based upon a unified position; rather it embraces a range of dispositions and mostly un-negotiated

contradictions that span interests as diverse as: design in the service of humanitarian aid; national through to micro economic advancement; locally based professional and design industry development; and community development. In such settings, design is once more positioned as a handmaiden of uncritical instrumentalism (design for ...). The adoption of this service relation (be it broadly or narrowly defined), transposed to the larger field of development, strands design in a condition of dependence upon the ethics of that which it serves. Design leadership cannot occur without a rupture from this sensibility of subordination.

The case to be made fundamentally requires rejecting the widespread, but wrongheaded, view held by much of the design community that design theory is essentially about, and exists for, the illumination and advancement of design practice. Design theory has to be about much more than this. Rather than its *raison d'être* being the servicing of a service industry, it has to be about what design is, and can become, within the material and immaterial worlds that are constituted and transformed by design.

Design for Development

The notion of design in support of (world) development has been around for a long time. It was inherent in E.F. Schumacher's applied economic theory that institutionalised appropriate technical transfer via the formation of the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) in the 1960s (Dickson: 1974). Likewise, it was a significant part of Victor Papanek's thinking when he wrote *Design for the Real World* (1971).

During this period, some designers were attached to mainstream developmentalism - a position that postulated that 'underdeveloped countries' imitate the industrialisation of 'developed nations', but in an accelerated form. This perspective on development was underpinned by modernisation theory, promoted by the UN and epitomised in W.W. Rostow's reductive, Eurocentric, and now completely discredited, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960). Another position asserted that there was an alternative path that would avoid the pitfalls of rapid industrialisation. This was based upon the idea of introducing less complex and capital intensive technologies that could be more easily integrated into local economies and culture. Both approaches had their foundation in western technical rationalism, and both posited a faith in technology as a means to instrumentally or economically solve problems. Thus, both were blind to the problems created by the introduction of technologies such as: the displacement of local economies and the cultures they sustained; changing the symbolic status of craft skills and the people who possessed them. So, while the means adopted by the approaches differed, and they progressed at different speeds, the result sought (the induction of the local economy into global order of capital) turns out to be the same.

Alongside the rise of the ‘development process’ and ‘development studies’¹, a major critique of development discourse and its designation of the condition of ‘underdevelopment’, emerged. This critique was heavily inflected by Marxist methodology. Notwithstanding the demise of Marxism as a political ideology, economic and social system, or as a theory of history, it did deliver a very powerful analysis that still requires engagement if we are to understand the nature of newly industrialising, still non-industrialised and neo-dysfunctional nations.² Despite its unfashionability, much can still be learned from past and present Marxist critique (e.g. Amin, 1976, Hardt & Negri: 2000). Equally, it is also worthwhile taking cognisance of what historical and cultural anthropology tells us about development (e.g., Sahlins: 2005).

To adequately identify what the appropriate relations between design and development should be, we have to initially defer a discussion of design’s association with development. We must first focus on development and the development process. Unless we do this, design will simply trade on unquestioned assumptions and subordinate itself to an agenda as a blind functionary. The motives of designers of good intent ‘in the field’ who act without having a theoretically informed critique of development in their heads are not challenged. What is in doubt, what is more problematic, is that good intentions do not necessarily lead to beneficial consequences. The immediate results of design actions are often not a good indicator of longer-term world-formative consequences. Objects of function are always also objects that express or frustrate desire – practical solutions thus are never totally contained by practicality (Leiss: 1978).

Development: Space, Time and Discourse

The arrival of the development discourse is usually associated with the immediate post World War Two moment which saw European decolonisation; the rise of modernisation theory; the formation of the United Nations and the rapid growth of its membership as newly independent nations joined.

We should remind ourselves that this moment arrived in the wake, and stood on the ground, of centuries of violent destruction of environments, populations and cultures by the competing European capitalist powers operating on a global scale. In this respect, it is almost impossible to separate the discourse of development from the longstanding objectives of these powers: imperial expansion and the extension of capitalism’s ability to appropriate natural resources, exploit labour and expand markets – all of this being assisted by technologies created during or amplified by, the industrial revolution.

