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# Justice, Not Development: Sen and the Hegemonic Framework For Ameliorating Global Inequality

**Abstract:** Starting from the merits of Sen's *Development as Freedom*, the article also explores its shortcomings. It argues that they are related to an uncritical adoption of the discourse of 'development', which is the hegemonic framework for ameliorating global inequality today. This discourse implies certain limitations of thought and action, and the article points out three areas where urgent questions of global justice have been largely ignored by development theory and policy as a consequence. Struggles for justice on a global scale, this is the conclusion, should not take the detour of 'development'.

**Keywords:** Sen, development, discourse, justice, inequality

## Introduction

Amartya Sen's work *Development as Freedom* can be regarded as development theory's best-seller of the last decade, and the 'capability approach' put forward in it (as in some other books by him and Martha Nussbaum) is certainly a contender for the most influential approach within the discipline at the moment. It appears to be equally influential within institutions of development policy like the United Nations' Development Program (UNDP) or indeed the World Bank where Sen worked as an advisor and research fellow. This article points out some merits, but also some problems of Sen's version of this approach and argues that the problems are related to Sen's uncritical adoption of the discourse of 'development'. This discourse is the hegemonic framework for ameliorating global inequality today but limits our thinking and action on the question of global justice and therefore should be abandoned.

In the first part of the article, I will be discussing the merits and flaws of Sen's *Development as Freedom*, highlighting positive as well as negative aspects. In the second part, I will link the problems identified in the approach to the discourse of 'development' which constitutes the hegemonic framework for discussing questions of global inequality since the mid-20th-century. Finally, I will point out which questions of global justice are neglected by adopting this hegemonic framework.

## Sen's Approach and its Problems

Sen's *Development as Freedom* has earned much praise since its publication in 1999, and certainly a great deal of it is justified. Before starting to criticize it, some of its merits have to be remembered. By seeing 'development' as 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy'<sup>1</sup> and by including not only political

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<sup>1</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development and Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), p. 1.

freedoms, transparency guarantees and protective security in his notion of human freedoms, but also economic facilities and social opportunities,<sup>2</sup> he considerably broadens the definition of the concept. This has certain consequences. The most important one is that it undermines the frequent discussions about whether political freedom or gender equality was ‘conducive to development’ (understood as economic growth). To this, Sen replies: ‘This way of posing the question tends to miss the important understanding that these substantive freedoms [...] are among the *constituent components* of development’.<sup>3</sup> Taking Sen’s approach seriously prevents such discussions and their concomitant privileging of the growth of the Gross National Product (GNP) which still take place decades after the Pearson Report (published in 1969 by the UN)<sup>4</sup> has established that economic growth does not automatically lead to poverty reduction.

The critique of narrow growth-centred perspectives is expanded when Sen points out several examples of countries which managed to significantly improve life expectancy without high GNP growth such as Sri-Lanka, China before 1978 and the Indian state of Kerala and inverse cases such as Brazil, South Africa and Gabon where a boost of the latter took place without substantial progress in the former indicator.<sup>5</sup> His polite style of writing would never allow the author to put it this way, but the book is a slap in the face to all those in development theory and policy who still maintain that a focus to economic growth is the most successful way to reduce poverty and achieve ‘development’.<sup>6</sup>

Even more relevant is that he manages to break up the black box of the state by comparing survival rates of African Americans in the USA and Indians in Kerala. Despite the former group being far more prosperous in terms of per capita income, the latter has better chances of reaching a higher age. The picture becomes more drastic if one narrows the group, e.g., to black men from Harlem.<sup>7</sup>

Last, but not least, Sen revisits his insights in the study of food policy, pointing out that famines have nothing to do with a general lack of food, but a lot with the ‘substantive freedom of the individual and the family to establish ownership over an adequate amount of food’,<sup>8</sup> and usually affect 5-10% of the population at most.<sup>9</sup> Thus he highlights that famines are a result of unequal distribution of assets. According to him, a functioning multi-party democracy and a free press

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2 Ibid., p. 4.

3 Ibid., p. 5.

4 Lester Pearson, *Partners in Development: Report of the Commission on International Development* (New York, Washington, and London: Praeger, 1969).

