

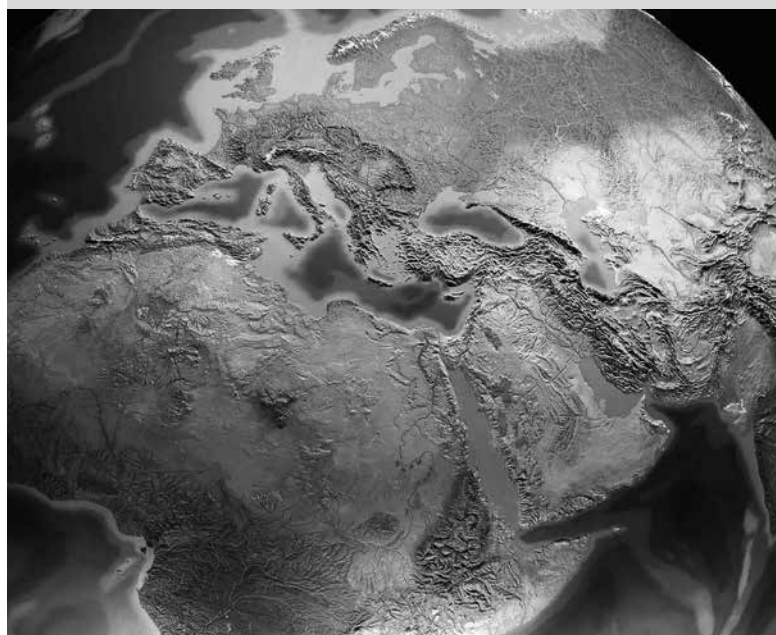
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HAS UNIVERSAL DEVELOPMENT COME OF AGE?

Editor **Richard Longhurst**



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Comparisons, Convergence and Connections

*Development Studies
in North and South*

Simon Maxwell

1. Introduction¹

My mission is to explore the issues of poverty and social exclusion across the boundary between developed and developing countries. Put briskly, the thesis is that increasing attention to poverty and social exclusion (PSE) in the North opens the possibility of fertile dialogue between North and South, on three questions of successively greater depth. First, are there new comparisons, or lessons to be drawn across geographical boundaries, about the characteristics, causes and remedies of PSE? Second, does the rapid increase in PSE in the North signal a new convergence between North and South? And third, are there theories to hand which will expose connections between PSE in North and South? The thesis is that the answer to each of these questions is 'yes': there are then exciting possibilities for a new 'mono-economics'², in which the boundaries of development studies begin to dissolve. Perhaps the Third World really is no more than a 'collective psychological delusion'³. Or does globalisation now mean that we are all developing countries?

The extent of PSE in the South needs no rehearsal here. Widespread poverty persists in developing countries, despite rapid income growth in some, and rapid improvement of social indicators in many (World Bank 1990, UNDP 1990, 1997): according to World Bank data, 1.3 billion people lived on less than \$US 1 per day in 1993, equivalent to 30 per cent of the population of the developing world.⁴ Poverty within developing countries, characterised by low income, but also by powerlessness and vulnerability, is often reported as a form of social exclusion (Chambers 1995; Shaffer 1996; ILO 1996; Gore and Figuereido 1997; UNDP 1997). And the growing disparities between rich and poor countries, associated with greater heterogeneity in the developing world, can themselves be seen as a form of social exclusion on the

¹ I am grateful to colleagues who provided comments on the draft of this paper: Arjan de Haan, Stephen Devereux, Walter Elkan, John Toye, Adrian Wood. Responsibility is mine.

² Hirschman (1981), cited by Lal (1983): 7

³ Toye (1987b): 5, citing the views of 'development counter-revolutionaries'.

⁴ This is at 1985 purchasing power parity.

international scale: Africa, in particular, is frequently represented as a continent excluded from the world economy (Berge et al. 1994).

