Development seems to have many lives despite numerous attempts to kill it off. Orthodox economists at first contended that there could be no development economics, only correct economics – describing markets but not intervening in them. Although the establishment failed in the 1940s and early 1950s to prevent scholars like W. Arthur Lewis from putting the new subdiscipline on a solid foundation, P. T. Bauer kept up an assault from the 1950s to the 1970s on the very idea of a development project within economics. In the 1980s, the banishment of development from the summits of the economic profession in the name of market orthodoxy seemed for a time to be complete.²

1. The End of Development?

But if Bauer got his Lordship, Lewis got his Nobel Prize.³ The announcement of the death of development turned out to be premature, and such established economists as Jeffrey Sachs abandoned their position as advocates of imposing market discipline on emerging societies and became, instead, proponents of consciously planned and expensively financed initiatives by states and international organizations to fight poverty around the globe.⁴ The market, we are now told, does not work miracles. If poor people are to meet basic human needs, if entire categories of people are not to be excluded from the knowledge, technologies and freedom of choice from which the majority of the world’s population now benefit, then the market needs help. In poorer states, leaders and ordinary citizens continue to believe that they have a claim on some of the resources of the world’s richest regions, and a large array of individuals, organizations and governments in the wealthy countries think they are right. Through the provision of credit to small

¹ I am grateful to Daniel Speich for his attentive and thoughtful reading of a draft of this article.  
enterprises to help them move forward with large-scale projects that contribute to
the remaking of regions, development efforts continue, and many people in rich
and poor countries make their careers through such efforts, providing a range of
ideas and talents, as well as a set of institutional interests, to development.

If assaults from the right – for all the backing they at times received from inter-
national financial institutions and conservative think-tanks – failed to exclude
development initiatives from the realm of political possibility, the left has also
assaulted the legitimacy of development. Development has been criticized as a con-
spiracy to make the world safe for capitalism, as self-serving alliances of local elites
and foreign businesses to exploit peasants more effectively, and as sinecures for
Westerners who peddle their expertise. And development soon proved grist for the
deconstruction mill: development was a discourse, and discourses can be taken
apart to show how an agenda of reinforcing existing power structures lies beneath
their benign surfaces. In this instance, the language of development can be shown
to be not so much a programme for improving the lives of the poor as a means of
marking and reinforcing global hierarchy: a division between developed and under-
developed, between advanced and backward, between modern and traditional –
new forms of the older distinctions between civilized and barbarian, between supe-
rior and inferior. The Western worker for an NGO may think he is helping people
grow more string beans, but he is really naturalizing Western modernity, inscrib-
ing on the world a single path for betterment to which people should aspire, even if
they are unlikely to get very far.5

But development has survived such assaults too, and for one basic reason. How-
ever much validity there is in critiques of self-serving development institutions and
ideologies, critiques do not bring piped water to people who lack it; they do not ease
the burdens of women caught between rural patriarchies and urban exploitation;
they do not distribute readily available antidotes to childhood diarrhoea and malaria
in areas of high infant mortality. Sensitive as most authors are to the reality of prob-
lems in much of the ex-colonial world, it is not clear that celebrations of «indigene-
ity» or hope that «social movements» will provide local answers where top-down
development projects have failed address the range of problems that impoverished
societies face. They do not address the possibility that indigenous social structures
and social movements – not just external colonialism and global capitalism – can
be oppressive and reactionary as well as liberatory.

Assertions that development is a project of self-evident benefit and critiques of
development as the imposition of an unwanted modernity are in fact mirror images
of each other.6 Neither of these positions comes to grips with the specificity of

5 A. Escobar, Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World (Princeton,

6 This analysis of alternative critiques of the deve-
global, local and regional structures of power that reproduce poverty. But each also has merit – the former in keeping open the possibility of finding solutions to problems, and the latter in tearing down the arrogance that often attends attempts at wide-scale reform. In practice, the two viewpoints are engaged in a dialogue of the deaf, taking place in different fora and different languages; in theory, they should have something to say to one another.

2. Historical Analyses in place of Metacritique

The papers in this issue of the *Journal of Modern European History* have something important to offer in their focus on concrete historical instances, rather than maintaining themselves at the level of abstractions and generalizations. Nearly seventy years have passed since the British government launched its Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940; the French government would follow six years later with its Fonds d’Investissement en Développement Economique et Social. Most African countries have been self-governing for fifty years, some Asian ones even longer, while Latin American states have been self-governing for approximately 180 years. There are experiences to be examined. And they are not uniform, not entirely negative. During the 1960s and into the 1970s, most African countries experienced significant, if modest, economic growth, and, more important, life expectancy rose consistently, infant mortality fell, education became more accessible, and literacy expanded rapidly. Some formerly colonized countries of South-East Asia, like Malaysia and South Korea, moved from sellers of raw materials to significant industrial producers. State action was an important component of the transformation of South-East Asian economies. In the not-so-distant African past, for all the evidence of corruption of local elites and the expatriation of profits by foreign investors, people who grew cocoa and workers in copper mines had reasonable expectations that they could get a little something out of participation in economic activities and that, as citizens, they could expect something from the state. Africans eagerly sought education at home and abroad, and expected that their skills would contribute to development and be appropriately rewarded.

