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Human development, the state and participation

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Human development should be seen as a broad, emancipatory and social process, rather than the mere expansion of individual choices or ‘capabilities’. In post-colonial nations, a strong ‘human development enabling’ state is necessary to build basic human capacity, such as in health, education, shelter and nutrition; and then to promote popular participation. This requirement can be seen in a range of historical experience and is reflected in the declaration on the right to development. A wider view of human development, deepening democracy with active state-civil society partnerships, might be seen as a social democratic project in a neoliberal era.

Keywords: human development; post-colonial state; participation

Around the turn of this century ‘human development’, for most of the ‘developing world’, became the key conceptual yardstick of socio-economic well-being and progress. As was intended by its founders, it began to displace crude economic measures such as growth in gross domestic product (GDP). It also helped embed deeper aspirations of national self-determination and began to redefine social democracy.

While sometimes said to represent individual ‘human capabilities’, based on human freedoms, human development is broader than that. It grew as a reaction to the irrelevance of narrow economism, but its roots go back many decades, to the social and humanist ideals of development across several continents. This was a humanism most often developed in national liberation struggles, in the face of colonial regimes and imperial power. To see contemporary human development indicators as separate from these historical processes would be a mistake.

The post-colonial character of human development goes further, to challenge liberal notions of citizens’ rights and the state. In contemporary international agreements, both the rights and processes of ‘development’ have been defined as including individual freedoms; but they also include social participation rights and the right to autonomous social organization. The right of a people to self-determination had been embedded as the central principle of both the post-colonial era and the era of human rights, since the 1960s. ‘Development’ in the twenty-first century, despite tensions with liberalism,

envisages a key role for the state, especially in the construction and deployment of human capacity. Successful human development experience across a range of countries tends to support these consensual understandings. So while some traditions suggest essential conflicts between the state, civil liberties and popular participation, the contemporary consensus on ‘development’ and better experience tells us that these are necessary combinations.

The state is now called on, by international agreements, to guarantee important elements of human development. It is a demand reinforced by an intransigent international reality: an imperial network of strong states persists, constantly limiting the autonomy of developing countries. On the one hand, developing states have been weakened by processes of neoliberal globalization, which increasingly require them to serve international markets and the dictates of multi-national companies (Hirsch 1997, 46); on the other hand, ‘weak states’ are said to represent threats (Rice and Patrick 2008, 4) to those same big powers which drive the globalized system.

Economistic formulae of development impose a centralizing logic and many autonomous post-colonial states have been bribed, induced and corrupted, sanctioned or overthrown. The big powers, like their colonial predecessors, have kept peripheral states weak and divided. In the current context, post-colonial peoples (those of developing countries, mostly former colonies) seeking self-determination must establish and protect their principal institution of independent organization, a sovereign state. I use the term ‘post-colonial

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state' here to emphasize that the formerly colonized peoples (those of most 'developing countries') were always left with a deficit in public institutions committed to human development. Schools, hospitals, libraries, research institutes and many other shared institutions which are taken for granted in the former colonial powers were lacking. On top of this, those relatively new countries face demands for privatization, 'development partnerships' or 'open access' regimes for foreign investors. In these circumstances, the development of indigenous human capacity requires significant political commitment to a core public sector. Notwithstanding the inevitable problems of corruption, replication of elite agendas and other forms of dysfunction, independent public institutions must be built and defended.

Human development, this paper suggests, is best understood as an emerging social process, rather than a liberal theory grounded in individual rights. The foundations lie in emancipatory movements and their humanist aspirations for self-determination. In this sense, the post-colonial state (which carries the renewed hope of a genuinely social project) is best seen as a key agency of human development and participation, rather than a barrier to market and individual freedoms. The paper develops this conceptual argument with illustrations, by revising views of human development along with those of the state and its relationship to social participation. The human development project of the late twentieth century used liberal reasoning to help displace narrow, economic measures and loosen the grip of corporate culture. However, the social character of human development must again be vindicated, in particular by post-liberal or wider social understandings concerning the role of the state in development.

1. A wider perspective on human development

There were important consequences of the late twentieth century recognition that 'development' was fundamentally a human, rather than a technical, economic process (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP 1990). First, both the protagonists and the subjects of development were immensely broadened, indeed democratized. Previously, a handful of corporations could be said to be 'developing' a country by swelling the cash economy, regardless of the impact on people and the environment. With human development, the participants and beneficiaries had to be massive. Second, the new idea helped legitimize a plurality of means to achieve decent outcomes. The older idea of simply expanding formal economies could be contrasted with other approaches, not least the investment in people and the construction of public institutions. This led to an important third consequence: that independent paths drawing on indigenous technologies and particular histories could be 'written into' the contemporary world.