The genocidal, ecocidal and ethnocidal horror of modern colonialism is almost beyond our imagination (Clastres: 1994). Overt genocide enacted by direct violence was both intentionally and

accidentally supplemented by introduced diseases and neglect. So often colonisers designated the other as sub-human, disregarded their social structures, cultures, ways of being-in-the-world, means of sustenance and how they constituted their geographic habitus. While colonialism ended the life of countless millions of people, its brutality damaged the living and their cultures, even more across the generations. Humanity has never really recovered from this moment – the lingering pain continues to shape geo-politics. The fragmentation of populations, and the artificial construction of nation states (especially inscribed in the straight lines of the borders of many African nations) that accompanied it, still massively inflects international relations and the psychologies of large numbers of the world's population. The imposition of 'civilisation' by savage means has never really been confronted as a contradiction. It is not a matter of amassing historically accumulative guilt, but of measuring consequences, accepting responsibility and recompense.

Although the history of colonialism is vast, complex, and at times ambiguous, the essential point is that so much of 'the to be developed' stood surrounded by the physical, cultural and emotional wreckage of colonial destruction from the distant and not-so-distant past. To acknowledge this is to temper the claim that development was about bringing the advantages and 'progress' of the modern to the 'underdeveloped' – a claim riven with contradictions. The humanitarian (e.g., the aid sector) was inflected by a strong strain of 'soft-modernisation' – they wished to ease their 'client groups' into modernity (but frequently ended-up just relieving suffering). In contrast, the objective of more aggressive change agents, the wealthy nations, both individually or via the UN, was to expand the global marketplace and dump goods, while continuing to acquire cheap 'natural resources' and labour. 'Development' was conflated with 'economic development', and the assumption was that the quality of people's lives would be an automatic consequence. This determinism, which was ideological, became inscribed into development thinking early on. While its accuracy is challenged by what has transpired, i.e., the emergence within 'developing nations' of a new cosmopolitan middle class (with international tastes in food, music, clothes, architecture, cars etc) along with a new dispossessed underclass, such thinking remains firmly in place, as is evident in the pro-globalisation lobby. The contradictory nature of this situation is not seen by those, across all shades of politics, with a misplaced faith in economic determinism. What this reveals is a restricted vision of the nature of exchange.³

While such characterisations beg considerable elaboration, the sketch given marks 'development' as a mechanism of transference from political force and economic dominance to more sophisticated market mechanisms of power based on unequal exchange (the most overt example being the structuring of indebtedness) and cultural forms and institutions (not least education and modern

media) that now function in a complexity well beyond any reductive notions of 'cultural imperialism'.

As the 'development' discourse developed, the most politically critical view of the process was projected as a move from colonialism to neo-colonialism. Notwithstanding the problem of often paradoxical socio-historical changes being crudely framed by rhetorically sweeping categorisation, one should not underestimate the degree to which this 'post-colonial' moment was appropriated by the ideological power blocs of capitalism and communism. This can be seen at its most extreme through surrogate wars conducted between the cold war powers (e.g., Korea, Angola, Vietnam, Nicaragua), and also in the construction of 'showcase' political and economic 'ideological state' projects (e.g., Tanzania, Cuba, Singapore).

The spatio-political geography that constituted at the moment of the formation of the development discourse was the division of the world into four segments: the First (industrialised and capitalist); the Second (the communist bloc); the Third (the underdeveloped nations); and, the Fourth (all residual pre-modern and dispossessed peoples). This was layered onto a political geography that mirrored the way colonial powers simply defined nations and national boundaries by drawing lines on maps. Although there were significant political implications in how the powerful defined the geo-political placement of the powerless, it also had profound designing implication on how 'the world' was imagined, thought and generally seen.