What appears to be new is increasing poverty and social exclusion in OECD countries, associated with rising inequality, falling political participation, and the rapid growth (allegedly) of a poorly-educated and unemployed underclass. There is a growing literature (Silver 1994; Evans et al. 1995; Rodgers et al. 1995; Walker and Walker (eds) 1997). Figure 1 provides information for the UK on inequality, poverty and mortality, illustrating the growth of poverty and inequality, and the marked association between poverty, low class status, and high mortality. Figure 2 provides comparative data on poverty in the 1980s for the countries of the European Union, showing an increase in poverty in 8 of 10 countries. There is much other evidence, from Europe and North America, for example on differentials in health status (Wilkinson 1996 and in this volume), or food poverty and malnutrition (Riches (ed) 1997; Kohler et al. (eds) 1997; Dowler in this volume).

The figures for rich countries need to be kept in proportion, of course. Whereas poverty lines for poor countries are usually fixed in absolute terms, based on minimum needs, those for rich countries are normally fixed in relative terms, at half average income or similar. Thus, for developing countries, the World Bank 1990 uses a figure of \$US 1 per day per capita as a poverty line, calculated in 1985 purchasing power parity prices. By contrast, in the UK, a poverty line set at 50 per cent of average income can mean around \$US 17 per person per day, not adjusted for purchasing power parity (Oppenheim and Harker 1996: 33), clearly a very different figure. This is not to deny real hardship among the poor in the North, but rather to make the additional point that poverty is often understood in relative, social terms: in Townsend's well-known wording, as the 'lack [of] the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are *customary, or at least widely encouraged and/or approved, in the societies to which they belong*' (Townsend 1979, italics added).

These ideas have become pervasive. As Dowler, among others, makes clear in this volume, the debate in the North is not just concerned with

material well-being; it is equally focused on participation, autonomy and self-respect, classic parameters of social exclusion. Indeed, Wilkinson makes an explicit link between social exclusion/inclusion and material well-being. As he argues in this volume, relative deprivation has material consequences: inequality is associated with higher morbidity and mortality, irrespective of income level. The causal path, he suggests, is psycho-social: the powerlessness associated with inequality has direct health effects.

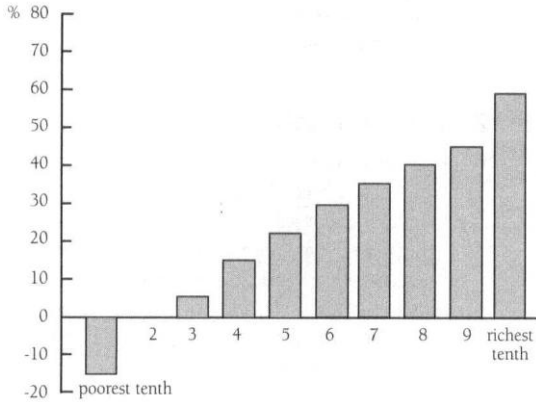
2 Comparisons

We will come below to the question of whether differences between North and South in the money equivalent of incomes accruing to the poor invalidate the search for *convergence* or *connections*. Whether they do or not, there are suggestive *comparisons* to be made, deriving on the one hand from differences in the discourse about PSE, and on the other from differences in the orientation of programmes to reduce PSE.

Take the discourse first. As far as developing countries are concerned, there has been a well-publicised dialectic between income-consumption poverty and a wider human development perspective, incorporating features of social exclusion (Shaffer 1996). The former has been associated with the World Bank (1990), with its familiar three-pronged strategy of labour-intensive growth, human resource development, and publicly-provided safety nets. The latter has been associated with UNDP (1990), which emphasises empowerment and participation, as well as income. In truth, these two visions were never as far apart as sometimes claimed (Askwith 1994). Over time, they have come closer together, with the Bank recognising the multi-dimensional nature of poverty (Hanmer et al. 1996), and UNDP the importance of growth (UNDP 1997). The common discourse has come to incorporate other elements of well-being and human development, particularly peace, good governance and participation, as ends and not just as means to the reduction of PSE. There has also been a shift away from the notion of 'jobs', towards the notion of 'livelihood', with more attention to self-employment, and to the diversity of poor people's livelihood strategies (Davies 1996, Chambers 1997).

