

INTRODUCTION

A Highly Unequal World: Poverty and Inequality

We live in a world characterized by major contrasts and differences. Although those who live in the rich countries of the world may not have reason to think about it every day, grinding poverty and poor living conditions are two of the major characteristics of the globe, not affluence and wealth. On the other hand, within the rich countries of the world the early twenty-first century has come to be characterized by a small minority of the population earning vast salaries, owning and controlling inordinate resources, and living implausibly and – to some at least – unacceptably affluent lifestyles. In a nutshell, these few observations represent the central topics of concern of *Key Concepts in Development Geography*: the global incidence of mass poverty and wide inequalities.

At one end of the spectrum we witness the worlds of celebrity, fame and success, where sportsmen and women, entertainers, and successful business people and bankers can command incomes that run into multiple millions of pounds or dollars per annum, that is multiple thousands of pounds or dollars per week. In some parts of the media we are bombarded on an almost daily basis with images of megastars and celebrities, and in many quarters of the media, an overwhelming emphasis is placed on conspicuous consumption. At the other extreme, a recent study carried out by the World Institute for Development Economics Research (2006) on behalf of the United Nations showed that 50 per cent of the world's total population owned total assets of less than \$2,200 and collectively accounted for only one per cent of the world's total wealth. As we shall see later in this book, over half the world's population is currently to be found living on just over US\$2 per day or less.

The same study undertaken by the World Institute for Development Economics Research (2006) showed that, viewed in terms of the standards of rich countries, you did not have to own very much in the way of resources to be part of the richest population group on earth. Their

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investigations showed that owning assets worth US\$500,000 or more, or about £350,000 plus, put you into the richest one per cent of people on the planet. This top one per cent was in control of some 40 per cent of the world's total wealth. The percentage distribution of the world's elite wealthiest one per cent was: the USA (37 per cent), Japan (27 per cent), UK (6 per cent), France (5 per cent), Germany (4 per cent), Italy (4 per cent), the Netherlands (2 per cent) and Canada (2 per cent). The rest of the world's countries accounted for only 13 per cent of the richest people on earth.

2 These massive contrasts in the basic human condition at the global level are exemplified by economic events over the last few years. Notably, the economic and banking crashes and linked recession experienced in the wealthy global North since 2008 have been directly linked to huge profits, million pound pension payments and bonuses made to some of those who are already astoundingly rich. In the meantime, this disastrous economic downturn has seen the world's poor majority getting relatively poorer, especially those living in the poor world or global South. In addition the huge profits made in the rich world or global North by banks and other financial institutions are the direct outcome of speculation on the world's money markets, with such speculation – along with all other forms of neoliberal deregulation (the freeing-up of markets) – being the prime mechanism in creating global economic instability, and thus poverty. Understanding the global system requires an understanding of the underpinnings of these key issues and concepts, and this is exactly what *Key Concepts in Development Geography* seeks to provide for the interested student.

This book follows closely the rationale provided for the Key Concepts in Human Geography series as a whole, offering upper level students a comprehensive introduction to this vital and increasingly important area of the discipline dealing with global inequalities and the incidence of global poverty. It may be argued that in the past, development geography and the cognate multidisciplinary area of development studies showed signs of being treated as the 'Cinderella' of the discipline of geography in particular and the social sciences in general – that is, an area the importance of which has been generally downgraded. The current pace and depth of globalization and the spread of the canons of the free market or neoliberal order in a world which is becoming markedly more unequal – and many would say



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unjust – means that it is vital to include development-related work at the core of the curriculum.

The Nature and Scope of Development

So what exactly is implied by the word ‘development’? Following the account above it can be ventured that, at a basic level, development is about improving the life conditions that are faced by the global majority, and specifically this means reducing existing levels of poverty and inequality at the world scale. A more detailed working definition of development might be adopted that stresses development as attempts to reduce poverty and world inequalities in an effort to guide the world to a situation of betterment and improvement over time (see Kothari, 2005; Potter et al., 2008). For example, the issues surrounding what development means and how it can be assessed and measured are the specific concerns of Section 1 of this book.

Although systematic efforts to improve conditions for the poor, disadvantaged and excluded majority may be said to date from the 1940s, from the dawn of civilization, presumably, some members of society have endeavoured to guide change in ways that might help improve the lives of members of the general population, and in that direct sense were trying to guide development and improve human welfare (Potter and Conway, 2011). The essence of development is that there is a poor world and there is a rich world, and it is implicit that it is the responsibility of the latter to assist the former. In other words, there is a pressing ethical need to equalize the highly disparate conditions that currently exist in the poor and rich worlds. The key concepts and ideas behind this pressing task represent the focus of this book.

