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Elite development theory: a labour-centred critique

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ABSTRACT

Much development theory is based upon elite-led conceptions of social change. Elite development theory (EDT) conceptualises 'the poor' as human inputs into or, at best, junior partners within elite-led development processes. This elitism contributes to the continual (re)framing of the poor as passive beneficiaries of elite policy, and legitimates economic exploitation of the poor. These claims are illustrated by discussing a number of EDT traditions – the Washington/Post-Washington Consensus, statist political economy, modernisation Marxism and varieties of pro-poor growth. As an alternative to EDT the article argues for a conception and practice of 'labour-centred development'.

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Introduction

The objective of development studies, theory and practice is to uplift and empower the world's poor. Much development thinking is founded upon elite-led conceptions of social change and can be thought of as forms of elite development theory (EDT). This article argues that, contrary to their self-stated objectives, the variants of EDT discussed here contribute to reproducing unequal, exploitative and oppressive social relations that limit significantly the possibilities for human development of the poor.

Within much contemporary development thinking the concept of 'elites' is often employed in pejorative terms (as in the conception of 'elite capture'), in contradistinction to the notion of representative and responsible state actors and/or dynamic capitalist entrepreneurs and corporations. For example, Acemoglu and Robinson counter-pose broad-based institutions that promote the growth of capitalist markets against narrow forms of rule designed to serve vested interests, as a means of explaining world-historical divergences in national economic growth, prosperity and development.¹ Such a conceptual employment is based upon axioms that posit the capitalist market as a sphere of entrepreneurial opportunity constituted by individual actors, unless distorted by fiat. Here the market is portrayed as a ladder of social mobility.² Within such conceptions elite capture of resources represents forms of 'opportunity hoarding', which are portrayed as antithetical to the potentially broad-based developmental benefits of market expansion and incorporation.³

In this article, by contrast, elites are understood not as 'opportunity hoarders' but more broadly as class fractions (or sections of the ruling class) that possess the ability to force the majority of a given population into a socially subservient position, enabling the former to systematically capture unpaid labour from (ie exploit) the latter. That these elites take different forms – occupying positions within state bureaucracies and owning capital – is secondary to their relational power over a nation's labouring classes.

The article discusses a range of EDT's – the Washington and Post-Washington Consensuses, statist political economy, modernisation Marxism, and varieties of pro-poor growth. It shows how each of these, albeit in different ways, conceives of human labour as an input into production and development processes. This conception conceives of workers as bearers of this input, which must be utilised to its maximum potential. Here workers are regarded as objects of development to be managed in order to best utilise their labour. This conception justifies theoretically and politically the exploitation, oppression and subordination of labour to elite-led development. Exploitation is understood here as the institutionalised and systematic capture by capital of workers' unpaid labour.⁴ The political-economic subordination of labour to elite-led development generates a situation whereby capitalism's immense dynamism and wealth-generating capacity systematically accrues to a small minority of the world's population.⁵

This article argues that if development studies, theory and practice are to really contribute to uplifting the poor they must, ultimately, reject EDT and practice. The alternative, it argues, is the concept of labour-centred development (LCD). The article is primarily a critique of EDT and provides only a brief glimpse of LCD, which is to be discussed at length in a subsequent article.⁶ The article is structured as follows. The next section highlights in broad conceptual brush strokes the elite assumptions at the core of EDT. Section three deconstructs the EDTs discussed. The fourth section begins the task of providing an alternative non-elite conception of development by introducing the concept of LCD.

Before proceeding further two caveats are in order. First, this is a theoretical article and empirical support for claims made in it can be found elsewhere.⁷ Second, it does not represent an exhaustive discussion of all strands of development thinking. Nor is it an attempt to assess the relative successes or failures of the theoretical approaches discussed (on their own or on others' terms) or their historical and contemporary implementation. Rather, its concern is to highlight how EDT is rooted in what I label an elite subject–subordinate object conception of social change. By doing so it paves the way for conceptualising alternative forms of non-elite-led development.