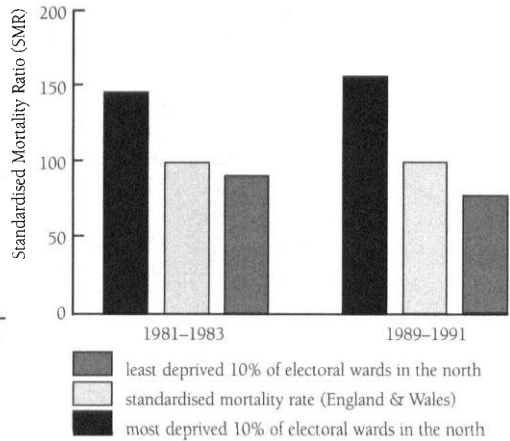
Figure 1: Poverty and inequality in the UK

A: Inequality is rising: changes in income 1979–1991/2, adjusted for household size, after housing costs



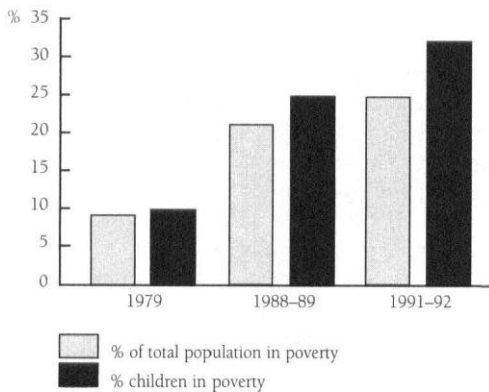
Source: 1994, *Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis 1979–1991/2*, London: HMSO

B: Dying from poverty



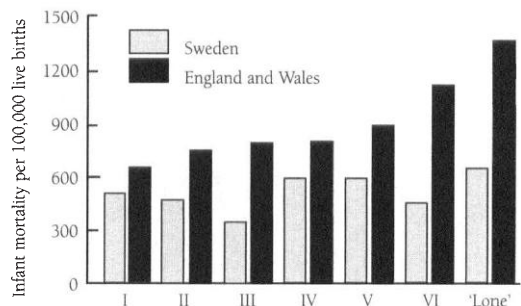
Source: P. Phillimore, A. Beattie and P. Townsend, 1994, 'Widening inequality of health in Northern England', *British Medical Journal* Vol 308

C: Poverty is rising: percentage below half average (mean) income, adjusted for household size, after housing costs



Source: 1994, *Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis 1979–1991/2*, London: HMSO

D: Infant mortality: class still counts in Britain

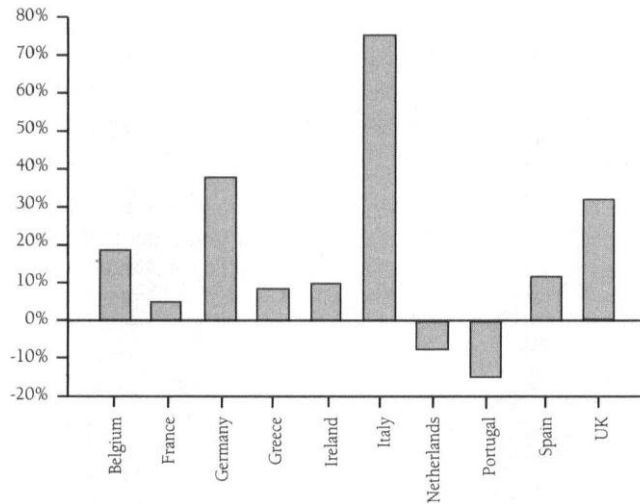


Note: 'Lone' refers to births registered in mother's name only. Social classes from I (professional) to VI (unskilled manual)