The oil shocks and world-wide recession of the 1970s changed all that, and the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s undermined the social policies that gave people hope and possibilities, without producing the kind of market miracle that was promised.


The politics of development became the politics of the write-off, denying the legitimacy of Africans’ claims on global resources, and placing blame on bad governments and not on invidious global structures. In Africa, the results of the «development» era (1950s through early 1970s) were mixed, but those of the «post-development» era were almost unremittingly negative in economic terms and worse in political terms. Efforts to build a politics of citizenship were undermined by the failure of citizenship to offer much of anything in the way of services and opportunities. If the decline of development funding and state initiatives in economic matters, decreasing economic regulation, and the firing of bureaucrats and soldiers were supposed to unleash a wave of local creativity, that creativity often took the form of warlords organizing local armies, of underpaid civil servants organizing rackets of all sorts, or of structures of clientage and dependence becoming entrenched. Orientation toward local initiative and improvisation did not necessarily produce happy results.

There is much in the openings and closures of development politics for scholars to examine, not least of which are the early years of independence, the focus of the papers in this volume. That «development», as constituted in the early years of independent government in Africa and Asia, had its roots in the colonial era is widely acknowledged among scholars. For some, this genealogy is enough to discredit the development project – development seems like colonialism by other means, a new name for what was once called the «civilizing mission». The present papers fit in with other historical research that presents a more complicated picture. The arrogance of colonial development is present in a particularly extreme form in the paper of Moritz Feichtinger and Stephan Malinowski on the forced resettlement villages of Algeria, linked to French counterinsurgency. The continuity of personnel in British development efforts across the line between colonial and postcolonial situations is Joseph Hodge’s contribution. An aspect of development history easily glossed over in the rush to treat development as a single orthodoxy imposed on ex-colonial states is brought out in the articles of Abou Bamba, Corinna

11 The much-cited book of James Scott, contrasting the simplifying and totalizing logic of the big project with the virtues of small-scale initiative (what he calls metis) misanalyses both: Scott fails to see the ways in which big projects were redefined as they were implemented and the possibility of complex local arrangements turning predatory and destructive. J. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven, 1998).
Unger and Constantin Katsakioris. Together, they reveal that countries as varied as India, Egypt and the Côte d’Ivoire could manoeuvre among industrial powers – the United States, Germany and the USSR, as well as former colonizing powers – competing for influence and business, and they were able to experiment with different models of how development could be done.

3. Development and Colonialism

A dynamic view of development history starts with the colonial period itself. The term «colonial» – and concepts that follow, such as «colonial mentality», «colonial legacy», or indeed «postcolonial» – gives a misleading coherence to a historical phenomenon that was, after World War II, becoming increasingly uncertain. And, notably in French and British Africa, the relationship of development and colonialism underwent a dramatic change. It is the reconfiguration of colonialism and development in the 1940s – not a timeless essence of colonialism – that constitutes a point of departure for asking what did and did not change with independence.

With hindsight, one can find concepts and projects that can be aggregated into a long-term history of «development»: assertions of civilizing missions, claims to be exercising trusteeship, the building of railroads, hospitals and schools, all of which were sometimes subsumed under a rhetoric of European-directed progress. But when influential colonial officials in both Britain and France tried in the early 1920s to put all this together into a specific policy called «colonial development» in the one case and «mise en valeur» in the other, the governments rejected the initiative. They did so in part because they did not want to invest metropolitan funds in the colonies – colonies were supposed to contribute to Britain and France, not the other way around. And they did so because colonial policy after World War I had taken a conservative shift – the governments fearing claims to the rights of the citizen coming from people who had contributed to the imperial war effort. Interwar policy played down the remaking of African society, justified colonial rule as a wise policy of conserving traditional ways of life and traditional leadership, which should be modified only slowly and within its own cultural terms, and celebrated chiefs and princes while denigrating as inauthentic the Africans who had gone the furthest to follow a European pathway. The imperial state protected and benefitted from an ensemble of diverse peoples and cultures. The Depression of 1929 deepened the inward-looking nature of imperial regimes: the franc and sterling zones could provide insulation against the crisis-ridden world economy, while the social

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13 On conceptual issues in the study of colonialism, including the overused and problematic concept of «modernity», see F. Cooper, Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History (Berkeley, 2005).