5 Cf. Sen (2000), pp. 44-8.

6 Cf., e.g., David Dollar and Aart Kraay, ‘Growth is Good for the Poor’, *Journal of Economic Growth* 7/ 3 (2002), 195-225.

7 Cf. Sen (2000), pp. 21-3.

8 Ibid., p. 161.

9 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 168.

would be the best methods of famine prevention, since the rulers simply could not afford to let it happen without losing their job, and serious attempts to prevent it by boosting the purchasing power of hard-hit groups were usually successful.<sup>10</sup>

However, despite these merits there are some problematic points in his work which deserve closer attention.

a) *Conceptual confusion*. Regarding the term ‘development’ and its content, Sen is at times ambiguous. When he writes: ‘Freedom is central to the process of development for two distinct reasons. 1) The evaluative reason: assessment of progress has to be done primarily in terms of whether the freedoms that people have are enhanced; 2) The effectiveness reason: achievement of development is thoroughly dependent on the free agency of the people’,<sup>11</sup> then there is a lack of conceptual clarity in statement 2. If, as it seems to suggest, ‘development’ is a process different from attaining freedoms, he is contradicting his earlier argument, because then freedoms are again conducive to some other process (of improvement, growth, etc.) – an argument he strongly criticizes elsewhere<sup>12</sup> and one which is incompatible with his view that ‘development’ consists in removing unfreedoms.<sup>13</sup> If, on the other hand, ‘development’ consists in attaining freedoms, as he argued earlier, then the sentence basically reads ‘The achievement of freedom is dependent on freedom’ – a textbook tautology.<sup>14</sup>

b) *All good things go together*. Throughout the book, Sen talks about ‘mutually reinforcing connections’<sup>15</sup> between different kinds of freedoms: between political rights and economic opportunities and health care and gender equality and low population growth etc. This assumption dates back to modernization theory which claimed that all the ‘good things’ would come with the transition to societies of high mass-consumption.<sup>16</sup> But there are numerous empirical observations which do not quite fit into this assumption: non-democratic states achieving high rates of economic growth (China), high levels of education and health care not leading to economic growth (Cuba),

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10 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 178-84.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

12 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 5; see above.

13 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 33.

14 A possible line of defense would be if Sen argued that he merely meant that different kinds of freedom are mutually reinforcing each other (4, 37). But then he firstly should have been more precise and secondly this statement is problematic in itself, as we shall see.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

16 Walt Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

indigenous communities practicing direct democracy but excluding women from it – the list could go on. Obviously good and bad things can occur quite independently.

c) *Benevolent institutions*. In discussing the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework<sup>17</sup> or the role of governmental institutions in famine prevention,<sup>18</sup> these institutions are implicitly conceived as rational, non-political and benevolent actors pursuing the interest of the poor and waiting to implement the policy recommendations of development theory.<sup>19</sup> This is little more than a convenient fiction neglecting relations of power and institutional interests, assuming that 'development' organizations will in fact work for 'development' and nothing else.<sup>20</sup>

d) *Modernization theory and the equation of development and capitalism*. By contrasting 'elements of "underdevelopment" in some parts of the [Italian] economy' with 'the most dynamic capitalism elsewhere in the same economy',<sup>21</sup> Sen implicitly equates 'development' with capitalism – as if the latter would automatically bring the substantive freedoms he writes about earlier. This argument was originally made by modernization theory, and it is not the only relation to this school of thought. In writing 'there are plenty of examples of the problems faced in precapitalist economies because of the underdevelopment of capitalist virtues'<sup>22</sup> the author reproduces the belief of modernization theory<sup>23</sup> that entrepreneurial ethics are a remedy for the problems of societies identified as precapitalist. The problematic aspects of 'capitalist virtues' (eroding communal solidarity etc.) are not an issue here. Also, modernization theory's equation of precapitalist and 'underdeveloped' economies, which neglects the colonial exploitation to which many of these were subjected, remains unquestioned.

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17 Sen (2000), p. 127.

18 Sen (2000), p. 133.

19 At the same time, Sen is quite ready to assume less than benevolent motives in individual actors, taking into account the possibility that some parents keep one child deliberately famished to receive nutritional support. Cf. Sen (2000), p. 132.