Source: D. Leon, D. Vagero and P. Otterbiad, 1992, 'Social class differences in infant mortality in Sweden: comparisons with England and Wales', *British Medical Journal* Vol 305

Cited in: Commission on Social Justice, 1994

**Figure 2: Poverty in the European Union:
percentage change of persons in poverty* between 1980 and 1988**



* poverty = 50% of national expenditure adjusted for family size

Source: Eurostat, 1994, **Poverty in Figures: Europe in the Late 1980s**, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the EC

In developed countries, unemployment has been seen as the main correlate of PSE, compounded by factors such as age, race, gender, lone parenthood, or migration status (Walker and Walker (eds) 1997). Education has been seen as the key to reducing unemployment; and reform of social security as a route both to reduction of PSE and to building stronger bridges from welfare to work. Most countries have adopted 'active labour market policies', for example involving training (Robinson 1996). And some have pioneered new forms of social programme explicitly designed to increase the participation in society of the socially excluded: the French programme, *Revenu Minimum d'Insertion* created in 1988, is a frequently-cited example, in which benefits can be provided in return for participation in community projects; more generally in France, a multi-agency urban regeneration programme, the *Développement Social de Quartiers* (DSQ), is specifically intended to assist in the reintegration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Cannan 1997).

There are both similarities and differences in these approaches. Education, skill-acquisition and growth are common to both. Many developing

countries also pursue active labour-market policies, for example India, which has a programme of training youth for self-employment (TRYSEM). Similarly, community development programmes emphasising participation are found in both types of country (see Gaventa, in this volume). The differences are instructive, however. Are there not lessons for developed countries in the developing country emphasis on secure and sustainable livelihoods, rather than jobs? And in the emphasis on the labour-intensity of growth, with all that implies for the incentive and regulatory framework and for tax policy? Similarly, can developing countries learn from social security reform in the North, particularly the apparent unsustainability of fiscal cost and the move to private insurance?

When it comes to the detail of programmes, there are many comparisons to be made. Two examples are the attractiveness of workfare and the design of food interventions. Why is it that progressive analysts in the South regard work in return for welfare as morally acceptable and economically productive (Ravallion 1990; Von Braun et al. 1992), whereas those in the North often see it as morally degrading and economically useless (Robinson 1996)? Are

there lessons that can be transferred from South to North? For example, the Southern debate focuses much more than the Northern on the longer term benefits of employment schemes: public works are valuable not just because they provide short-term jobs, and thereby foster social inclusion, but also because they create assets, like roads, forests, or irrigation ponds, that generate livelihoods and incomes into the future. Unemployment or famine relief in the North has certainly followed this route in the past: think of the roads built during the potato famine in Ireland. Has the lesson been forgotten?

By the same token, policy initiatives in the North about how to remedy food poverty seem sterile by comparison with those in the South: overly preoccupied with small-scale, local initiatives, nutrition education and the like, too little concerned with macro-economic issues, national food pricing, and the geographical distribution of shops. The need for a broader perspective is well-known – Dowler makes the point eloquently here, and others have done so too (e.g. Leather 1996). However, a recent British review (Low Income Project Team 1996) was specifically debarred from examining wider issues: Leather (*ibid*) describes it as having been 'gagged'. This is a pity, for certainly, there are policies in the Southern tool box that could be considered in the North: subsidies on inferior commodities, supplementary feeding programmes, food stamps, even food hand-outs (World Bank 1986, Pinstруп-Andersen 1988). It is worth making the point, too, that analysis of food insecurity in the South has attached great importance to the cultural and social roles of food, emphasising autonomy, self-determination, cultural appropriateness, and other terms redolent of the social exclusion debate³.