The concepts linked to 'human development' have changed over time and differ across cultures. In discussing

'human resource' development in Africa in the 1960s, Harbison (1965, 53) noted that there was ready acceptance of the proposition that 'the real basis for social economic and political progress is the development of the skills, knowledge and creative capacities of people'. Problems arose because of the demands to instrumentally link all such notions to 'aggregate economic growth'. Similarly, Ratinoff (1967, 5), in discussions of Latin American 'human capital' (in Spanish: capital humana), put this in the wider context of 'human capacity' ('capacidad humana', which translates both as human capacity and human capability). Pilone (1975, 111) observed that while the notion of 'human resources' had created a new focus of study, it had really re-established some previously well-known objectives (such as labor force, training and education) from a different perspective. Central to this article is the concern that, by engaging with newer perspectives, we do not lose contact with the earlier ones, or remain Anglo-centric. The Chinese apparently have no equivalent word for 'human resources', but have an expression (ren-cai-kai-fa) which translates more like 'human talent development'. This has two parts: human talent development and human talent use (Yang, Zhang, and Zhang 2004, 298–299). In this article, I refer to 'human capacity' as a broad term with less of the instrumentality often associated with human capital and perhaps not quite so much theoretical baggage as now attaches to the idea of human 'capabilities'.

Human development had grown from a series of reactions to imperial modernism, dressed up as economic development. The latter project was imperial in that domination of entire regions was enforced through an economic doctrine which selectively argued 'open markets', while privileging giant corporations. Known as the 'Washington Consensus' during the 1980s and 1990s, it derailed earlier development strategies with a focus on 'privatization, liberalization and macro-stability (meaning mostly price stability)' and was based on 'a strong faith ... in unfettered markets and aimed at reducing ... the role of government' (Stiglitz 2004, 1). One writer described this as 'the partial globalization of development policy ... a shift from historicism to ahistorical performance assessment', which confronted both 'East Asian developmentalism and Latin American neostructuralism' (Gore 2000, 789). The economic project came to be backed up by the military doctrines of 'Destroying Disconnectedness' (Barnett 2004) and 'Full Spectrum Dominance' (USJCS 2004, 23; see also Engdahl 2009, 168). This imperialism was 'modernist' in imposing a common economic vision for all societies, ignoring differences in history and culture.

Yet the absurdity of measuring human progress simply through a mounting cash economy attracted repeated criticism and indignation. Human sensibilities were awakened at the injustice of this 'development' project, manifest as gross inequalities, poverty and institutional distortions (Ul Haq 1973). The very idea of 'development' was 'denounced

as an evil thing', for its injustice, destruction of cultures, environmental damage, alienation and for undermining 'the foundation ... of a just society' (Goulet 1992, 467–468, 472). The reconstruction of an idea of 'development' in which human beings were both the means and the end was built from this dissatisfaction, mostly by intellectuals from the former colonies. However, the precursors were much older aspirations for the nurturing of human capacity within a process of social and political self-determination.

The great deficit in human capacity in the colonies, in particular in education and training, was a constant focus of attention. Tanzania's first president, Julius Nyerere, pointed out that his country, at independence in 1961, had only 2 qualified engineers and 12–17 doctors in a population of 9 million. Only 45% of children went to school and 85% of adults were illiterate (Assensoh 1998, 135). More than two decades later, Nyerere could say: 'we did not have enough engineers, but we had thousands of engineers trained by ourselves. We did not have enough doctors, but we had ... thousands trained by ourselves'. Furthermore, Tanzanians could look the former British colonists 'straight in the eye ... they were no longer subservient' to them (in Medlum 1994, 70–71). Nothing in this should suggest that emerging post-colonial states would not face substantial problems of their own making and their own responsibility, not least from their stunted human capacity. However, it remains important to observe that independent Tanzania, like many former colonies, was able to use its newly built national institutions, not least in education and training, to emphasize human dignity while introducing compulsory primary education and a much improved universal health care system (Assensoh 1998, 135–137).

Beyond the tangible achievements in formal education, independence leaders stressed the human and social character of post-colonial education. Mamadou Dia of Senegal said that the focus of African development was of a person 'who finds his full blossoming in the coherence of a living society, of an organic community' (Dia 1963, 18). To this way of thinking, 'European capitalism neglected the artistic, religious, literary and philosophical values' of African culture (Andrain 1964, 163). Here 'culture' included a range of social relations, such as land management and social support, that modernist ways of thinking often claim to be 'economic'. Post-colonial self-determination, in this sense, could redefine the boundaries of cultural and economic spheres.