The elite subject–subordinate object foundations of elite development theory

While development thinking aims to contribute to the uplifting of the world's poor, many of the major traditions within development theory are founded upon assumptions about 'the poor' that contribute to their (re)subjection to debilitating hierarchical social relations. This is because the development of 'the poor' is dependent upon elite guidance. The poor are required to subject themselves to, or be subjected to, elite-devised and -led development.

This elite subject–subordinate object (ES–SO) conception of development reproduces itself in at least four ways in development, policy and practice: (1) it identifies elites (whether corporations, state planners, private sector agencies or NGOs) as drivers of development;

(2) it ranges from ignoring to de-legitimizing the poor's actions to ameliorate their conditions; (3) as a consequence of point 2 it legitimates elite repression and exploitation of the poor politically and economically, especially when the latter contest elite-led development; and (4) consequently, while myriad actions, movements and struggles by the poor are *not* considered developmental, they are often considered to be *hindrances* to development.

The ES–SO conception of development represents what Michael Cowen and Roger Shenton label a 'doctrine' because it rests upon 'the intent to develop through the exercise of trusteeship over society. Trusteeship is the intent which is expressed, by one source of agency, to develop the capacities of another.'⁸ In this ES–SO conception subjects possess primary agency, objects only possess secondary agency *once they have been incorporated into elite-led development processes*.⁹ The disempowered condition of objects is unrelated to the empowered condition of subjects. Empowerment of objects does not require disempowerment of subjects. Once development has been 'achieved', subjects retain their empowered status *vis-à-vis* objects. EDT cannot conceive of development being a process whereby objects, through their own actions and through the transformation of social relations, displace subjects from their elite position.

At the heart of all ES–SO conceptions of development, albeit with various nuances, is a representation of the capitalist market as a developmentally progressive sphere of individual and social opportunity and economic dynamism. The world market is portrayed as a ladder of opportunity, where, once on the bottom rung, poor countries and their populations have the possibility of climbing further up. For example, UN Millennium Project director Jeffrey Sachs defends the proliferation of sweatshop labour across the global South, arguing that 'rich-world protestors...should support increased numbers of such jobs' and that 'the sweatshops are the first rung on the ladder out of extreme poverty'.¹⁰ In the ES–SO conception market 'inclusion' is posited as the solution to the maladies generated by market 'exclusion'.

The portrayal of the market as natural – as an outgrowth of 'the necessary, though very slow and gradual consequence of a certain propensity in human nature...to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another' is integral to the ES–SO doctrine of development.¹¹ The 'very slow and gradual' consequences of human nature require development policy, imposed through ES–SO relations, to accelerate the positive effects of market integration, expansion and deepening.

Capitalist development is, however, simultaneously destructive and creative. The destructive aspects of capitalist expansion and reproduction are what Cowen and Shenton label 'immanent' development, while the ES–SO doctrine represents 'intentional' development.¹² Immanent development refers to the underlying process of capitalist expansion, in particular the establishment of capitalist social relations (or 'markets' in much development parlance). In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith assumed, rather than explained, the existence of a sizeable segment of a nation's population ready to sell its labour to employers. He explained employers' ability to purchase that labour as arising from their 'previous accumulation'. He did not explain the alteration of social relations that underpinned the transformation of the age of agriculture into the age of commerce.¹³

However, the shift from agricultural to commercial society required the establishment of large-scale labour markets and a dynamic class of capital-holding entrepreneurs, as detailed in Marx's analysis of primitive accumulation.¹⁴ Aspects of immanent capitalist development include (often very violent) mass dispossession from the land, the creation of property-less

wage-labour forces, despoliation of human populations, unplanned urbanisation and the creation of mega-slums, and environmental destruction.

The ES–SO conception obscures and externalises these destructive aspects of development from the benign image of (intentional) development that it offers to the poor, even though modern states play significant roles in facilitating the (re)production of capitalist social relations. Rather than focus on these destructive aspects, the ES–SO doctrine focuses upon the creative and more benign aspects of development, such as ‘human capital formulation’ (ie training workers once they have been established within a labour market).