The point here is not to pretend that analysis and policy for one country can be read off directly from another, even within the broad groupings of North and South. It is simply to demonstrate that opportunities are missed to compare and contrast. A good, recent example was the World Food Summit, held in November 1996 (FAO 1996), which concentrated almost entirely on third world hunger, and missed precisely the opportunities suggested here.

3 Convergence

The North is rich, the South is poor. GNP per capita in the UK is over 40 times that of Ethiopia, even on the basis of purchasing power parity (UNDP 1997). The poverty line in the UK, as we have seen, is 17 times the poverty line established by the World Bank for developing countries. How, then, can it be possible to talk of convergence between North and South?

The argument rests not on levels of living, so much as on the economic, political and social characteristics of different groups of countries; and on the tools of analysis deployed to study them.

The argument about the differences between North and South, both the features and tools of analysis, occupies well-trodden and much-loved territory, which goes to the heart of whether 'development studies', or more often 'development economics' is a legitimate area of professional endeavour. Do we believe, with Seers (1963), Sen (1983), or Meier (1989), that developing countries are qualitatively different, and therefore worthy of an independent discipline? Or do we follow Lal (1983), Krueger (1986) and others, in arguing that differences are merely quantitative, and should not preclude similarities in theory or analytical method?

A starting point for the discussion is Dudley Seers' classic 1963 paper **The Limitations of the Special Case**, which effectively launched the discipline of development economics. Seers helpfully provided a checklist of 20 features, which distinguished a small group of developed countries from others, and marked them out as a 'special case': development economics was concerned with the rest. The list is reproduced in the Appendix. From the perspective of the late 1990s, it has a distinctly dated feel. Partly, this is because of growing heterogeneity among developing countries, and the fact that many have either graduated or are about to do so. It can hardly be said of the Asian tigers, for example, or of the middle-income countries of Latin America, that they lack entrepreneurship, skilled professionals, or a sector exporting manufactures. But more generally, there has been movement in both developed and developing countries, which has brought them

³ For a review of food security concepts, see Maxwell (1996).

closer together: free trade and deindustrialisation in the North; population increase, urbanisation and economic diversification in the South; these and other factors have changed the world significantly since 1963.

Take a few examples⁶. In 1960, manufacturing accounted for around 30 per cent of GDP among the high income economies, but for only 15 per cent among low income economies. By the mid-1990s, the figures had converged, falling to under a quarter in high income economies, and rising to around the same figure in low income economies – and we should note here that the category of low income economies excludes the newly industrialised countries (NICs) where manufacturing has really taken off. Other changes follow from this shift: greater similarity in the composition of exports (75 per cent of India's exports are now manufactures); a greater share of capital goods in the imports of developed countries (now just under 40 per cent, the same figure as for developing countries); similarities in the level and composition of investment (now higher in the North than the South). Again, Seers's statement that rich countries have no tendency to chronic trade deficits no longer applies: high income economies had aggregate trade deficits regularly after 1979, low income economies had regular trade surpluses.

Other examples could be cited: the rise of literacy in developing countries; their gradual shift away from trade taxes to value-added tax and income tax; their cultural homogenisation; and, on the other side, the growing exposure of developed economies to the vagaries of capital markets, their growing income inequality, and their growing envy of others' living standards. Of course, many developing countries, particularly the poorest, remain predominantly agrarian and dependent on exports of primary commodities. Even here, however, it is much harder to argue than in 1963 (even if it could be argued then) that there remain large amounts of unused land, or that farmers are not responsive to price, or that marketing of food is rare. Seers's list is really no longer a good guide to what defines a developing country.

Have others done better? Seers himself had another stab at the question in his writing on the European periphery. Here, he defined the problem as one of structural change, for example the reduction of regional inequalities (cited by Emmerij 1989). Sen (1983) identified development problems in terms of major strategic themes, such as capital accumulation, industrialisation, unemployment, and planning, with the ultimate objective of increasing the capabilities of poor people. In the 1980s, Meier (1989:18), too, focused on structural problems such as population growth, inequality, or lack of political development. He laid particular emphasis on managing the disequilibria associated with the dynamics of structural change. Toye (1987b) is another who has addressed the question. While emphasising the heterogeneity of developing countries, he nevertheless finds commonality in psychological and political factors, particularly the shared experience of decolonisation.