Human development through post-colonial education has a longer history. Cuba's national hero of the late nineteenth century, José Martí, stressed not only the centrality of education, but also an ethical education which could awaken social conscience:

Instruction is not the same thing as education; the former refers to thought, the latter principally to feelings.

Nevertheless there is no good education without instruction ... An ignorant people can be deceived by superstition and become servile. An instructed people will always be strong and free ... Education is the only means of being saved from slavery. (Martí 1878, 34–35)

For Martí, the first duty of a human being was to 'think for him or herself' and, with that freedom, to become a social protagonist (Alvarado Arias 2007, 9–10). Brazilian Pedagogue Paulo Freire made a similar distinction between rote learning – what he called the 'banking concept' of learning (Freire 1970) – and emancipatory education. By this idea 'words must take on meaning from the experience of those being educated, not from that of the educator' (Freire and Macedo 1989, 56). A full and ethical education, according to Martí, led naturally to the imperative of a social conscience and of social participation. So he wrote, in a book for children:

A person who obeys a bad government, without working to make that government good, is not an honorable person ... who allows his own country to be trampled on and his people to be maltreated, is not an honorable person. (Martí 1889, 29)

As an internationalist, Martí maintained that an ethical and autonomous education gives us 'the keys to the world' (Martí 2001b, 290–291), and the means to engage with the 'republics of the world'. Yet while 'our country is humanity', we must necessarily engage with 'that portion of humanity which we see more closely' (Martí 2001a, 468a). This was human development with a social conscience. Fidel Castro, who always cited Martí as his main intellectual influence, took up this theme at a 2005 graduation of doctors, in Cuba's huge Latin American School of Medicine: 'Human capital implies not just understandings but also – and essentially – conscience, ethics, solidarity, truly human sentiments, a spirit of sacrifice, heroism, and the capacity to much with little' (in Lafita Navarro 2011). This gave a wider, ethical sense to the term 'human capital'.

As well as in education, earlier debates stressed necessary advances in public health, another key focus of contemporary human development. More than 30 years before, he was elected President of Chile, Dr Salvador Allende, as a young health minister, became a leader of Latin American 'social medicine'. He stressed not just the passive 'social determinants' of health, but also medicine as an active social process. In his, 1939, book 'Chile's Medical-Social Reality', he set out this challenge:

to reacquire the physiological capacity of a strong people, recover its immunity against epidemics; all of which will allow a better performance in national production while also providing a better disposition and spirit to live and appreciate life. (Allende 1939)

In the 1950s, as a senator, Allende introduced the law that created Chile's National Health Service, 'the first national program in the Americas that guaranteed universal access to services' (Waitzkin 2001). Ideas of social medicine were also alive in Europe in the mid twentieth century, for example with concern to maintain preventive and promotional health care in British medical education (Grant 1948).

These earlier thinkers focussed on both the social and the individual character of human development, usually by reference to the agency of an independent state. They did not dissociate social and individual goals, or the means of development. The post-colonial goal of self-determination was tethered to visions of human development. Choice was not simply a matter of individual agency, but of autonomous social development. As Bruton (1985, 1099) puts it: if economic growth is not the goal, 'a country must find its own way, and to do this it must search, it must learn, it must choose'.

Nevertheless, by the late twentieth century, the measurement of 'development' was still captured by an economic technique with deeply embedded neoliberal values, that is: 'open market' ideas selectively applied so as to advance corporate investment agendas. Development was judged principally by growth in GDP per capita (Harrison 1966), supplemented at times by poverty estimates. The liberal foundations were individual freedoms, open markets and consumer choice. In this context, a social liberal language, stressing freedoms and choice, was used to loosen the neoliberal grip on ideas of 'development'.

In the UNDP's first Human Development Report – along with tables of indicators setting out real human outcomes – such as babies surviving birth and children attending school – 'human development' was proposed as a wider concept than economic development. It distinguished itself from some earlier experiments with alternatives to gross national product (GNP) (UNDP 1990, 105), arguing that human development meant 'both the process of widening people's choices and the level of their achieved well-being' (UNDP 1990, 10). As the centerpiece, a Human Development Index (HDI) was derived from indicators of healthy lives, education and decent living standards. A single figure was created to rival to the ubiquitous GDP growth measure. The chief architect of this new index, Mohammed UI Haq, said human development would 'enlarge peoples' choices and the idea of the HDI was to 'measure at least a few more choices besides income and to reflect them in a methodologically sound composite index' (UI Haq 2003, 127). Twenty years later, the UNDP maintained: 'People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to live long, healthy and creative lives' (UNDP 2010, 12).