Development, however, is also a practical subject and nations, international agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations are all involved in the policy-related process of trying to promote development on the ground. Combined, the practice of development and the concepts that underlie such practice give rise to what is referred to as the broad arena of ‘development studies’. Development studies represents theoretical, empirical and policy-related studies concerning how development has been, and should be, implemented. Development studies has its origins in the 1940s, when



development became an overt aim of Western or advanced states – those of Europe and North America.

The Cross-Disciplinary Field of Development Studies

The rise of development studies as an academic subject that can be studied at university dates from the 1960s. In a review of the history of the field, Harriss (2005) puts its origins in the work of a number of mainly British economists and other social scientists who were unhappy with the insights that were being provided at that time by existing social science subjects, notably traditional or classical economics. These traditional approaches emphasized the importance of quantitative paths to the study of societies and economies. These approaches were seen as reflecting a positivist orthodoxy in the social sciences at that time, which stressed the importance of hypothesis testing and statistical verification as the paramount sources for knowledge.

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At this juncture the ‘new universities’ were being established in the United Kingdom and were premised on the idea of ‘doing things differently’. In particular, the new universities were keen to promote multi- and interdisciplinary studies that cut across the boundaries of traditional disciplines. Changes in both thinking and practice at this point were also closely linked with the growth of radical Marxist approaches in the 1960s (Harriss, 2005; Kothari, 2005). The Institute of Development Studies was established at the University of Sussex in 1966 and represented a founding institution. Seven years later in 1973 the first undergraduate teaching programme in the field opened at the University of East Anglia. Development studies has spread as an academic discipline to other universities such as Oxford, Manchester, Bath, SOAS London, LSE and Birmingham among others, and has remained quite strongly British. In the words of Harriss (2005: 18): ‘(d)velopment studies has been, institutionally, a distinctively British and to a lesser extent other European field of study’. Of course, as we shall see in several chapters of this book, over the years, scholars from developing countries have made fundamental contributions. However, the field still means relatively little in the USA, for



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example, although similar issues are studied in cognate fields such as international relations, politics, economics and, of course, geography.

It can be argued that rather than being either inter- or multidisciplinary, development studies is cross-disciplinary in nature in that it serves to bring together a large number of fields in the study of poverty and inequality. This is represented in graphical summary form in Figure 1. Following what we said earlier in the chapter, the core concern of development studies may be seen as the existence and seemingly inexorable deepening of global poverty and inequality. In its early stages, 'breakaway' economists were strongly involved in the rise of development studies. Reflecting this in the core discipline, a distinct sub-discipline within economics can be recognized that is now conventionally referred to as 'development economics' (Figure 1). Geographers, with their strong tradition of regional and area studies, represented another area of involvement and interest (Figure 1). In the same way as in the case of economics, the rise of 'development geography' can be recognized.

Other mainstream social science disciplines such as politics and sociology also contributed to the rise of development studies and equally came to be characterized by home disciplinary patches, known respectively as the sociology of development and the politics of development (Figure 1). Attesting to the truly cross-disciplinary character of the field, subjects such as demography, international relations, anthropology and history, and urban and regional planning should also be identified as making a distinct contribution to development studies (Figure 1).

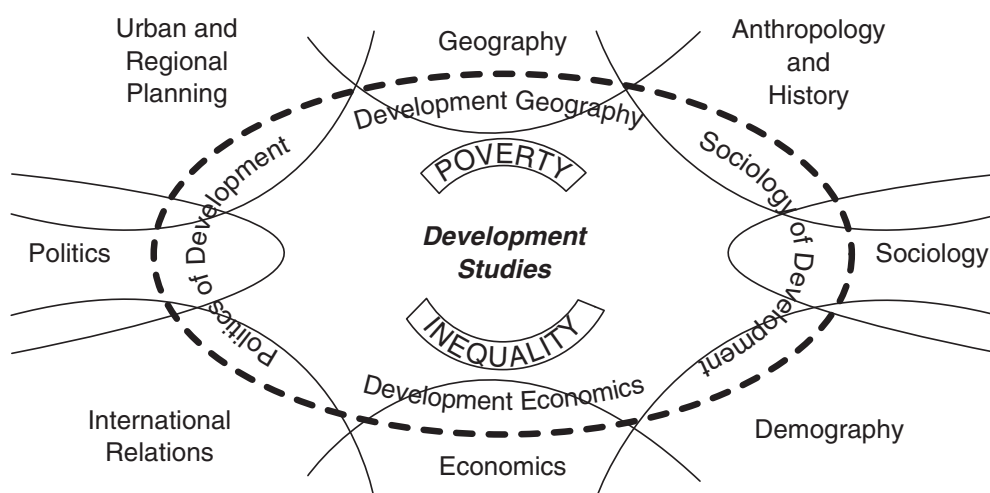


Figure 1 The cross-disciplinary field of Development Studies



Development, Development Geography and Development Studies

This book aims to present the key concepts involved in development studies and practical development policy to geographers taking courses broadly defined as development geography or development studies. But, given the cross-disciplinary nature of the field, the volume should also prove useful for all those students taking components of the various disciplines shown in Figure 1 that focus on the development process, as well as other subjects which are not shown on the figure for reasons of space (for example, the fields of law, gender studies and so on).