All this is well and good, as far as it goes. But it raises two problems. First, classification is obviously an endless game. Take any pair of societies or countries, identify some differences between them, isolate those which belong to the poorer country, and call this the true territory of development. But we could do this with Britain and Belgium, as easily as with Britain and Belize; and anyway, the characteristics change over time. Does the game bring us any closer to a 'true' definition of a developing country? I fear not, except, to paraphrase Ernest Hemingway, that the difference between the poorer countries and us is that they have less money.

The second problem is that the list of features of development studies will immediately be familiar and seem relevant to many who work on so-called developed countries. Do developed countries not need to 'modernise'? Do they not face growing pains associated with structural change in their economies? Do they not struggle with market failure? If 'development studies', by induction, is what students of development do, then many current themes are relevant to both North and South: restructuring the state; poverty reduction and livelihood; political development and governance; gender inequality; social capital; agency and

⁶ I am indebted to Edward Andersen for research assistance on the data which follow. Data are from the

World Bank's World Development Report, various years.

participation ... the list goes on – and of course includes social exclusion⁷.

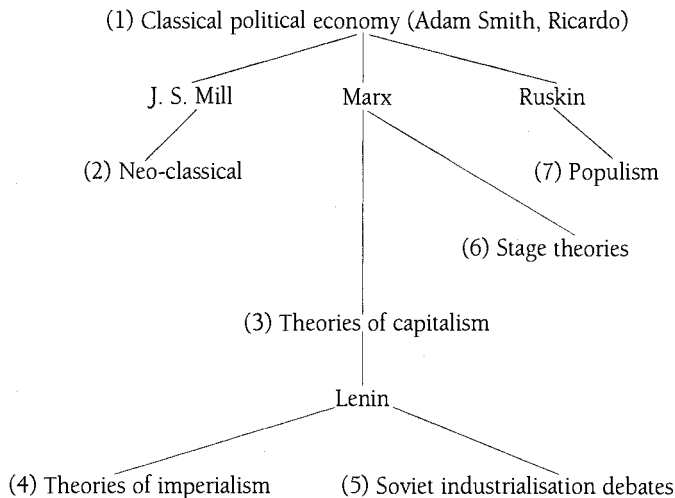
Of course, there are many particularities to the analysis of development in particular places, and it would be foolish to pretend that these do not matter: share-cropping, to take one example, is important in Indian agriculture, but not in British. Nevertheless, it does seem that the sharp boundaries between developed and developing countries as groups are beginning to blur. In his later writing, Seers himself recognised as much. In a Presidential Address to the European Association of Development Institutes in 1975, he talked about development studies 'coming home' to underdeveloped Europe. But he also observed, in a comment that resonates with the case I have been trying to make, that 'attempting to deal with problems of the Third World will end, if the history of economic thought is any guide, by changing the attitude to development in industrial economies, and therefore the whole body of economic theory' (cited in Toye 1987a: 508).

4 Connections

Policy-makers need explanations before they can intervene; and explanations usually involve theory. As the old saw has it, there is nothing so practical as a good theory. If PSE are current in both North and South, and if there is at least some degree of convergence between the two, then an intriguing possibility arises: that common theories can be found which will explain PSE across the North-South divide.