14 A fine, down-to-earth study of a colonial development project that Africans turned into a political issue, claiming their own vision of what it should be, is M. Van Beusekom, Negotiating Development: African Farmers and Colonial Experts at the Office du Niger, 1920–1960 (Portsmouth/N.H., 2002).
tensions of declining employment and cash incomes could be sloughed off from cities and mine towns to a less visible countryside.\textsuperscript{15} Interwar colonialism refused to follow a developmentalist vision of itself.

The unreality of this view of an Africa of tribes caught up with French and British rulers in the late 1930s: urbanization, wage labour and commodification had become realities whatever the rhetoric of colonial rule, and the slow recovery from depression intensified pressure on woefully neglected urban infrastructures. That the British West Indies were part of the same imperial system as British Africa – but hardly fit a tribal model of colonial society – posed a problem that hit officials in London hard when a series of strikes and riots broke out in Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana between 1935 and 1938, accompanied by strike movements in Northern Rhodesia and several African port cities. Although officials in Africa at first recommended measures to restrict urban migration and enhance the power of chiefs, such a policy failed to address the empire-wide nature of the problem, and officials finally began to think in terms of development when considering a remedy for the nexus of poverty and disorder that was striking the parts of the empire that were most visibly participating in the imperial economy. Here lay the genesis of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. Not the least of its breakthroughs was in setting forth its goal as raising the standard of living of indigenous populations, particularly wage workers. Money was to be spent not just on projects that promised immediate profits but on housing, education and other social services, as well as on research. Because of the war, little could actually be done, but the continuing labour tensions in Africa during and after the war made the turn to developmentalist colonialism even more of an imperative after 1945.\textsuperscript{16}

Whatever the possible ways of theoretically defining development, the historical sequence sketched above established a conception that has proven durable: state projects, channelling resources in ways that the market does not, with the goal of improving the conditions that foster economic growth and higher standards of living. If many development economists saw their objective as fostering the long-

\textsuperscript{15} The British Colonial Development Act of 1929 was advertised as a means of creating jobs at home rather than improvising welfare in the colonies, and in any case very little money was spent under its auspices. Colonial officials under the Popular Front in France made in 1936 another attempt to get funding for colonial development, but, like the attempt in the 1920s, it was rejected by the government. The Vichy government also considered a large-scale development effort and also did not fund or implement it. S. Constantine, The Making of British Colonial Development Policy 1914–1940 (London, 1984); M. Havinden and D. Meredith, Colonialism and Development: Britain and Its Tropical Colonies, 1850–1960 (London, 1993); C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, D. Hémery and J. Piel, eds., Pour une histoire du développement: États, sociétés, développement (Paris, 1988); C. Cotte, «La politique économique de la France en Afrique noire (1936–1946)», Thèse de troisième cycle d’histoire, Université de Paris VII, 1981; M. Ochonu, Colonial Meltdown: Northern Nigeria in the Great Depression (Athens Ohio, 2009).

\textsuperscript{16} F. Cooper, Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa (Cambridge, 1996).
run preconditions for market economies, they at least recognized that markets would not bring about such conditions themselves. Such a conception has its consequences: Development as a state affair entails relations of power; it demands and rewards expertise; it presumes inequality and hierarchy, even if it claims to be promoting a levelling upward of all people’s living standards. The way in which development came into the political arena thus shaped patterns for the future, but not necessarily in ways its early architects expected.

If colonial governments, by calling their programmes «development» were trying to turn the conflicts of empire from a political into a technical and financial problem, they failed in their attempts, for the reverse came to pass. Development became a claim-making construct for post-war social and political movements in Africa. Such was even more the case in India, where the Indian National Congress put pressure on the British government in the 1940s and made development into a core element of its own assertion of power and legitimacy after independence in 1947. The colonial regimes did have a strong assertion of their unique role through their claims to expertise. But even the most technically oriented aspects of developmentalism turned out to have a political edge, such as the use of statistical methods. Development, unlike earlier claims to a civilizing mission, was quantifiable. Measurement could be used to show the inadequacy of colonial efforts. In South Africa, for instance, a school of social research was formed during the 1940s at the University of Capetown around social scientist Edward Batson’s development of «the poverty datum line», statistical techniques for measuring poverty. Batson and others saw that statistically based arguments could have more of a political impact than seemingly less objective ways of defining a problem. Whatever the analytical flaws of such methods, they marked out a terrain that demanded resources – arguments used against apartheid policies in South Africa and in favor of development strategies, particularly directed against the impoverishment of people fully implicated in the wage economy.