Part of the practice of intentional development is the provision of social policies to ameliorate the effects of immanent development. These policies are delivered within an ES–SO conception and are thus framed ideologically as forms of benign assistance to the poor, as a result of the latter’s exclusion from, or inadequate integration into, the market. This framing enables proponents of immanent development to continuously argue for greater elite-led ‘inclusion’ of the poor within expanding capitalist markets, in a never-ending power/knowledge (re)construction.¹⁵

The ideologically debilitating effects of such a portrayal of progressive social change are to simultaneously reproduce elite power *vis-à-vis* a disempowered mass. As Gustavo Esteva puts it, from a post-structuralist perspective, for the world’s poor ‘to think...of any kind of development – requires first the perception of themselves as underdeveloped.’¹⁶ Elise Van Waeyenberge and Ben Fine demonstrate, from a critical materialist perspective, how the World Bank’s institutionalised intellectual cycle – of investigation–knowledge production–practical solution generation – reproduces axioms about the social world that continually naturalise, reify and pose as developmentally friendly, the operations of capitalist markets.¹⁷ The World Bank’s ideological self-definition as a benign knowledge-bank is expressed particularly clearly in its *World Development Reports*. These present a uni-conceptual analysis of development, where rival interpretations of causes of development and the lack of it are consistently ignored.

To be sure, development under capitalism *does* transform the situations of the poor. But it does so by de/re-integrating them from one set of hierarchical relations into another. An indication of this is the way in which labour is conceptualised – as an input into or a ‘factor’ of production – within EDT.

For example, the World Bank has argued consistently that the countries with the most success in poverty reduction encourage patterns of growth that make efficient use of labour and invest in the human capital of the poor.¹⁸ Such a conception reduces workers to secondary actors in an unfolding development trajectory designed and implemented by elite actors operating within intellectually naturalised capitalist markets. While the World Bank has been criticised from across the political spectrum for its seemingly anti-labour concept of development, such a perspective is common to EDT right and left, as we shall see.

Labour as an object of development

The argument that EDT is intrinsically elitist is simultaneously obvious, even axiomatic, and deeply problematic as it potentially undermines much of the rationale and popular appeal of development studies, theory and practice. The following section will illustrate through textual analysis and deconstruction how EDT conceives of human labour and workers as inputs into the development process and how this starting point simultaneously justifies labour oppression and exploitation, and de-legitimises labouring class attempts at collective self-amelioration (Table 1).

The Washington/Post-Washington Consensus

The Washington Consensus (WC) conception of development derives from Adam Smith's understanding of gains from specialisation, David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage and marginalist economics' emphasis upon 'perfect' markets. Each tenet contributes, from its own perspective and when combined within the WC, to generating 'higher productivity and labour utilisation'.¹⁹ Ricardo's theory is based on a simple truth – that each country performs a range of activities better than it does others. From this truth arises the (much debated) policy prescription that countries should specialise in the mix of activities they do best, which will maximise effective resource use and output. Goods can then be traded on the world market in exchange for goods that a society wishes to consume. If this theory is adhered to on a world scale, then global resource use will be optimised and the maximum range of goods will be produced at lowest cost. Specialisation and trade ensure a harmony of interests between different national economic units. What benefits one country benefits another – and their respective populations. The WC also adheres to marginalist axioms about perfect markets, where rigidities or inflexibilities within the latter reduce welfare gains from market participation (see below).

The emergence of the WC and neoliberalism more broadly has been conceptualised as a counter-revolution in social policy, and in development thinking.²⁰ Its 'market fundamentalism' reflected an ideological attack on the 'dirigisme' of the state under Keynesian social democracy, in response to the economic crises of the early and mid-1970s that reverberated across advanced capitalist countries.²¹ The WC and neoliberalism more generally have been conceptualised as a political–ideological–social battering ram, to be used by states and firms to reduce significantly any influence by organised labour in politics and economics.²² Its objective has been to establish 'capitalism without a working class opposition'.²³ The WC conception of perfectly operating markets, derived from general equilibrium theory, provided an intellectually justifiable rationale for these actions.