20 To give but one drastic example: The food-for-work programs which Sen advocates (cf. *ibid.*, p. 133) have often been used as political instruments. The most extreme case probably was Guatemala during the 1980s where these programs (funded by development agencies) were used as a part of the 'scorched earth'- and counterinsurgency policy of the military dictatorship to recruit refugees to build 'model villages' in the vicinity of military camps after their own villages had been destroyed. Cf. Susanne Schultz, *Guatemala: Entwicklungspolitik im Counterinsurgency-Staat – Das Fallbeispiel Food-for-Work-Projekte* (Diploma thesis, Free University of Berlin, 1992).

21 Sen (2000), p. 264.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 263.

23 See Rostow (1960).

e) *Liberal bias*. Even beyond the implicit argumentative structure of modernization theory, there is an explicit bias towards capitalist relations of production and free markets as the best way to achieve an improvement of living standards or ‘development’ throughout the book. This becomes manifest in categorical statements (‘It is hard to think that any process of substantial development can do without very extensive use of markets’, 7 – what about Cuba?), in praise for the hard core neo-liberal Hayek<sup>24</sup> and for micro-credits as a best practice of poverty reduction,<sup>25</sup> in advocating the freedom that markets bring (ch. 5) without mentioning the unfreedom of those who cannot afford the market prices of urgently needed goods, in chastising ‘the political power of those groups that obtain substantial material benefits from restricting trade and exchange’<sup>26</sup> while forgetting about the often far more powerful transnational business lobby groups that benefit from implementing market liberalizations, by confounding economic freedom and economic openness<sup>27</sup> while neglecting the social costs of producers unable to compete with the world market, and in attributing all problems related to market mechanisms to inadequate regulation<sup>28</sup> – reminding me of the saying that ‘there is no bad weather, only inappropriate clothing’.

f) *Universalist assumptions*. In his lucid discussion of the problems of cultural relativism, Sen points to numerous different philosophical traditions in Asia, concluding that ‘the modern advocates of the authoritarian view of “Asian values” base their reading on very arbitrary interpretations and extremely narrow selections of authors and traditions. The valuing of freedoms is not confined to one culture only, and the Western traditions are not the only ones that prepare us for a freedom-based approach to social understanding’.<sup>29</sup> However, his assumption that the capability approach is valid for all cultures raises some questions. Because in postulating that a good life is impossible without ‘basic education’, ‘free media’ and ‘elections’<sup>30</sup> (as sympathetic as this may seem to most, including myself), he again introduces universalist criteria for evaluating societies which may not be shared by the people concerned. Is the life of indigenous subsistence communities really objectively inferior because it lacks these three elements? A plurality of conceptions of a good life is conceivable.

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24 Sen (2000), p. 114.

25 Ibid., p. 201.

26 Ibid., p. 122.

27 Ibid., p. 123.

28 Ibid., p. 142.

29 Ibid., p. 240.

30 Ibid., p. 242.

My argument is that all these flaws (as I see them) are related to the conceptual framework Sen employs, which is the hegemonic framework for dealing with questions of global inequality since the middle of the 20th century: the discourse of ‘development’. The use of this framework is contingent, in fact, the situations of ‘unfreedom’ that Sen describes (undernourishment, premature mortality, discrimination of women, religious violence, tyranny, etc.)<sup>31</sup> could easily be framed as questions of economic, social and political inequality – or as questions of justice.

### **The Discourse of ‘Development’**

The perspective to analyze ‘development’ as a discourse which is presented here builds on the works of post-development scholars<sup>32</sup> as well as on Michel Foucault. According to Foucault,<sup>33</sup> a discourse is a group of statements united by common rules, in particular by rules of formation concerning the objects, concepts, enunciative modalities and thematic choices. While this is not the place for a thorough presentation of the structure of ‘development’ discourse,<sup>34</sup> a brief sketch is certainly necessary. Throughout the following description of the discourse those elements will be highlighted which we encountered in the critical reading of Sen’s work.