Badly shaken by the Japanese take-over of most of the European colonies of South-East Asia, by the discrediting of racial ideologies during the Nazi debacle,
and by ferment in the colonial world itself, both France and Britain saw development as the key means by which they could re-establish imperial legitimacy. Development was part of a wider policy by which colonial regimes sought to give modernizing elites – not just pseudo-traditionalist leaders – a stake in the changing imperial regime. France went the furthest in declaring in its constitution of 1946 that all its overseas subjects had the «qualities» of the citizen – equivalent political and civil rights, including that of moving to European France and seeking jobs. African politicians sat in the French legislature in Paris. Britain insisted that each of its colonial territories was on its own path toward greater self-government within the Commonwealth, but it, too, tried to articulate a wider imperial citizenship under the Nationalities Act of 1948, creating a kind of second-order citizenship derivative from the nationality accorded by a Dominion (Canada, Australia, etc.), but also applying to colonial subjects from Jamaica to Kenya a policy that gave the «imperial citizens» the right to enter the United Kingdom. Whatever the ambiguities of imperial citizenship, it provided a powerful basis for social and political movements to make claims, and there was no clear stopping point in such claims other than equality with other imperial citizens, including equality of standard of living.21

4. Development and Modernization

Neither power had fully anticipated the consequences of this policy shift: colonialism, as a moving target, became rapidly more vulnerable than it had been in an era of a more stolid, conservative colonial regime. Britain and France found themselves trapped between the possibility that their strategies of containing colonial ferment might fail, on the one hand, leading to revolution, or that they might succeed, on the other, leading to the obligation to bring colonial citizens up to a European standard of living. The article of Feichtinger and Malinowski reveals both sides of this dilemma in a single case: the coerced relocation of thousands of Algerians, in the midst of a war of colonial rebellion and repression, into controlled villages where they underwent what the authors called «forced modernization» – a programme of agricultural development, education and reform of gender roles intended to make them better off and more content. Here we find the extremes both of a logic of counterinsurgency and one of making colonized people into something they did not necessarily want to be – a man, with wife and children, adapted to «modern» rhythms of production and family life. Looking at a wider context, the combination of elements in French politics becomes even more complex. Muslim Algerians at the time were French citizens, and they had the right to enter and seek jobs in Euro-

pean France, where their labour was in demand. Legally, Algerians in France had the same rights as any other French person and were not supposed to be subject to the kind of controls police typically reserved for immigrants, although the police found ways to keep Algerians under surveillance (and to subject them to a brutal instance of police violence in Paris in 1961). In a sense Algerians were in a position to «develop» themselves via access to higher wages and the possibility of remitting some of their income to families in Algeria. More surprising, the French government – in another move to woo Algerians away from rebellion – adopted in 1958 a programme of what Americans would call affirmative action, reserving a proportion of jobs in the civil service in both Algerian and European France for the recognized social category, «les français musulmans d’Algérie». Efforts were made in European France to provide housing and other services to help acculturate Algerians to life in France.  

Something similar was going on in Kenya after 1952. These were the years of the Mau Mau Emergency, the brutal repression of a rebellion in Central Kenya that involved mass relocations of peasants to cut off rebels from their supply base, internment camps, torture and arbitrary punishment. But at the same time, the state abolished restrictions on Africans growing lucrative cash crops that competed with production on European farms, and attempted programmes of improving land access and security to select African farmers. As Hodge points out in his contribution to this volume, Kenya’s leading agricultural reform project, the Swynerton plan, was considered a great success. Meanwhile, the government undertook a programme to «stabilize» urban work forces in key sectors, hoping that more regular work, higher wages, better housing, and urban social services would wean Kenyans away from their rural lifestyle and tendency to move back and forth between wage labour and agriculture. The programme turned the male worker, his wife and his children into something like a European worker, and all under the watchful eye of teachers, nurses and bureaucrats.

The juxtaposition of these efforts and the language in which officials and journalists talked about them reveal at the same time a deep anxiety that Africans were really primitive, atavistic people, ready at a moment’s notice to go on a binge of throat-cutting, and hope that with modest incentives Africans were ready to adapt to their place in an ordered class society, as yeoman farmers, owners of urban  

property or wage workers. These were the two faces of the implicit version of modernization theory that had developed among French and British bureaucracies well before it was systematized by American social scientists. There was brittleness about this way of thinking that could lead toward excesses of violence, or toward helping Africans gain a place in modern society. The reference point, of course, was ethnocentric: the end point of modernization was widely perceived to be European or North American society. Academic modernization theory was in large part social scientists’ effort to take account of and provide a theoretical basis for the modernizing policies developed in colonial bureaucracies.25