UI Haq had taken a practical approach to raising the profile of human development. He was alarmed by

increasing inequalities, which did not show up at all in conventional economic indicators. He believed the whole idea of liberal 'economic development' was in crisis (UI Haq 1973, 29–31). While UI Haq advanced the HDI, his colleague Amartya Sen attempted a liberal conceptualization of this 'human development', asserting that 'economic development [involved] ... expansion of people's capabilities'. For this, income or economic growth was only an indirect means and often an ineffective means. There was a 'close link' between entitlements and capabilities, so 'focusing on entitlements – what commodity bundles a person can command – provides a helpful format for institutional economic development' (Sen 1983, 760). He would later drop this reference to 'commodity bundles'.

Developing this humanist approach, Sen (1985) made use of liberal concepts familiar to neoclassically trained economists, often quoting Adam Smith. Yet he steered his ideas away from exchange and production, because 'Human beings are not merely means of production ... but also the end of the exercise' (Sen 1997, 1960). Nor was human development simply a means toward enhanced production. He distinguished 'human capabilities' from 'human capital', saying that:

'human capability ... focuses on the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have.' Human capital, on the other hand, focused on 'the agency of human beings, through skill and knowledge as well as effort, in augmenting production'. (Sen 1997, 1959)

This was an important distinction, but it also weakened the link between 'capabilities' and the means and agency of development. How and by whom and to which end might these 'human capabilities' be built?

Because of the focus on individual human choice and a general expansion of human freedoms (Sen 1999, 36), Sen has been criticized for his 'methodological individualism' (Stewart and Deneulin 2002, 66). That is, he primarily linked human development to individual human achievements distinct from, and sometimes at odds with, social and institutional development. Sen's view involved accounting for 'social phenomena ... [mainly] in terms of what individuals think, choose and do' (Stewart and Deneulin 2002, 66). A related criticism came from Evans (2002, 56, 59), who made the case for 'collective capabilities'. These points do identify some limitations in Sen's approach. Social phenomena have their own dynamics and are commonly understood to be more than the sum of individual agencies.

Defending himself from the 'methodological individualism' criticism, Sen responded that he had always stressed the importance of social context and 'social influences', saying that 'individual human beings ... are quintessentially social creatures'. He protested that he could not be

justly accused of a methodological individualism which implied ‘that individuals are separated and detached from each other’ (Sen 2002, 81). Yet the criticism was not as simple as this, rather suggesting that individual agency could not be the touchstone of social phenomena, in this case ‘development’. Indeed, in his response, Sen affirmed that his touchstone was ‘individual capabilities’, even if they might be ‘socially dependent’. He illustrated the subordination of the social to the individual with the idea that ‘democratic freedom’ might be seen as mainly an ‘ingredient’ or ‘an important component of’ individual capabilities. (Sen 2002, 85)

Amartya Sen played an important part in loosening the grip of neoliberal ideology from ideas and measures of ‘development’, but faced considered and sympathetic criticism from within as well as without the liberal paradigm. He and his colleagues made links between notions of social justice, human freedoms and the idea of human beings as the ends of development. Yet Sen’s ideas on capabilities, beyond individual choice and freedom, were said to have no defined values (Qizilbash 1996, 1209–1212). Do not some choices have greater human and developmental significance than others? Attempts at defining such values have been made through empowerment approaches (Nussbaum 2011) and a basic needs approach (Streeten 1981). However, these also sidestep the social character of development.

Human development was a powerful concept, but did not represent a ‘paradigm shift’, nor did it provide ‘the means to supplant the intellectual primacy of neoclassical economics’ (Kuonqui 2006, 2, 34). There was some discussion of ‘agency’ in the ‘capabilities’ debates, but either in such a general or a liberal sense as to pose little challenge to the very specific means prescribed by neoliberal or ‘Washington Consensus’ doctrine, particularly as regards the state. The methodological individualism of ‘capabilities’ ideas remained ‘tied to the fundamentals of neoclassical economic thought, sharing many of its values [and] assumptions’ (Kuonqui 2006, 35). Indeed, this was one of the great diplomatic achievements of what have been called the ‘message entrepreneurs’ who steered through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Hulme and Fukudu-Parr 2009, 15). While the MDGs adopted many human development concepts and measures, they were either silent on the means or adopted some quite specific neoliberal means.

