

# IDS Bulletin

Transforming Development Knowledge

Volume 47 | Number 2A | November 2016

## STATES, MARKETS AND SOCIETY – NEW RELATIONSHIPS FOR A NEW DEVELOPMENT ERA

Editor **Melissa Leach**



<b>Notes on Contributors</b>	iii
<b>Introduction: States, Markets and Society – Looking Back to Look Forward</b> Melissa Leach	1
<b>PART I: LOOKING BACK – ARCHIVE ARTICLES</b>	
<b>Politics, Class and Development (Editorial)</b> Robin Luckham <i>Article first published January 1977, IDSB9.1</i>	19
<b>The Retreat of the State (Editorial Introduction)</b> John Dearlove and Gordon White <i>Article first published July 1987, IDSB18.3</i>	23
<b>Alternatives in the Restructuring of State–Society Relations: Research Issues for Tropical Africa</b> David Booth <i>Article first published October 1987, IDSB18.4</i>	29
<b>Towards a Political Analysis of Markets</b> Gordon White <i>Article first published July 1993, IDSB24.3</i>	45
<b>Strengthening Civil Society in Africa: The Role of Foreign Political Aid</b> Mark Robinson <i>Article first published May 1995, IDSB26.2</i>	59
<b>No Path to Power: Civil Society, State Services, and the Poverty of City Women</b> Hania Sholkamy <i>Article first published January 2010, IDSB41.2</i>	77
<b>PART II: LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD – NEW ARTICLES</b>	
<b>States or Markets – Twenty-Five Years On</b> Christopher Colclough	89
<b>Inequality and Exclusion in the New Era of Capital</b> Violet Barasa	93
<b>Inclusive Innovation, Development and Policy: Four Key Themes</b> Amrita Saha	101
<b><u>Consequences of Inequality for Sustainability</u></b> <b><u>Sunita Narain</u></b>	113
<b>Accelerating Sustainability: The Variations of State, Market and Society Dynamics in Diverse Contexts</b> Ramy Lotfy Hanna	117
<b>Political Challenges of Addressing Climate Change through the ‘Entrepreneurial State’</b> Rachel Godfrey-Wood	125
<b>Civil Society and Civic Engagement in a Time of Change</b> Becky Faith and Pedro Prieto-Martin	137
<b>State, Market and Society Relations: The Roaring Last Fifty Years</b> Luka Biong Deng Kuol	145
<b>State–Society Relations and the Dilemmas of the New Developmentalist State</b> Evelina Dagnino	157
<b>Back to the Future?</b> Michael Edwards	169
<b>Restoring Development <i>Dharma</i> with Toad’s Eye Science?</b> Dipak Gyawali and Michael Thompson	179
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>191</b>

# Consequences of Inequality for Sustainability

Sunita Narain

**Abstract** In this article, I argue that sustainable development is not possible without affordable and inclusive growth. Inequality and unsustainability are linked and unless the world is able to look for environmental solutions that are affordable and can meet the needs of all, these will not work.

**Keywords:** air pollution, Delhi, inequality, sustainability, water pollution, development.

Fifty years of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) marks an important opportunity to think and rethink development as the world practises it today. In this short opinion piece, I offer some reflections on the twin challenges of inequality and unsustainability, the relationship between them, and the implications for understanding and action around states, markets and society.

We currently stand at a crossroads. The challenge of unsustainable growth means that we are hurtling towards climate catastrophe, and the challenge of inequitable growth means that we are hurtling towards increased poverty, increased marginalisation and increased anger.

The problem has been that we have believed (and continue to do so with conviction) that we can practise unsustainable development and then clean it up, make the pollution go away. Or we have believed that we can make environmental management a part of growth; investment in pollution control is an economic activity after all. But these approaches do not work. We end up managing small fallouts and stay behind the problem: they are technocratic, and not political.

We have learnt that growth that is not affordable or in other words equitable, cannot be sustainable. We cannot push away the *politics of development* when we discuss sustainability.

## 1 The case of air pollution

Air pollution illustrates these points. Today, a miniscule number of people in Delhi (and indeed most other cities of the global South) drive a

car. In Delhi, the proportion is 15 per cent, but air pollution is at a very high level and the congestion has become intolerable. The question is how will Delhi combat air pollution as more and more people start to drive? What contingencies can be put in place for the remaining 85 per cent? Is there space on the road and corresponding space in the airshed?

Clearly a simple technical solution is not feasible. We cannot fix the tailpipes of individual cars. Instead we have to change the way people drive (or do not drive). We need to plan for sustainability for all, and for this we need to re-invent mobility at a scale not seen before. Without this we cannot clean our air for anybody, regardless of their economic position. It is clear that solutions must work for the poor, for them to work for the rich. In this, managing local air pollution is no different from the management of the global commons – the atmosphere mirrors the air pollution of Delhi's roads on a grand scale. Climate change cannot be mitigated unless we address issues of equity and find ways of growth that work for all, without destroying the planet.

### **2 The case of water pollution**

Indian rivers are increasingly polluted, but the question is, again, can we clean up when large numbers of people are unconnected to sanitation and do not have access to clean water? We know that the current system of water and waste management in cities like Delhi is both capital-intensive and divisive. The state has limited resources and can only invest in providing for some – and this is too often the rich and not the poor. But if only a part of the city has access to sanitation and underground sewage, pollution control will not work. The reason is simple – the treated waste of a few will be mixed with the untreated waste of many. The end result is pollution (Narain 2016: 138).

The greater the pollution, the higher the costs of cleaning the water – even the rich cannot afford the current costs of delivery of water or of taking back waste. This example therefore underlines again that solutions must work for the poor, for them to work for the rich.

### **3 States, markets and society – for whom?**

So in the next 50 years of development it is important to rethink the question of states, markets and society. In recent decades we have dismembered the state, grown the market and believed that we have empowered society. We believed that people would be the moderating voices over the market, but we forgot to ask whose society is being empowered and for what? Slowly, the circle has closed – the state–market and aspiring, consuming society have merged and become one. Anyone outside this circle has stopped being counted: these people are being slowly erased. The current state–market–society configuration is about the survival of the fittest, in a way that drives both growing inequalities, and ultimately unsustainability too.

So, in the coming years, we must also ask – deliberately and insistently – whose society are we talking about, that of the poor or that of the rich? In most settings, electoral democracy is not proving sufficient to

represent the poor; it is delayed in response, and politicians can polarise communities and still win. It is necessary but not sufficient. A further, central part of the development challenge is therefore deepening and strengthening democracy, not just for the socially connected but for all.

In conclusion, it is increasingly clear that sustainable development is not possible if it is not equitable. Growth has to be affordable and inclusive for it to be sustainable. Yet none of this will happen unless we articulate that the environmental challenge is not technocratic but political. We cannot neuter the politics of access, justice and rights and hope to fix environmental – or indeed development – problems.

### **References**

- Narain, S. (2016) 'Poverty and Environmental Inequality in India', in *World Social Science Report, Challenging Inequalities: Pathways to a Just World*, Paris: UNESCO Publishing, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002458/245825e.pdf> (accessed 11 October 2016)

This page is intentionally left blank