What is underplayed in critical analyses of development discourses and projects is how much this way of thinking provided people in the colonies with a basis for making claims – for economic resources, for political voice, for recognition of their existence as a «nation» among nations. In the mundane context of strike negotiations in Dakar in 1946, a Senegalese trade unionist captured the situation precisely when he silenced his French counterpart by stating, «Your goal is to elevate us to your level; without the means, we will never succeed».26 The Kenyan leader Tom Mboya played this line brilliantly: as a trade union leader, he obtained a large settlement for Mombasa dockworkers in 1955, and as leader of a political party, he helped put Kenya on the track toward independence by positioning himself as the modernizing alternative to what British leaders perceived as a backward-looking political movement.27 Leading politicians in French West Africa were explicit in seeking political strategies that were both «horizontal» – based on solidarity among Africans, expressive of their collective ethos – and «vertical», a continued connection to European France from which Africans could insist upon entitlements that only the rich partner could provide.28 What is important here is that social and political activists were not making claims as supplicants, but as citizens. If imperial regimes were going to assert that the inhabitants of colonies belonged within the polity, then those people could claim as entitlements what other citizens expected.

A double transformation was at play in the middle of the twentieth century: first, the increasingly solid foundations of the welfare state in Europe, and with it the notion that citizenship implied entitlements to a certain level of social secu-

25 The American framework for understanding modernization is inadequate. The prior development of a politics of modernization in French and British bureaucracies also makes clear that however much the Cold War shaped the contours of modernization theory in the 1950s, it cannot be seen as the theory’s point of origin. See also F. Cooper, «Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept», in Cooper/Packard, International Development and the Social Sciences, 64–92.

26 Transcript of interview, 15 January 1946, between representatives of the Union des Syndicats of Saint-Louis and the Director of Personnel and the Director of Finance of the Government General, K 405 (132), Archives du Sénégal.

27 Cooper, On the African Waterfront.

28 See several entries in the Senegalese newspapers La Condition Humaine, 25 February 1953, 31 May 1956. I will be developing this argument further in current research.
rity – a significant expansion of the entailments of citizenship; second, the possibility that people in the colonies could acquire at least some of the «qualities» of the citizen – and with it social and economic as well as political entitlements. It was in this context that development became less a matter of benevolent outsiders assisting needy people in backward areas of the world than of citizens claiming entitlements.

5. Development after Decolonization

Saying this brings us to the next transformation, easily underestimated in arguments about the continuities of neo-colonialism: independence turned entitlement into supplication. European powers might choose to provide expertise and capital to their former colonies – as all the papers in this collection make clear – but they did not have to. Officials in the middle and late 1950s were quite frank about how much of a burden they felt from colonized people’s insistence that they were entitled to – as one French politician put it – equality in wages, equality in labour legislation, in social security benefits, equality in family allowances, in brief, equality in standard of living. Such considerations were part of the cost-benefit analyses that France and Britain – having long avoided getting so explicit – undertook around 1956 and 1957. It was as a consequence of this kind of thinking that the French government (in 1956) reversed its centralizing view, particularly of economic policy, in favour of what it called «territorialization», allowing elections under universal suffrage that produced African governments that were given authority over their budgets, out of which they had to pay, using their taxpayers’ money, the salaries that civil service unions negotiated and the cost of social services. In 1957 the British government undertook a cost-benefit analysis of each colony, and when the results came in that Britain stood more to gain from a positive post-independence relationship with its former charges than from continuing to maintain sovereignty, it gave the government of Harold Macmillan a basis on which to negotiate independence agreements, regardless of whether the Africa hands had pronounced a particular territory «ready» for independence.

The other side of colonial powers’ shedding obligations was that newly independent countries acquired the possibility of shopping around for patrons. The Soviet Union, the United States and Germany – as the papers of Katsakioris, Bamba, and Unger make clear – were quite willing to play this game alongside the former colonial powers. The game was not played among equals, for a few patrons with deep resources existed among many potential clients with a great need for

31 Cooper, Decolonization, chapter 10.
resources. The patrons were capable of inflicting great harm as well as providing useful assistance: the arming of client states or opposition movements has had deadly effects long after Cold War rivalries became irrelevant.

At the end of the 1940s the United States tried to assert a leading role in development, even as colonial powers were still claiming development as their domain, but, in relation to its economic might, it was a miserly contributor to aid programmes and at times a bastion of market orthodoxy. That such non-colonial states as those of Scandinavia joined the development apparatus was another sign that development was becoming a postcolonial question. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 both proclaimed that each human being had a right to a minimal level of sustenance and enshrined the principle of state sovereignty. In that sense, the internationalization of development had a double meaning: it was a matter of universal concern, but fragmented responsibility.