Some worried that the MDGs mixed their goals with ‘means’ (Khoo 2005, 46–47). A more direct attack came from Samir Amin, who branded the MDG project ‘part of a series of discourses that are intended to legitimize the policies and practices implemented by dominant capital and those who support it’ (Amin 2006). While many of the MDGs (e.g. on poverty, hunger and education) were ‘unobjectionable’, they asserted that neoliberal methods were ‘perfectly compatible with’, indeed the preferred path to

achieving, those goals. The eighth goal linked ‘global partnerships’ to privatizations (now often referred to as one element of ‘public private partnerships’) and to the notion of an ‘open and multilateral commercial and financial system’, the same agenda pushed by the big powers and resisted by most developing countries at the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Amin 2006). Many of these decent goals had been around for some time, but had been crippled by neoliberal methods. For example, the second goal of ‘universal primary education’ had been championed by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) since 1960, but was undermined by school fee regimes, privatizations and cuts to public expenditure. Similarly, goals four, five and six (to reduce death by infectious diseases and amongst children and mothers) had been promoted by the WHO since its 1978 ‘health for all’ declaration, yet had also been undermined by privatizations, user pays regimes for health services and the strong intellectual property rights claims of multi-national pharmaceutical companies. It would require a strong state, committed to effective public health – including the steady and substantial training of health workers and the creation of a universal health service system – to resist such pressure. Finally, the linking of ‘sustainable development’ to this overall project was an absurdity, said Amin, ‘since capitalist strategy is founded on the concept of rapid discounting of economic time’, whereas sustainability notions always apply to the longer term (Amin 2006).

The most powerful prescription of means came in the eighth goal of the MDGs, on ‘partnerships for development’, which re-asserts the need for privatizations, liberalized trade and finance and access to new technologies ‘in cooperation with the private sector’. This is to be alongside ‘more generous’ (but corporate dominated) foreign aid; progress in ‘debt relief’ (but linked to removing controls on foreign capital); ‘decent and productive work for youth’ (but implicitly subject to weakened trade unions and liberalized labor markets) and providing ‘access to affordable essential drugs’ (yet with many of these prices tied to the monopoly pricing practices of corporate patent holders under strong intellectual property rights regimes). This was a strange mix of goals and mechanisms, and one which seems to allow little room for distinct approaches to old problems.

One can agree with Amin that there is an incompatibility between these neoliberal means and the decent goals of the MDGs, and that a powerful project lies behind them. However, that is not the same as saying the MDGs simply represent ‘commandments drafted in the imperialist centres’, and which have no future (Amin 2006). First, the human development ideas incorporated by the MDGs were drafted at the UNDP, mainly by intellectuals from developing countries. They are thus ideas co-opted rather than created by an imperial project, adding incoherence and tension to that project. Second, the actual goals are

separable from the neoliberal means and can be progressively ‘delinked’. For example, the fact that Cuba has achieved the best health outcomes in the developing world through a well-coordinated public health system, without privatizations (Spiegel and Yassi 2004; Kirk and Erisman 2009), can be used to defend the value of public health systems. Third, the MDGs’ wider focus on hunger, education, health and environmental sustainability, above simple growth in GDP, actually ‘rings a bell’ in the developing world. Although the big powers may have staked a claim in them, the MDGs are not the same as the ‘open market’ ideas of the WTO. Despite their incoherence, they do represent common and desirable ideals.

Yet social agency requires attention. Those who created the MDGs had ‘argued for a shift away from [neoliberal] structural adjustment but did not refute a market-based approach to development ... [and] as a result the institutionalization of the norm did not really lead to substantial change in policy approaches’ (Hulme and Fukuda-Parr 2009, 31). Putting it another way, Fukuda-Parr (2011, 130) observes that the consensus on the MDGs was relatively easy to achieve because ‘it was devoid of causative ideas’, well at least of *new* causative ideas. That is why human development needs revision as to its principal *means*.

The concept of ‘human capital’, for all its limitations, at least made the link between the development of individual capacity and the social process of production. Yet production, in turn, represents only one aspect of society. What of broader social organization and the role of the state? The state typically facilitates the agendas of those that control it: with strong elite control, the state facilitates elite agendas; if it embodies strong popular will, there can be popular agendas. From a liberal perspective, the state is usually said to be an obstacle to individual and market freedoms. Yet in developing countries, the state plays an absolutely central role in the formation, and often also the deployment, of human capacity. It seems important, then, to pay more attention to the agency of social institutions, and in particular the post-colonial state, while vindicating the broader ethical, social and participatory character of human development.

2. The state and participation

Any form of social organization which helps shape foundational human capacity – such as nutrition, shelter, education and health – necessarily draws on social aims and objectives; and these, in turn, generally demand state mobilization. What other social agency can foment mass education and health? Conversely, why would a state do so unless driven by social demands? While education represents an extension of individual human potential, a mass education which embodies strong social values only develops when linked to strong social agency

motivated by social aims. The wider elements of human empowerment – such as communications and a democratic and broader social participation capacity – must develop from such a base.