Alongside the rise of development theory and rhetoric, there was an accompanying humanitarian- inspired shift towards the notion of 'human development'. Created out of liberal humanism and welfare economics (especially, from the mid/late 1980s, associated with thinkers like Amartya Sen and voiced by UNDP Human Development Reports) it started to inflict many practical, pragmatic and instrumentalised processes across numerous areas of activity – rural development, industrial development, demographic study, natural resource utilisation, labour market management, health, women's participation in the economy, and so on. Effectively, for the last decade and a half, a humanist a 'soft edge' concept of development has co-existed with a 'hard edge' market-driven model. This division is mirrored in a pluralist concept of globalisation, which at one extreme was indivisible from Sen's constantly growing community of communication and at the other, from the unrestrained technocentric neo-liberal free trade of the contemporary flat-earththers.⁴

UN led development has been contradictory in its attempts to reconcile economic objectives, international security, human emancipation and humanitarian aid. Without attempting a comprehensive review, a few more obvious observations on its contradictions are in order – on the one hand, leaving aside the

horrors of its internal politics, rhetorical gesturalism and corruption, and on the hand, fully acknowledging that notwithstanding its massive flaws it has made a positive difference to the lives of an enormous number of people.

Many World Health Organisation (WHO) health programs have been significant in eradicating disease and improving public health, yet they have lacked the economic muscle to cope with the spread and severity of HIV/AIDS. Likewise, action in agriculture (in particular during the 1970s when the 'green revolution' was most aggressively promoted) was at best a mixed bag and at worst a disaster. The same judgement can be applied to education. This is seen in attempts to overcome illiteracy (a project outpaced by the growth in the world population). Within this context, we find the contradiction of UNESCO-created functional literacy programs (which aimed to provide sufficient literacy for, e.g., farmers to be able to read a tractor operation and maintenance manual) and the program directed at the production of 'cultivated readers'. More recently, a UNEP promotion of alternative technologies has flowed into a broader range of environmental actions. Yet just as the United Nations' ability to deal with destruction associated with international conflicts has been extremely limited, so equally has been its ability to halt the large scale decimation of environments around the world, including vast tracts of rainforests. The records of the World Bank and the UN Security Council are less ambiguous. In spite of recent liberalisation, the World Bank's role in 'debt induction' was a massive anti-development action that created an enormous amount of human suffering. Similarly, the UN's record in the prevention of conflict and genocide has been abysmal.

If there is an overall judgement, it is that the UN has played a major role in making the extent of the global inequity of humanity evident, but has lacked the support, philosophy, nous and political aggression to do what it should.

The 'Logics' of Development

The dominant 'logic' of development, as already touched on, has rested with the proposition that human destiny was to be advanced simply by: increasing productive and consumptive capacity; competitive entry into the global market system; and the improvement of people's standard of living. Increasingly, as we shall see, the flaws in this proposition have become apparent. But before doing so, three of the fundamental assumptions of 'the development process' require interrogation.

The first assumption is that somehow 'development' is a response to 'underdevelopment'.

The error of this view has been exposed by many commentators, none more cogently than André Gunder Frank, via his 'development of underdevelopment' thesis in the late 1960s (Gunder Frank: 1969).

Gunder Frank demonstrated the fallacy of both conservative and Marxist theories of history – theories that dominated development thinking. The key flaw of these notions of history was that humanity progressed in stages, with the modern world and advanced capitalism being the latest moment. Gunder Frank made clear that underdevelopment was, and is, not a prior social, economic, cultural or political structural condition evident in particular countries. These countries were regarded by Gunder Frank as never *underdeveloped*, although they may well have been *undeveloped*. What he showed was that the condition of underdevelopment was designated by developed nations in the formation of the discourse – that is the theory, rhetoric and practice – of development. Moreover, he showed that intervention in ‘undeveloped’ nations, who were classified in need of development (thus underdeveloped), did not lead necessarily to a general condition of development, but to the formation of new elites, social and economic divisions and inequalities (Gunder Frank: 1970). What he was actually identifying was the condition of uneven development that is now well entrenched in many nations.