The world of development has offered a variety of approaches and a variety of linkages to scholars and practitioners in ex-colonial polities; development orthodoxies have been far less orthodox than images suggest. Indeed, the Economic Commission for Latin America was articulating a highly critical view of the benefits of international trade and investment from the late 1940s, long before development economics or modernization theory had attained any academic stature in the United States, producing a lineage of critical economics that extended to Africa through such scholars as Walter Rodney and Samir Amin. The fashions of «Western» economics have themselves varied. The «big push», balanced growth, unbalanced growth, growth with redistribution, basic needs, structural adjustment, sustainable development, microcredit – all these have had their place in the development pantheon, sitting alongside institutional tendencies to emphasize «one size fits all» and arrogant assertions that the latest theory represents the ultimate. The «Washington Consensus» – market-driven development – of the 1980s was neither a full consensus nor a durable one, even among some of its leading exponents, including, eventually, the World Bank. Shifting fashions could be a problem as well as a virtue – producing fads and bandwagon jumping in development organizations – but the heterodoxy of development thinking over the nearly seventy years of development history should be recognized. The articles in this collection effectively illustrate the availability of alternatives shortly after decolonization – whether and how they are used is yet another question with no single answer.


6. The Good, the Bad and the Historical
The endless debates over whether foreign aid is good or bad: whether development attacks universally recognized evils such as poverty, sickness, illiteracy and female subordination, or whether such aid imposes a Western modernity on people who have their own way of living – all of these issues might take on a different slant if one poses the questions historically. Aid is «foreign» (and it is aid) because of a «we»-«they» distinction that it both presumes and reinforces: the wealthy give to the poor. But the boundary of the «we» and the «they» has a history. For a brief moment after World War II, the imperial «we» – with all the paternalism, hierarchy and, at times, violence that concept implied – meant that colonized people had a different sort of language: a language of rights and entitlement, to use. In some contexts, they had an institutional structure in which to articulate those demands such as elections in Africa for representatives to the French parliament or participation of African deputies in debates in France.

Alternative «we's» to both imperial incorporation and national separation appeared on the horizon for a time: turning empire into confederation or commonwealth, in which former colonies and metropoles would participate as equals in certain governmental functions while acting autonomously in territorial affairs; a Third World bloc that could mutually provide trade connections, capital formation and expertise by-passing ex-colonial powers; international revolution creating a Communist bloc that would aggregate and exchange material and intellectual resources; or an idea of «global citizenship» that refuses the social and economic cloistering that state sovereignty implies and insists that all people, by virtue of their humanity, are entitled to have their basic needs met. The latter view, seemingly the most utopian of all, has been present in the background ever since the fading away of colonial empires, coming to the fore in periodic public mobilizations, such as the Jubilee 2000 campaign: the ultimate rationale for development programmes crossing political boundaries is that the «we» and the «they» are not so separate after all.

It is the particular pattern of decolonization that defined development as a relationship between unequal states rather than any of the alternatives. Once small, poorly endowed countries proliferated, each leadership, uncertain of its hold on power, had more of an interest in cultivating patron-client relations with rich countries, corporations or international financial institutions than it did in intensifying reforms of 1956. The episode is one of the subjects of my current research.

34 W. Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York, 2006); Sachs, *End of Poverty.*
35 This possibility was if anything the most commonly accepted by both African and European French politicians in the late 1940s and early 1950s, unravelling after the «territorialization»
economic relations with equivalently poor countries. Uncertain that governments could respond to the demands of a citizenry that had briefly shaken the power of wealthy colonial empires, the leaders of new states generally became wary of democratic politics and of activist organizations – trade unions, farmers’ associations, etc. – and more concerned to use their control over the interface between national and international economies to keep control of resources in their own hands. They became what I have elsewhere called «gatekeeper states». They were in this sense successors to colonial states, which had also tried to insure that economic and political relations passed through the nodes they controlled – a strategy of using vertical ties and trying to limit horizontal ones (that is of colonized peoples with each other). Gatekeeping became a crucial aspect of the development regime as it took shape after independence (a topic underemphasized in the papers in this volume), for governing elites had a great opportunity to control the narrow channels left by the shortcomings of colonial development, insuring their friends and clients would have access and their rivals would not.37

The most compelling of all the critiques of current development practices flows from this historical pattern and its structural consequences: the turning of capital, expertise and long-distance connections into a resource by governing elites; concentrating resources rather than making them more accessible to people who need them most; and the formation of networks of clientage between elites of rich and poor countries, without the realistic possibility of sanction by democratic processes. Both developed and under-developed countries use the fiction of a sovereignty regime to maintain their vertical connection without clear accountability: the sovereignty of the developing countries protect them from interference in their «internal» affairs, while donor countries, financial organizations and NGOs, if they want the relationship to continue, need the permission of the receiving country to act within it. African leaders have proven quite adept at side-stepping the ever-changing demands of international financial institutions – at least when it comes to their personal interests and control.38