In a recent essay, Potter and Conway (2011) summarized the evolution of thinking about development in relation to the advancement of geography as a discipline since the 1940s and the emergence of development studies as a field in the 1960s. Presented in summary terms, such an account is useful in that it serves to stress the similarities and differences in focus that have characterized development practice, development geography and development studies over the last sixty years or so. In doing this, it provides a broad-brush introduction to many of the concepts and ideas that are considered in the main body of this book. We shall now briefly summarize events on a decade-by-decade basis.

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The 1940s

The modern roots of development practice can be traced to the period immediately following World War II and to the inaugural speech made by United States President Truman in 1947. In this speech Truman effectively stated that it was the responsibility of rich nations such as the United States and those of Europe to develop poorer countries in their own image. In this period, during which development was emerging, geography was characterized by forms of development-oriented enquiry which might be described as 'colonial', 'military', 'tropical' and 'regional' geographies. Interest in the 'great overseas' had been stimulated initially by consideration of the countries making up the British Empire under colonialism. Then, between 1939 and 1945, a number of British geographers travelled to countries such as Singapore, Egypt, India and Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) as part of their wartime military service. The main statement on development came with the publication of the French geographer Pierre Gourou's (1947) text



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Tropical Geography. Of course, aspects of development had always formed part of the bread and butter of the discipline, in the guise of regional geography; however, as already noted, there was no separate field of development studies per se at this juncture.

The 1950s

The decade of the 1950s was strongly involved with post-war reconstruction and economic development. The ultimate goal was seen as being the application of the historical-development experience of the rich nations in the development of the poorer nations. During this period development policy came to be strongly associated with traditional (classical) economic theory. This was largely based on classical and neoclassical economic theory and emphasized the importance of 'liberalizing', or freeing-up world trade at the global level. At the national level, the approach mainly advocated concentrating development around natural growth poles. At this time, underdevelopment was regarded as an initial state beyond which Western industrial nations had managed to progress. It was envisaged that the experience of the West could assist other countries in catching-up, by sharing capital and technology. Thus, the approach was very much a Western one and was very top-down. In the academic field of geography, the period was associated with the spread of what is still referred to as the 'new geography'. This was based on the search for generalized explanations of the real world by means of the development of models and the use of quantitatively-derived generalizations and laws.

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The 1960s

The 1960s saw the emergence of radical political perspectives within both society as a whole as well as within mainstream social science subjects, albeit to a greater or lesser extent. A major development was the emergence of what came to be called 'dependency theory', which had its roots in Latin American and Caribbean development. Dependency theory essentially argued that the global pattern of Western-dominated development had served to keep the poor world poor, rather than serving to aid its accelerated development. Dependency theory thereby represented an almost complete rebuttal of classical and neoclassical economic approaches to the challenges of development. It argued that less-developed countries would do better to de-link from the developed



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world and to follow an alternative development path. Despite this radical ferment in the wider social sciences in the 1960s, by contrast, it was the quantitative revolution that was coming to full fruition in the academic field of geography. But by this time the seeds were already being sown for the development of cross-disciplinary development studies, as already noted in terms of the establishment of the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex in 1966.

The 1970s

It was the early 1970s that saw the emergence of more radical approaches in the field of geography. A landmark publication was David Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* in 1973. The analyses of Harvey and others gave rise to an increasing acceptance of political-economic, or structuralist approaches in human geography by the mid-1970s. Such an orientation was more encouraging to the emergence of a distinct development geography as a sub-discipline, although the term itself was little used at that stage. In a further series of developments, dissatisfaction with the quantitative revolution gave rise to avowedly humanistic approaches in the field of geography, which stressed the subjectivity of phenomena and knowledge. At the same time, alternative and more humanistic-orientated approaches were coming to influence thinking about development practice in what is often referred to as the emergence of 'another development'. This was anchored in a growing critique of urban-based, top-down, centre-out neoclassically inspired development policies. It was at this very juncture that, as already noted, the first development studies undergraduate degree programme was introduced at the University of East Anglia in 1973.