We find the second assumption by merely moving our focus on the same conditions.

Development has been shown to have operated with an asymmetrical geometry – two deflective forces have received considerable attention: the construction of dependence (which means the ‘conditioning situation’ coming from the economy of one country being interlocked with that of others), and uneven development (as indicated, a product of installing what effectively become enduring structural inequalities).⁵

Assumption three is that modernity (cultural, economic and political), and by implication development, necessitates the erasure of the past. This was and is nowhere more evident than in China. A war on the past has been waged in China for over a century and a half – it is worth briefly outlining this.

The impetus to modernise China came from two sources: the humiliations resulting from the nation’s conflicts with European powers during the Opium Wars, not least the foreign occupation of Beijing in 1860; and the horrendous internal rebellions of the 1850s and 60s. The most devastating event was the Taiping rebellion waged by armed peasant groups and secret societies against the Qing regime. The rebellion lasted twenty years and cost between twenty and thirty million lives. Not only did the conflict cost more lives than any other civil war before or since, but it also tragically coincided with a period of drought and famine in which another thirty million people perished. The Qing government never recovered from these events and their power was displaced by the rise of the *Han* elite. At its most basic, the rebellion was a conflict over China either returning to values of the past or moving forward towards modernity.

By 1864 the rebellion was spent, but the nation, especially the educated classes, had been shaken to their core. The conflict of ideas, together with catastrophic wars, had enormous and tragic consequences for China – well beyond the numbers of lives lost. China's self-image and modern political history cannot actually be separated from this period of national trauma.

Mao Zedong's 'cultural revolution' of the mid and late 1960s was another massive assault on the past. It was based on the view that the cultural values and practices of the past blocked the way to the future and on Mao's notion that "the suppression of the old by the new is a general, eternal and inviolable law of the universe" (Liang Congjie 1996: 254). This was followed by Dao Xiaoping's transposition of the same disposition into the economic sphere, as encapsulated by his 'one nation, two systems' policy.

A linear view of historical change and faith in economic determinism are still alive and well in the present, being very much a part of the intellectual baggage of globalisation advocates like journalist Thomas Friedman and theorists such as Jagdish Baghwati, a Columbia University professor of economics.

Friedman names three stages of the development of Globalisation – in *The World is Flat* (2004) and his earlier book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (1999). His thinking is very much in the mould of Rostow's anti-Marxist 'stages of economic growth'. Friedman posits an enormous faith in the developmental designing power of technology, especially information technology, which he regards as a key driver of 'progress' towards 'one world'. Its ambiguity and defuturing qualities go by the board. His focus on immaterial technologies neglects a whole series of 'world-shaping' factors, including: the geo-politics of material resource supply; anthropogenically driven environmental damage; and the expanding global underclass that survive via the 'informal economy' and occupy the world's fastest growing housing stock – slums. The extent and condition of this underclass, both now, and in the future is the subject of the seminal article, 'Planet of Slums' by Mike Davis (Davis: 2004). This should be essential reading for anyone with a concern for development. He describes the vast numbers of people who exist outside the immediate reach of development, but have a distasteful relation to it – as its exploited service workers or by living off its detritus. Notwithstanding the passage of a percentage of those in the informal economy to the formal, the rate of people entering far exceeds the numbers leaving. They also display an instinctual characteristic of humanity in their ability to survive in appalling conditions – the utilisation of whatever resources they can find and their transformation *by design* into elements of habitation (which goes well beyond merely the making of a shelter). One can go as far as to say that these people remain human by design.

Turning to Baghwati. If anything, his positive view of globalisation is more extreme and abstract than Friedman's. Baghwati is totally dismissive of critics of globalisation. Anyone who dares to occupy a position substantially questioning how capitalism conducts itself is instantly dismissed as intellectually deficient. He is equally dismissive of others, deeming them well-meaning but fuzzy minded.