What is least persuasive – because the least historical – in the critiques of development practices and ideologies is a juxtaposition of «good» indigenous practices and «good» social movements against «bad» development. Africans and Asians have been involved for centuries in short- and long-distance trade relations; kingdoms and empires have come and gone; people have been incorporated willingly or by violence into polities; and those polities have in turn been shaped and reshaped by the wave of European colonizations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

37 I have developed an argument around the gatekeeper state in Cooper, *Africa since 1940*. See also my «Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective», *Journal of African History* 49 (2008), 167–196.
38 See the arguments from very different viewpoints of Easterly, *White Man’s Burden*, and J. Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, 2006).
in which even the most oppressed have been far from passive participants. The economic elites of South and South-East Asia draw on centuries of experience in building the commercial networks that in the sixteenth and seventeenth century attracted European explorers and traders, whose own wealth depended on integrating those elites into commercial networks centred on Europe. The phase of European political domination and exploitation in Asia did not eclipse the relevance of control of land, credit, commercial savvy and networks by indigenous elites. In Africa, commercial networks were more vulnerable to colonial and then postcolonial states, but the power of entrenched interests and networks in local, regional and international networks is no less important for that fact.

The very narrowness of commercial channels developed by colonial regimes has made gatekeeping an effective strategy for self-serving rulers. Rivals tried to develop networks that by-passed government control. In the 1980s and the 1990s Angola was an extreme example of a gatekeeping state dependent on tight control of oil revenue, fighting a gate-circling rebellion enriched by diamond smuggling (a pattern that outlived the support both sides had from Cold War allies). The economic and social strategies of actually existing communities are the products of these histories, and both the valuable experiences of managing complex environments and the linkages that serve narrow interests at home and abroad are consequences of this long history. The myth of «community» is not a compelling point of departure for finding alternatives to current development strategies – this myth can be as self-serving for a ruling clique as the myth of «modern» expertise has been for international financial institutions.39

Some scholars have posited «social movements» as an alternative to approaches to development centred on top-down expertise and state actors. Others advocate modesty as the alternative to the big projects. The first argument has a point, but not as a generalization: how does one distinguish a process of network building and community mobilizing that produces institutions of microcredit that benefit thousands of artisans and farmers from a movement that produces a Pol Pot? The category of social movement is in itself of little help, nor are appeals for «radical connectivity». Radical connectivity can produce vicious movements – think of those that devastated Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990s, the Lord’s Army of Uganda that still fights on, various movements in the eastern Congo since the late 1990s, etc. The value of connectivity depends on the institutions to which connection is made.40

39 The Cameroonian journalist Axelle Kabou has vigorously dissected the use of the myth of African authenticity by African rulers anxious to avoid the accumulation of wealth in any hands but their own. Et si l’Afrique refusait le développement? (Paris, 1991).
40 Here lies the problem with alternatives to development articulated by Arturo Escobar. There is much in the possibilities he offers, but at his level of generalization, they could as easily make things worse as better: Encountering Development and «Development, Trans/modernities, and the Politics of Theory», *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 52 (2008), 127–135.
The development idea, from the time it came into colonial thinking to the present, reflected a coming to grips with the fact that markets in themselves do not necessarily provide the conditions for economic growth and human welfare – in imperial, national and local economies. Indigenous communities may contain and pass on valuable knowledge of how to use local resources, but their leaders have blind spots and are motivated by self-interest as much as outside «experts». Sharing ideas and expertise across regions – «South to South» – may play a bigger part in present and future development efforts than criticism of an all-effacing «North» might allow. One can give due weight to the asymmetric nature of colonial and postcolonial relationships and still move beyond assumptions that «development» is an exogenous imposition on self-sustaining societies. People’s wants and expectations have been formed through interaction and adaptation as well as through efforts at maintaining social integrity.41

To say this is to point to the importance of questions of who intervenes, for what reasons, through what relationships, and to what effect. There is no evading, through generalized praise or denunciation of «development» or «modernity», the importance of analyzing specific situations. Colonial and postcolonial states; development «experts» around the world; African and Asian governments; international corporations and financial institutions; landlords, peasants and workers; men and women – they all bring their histories to their places in addressing these issues. «Community» no more represents primal innocence than does the IMF. The people who devise plans for reforming agriculture, like landlords and peasants, come to development encounters with their experiences, with their own (always limited) visions of themselves and the future, and their own interests. So, too, do the builders of dams and factories, the people who might be flooded out by the dam or employed by the factory, and others whose vested interests might be threatened by any benefits that an innovation might confer. Colonial states tried to direct development efforts in their own directions and were faced with the unintended consequences of their efforts, not least of which were changes in the institutional and rhetorical resources which people in the colonies had to express their demands. Independent states tried to turn development into a national project, while fearing that a too-involved citizenry might find the state’s efforts wanting, or that the unevenness of development might provide resources that could be used against governing elites’ interests.