While the discourse of ‘development’ as we know it today has been established in the mid-20th century, its roots go back somewhat further: on the one hand to evolutionist thinking of the 19th century (Spencer, Marx, Comte) which perceived the industrialized capitalist countries of Western Europe to be at the top of an evolution of mankind towards progress and other countries to be backward; on the other hand to Enlightenment thinking and the Saint-Simonians, planning to reform society rationally to reconcile order and progress on the basis of trusteeship and expert knowledge.<sup>35</sup> Already in the 19th century this intent to improve the social situation of certain groups was a reaction to socialist movements and the intent was to stabilize capitalism by ameliorating poverty. In the first half of the twentieth century, when the idea of ‘development’ was increasingly applied to the European colonies, this intent became even more pressing against the background of the Russian Revolution and anti-colonial movements. Alcalde concludes that ‘The first and broadest function of the idea of development was

31 Cf., e.g., *ibid.* pp. 3, 8, 20.

32 Wolfgang Sachs (ed.), *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (London: Zed Books, 1992); James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine. ‘Development’, Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development. From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London: Zed Books, 1997).

33 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

34 Cf. Aram Ziai, ‘The discourse of “development” and why the concept should be abandoned’, *Development in Practice* 23/1 (2013), 123-36; Aram Ziai, *The Discourse of ‘Development’: Archaeology and Genealogy* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

35 Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (London: Routledge, 1996).

to give economic activity, particularly foreign economic activity, a positive and essential meaning for the lives of less-developed peoples. ... the aim was essentially ... enhancing a mental linkage between capitalism and well-being in the South'.<sup>36</sup> So when Truman, in the context of the Cold War and the dawn of colonialism announced the first 'program of development' to help the underdeveloped peoples and simultaneously support the US economy and fight world communism, the explicit *liberal bias* was an important element of the discourse.<sup>37</sup>

During the first post-World-War-II-decades, the picture was clear and the tenets of 'development' discourse were unshaken: there are 'developed' and 'less developed' countries, the industrialized capitalist countries constituting the former group. So there is a universal scale of comparison, unit of analysis is the state, the West sets the norm and the measure is the GNP. The dominant approach in development theory and policy was *modernization theory*,<sup>38</sup> which treated subsistence communities and non-Western empires alike as traditional societies in need of capital, technology and modern values. It assumed that traditional societies are 'underdeveloped' because they are pre-capitalist, neglecting the ties which had linked most of them to global capitalism since they had been colonized and implicitly *equating 'development' and capitalism*. Not only Rostow, but also later development theorists<sup>39</sup> assumed that the process of 'development' simultaneously comprised economic growth, modernization, industrialization, democratization, and even redistribution (leading to 'societies of high mass-consumption', as Rostow put it), thus assuming that *all good things go together*.<sup>40</sup>

Already at the beginning of the 1960s, however, it became clear that the transition to these 'developed' societies was not as easy as envisioned by modernization theory. Economic growth did not necessarily lead to poverty reduction (let alone democratization), and capitalist modernity did not provide viable livelihoods for everyone. Thus new aspects of the objects ('underdeveloped' countries) gained visibility in 'development' discourse, leading to new strategies of development policy. After the new strategy turned out to be less successful than had been hoped for, the failure led to a new diagnosis of deficiency, a new concept

36 Javier Gonzalo Alcalde, *The Idea of Third World Development. Emerging Perspectives in the United States and Britain, 1900-1950* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), p. 223.

37 Harry Truman, 'Inaugural address, January 20, 1949', [www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr\\_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm) (accessed 16 September 2013).

38 Cf., e.g., Rostow (1960).

39 For example, Ulrich Menzel '40 Jahre Entwicklungsstrategie = 40 Jahre Wachstumsstrategie', in Dieter Nohlen and Franz Nuscheler (eds.), *Handbuch der Dritten Welt. Band I: Grundprobleme, Theorien, Strategien* (Bonn: Dietz, 1993), 131-55, p. 132.

40 It has to be noted that some conservative (Huntington) or neoliberal (Lal) development theorists did not share this assumption, but saw the necessity for undemocratic governments implementing economic reforms which lead to growth even against the will of the people.

and a renewal of the promise of ‘development’ to overcome poverty and bring affluence. So the rule of formation concerning the objects led to a ‘cycle of the clinical gaze’, prescribing ever new recipes for the ‘less developed’ countries: rural, endogenous, sustainable, participatory or human ‘development’, basic needs, structural adjustment, good governance, mainstreaming gender, ownership, etc. This cycle has led to the proliferation of meanings of the term ‘development’ and to the ensuing *conceptual confusion*. While earlier it was clear that the term denoted economic growth, nowadays anything from female empowerment or biodiversity protection to road-building can be the object of a ‘development’ project. Even on a more abstract level in ‘development’ theory, the term is used to denote different things: 1) social change in general, 2) social change as a result of capitalist modernity and 3) social change leading to an improvement in the lives of people. And even a brilliant thinker like Sen sometimes gets entangled in this ‘web of meanings’.<sup>41</sup>