Baghwati's representation of human existence is dominated by the mediation of economic metrics and by his adoption of capitalism as a liberation theology. Ironically, as an Indian, his is a logic of exclusion that neglects to recognise the extent of the informal global economy, and the way it places the abject poor outside the reach of liberal market forces. Baghwati argues that poverty is to be alleviated by the production of wealth by economic growth, rather than by redistributive justice. This ignores the facts that, as already indicated, a vast percentage of the human population is excluded from 'the system' and 'more globalisation' will not reach them; and, notwithstanding 'sustainable technologies' and 'environmental management' the more economic growth, the greater the environmental impacts, the extent of unsustainability and the speed of defuturing. As the World Bank and the International Red Cross acknowledge, there are now more environmental refugees in the world than those created by war. Additionally, the inability of market forces to cope with the social and environmental consequences of rapid urbanisation, and the way that climate change combined with 'heat islanding' will transform enormous numbers of cities, are situations just not taken seriously.

Thinkers like Bagwati and Freedman are captured within the domain of the 'restrictive economy'. The 'restrictive economy' is a way of naming capitalism's mode of exchange, dislocated as it is from the 'general economy' of the (ex)changes of all matter and living things that exist in a condition of absolute interdependence. Such thinkers seem unable to grasp the danger of supporting the elimination of difference – which is one way to characterise the ultimate ambition of the development of globalisation. The general economy, and the dynamic of biodiversity within it, affirms difference at the very core of being. Framed by this observation, one can point out that monocultures, irrespective of ecology (plant, animal or human), always put the survival of a species at risk.

Globalisation theorists extend many of the misconceptions of the earlier promoters of modernity. Paramount among these is a geo-spatial understanding of underdevelopment, that designates entire nations as underdeveloped. Yet so many factors work against this totalising view: the diaspora from the disintegrating colonised nations after the Second World; the increasing transnational mobility of labour; the movement of refugees from conflicts and from environmental degeneration; and the growth of underclasses in

many 'developed' nations. Thus, the constituency once designated as geographically located in the Third and Fourth World is now anywhere and everywhere. This is graphically illustrated by UNDP *Human Development Report 2005* which gives an account of the rise of a new global middle class (not least in China and India) and the nature of global poverty (not least in China and India). It points out that that worldwide 10.7 million children never reach the age of five, that the infant mortality rate among the black community of Washington D.C. is higher than in many Indian cities and that global income inequality is increasing for 80% of the world's population. It also goes on to state that almost half a billion of the world's poor are worse off than they were in 1990, one billion people live on less than \$US1 a day, and that one billion people lack access to fresh drinking water. It also summarises the still rampant scourge of HIV/AIDS, most graphically by noting life expectancy in Botswana is 31 years of age.

Along with the picture of poverty and the constant proliferation of the space of slums, is the accompanying image of the growing space of the world's wealthy elites. Many of the privileged of many nations live in protected gated communities, or even behind razor wire-topped walls of compounds guarded by private security police, some even with machine gun towers. Notwithstanding parts of the world, like sub-Saharan Africa where archetypical images of abject poverty endure, a geographically bound image of poverty and development is largely redundant. This was graphically seen in the aftermath of the hurricane that hit the US states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama in 2005.

De facto, the centre/periphery model of development that had structured the world order for so many decades has crumbled. Rather than 'uneven development' being a characteristic of 'developing' nations, it is now part of almost every nation. The arrival of what Manuel Castells calls the 'informational mode of development' layered onto this, redraws relations and creates global networks. Unlike the IT globalising optimists, Castells does not see this technology as the panacea of world poverty (Castells 2000: 17, 112).

Sustainable Development

The rise of interest in sustainable development stems from the 1987 World Commission on Environment, Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*.

Brundtland defined sustainable development as "... those paths of social, economic and political progress that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." In this context, sustainability was directly linked to economic growth to be managed in such a way that natural resources were to be used to ensure the "quality of life of future generations".