A generally strong state is often posited as contradicting genuine popular participation. Indeed, there is ample evidence of this. Despotic and authoritarian states often trample on social participation. Furthermore, and contrary to the liberal image, this also occurs in ‘liberal’ regimes. The strong state associated with ‘open market’ capitalism often represses social participation, due to the demands of powerful investor groups. Polanyi (1944) made this point many years ago: powerful economic players demand state action to open markets and repress forces of social protection. Yet this repression, in its own way, is also the expression of a social project, that of privileged social networks of private investors. With such histories, why should we imagine that post-colonial aspirations for human capacity building do not also require a strong state?

But what sort of strong state? States in the former colonies have been undermined by processes of neoliberal globalization (Hirsch 1997, 45–46), and challenged as ‘providers of public goods and (a key) source of legitimacy’ (Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2009, 6). In turn, states ‘weak’ in key functions (as opposed to weak in a military or authoritarian sense) have been portrayed as security threats to large and powerful states, presenting rationales for ‘assistance’ and, at times, intervention (Rice and Patrick 2008, 4, 21–24). These recent developments point to the contemporary vulnerability of post-colonial states.

The longer standing notion of a ‘developmental state’ has been spoken of in economically productive terms, but much less so in terms of human development. Johnson (1982) introduced the idea of a ‘capitalist developmental state’, with reference to the successful post-war industrialization of Japan. With a commitment to private property and the market, this authoritarian state minimized welfarist goals and guided a group of large corporations in strategic investment and industrial production. Johnson wanted to contrast ‘East Asian soft authoritarianism’, as a capitalist means to ‘an economic end’, with Eastern European socialist authoritarianism, which he claimed was ‘an end in itself’ (Johnson 1986, 564). Amsden (1989), referring to the experience of South Korea, spoke of this as a ‘guided market’ approach in which the logic of open markets was constrained by the priority given to industrialization, and of building new ‘comparative advantage’. Indeed, through the state, which was ‘by far the most important player in capital formation’ (Amsden 2001, 127), the comparative advantages of developing countries could be ‘stretched’, principally by building labor force skills (Wade 1992, 297–298). Amsden saw ‘economic development’ as ‘the process of moving from a set of assets based on primary products, exploited by unskilled labor,

to a set of assets based on knowledge, exploited by skilled labor' (Amsden 2001, 2). Yet behind this classical focus on production lay, the assumption that human capacity was central to building and improving 'comparative advantage', and in turn linked to an assertion that the developmental state was the key agency in bringing about this change. The state thus had to be strong in the sense of its commitment to building and directing human and productive capacity, albeit in a capitalist sense. This has been called an 'authoritarian corporatism', in that it excludes labor and broader social participation, but wields 'infrastructural' or systemic, rather than despotic, state power (Öniş 1991, 118, 123). A strong state was required, but for a defined purpose.

Developmental states have been described in more inclusive democracies, such as contemporary Venezuela and in small island nations such as Mauritius (Sandbrook 2005). In the former case, a new constitution and a strong yet democratic government reclaimed control of industries and natural resources and used these to generate new forms of social participation, including huge education, health and housing programs (Wilpert 2005; Burbach and Piñeiro 2007). In the latter case, a former French and British colony managed to escape dependency on plantation sugar and moved into a more diverse, capitalist model, with strong development of education and health, in a process said to require a 'capable and relatively autonomous state bureaucracy' (Meisenhelder 1997).

The focus of the 'developmental state' idea has remained on production, and the suggested compromises this poses for the liberal ideal of a minimalist state alongside strongly increased industrial capacity. Although the idea downplays human development, it maintains a focus on social dynamics and cross-linkages (UNCTAD 1998; Toner 1999), while drawing attention to the role of the state in building human capital.

However, while 'developmental state' ideas can provide a dynamic explanation for the development of productive capacity, they do not provide the full social picture. They describe the role of the state in mobilizing human resources. Yet they do not address the human development ends of education and training or those of industrial development. The idea of a developmental state obiliz on industrialization draws our attention to the need for a clear vision and a mobilized political will to build a well-trained industrial workforce. It is a concept which needs broadening to match the humanist focus on the means and ends of development. We are speaking here of a 'human development enabling state', committed to the construction and defence of foundational human capacity, for example in nutrition, shelter, education and health.