My use of 'theories' in the plural is apposite, I hope. Neo-classical neo-liberalism may be hegemonic, but it is not universal. On the development side, at least, the theoretical space is already full, and getting fuller. Lipton (1977: 92) has produced one map to the territory, in the context of rural development. It is reproduced in Figure 3 and provides a framework which relates neo-classical theory as well as Marxist analysis back to the classical political economy of Smith and Ricardo. We can add to this, however. Hunt (1989) identifies six new paradigms of development post-1940, which she

Figure 3: Ideologies and rural development



Source: Lipton (1977)

⁷ Toye (1989) identifies the following features of structuralism that became relevant to OECD countries in the 1980s: structural bottlenecks, pervasive sources of

inefficiency in production, wage bargaining systems, non-competitive pricing rules, supply side bottlenecks.

identifies as follows, with the key proponents in brackets:

- (i) A paradigm of the expanding capitalist nucleus (Lewis, Rostow, Ranis/Fei);
- (ii) A structuralist paradigm (Furtado, Prebisch, Seers);
- (iii) A neo-Marxist paradigm (Baran, Gunder Frank, Amin);
- (iv) A dependency paradigm (Sunkel, Furtado, Cardoso);
- (v) A Maoist paradigm;
- (vi) A basic needs paradigm (Singer, Streeten, Stewart)

There's more. A further stream of thinking has been concerned with the 'impasse' in development theory, and with possible new avenues. This territory is mapped by Schuurman (1993). To Hunt's list, he adds the Regulation School of Lipietz and Aglietta, the actor-oriented approach of Long, and a school of post-imperialism associated with Becker and Sklar. He identifies diversity and inequality, universalism and specificity, determinism and voluntarism, as marking out 'the narrow path of post-impasse development theory', and concludes that

the point is not to strive for one grand and glorious metatheory *per se*, but rather to stress that a lot of ground has already been covered, but that the plots remain rather isolated . . . The construction of a post-impasse development theory on a non-reductionist and non-teleological basis is the challenge of the 1990s. (*ibid*: 32)

As an avowed post-modernist (Maxwell 1996), I share Schuurman's scepticism of meta-theory. Two or three points are worth making, however.

First, growing PSE in the North ought to change the terms of debate, or what Schuurman, following Buttel and McMichael, calls the 'explanandum', that which needs to be explained. The heterogeneity of the so-called Third World already puts obstacles in the way of theories which try to explain the experience of under-development across the board; and Schuurman and his collaborators find themselves arguing over whether 'diversity' or 'inequality' would be more appropriate as terms to describe the

diversity they observe. Whichever is chosen, diversity should stretch to include the fact of poverty and social exclusion in the North.

Second, it is clear that the existence of PSE in the North helps to discriminate between the multitude of development theories on offer. In particular, it casts serious doubt on linear theories of progress associated with modernisation theory, and particularly with what Lipton in Figure 3 describes as Stage Theories.

Third, globalisation offers new challenges to theory – and to the distinction between developed and developing countries. Seers, again, spotted this, pointing to 'forces at work within the international economy which made a tripartite division of the world increasingly misleading' (cited by Jolly 1989: 39). More recently, UNDP have emphasised that the winners and losers straddle the North–South divide:

With the expansion of trade and foreign investment, developing countries have seen the gaps among themselves widen. Meanwhile, in many industrial countries unemployment has soared to levels not seen since the 1930s, and income inequality to levels not recorded since the last century. A rising tide of wealth is supposed to lift all boats . . . the yachts and ocean liners are indeed rising in response to new opportunities, but the rafts and rowboats are taking on water – and some are sinking fast (UNDP 1997: 82).

Globalisation is not in itself a theory or a paradigm, but it does change the context within which theory must work. In particular, it is associated with rapid technical change, an apparent shift in unskilled jobs from North to South, and a marked growth in the size and reach of transnational corporations. Different theories are propounded as to the motor of globalisation. Some (e.g. Wood 1996a,b) cite orthodox trade theory, and see the shift of jobs as being explained by the comparative advantage of poorer countries in the supply of unskilled labour. Others cite technical change, particularly computerisation and the fall in communication costs, which enable production to be more flexible and to take place further from the market (Economist 1996). Still others cite tendencies to accumulation in the world economy (Murray in O'Brien et al.

1997). Probably, there is some truth in all of these: they are not mutually exclusive.