This definition is constantly deployed as a key point of reference. Notwithstanding this, it is just not satisfactory. It is based on a number of very questionable assumptions and a degree of bad faith in relation to environmental debates that pre-dated it.

First of all, 'sustainable development's' anthropocentric bias towards future generations means that the interconnected interdependency of *all* biological life is not sufficiently registered. Moreover, to appeal to the "quality of life of future generations" fails to recognise the unevenness of the human condition as a key factor at the core of the question of development. If the socio-economic inequity of current generations is faced, then the issue of establishing a basic quality of life for several billion people *now* has to be confronted, as does the excess of 'quality' and 'quantity' of resources that a small percentage of the world's population currently command. Both poverty and wealth drive unsustainability – the former by depleting resources without the ability to renew them; the latter by their disproportionate over-consumption. The kind of inequity confronted here is structural. It is inscribed into the banking system, the global labour market, commodity exchange and frameworks of international political power. Brundtland's idea of inter-generational equity needs to be subordinated to inter-species plus trans and inter socio-cultural equity at a global level.

Second, and just as fundamental, is the need to challenge the assumption that the future can be secured via economic growth. In large part, this viewpoint was underpinned by an unstated proposition that the development of capitalism had to accommodate for any appeal to environmental protection to be taken seriously.

Brundtland's assumptions were partly shaped by the context of 1980s environmental thinking. The recoil resulting from the "Limits to Growth" Club of Rome report authored by Donella Meadows *et al* in the late 1970s perhaps best registers this mindset. With the failure to take seriously the message of restraint, with capitalism ever rampant, with a conceptually limited understanding of the interface between the human and the unsustainable, plus leadership from an establishment position, the conservatism of Brundtland's report was inevitable. Certainly, the wish to curb unsustainability, reduce the squandering of 'natural capital' and protect the environment was genuine, but the problem lay with the means proposed to realise these desired ends, i.e., Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD). Effectively, this idea left the existing notion of development intact and simply gave it an extra task. ESD neither put the cause of the problem – the disposition and actions of human beings – on the spot, nor did it recognise the need for the objective of development to be redefined. Put succinctly, the real path forward should have been presented as the 'development of sustainment'.

The proposition carried by the notion of ‘sustainment’ is not an idealistic or naive call to overthrow capitalism (to be replaced by what?). Rather, it is the naming of a project, a culture, an age within which capitalism is *to be led to* a paradigmatic recognition of the vital need to confront: (i) a shift in the how human beings are constituted and positioned as social and environmental subjects who act in, and on, the world and each other; and, (ii) the imperative to create an economy, a social fabric, political institutions and modes of *design* able to generate and deliver wealth, equity/redistributive justice and a civil society based on moving from quantity to quality as the basis of normative measure. This compressed paragraph stands for the work of many extending over decades. While what it proposes may well be regarded as impossible, one should remember that the impossible is as much a matter of perspective as of fact. Moreover, a good deal of human history demonstrates the realisation of the impossible. Likewise, developing sustainment (the process which is the condition) needs understanding as a matter necessity rather than choice.⁶

The idea of sustainment tells us it is time to leave Brundtland behind and rewrite the development task.

On Considering Design

One cannot reach the essence of design (the designed and designing) via deductive reason. Geo-culturally, it continually moves and morphs. Moreover, such thinking cannot accommodate design’s non-neutrality and cultural non-universality. While motivated by the ‘quest for knowledge’ of design, the reification of design by much design research activity obstructs design’s potential by its scientific preoccupation with practice. Such research fixes design as a restrictive practice within the restrictive economy. The prefigurative capability of human beings, and its articulation to the directionality/propensity of the things that are brought into being via design, transcends the descriptive capability of design discourse. For instance, this discourse posits design exclusively with direct human agency, or indirectly as this agency has become embodied in technology. What it does not recognise is that ‘we’ are as much the designed as we are designers. In this setting, and the setting of the mono-cultural trend of globalisation to homogenise world cultures into the singularity of culturally pluralist products, ‘we’ planetary beings of difference are either being diminished by the commodified objects of our ‘cultural enrichment’, or rendered into the culture of the invisible (the ‘inoperative community’ of peoples of the global informal economy).