The era of colonial and postcolonial development was not without its successes from the 1950s to the 1970s, and one of the consequences of the 1970s world recession and the harsh and short-sighted policies imposed on poor countries by international financial institutions was the destruction of the modest expectations

people had as citizens of self-governing countries – access to water, health care, education, transportation, regional and international markets and other resources that individuals and families could use in different ways. Government intervention means something different when a politics of citizenship shaped – to some degree at least – its contours, and another when networks of clientage (within and across national boundaries) proceed with few countervailing forces. These complex trajectories, and the even more complex ways in which different sets of actors fit into them, shape the possibilities that exist for change.

The colonial genealogy of the development concept and the vested interests that people in development institutions have acquired do not in themselves show that their actions today are a force for harm, any more than the assumption that poor people will better their condition if left to their own devices is a force for the good. The outcomes of development initiatives have ranged from the disastrous to the mitigated. But the question is: to what alternative scenario are they being compared? When states are not capable of providing the basic infrastructure for commerce, education and health, economies of extraction and predation may become the most attractive alternative. Such processes benefit particular interests inside and outside the countries in question, but the benefits for «global capitalism» are dubious, and the harm to the populations of poor countries immense.

The most important unintended consequence of the advent of development in colonial and then postcolonial politics has been to set out an issue that can be talked about in its painful concreteness around the globe. There is no intrinsic reason why the situation of near-starvation of children in a refugee camp in Chad should create controversy in Geneva or London. That it does may contribute to certain images of «them» – the poor and the abject – but it also emphasizes the complicity of «us» in the past and future of all people. It raises questions of who is connected to whom, through what past trajectory and with what future implications. Within «underdeveloped countries», the development idea, from its entry into the colonial lexicon in the 1940s, carried the implication that states should «develop» their people, that those people should have a say in how the process is carried out, and that something is wrong with a local government and world institutions when people do not benefit from such a process. The history of development suggests that, in the future as in much of the past, the consequences of actions cannot be evaluated by generalizations about «modernity» or «development», whether by advocates of development initiatives or by their critics. There is no substitute for specific analysis of contexts and possibilities when the goal is to examine who is helped, who is hurt, and who might find unexpected opportunities or constraints in programmes for economic change. And if in the past we can trace the consequences – positive, negative, intended, unintended – of specific actions, in the future we need to be able to assess responsibility and accountability. Most important of all, the history of development is a history of changing expectations.
Writing the History of Development

Although some scholars think of economic development as a project of self-evident benevolence and others consider it as the imposition of an unwanted modernity, recent scholarship, such as the articles in this volume, suggests a more complex history. Colonial governments from the late 1930s sought to assert legitimacy and foster the co-operation of colonized people via development programmes, but development quickly became politicized – a basis for claims on the resources of empire, an insistence on voice in deciding what development policies should be. The history of development suggests that in the future as in much of the past the consequences of actions cannot be evaluated by generalizations about «modernity», neither by advocates of development initiatives nor by their critics. There is no substitute for specific analysis of who might find opportunities or constraints in programmes for economic change. Through the politics of development, poverty became an issue not only in remote parts of Africa or Asia, but also in New York and Geneva. Most important of all, the history of development is a history of changing expectations.

Die Historiografie von Entwicklung


Ecrire l’histoire du développement

Pour certains scientifiques, le développement économique est un bienfait évident en soi. D’autres sont convaincus qu’il impose une modernité à ceux qui ne l’ont ni souhaitée, ni demandée. Les articles de cette édition du JMEH inaugurent une histo- ire beaucoup plus complexe. Les gouvernements coloniaux de la fin des années 1930 souhaitaient légitimer leur domination à l’aide de programmes de développe-
ment qui renforçaient la coopération entre les colonisés. Toutefois, le développement devint rapidement un concept politique et politisé à partir duquel l'on exigeait des droits et des ressources. Ces revendications étaient désormais dirigées contre l'Empire. On exigeait la participation aux décisions concernant ce que devait être la politique de développement. Une telle histoire du développement se méfie des jugements généralisés et des conceptions habituelles de ce qu'est la «modernité», et ce indépendamment de l'utilisation affirmative et/ou critique desdites conceptions par les protagonistes de cette histoire. Des exemples concrets qui posent un certain nombre de questions se sont avérés absolument nécessaires, parmi elles: à qui profitaient ces programmes de modernisation? A qui nuisaient-ils? Quel(s) profit(s) confronte(nt) quel(s) coût(s)? Grâce aux politiques de développement, la pauvreté a été désormais non seulement problématisée dans les régions les plus reculées de l’Afrique ou de l’Asie, mais également à New York et à Genève. Cependant il est également très important de ne pas oublier que l’histoire du développement est toujours une histoire des attentes qui changent.

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