What might this mean in practical terms? We need to take a step backwards from human development measures, which mostly avoid means to assess outcomes, and consider the key functions of a 'human development enabling

state'. The best starting points are in education and health. In education, we know there has been a retreat from repeated commitments made, since the 1960s, to 'free, universal and compulsory' primary education; and that secondary education drop-out rates shoot upwards when fee regimes remain or are imposed (Tomasevski 2006). At the same time, it is clear that the state bears the main responsibility for teacher training and support of universal education. In this regard, we can find some indication of positive state action in the UNDP measures of teacher-student ratios, or 'primary teachers trained to teach' (UNDP 2011, Table 9; UNDP 2013, Table 8), since the state remains the main teacher trainer. The commitment to education through public education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure (UNDP 2009, Table N) is also relevant, at least 'in the breach', because proportionately small expenditure on education (for example less than 10% of a budget) is the sign of a low priority to education. However, differing cost structures, 'social wages' and population growth rates make it difficult to suggest particular benchmarks. In health, a state's role in guaranteeing 'universal health coverage' has become a new and appropriate focus of concern (WHO 2014), given that countries with universal service coverage (and those with a high proportion of public health expenditure) have generally better health outcomes (Anderson 2006, 250). Yet, once again, it is more a case of low proportions of public expenditure indicating a low priority to public health, than 'more public spending is good'. Better indicators of a state's commitment to health care might be seen in levels of child immunization and 'births attended by skilled health personnel' (UNDP 2007–2008, Table 6), as the state sector always carries the burden of preventive health and universal access regimes produce demonstrably better maternal and infant mortality outcomes (De Brouwere and Van Lerberghe 2001). Through such reasoning we can see the measure a 'human development enabling state'. The potential of state agency to drive human development is well established. One example often given to illustrate the broader benefits of education, even when there may be little economic advantage, comes from the Indian state of Kerala. At independence, Kerala had a literacy rate three times that of the Indian average (GOI 2005; GOK 2006). A post-colonial state built on that advantage. The British neglected mass education in Kerala, as in the rest of colonial India, yet a competitive foment between churches and private and indigenous schools managed to lift schooling amongst the privileged classes in Kerala, in the colonial era (Gopinathan Nair 1976, 31–37). After independence, sustained investment and the commitment to free education by a Marxist state government – against significant central government opposition – brought in the excluded classes, both lifting and entrenching Kerala's superiority in education (Lieten 1977, 4–8). Fulfillment of the post-colonial aspirations of

mass education, along with a lifting of health, nutritional and gender equity standards, received a substantial push from a determined state. Fifty years later, average incomes in Kerala were almost the same as the Indian average, but people in that state had a 12-year greater life expectancy, gender disparities were much lower and there were vastly superior indicators of sanitation, access to clean water and well-nourished children (GOK 2003). More recent research across a large number of countries confirms the powerful impact education, and particularly women's education, can have on a range of critical health indicators (Wang et al. 1999). The Kerala example makes a powerful point about the broader social value of education; but it also tells us something about social agency and the role of the state.

The state remains the principal means by which longer term investment in mass education and health can build both human capacity and strategic advantage for a former colony. Yet this requires substantial political will, especially in a world with big power ideology which – often in the name of ‘open markets’ and in pursuit of natural resources – seeks to disqualify independent political will. Yet neither ‘open markets’ nor resource endowment form the basis of superior development experience. It is notable, for example, that resource poor, island states such as Japan, Singapore and Cuba, with very different social systems, have made great advances through strong states committed to building human capacity. Japan became an industrial power despite being crushed by war, having virtually no energy resources and very limited arable land (Johnson 1982). Singapore, a former colony with few material resources (it even has to import fresh water) became an important financial and commercial hub, with first world per capita incomes. The small island state was socially and politically authoritarian, but also invested heavily in education and directed the build-up of a skilled labor force, as the basis for its successful industrial development (Grice and Drakakis-Smith 1985). Likewise Cuba, with limited natural resources and a hostile super-power obiliza, gave a great priority to public education and health, building up specialist centers in biotechnology, medicines and health services, on the back of its large and well-trained health sector workforce. Cuba now has the best health indicators in the developing world, is the world's top provider of health aid and health training programs and has developed considerable commercial advantage from its health sector (Kirk and Erisman 2009). These three very different countries had one thing in common: they built distinct futures through well organized states which were committed to sustained, longer term investment in their own people. Unique ‘comparative advantages’ were later shaped from this ‘leavened’ human capacity.

While often contradicted by liberal and syndicalist theory, demand in the post-colonial world for strong ‘human development enabling’ states is well established.