Unquestionably, the ethnocentric bulldozer creeps on, flattening difference in its path. Yet pockets of difference remain and force us to ask ‘whose design’?⁷ To be unaware of the significance of this question is not to know what design is and does.

Dominantly, design has acted in the service of the culture and economy of modernity and its metropolitan and global extension. It has been deeply implicated in the development and universalisation of modernisation and unsustainability, modernisation having been viewed as a means of national advancement and improved standards of living. The reality, however, has so often been the development of a new, internationally integrated middle class 'in the periphery' and a widening gap between these wealth owners and the nation's poor plus the importation of problems and practices that continually extended the depth of material unsustainability.

What design/designing/the designed actually needs to do is to lay down a foundation of futuring. This is not to be a mono-form or an instrumental exercise. It has to be circumstantially responsive and be as much to do with the mind, dreams, feelings and dispositions of people in the world they inhabit (as they are constituted from structures, products, systems and biophysical ecologies).

The economic growth rate of newly industrialised nations and their consumer classes, means that the ecological impact of the global population is growing rapidly. This is far more significant factor than raw numbers. In fact with current developmental trends, the global population could fall (which it will not do) while impacts could go on rising (which they will do). Obviously suggesting the standard of living of half the world's population should remain low in order to preserve the high standard of the advantaged is neither ethical nor politic. Another way has to be found – as will be seen in a moment.

Against this backdrop three kinds of relationships between design and development can be contemplated.

Relationship 1: this is a continuation of the status quo (enfolding 'sustainable development' as it strives to 'sustain the unsustainable'). Clearly, this is going to continue to be the option the majority of designers working on the design and development nexus will opt for. In spite of good intentions with an often substantial dose of humanitarianism, the consequence of this choice is, in the end, the development of unsustainability via the creation of things, systems and practices that defuture. Obviously, this option spans an enormous gradation of levels of involvement and scales of impact from 'high end' governmental and corporate projects to modest NGO supported village design activity, and even aid projects, which while often having immediate practical benefits, not least in improving public health, are still nonetheless 'system inductive' and often impositional.

Relationship 2: this can be seen as supporting currently available development against the dominant direction of development. It includes the selective recovery of the futuring potential of traditional knowledge, skills and practices and their valorisation. The developmental objective is the revitalisation of rural and village

level industry and culture as a culture and economy of sustainment. While the ambition can only be modest, there is also important conservational dimension associated with it. With the prospect of increasing dysfunction as climate change and rapid urbanisation converge to make conditions unbearable in many cities, some kind of large retreat to the rural can be expected. Design/development action here is not a matter of bringing imported design knowledge and skill to the project, but rather mobilising the cultural capital that institutional design qualifications carry to give recognition to local capability both within the context of community self-image and regimes of authority.

Relationship 3: this ambitiously could offer an opening into an ‘other development’ – the development of the moment of a culture of sustainment. This culture, and its epoch, created to counter the developmental trajectory of humanity turning against itself by destroying so much of what it, and much else, depends upon through what it creates (mostly by design). In design terms the gigantic challenge goes well beyond the agenda of sustainable design. Foundationally, it requires establishing a basis of ‘being-in-the-world’ able to take responsibility for our being anthropocentric. Pragmatically, it means starting to find ways to move from an economy based on the growth of quantity to one centring on expanding the domain of quality in almost every aspect of human endeavour. The metaphors of such change: small, light, slow, long-lived, beautiful. The range of its actions: art, literature, music, education, architecture, products, services, lifestyles, industries. In contrast to accepting the validity of the aspirations of those nations currently captured by the dream of being developed, this option goes to development beyond the currently developed. It has the ability to give agency to much within the cultural and economic history of a nation that can be used to build a very different developmental base. Looking for such starting points is what prevents the exercise being utopian. Certainly, the gigantic difficulty of the ambition is not to be underestimated, but neither is the gigantic opportunity, not least for design(ers). For the courageous, this move adds up to vastly expanded sphere of creative potential, action and reward.