After the end of colonialism, the trusteeship for ‘development’ has been passed on to ‘development’ institutions, primarily governmental bodies, but also organizations of bilateral or multilateral ‘development’ cooperation. That these are not necessarily *benevolent institutions* has been shown in the study of Ferguson, where he portrays the transfer of resources to elites and the increase in bureaucratic power as regular (often unintended) effects of ‘development’ projects.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, their actions are assumed to be benign because ‘development’ is seen as something positive, aiming at ending poverty or achieving freedom. In the discourse of ‘development’, there is usually no place for social conflicts or political struggles, because ‘development’ is seen as a process which benefits the whole society and which consists of technical solutions, e.g., projects resulting in improvements in irrigation, productivity, technology or governance. Thus the question of inequality is removed from relations of power and depoliticized. And ‘development’ organisations reproduce this discourse: their construction of reality is influenced by the means they have at their disposal: non-political, technical projects. Other solutions to social problems which would entail taking sides in political conflicts, opposing the elite or supporting revolutionary struggles are excluded because they are incompatible with their institutional self-interest and their identity as ‘development’ organizations. Yet the development organizations discursively produce the image of benevolent institutions working for the common good without pursuing any other interest.

One last point to be made concerns the rule of formation of enunciative modalities. The discourse of ‘development’ inevitably constructs a subject

41 Gustavo Esteva, ‘Development’, in Sachs (1992), 6-25, p. 10.

42 Ferguson (1994).



position of the knowing expert who says what a good ('developed') society looks like and how it can be achieved. Other types of statements appear meaningless within this discourse. Assuming that there is a plurality of visions of what a good society looks like, this means that the discourse universalizes a particular vision and subordinates others, thus *universalist assumptions* about one model of a good society contain an authoritarian element. This element was responsible for violence and paternalism in 'uplifting', 'educating' or 'developing' those who were perceived as backward Others. The critique of this authoritarian element has led to conceptual innovations in 'development' policy like participation or empowerment. Yet neither 'development' policy nor theory can do without these universalist assumptions, and this is why we find it in the work of Sen as well. If one would reject these assumptions, saying something like, 'People have their own priorities in life and the world is too complex to generalize about processes of social change', one would embrace the plurality of visions and the heterogeneity of reality, but could not any longer provide advice to 'development' institutions. Because the advice is based on the assumptions that there is just one vision of a good society and that social change occurs everywhere along very similar patterns, it makes sense to send advisory experts to a country despite their having never lived there as long as they have a lot of knowledge about 'development'.

So it appears that the problematic aspects of Sen's work *Development as Freedom* are related to this discourse of 'development'. And this discourse has been the hegemonic framework for dealing with global inequality since the mid-20th century, defining poverty as a global problem to be dealt with by 'development' projects, programs and organizations.<sup>43</sup> Countless aspirations for a better life and a more just society have been framed in this discourse. However, this framework has serious limitations which come to the fore when we examine its contribution to some areas in which debates about global justice take place.

### **'Development' and Justice**

Adopting the discourse of 'development' has implications which limit the scope of thought and action concerning global justice. If questions of global inequality are answered with the hegemonic framework of 'development', the 'web of meanings'<sup>44</sup> surrounding the concept suggests that 1) the solutions to global inequality lie in each country's process of social change, 2) these solutions do not require political struggles and transformations of the existing relations of power or capitalist relations of production, 3) these solutions have to be based on expert knowledge and economic growth. Of course critical approaches like the dependency school or world systems theory have questioned these tenets, but

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43 Ibid.; Escobar (1995).

44 Esteva (1992), p. 10.

the dominant views in the institutions today remain largely untouched by these critiques. However, on this basis better ‘development’ projects and policies are possible, but a different world order is out of the question. Even if we assume that global capitalism was compatible with global justice (a somewhat questionable assumption), there are at least three areas where urgent questions of justice have been largely ignored by ‘development’ theory and policy.