Sengupta (2002, 846) points out that ‘rights based’ development is identified ‘as a participatory, non-discriminatory, accountable and transparent process with equity in decision-making and sharing the fruits of progress; and that ‘the primary responsibility for implementing this right to development belongs to states’. The United Nations’ Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) makes this clear. States are expected to ensure ‘equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income’. The state is entrusted with lifting the living standards and well-being ‘of the entire population’, and of developing ‘equitable’ and ‘participatory’ processes of development (Sengupta 2002, 847–848, 853). This is not the liberal idea of a minimalist state getting out of the way of the free exercise of individual or market freedoms, but rather of a protagonistic ‘human development enabling’ state, acting to build human capacity and create opportunities for social democracy: that is, an active participation of citizens in all spheres of life. How else might small and resource poor countries develop in a world of big powers?

As well as building basic human capacity a state committed to human development, given appropriate focus and mobilization of political will, can and should facilitate social participation. This is a feature of transformative social democracy which has been made explicit in the principles of the ‘Right to Development’; but it is still poorly recognized. Post-colonial states face both neomarxist and liberal critiques. The former, based on European observation and experience, suggests that western states are mostly ‘captured’ by capitalist elites (Poulantzas 1973) and so cannot really lead or form part of an emancipatory process. The state is said to only have ‘relative autonomy’ of action from the demands of the dominant investor groups and, as a result, wider social participation is heavily constrained. In liberal traditions, it is suggested that an assertive state is more likely to be an obstacle to both market and individual liberties (Hayek 1944; Friedman and Friedman 1981). In both cases, a simple polemic is often suggested of ‘bottom up’ versus ‘top down’ processes of development and change, rather than any effective combination of state and popular will.

Yet in developing countries, the state is still seen as central, not only to industrial development, but also to human development and social participation. In 1999, Fantu Cheru repeated what Hirsch (1997, 45–46) had earlier said: the major problem arising from neoliberal policies of ‘structural adjustment’ in the 1980s and 1990s had been a weakening of the role of the state: ‘The most crucial impact of globalization ... has been on the role of the state in national development ... the state no longer primarily acts as a buffer against the world economy’ (Cheru 1999, par 33). ‘Washington Consensus’ policies, administered by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

(IMF), had used debt to weaken the capacity of the state to control multi-national corporations. Cheru said that ‘equitable economic growth’ required a ‘strong cooperation between both the state and civil society’ (Cheru 1999, par 131). That pressure could only be resisted by a state with significant capacity and commitment to key human development goals.

To these economic pressures, we might add the more direct intervention experienced by the governments of a number of post-colonial governments (to name but a few: Iran and Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973 and Honduras in 2009), which attempted independent economic policies but were unable to defend their strategy in the face of big power hostility. On the other hand, the independent, participatory initiatives in Venezuela, under the government of Hugo Chavez, show how a relatively strong state with resources and regional partnerships can encourage wider social participation and actively reduce poverty (Wilpert 2005; Burbach and Piñeiro 2007; Ellner 2009). This is not so much a question of a ‘top down versus bottom up’ social process as of attempts to forge some effective combination of state commitment and popular participation.

3. Concluding remarks

This has been a conceptual paper which sought to discuss and illustrate its ideas, rather than prove them. It argued that states which do not promote social participation, or which no longer do so, lose both popular legitimacy and their potential as ‘human development enabling’ agencies. Liberals, syndicalists and neomarxists constantly stress the deficiencies of the state as a progressive agency. Notwithstanding the inevitable problems of corruption, replication of elite agendas and other forms of dysfunction, independent public institutions must be built and defended. The idea that, in the former colonies, strong states and substantial public sectors are antithetical to human development and social participation is misguided.

The paper argues that human development must be seen as a broad, emancipatory and social process. Independent human development paths require the cultivation of individual freedoms alongside, and through, social processes led by a strong state, committed to building human capacity and fomenting high levels of social participation. This is not an argument for despotic power but rather for sustained state investment in the greatest resource any nation has, its people, and to defend that commitment in the face of competing claims, in particular those from privileged groups. The state retains the central role in building foundational human capacity, such as in public institutions of health and education. Only a determined body politic can commit the necessary resources and priorities to long-term human development projects such as teacher training, wide regimes of education and training and universal health coverage. A strong ‘human development enabling’ state is

also necessary to build broader social participation on that basis in foundational human capacity. This is not a paradox but a necessary combination.

For the post-colonial nation, how can human development be strongly developed and hegemonic forces resisted with weak public institutions? The need for, and desirability of, a strong ‘human development enabling’ state can be seen in a range of historical experience and is reinforced by the Declaration on the Right to Development. A powerful and effective post-colonial state is even more vital as populations become more highly educated and socially conscious. This wider view of human development, deepening democracy with active state-civil society partnerships, might come to be seen as a social democratic project in a neoliberal era.

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