Of course, making a division between these three relationships is a heuristic construct – *de facto*, they bleed into each other.

A Closing Observation

Reference has been made to the under-recognised relation between creation and destruction. This observation now needs to be directly brought to the relation between design and development.

Development, when it actually occurs, creates the material and cultural infrastructure of modern life, but it also destroys much of futuring value in the undeveloped: tradition, knowledge, memory, craft, taste, slow-time. In this respect, development first reframes

the human condition and then redirects it. For all the history of its Marxist critique and for all the countless courses in development studies, development is dominantly regarded as ‘the good or the desired’ (depending on whether it is the experienced or hoped for). And, notwithstanding the ambiguity with which development is viewed by some intellectuals, its underside mostly resides in cultural spaces of silence. Abject poverty so often is that silence coming from a lack knowledge – abject poverty is a multi-dimensional lack. Understanding, for example, the degree to which planetary cultures are under stress; recognising the imperative to cease human-created atmospheric damage, learning how to adapt to a dramatically changing climate; dealing with the technologies human ingenuity has let loose; making sense of the despatialisation of war that the omnipresent spectre of terrorism has now produced; and, grasping the politics of these factors – this all presumes a position of privilege. At its most basic, it means freedom from the immediate quest of daily survival and a degree of education. Equity, like poverty, is never merely an economic condition.

One thing can be concluded with some certainty. Although the complexity of the issues is daunting, and one can easily get lost within it, this complexity is unavoidable if ones wishes to act responsibly/ethically. To refuse this complexity is to drive blind, and so be a danger to oneself and others. It is chilling to realise just how many designers believe they are making a contribution to ‘human development’ while what they serve undermines the world of both human and non-human dependence.

Note: Notwithstanding the impression of distance from ‘the real world’ that any overview article gives, the comments made are not merely the product of research. They are equally informed experientially, including by critical self reflection on work undertaken for the ITDG and UNESCO during the early 1970s – Tony Fry.

Notes

1. The rise development studies as an academic discipline embracing economic, cultural, environmental, demographic, political and social change mirrored the pluralistic character of development practice and the moderation of its politics. Its concerns have effectively been repositioned by the demise of the authority of Marxist theory, the degeneration of many nation states in Africa into complete dysfunction, the arrival of conflict over environmental resources and the globalisation of contemporary modes of terrorism.
2. It should be remembered that one cannot conflate Marx’s analysis and theory with the manner of its appropriation in the creation of communist states. This is not to suggest there are no problems with his thinking, it is to say that the political systems these states created were not necessarily

an accurate representation of the strengths or weaknesses of Marx's theories.

3. Georges Bataille *The Accursed Share Vol 1* (trans Robert Hurley) New York, 1988.
4. Amartya Sen succinctly outlines his view on globalisation and communication in the Asia Society on-line journal, *Asia Source* October 26, 2005 – www.asiasource.org/news/special_report/sen.cfm.
5. Both of these forces have received considerable attention for many decades, not least by the pioneering work of Immanuel Wallerstein, which was established by his three volume seminal work – *The Modern World-System* 1974.
6. Quality posed in this setting is not reduced to a matter of values, appearance or aesthetic taste. Rather it begs to be defined by rethinking and spelling out measurable elements like: durability, performance, craft construction (manual or industrial), economy of materials, user fulfilment plus levels of attachment to things. Every one of these elements can be taken as a design challenge open to all design disciplines.
7. 'Design Betwixt Design's Other' *Design Philosophy Papers* No 6, 2003/2004.

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