Indeed, this point can be generalised: eclecticism could be the key to understanding poverty and social exclusion in North and South. Poverty and social exclusion are not themselves homogeneous phenomena. The poverty experienced by a small-scale pastoralist in semi-arid Tanzania is not of the same character, and does not have the same causes, as that experienced by a landless family in a cash-cropping area of the same country, let alone that experienced by people carrying similar labels in other countries, or by those carrying different labels altogether. Multiple realities need multiple theories – across the North–South boundary.

5 Conclusion

I have argued that the increase in poverty and social exclusion in the North offers new possibilities to

learn lessons across the North–South boundary; that it actually blurs the boundary; and that it challenges theory. Where does this leave researchers and policy-makers concerned with poverty and social exclusion?

There is one route I think we should not take, which is that each of us should try to merge all our work into one, covering North and South. The world is too big, and the intellectual complexity too great. Instead, people who specialise on the North or South will continue to do so, but should make new efforts to learn from each other, to explore common problems brought on by convergence, and perhaps to develop new theory together. The best place to start might be with specific topics, like public works, food policy or participation – indeed, with the meaning and measurement of terms like 'poverty' and 'social exclusion'. This will enable collaboration to be built inductively, from the bottom-up.

Appendix: Characteristic features of the special case

I. *Factors of Production*

- a. *Labour*. Literate and mobile, mostly in employment; highly organised; racial, religious and linguistic differences not sufficiently important to break up the labour supply; substantial quantities of skilled and professional workers.
- b. *Land*. Most available land cultivated, and by private owners (or farmers with secure leaseholds) in plots of economic size.
- c. *Capital*. All sectors heavily capitalised, with spare capacity; integrated and comprehensive systems of transport and power.
- d. *Enterprise*. A wide field from which entrepreneurs can be drawn, and a favourable climate for enterprise; firm legal basis for corporations.

II. *Sectors of the Economy*

- a. *Agriculture*. Wholly commercial, and flexible in response to price changes or technical advances; foreign ownership rare; extensive marketing network for foods.
- b. *Mining*. Of limited size and in the hands of local firms.
- c. *Manufacturing*. Diversified, with a large metal-using industry producing (inter alia) machinery and vehicles; some areas of competition.
- d. *Overall*. Manufacturing much larger than either agriculture or mining; natural resources adequately surveyed.

III. *Public Finance*

- a. *Revenue*. Strong reliance on direct taxes relative to import or export duties; tax laws enforceable.
- b. *Expenditure*. Includes big outlays on social security and agricultural subsidies, relatively little on public works.

IV. *Foreign Trade*

- a. *Exports*. Consist of several products for which there is a large internal market; and for which price and income elasticities are fairly high; export prices determined by local costs and stable; exports sold to many countries.
- b. *Imports*. Consist largely of primary products (some of which are also produced domestically) which come from many countries, and for which the income elasticity of demand is not high.
- c. *Capital*. Long-term capital flows and profit remittances of secondary importance.

V. *Households*

- a. *Income*. Distribution moderately equal (post-tax); very few living at subsistence level.
- b. *Expenditure*. Food not overwhelmingly important; standardisation and mass production possible, because of equal distribution of income, national promotion and homogeneity of tastes; prestige of local manufactures high.

VI. *Savings and Investment*

- a. *Savings*. Mobilised by a capital market, comprising a stock exchange, a bond market and an extensive nationally owned banking system, with a central bank and a managed currency; personal savings significant.
- b. *Investment*. High (probably over 20 per cent of G.D.P.); but import content low.

VII. *Dynamic Influences*

- a. *Trade*. No chronic tendency to deficit because of income elasticities (see above).
- b. *Population*. Growth of population slow (less than 2 per cent a year), and urbanisation relatively moderate.
- c. *Aspirations*. Envy of foreign living standards not high or spreading as a cause of discontent.

Source: Seers 1963

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