The 1980s

In the 1980s development practice and policy were broadly characterized by the rise of what can be referred to as the 'New Right' in Europe and 'Neoconservatism' in the United States. This is also referred to as the rise of the neoliberal agenda, the strong view that liberal free trade and unregulated free markets should be left to make economic decisions and that they would do so rationally and effectively. Thus the New Right sang the praises of the unrestrained power of the unregulated free market. In Britain, full-blown neoliberalism came in the form of



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Margaret Thatcher's 'popular capitalism', and in the United States it was witnessed by President Reagan's 'Reaganomics'. Both Thatcher and Reagan pushed for the extension of private-market inspired controls into the public sector. While development studies can be seen to have started to consolidate as a field during the 1980s, and despite the emergence of common concerns between geography and development studies at this time, the focus of geography remained firmly in the fields of cultural and historical geography and the accent was placed mainly on Europe and North America. Surveys carried out at the time showed that what could be recognized as development geography was at best taught by one specialist member of staff in the majority of British geography departments (Potter and Unwin, 1988; Unwin and Potter, 1992).

The 1990s

Postmodernism emerged as an alternative paradigm for the social sciences at the start of the decade. The approach was associated with the rejection of meta-theories and meta-narratives – that is, the big explanations and big ideas that had come to be associated with modernizing as the inevitable and invariant path to development and change. Instead, postmodernism suggested that emphasis should be placed on a wide range of possibly discordant and even contradictory views, voices and discourses. Thus, 'development' was one of the very meta-narratives that was to be questioned, giving rise to what have been referred to as 'anti', 'post' and 'beyond' development stances. In particular at this juncture the question asked was whether the 'development mission', as posed in the 1940s, 1950s and beyond, could ever have been successful given its essentially Eurocentric stance and origins in Western experience and thought. In short, the move toward a distinctly postmodern turn might be interpreted as having given rise to doubts, uncertainties and reflections in both development studies and development geography. In that sense, the 1990s can be seen as having given rise to something of a greater degree of possible commonality between geography and development studies as academic fields. However, there is a critical, alternative interpretation of postmodernity, one that argues it is nothing more than the next logical stage in the progress of modernity. Such a view sees postmodernity as the latest manifestation of late capitalism, seeing individual and group choice being hailed and promoted in an essentially free market setting.



The 2000s

Potter and Conway (2011) argue from the point of view of geography as an overall discipline, that, since the turn of the new millennium, matters seem to have been changing for the better and that there have emerged some grounds for optimism, both within the discipline and the development establishment more generally. Thus, there have been definite signs of a more positive view of development-related issues in geography as a discipline, albeit born out of the pressing global developmental–geo-political crises the world currently faces: ‘(t)he world is now so deeply unequal that the need for a truly global geography has never been greater’ (Potter and Conway, 2011: 607). There are the signs that the geographical study of critical development-oriented issues is starting to become more valued and central to geography as a whole. This certainly needs to be the case in the twenty-first century, as an era that faces the pressing realities of the global financial crisis, the other geographical realities of unregulated and unruly globalization, transnationality, global conflict, and environmental change – in particular, climate change.

Structure and Scope of this Book

As already noted, *Key Concepts in Development Geography* aims to foster an understanding of the pressing development issues that are being faced globally, in the twenty-first century, among those studying development geography, development studies and cognate fields. It seeks to do this by means of twenty-four concise and carefully presented essays, each of around 2,500 words. Although standard format textbooks have their place – and there are now some well-established ones in the field of development geography (Willis 2005; Potter et al., 2008; Chant and McIlwaine, 2009; Williams et al., 2009) – it is increasingly appreciated that undergraduates often find particularly useful, relatively short and focused essays that present the key issues they seek to understand. This has been demonstrated by the publication of a number of successful companion volumes and readers (see, for example, Chari and Corbridge, 2008; Desai and Potter, 2008); but where these seek to be highly comprehensive, rather than being limited to key themes and ideas, they too become rather large, expensive and over-inclusive for mass purchase within the undergraduate market.



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The text of this book is divided into five clear sections. The first two deal with the basic concepts that form the foundations of development geography: the first with the nature and meanings of development and the second with the theory and practice of development. Thus, Section 1 covers key concepts such as the definition and measurement of development, the spatial nature of development issues, the definitions and measurement of poverty and the Millennium Development Goals as a framework for future progress in development. Section 2 covers key concepts such as modernity, postmodernity and post-structuralism, radical development theory, neoliberalism and globalization, the development imperatives of global institutions and sustainable development. In Section 3, the focus is placed on work and employment, covering the vitally important topics of rural livelihoods, industrialization and the New Division of Labour, the informal sector, the digital economy and global trade, aid and regulation. This is then followed in Section 4 by a focus on the interconnections between people, culture and development. In this, key concepts such as gender, households, children, youth and development, health, disability, sexualities and ageing are examined in relation to the process of development and change. In order to round off the volume, a number of cutting-edge contemporary issues in development are reviewed in Section 5 – ranging from human rights and culture, issues of transnationality and diaspora, to civil society and social capital, and to the call for Tobin-type taxes to tackle speculative trading on global markets – and in so doing, to raise money for core aspects of development, such as universal primary education.