1) *Reparations for colonialism*: After 400 years of conquering, subjugating and exploiting the rest of the planet, there have so far been no reparations from the former colonial powers to the former colonies. This is so despite the fact that reparations, e.g., after the world wars, have been a common feature of international law. However, while the white nations have been willing to pay for their crimes they committed against other white nations, they have not been prepared to do so for their crimes against former colonies.<sup>45</sup> The African World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission has estimated the amount of reparations due at 777.000.000.000.000 USD. Of course the (substantially lower) financial transfers declared as ‘development’ aid have sometimes been linked with colonialism, but certainly not all of these transfers have benefited the people in recipient countries – the keywords ‘odious debts’ and ‘tied aid’ may suffice here – and it does make a significant difference whether money is given in repayment of a crime or as a benevolent gesture of compassion.

2) *Ecological justice*: Contrary to the idea that justice can be achieved through ‘development’ in the sense of the poor catching up with the rich, ecological limits demand another kind of justice: namely, that the industrialized countries discontinue a way of life based on non-renewable energy sources and a disproportionate share of resource use and environmental pollution, in particular regarding the question of climate change.<sup>46</sup> Ecological justice could mean that the environment is seen as a public good and that each person must not use more of it than his or her fair share. And even here, one could talk about historical debts in terms of processes of industrialization in some countries which have depleted the resources and polluted the environment in such a way that other processes by late-comers are being prevented or rendered irresponsible. But why should some people be entitled to a larger share than others? And is it just to

45 This seems to be a case of what Roxanne Lynn Doty calls the ‘Western bond’: the differences among former war enemies are overcome by a bond vis-à-vis the non-Western countries; cf. her *Imperial Encounters. The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 33-6.

46 See the homepage [www.climate-justice-now.org/](http://www.climate-justice-now.org/) (accessed 21 March 2014).

permit oligarchic (or ‘imperial’<sup>47</sup>) lifestyles which are possible only if a majority is excluded from them?

3) *A cosmopolitan world order*: According to a Rawlsian ‘veil of ignorance’, all people on the world are entitled to the same chance for a decent life. This is in fact not the case, and the coincidence of being born into a slum in São Paulo or an upper-class neighborhood in Munich determines individual life chances to a considerable extent. This is not only related to social inequality, but also to a nation-state system which severely restricts migration into richer countries and guarantees human rights only for citizens (and even that only in an imperfect manner). Movements for a cosmopolitan citizenship are hardly existent, but some migrants in North Africa and Europe have been organizing for a global right to free movement and settlement.<sup>48</sup>

Remembering the critique of universalist assumptions, one might ask: do these struggles not also imply struggles for universal rights? Indeed they do. But here we have to differentiate between universal rights which imply normative judgements on how people should live (to which they could object in the name of self-determination), and universal rights which create conditions for self-determination. In all three areas, any limitation of people’s right to self-determination takes place only to protect the rights of others to self-determination, denying rights to exclude people on the basis of their nationality, to consume resources in a oligarchic manner, and to colonize others without compensation.

Of course, the debates and conflicts in these areas have been sketched here only very briefly, but the central point is that Sen’s work and in fact the vast majority of ‘development’ theory and policy remains silent on all three points. Improvements in these areas cannot be expected from ‘development’ projects based on expert knowledge nor from successful programs of economic growth in income-poor countries, but only from changes in political structures as a result of political struggles and social movements. In all three areas pressing questions about global justice are pertinent. And the discourse of ‘development’ does not provide answers. It is time to overcome this discourse. Struggles for justice should not take the detour of ‘development’.

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47 Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen, ‘Sozial-ökologische Krise und imperiale Lebensweise. Zu Krise und Kontinuität kapitalistischer Naturverhältnisse’ in Alex Demirovic et al. (eds.), *Vielfachkrise im Finanzdominierten Kapitalismus* (Hamburg, VSA, 2011), 79-94.

48 See the homepage [www.afrique-europe.interact.net](http://www.afrique-europe.interact.net) (accessed 21 March 2014). Interestingly, they also struggle for a ‘right to stay’ in their home countries, provided there are opportunities for a ‘secure, dignified and self-determined life’, which they frame as ‘fair development’.