The concept of market inflexibility was utilised by WC proponents to theorise and justify (deleterious) reforms to workers' conditions. Such reforms aimed to re-establish workers' 'role' in development as holders of a factor of production (labour) that could be effectively employed by firms. Eliminating labour market inflexibilities would generate virtuous circles of rising firm profits, greater employment and higher economic growth. Labour market inflexibilities were defined by Robert Solow as follows:

[A] labour market is inflexible if the level of unemployment–insurance benefits is too high or their duration is too long, or if there are too many restrictions on the freedom of employers to fire and to hire, or if the permissible hours of work are too tightly regulated, or if excessively generous compensation for overtime work is mandated, or if trade unions have too much power to protect incumbent workers against competition and to control the flow of work at the site of production, or perhaps if statutory health and safety regulations are too stringent.²⁴

The concept of labour market inflexibility justifies workers' political and wage repression in order to restore greater flexibility to this market. Such actions are portrayed as being in workers' long-run interests. For example, Anne Kreuger (the World Bank's chief economist between 1982 and 1986) argued, following Harris and Todaro, that 'with a sufficiently low urban wage, a zero unemployment level is a feasible outcome'.²⁵

From this perspective, ensuring labour market flexibility represents a base-line for successful economic development. Hence, in its 1993 report on the East Asian Miracle, the World Bank argued that part of the success of the high performing Asian economies was

their ability to limit labour market distortions. These economies 'have generally been less vulnerable than other developing-economy governments to organized labour's demands to legislate a minimum wage'. Further:

Because wages or at least wage rate increases have been downwardly flexible in response to changes in the demand for labour, adjustment to macroeconomic shocks has generally been quicker and less painful in East Asia than in other developing regions.²⁶

The Washington Consensus became increasingly untenable, however, following the failure of structural adjustment programmes to regenerate growth; the proliferation of 'IMF riots' and continued protests against the effects of neoliberal policy; significant research from statist political economy that demonstrated the central role of states in generating growth in East Asia (see below); increasingly severe financial crises across the globe; and, more broadly, a recognition throughout development thinking that removing market inflexibilities (or 'getting prices right') did not suffice to guarantee development.

These critiques generated a shift in the World Bank's thinking and in development theory more broadly. States and institutions, from distorting markets in the WC, became correctors of market failures under the Post-Washington Consensus (PWC). The shift from WC to PWC did entail a soft critique of the market in so far as it was theorised as suffering under certain conditions from failures. As Stiglitz and Hoff argued: 'in leaving out history, institutions, and distributional considerations, neoclassical economics was leaving out the heart of development economics...market failures are pervasive, especially in less developed countries.'²⁷

However, the critique was soft because the PWC argued that, with the correct state or institutional support, market failures could be negated and the benefits of well-functioning markets, as proclaimed by proponents of the earlier WC, could be realised. As Stiglitz said in his 1998 WIDER lecture 'making markets work requires...sound financial regulation, competition policy, and policies to facilitate the transfer of technology and to encourage transparency.'²⁸

The PWC holds that markets are the best allocator of resources and generators of developmental dynamism, albeit when they are properly supported by states and institutions. Hence Stiglitz argues that 'the government should see itself as complementary to markets, undertaking those actions that make markets fulfill their functions better – as well as correcting market failures'. Furthermore, 'free competitive markets and private property' are 'essential to market economy.'²⁹

While in the WC the theory of labour market inflexibility was used to rationalise reductions in workers' wages, deterioration of their conditions and constraints placed upon their organisations, Stiglitz approached labour differently. His advocacy of 'democratic development', sympathy for street protests against the IMF and World Bank, and support for worker's right to unionise set him apart from the anti-labour orientation of the WC.³⁰

Stiglitz's transformation of neoliberal ideology reflects a broader socioeconomic-political process. Following states' and corporations' restructuring of organised labour during neoliberalism's market-fundamentalist phase, the reduction of trade union bargaining power and the latter's embracing of many market-orientated norms (often under the ideology of the 'Third Way'), the conditions were established for a period of neoliberal consolidation through 'social neoliberalism'. The latter variant was softer than the former because opposition to it was weaker. As Neil Davidson explains for the British case, but applicable to the shift from WC to PWC:

the first [phase of neoliberalism – the WC] involved a frontal onslaught on the labour movement and the dismantling of formerly embedded social democratic institutions ('roll-back'); the second [phase – the PWC] involved a more molecular process with the gradual commodification of... new areas of social life and the creation of new institutions specifically constructed on neoliberal principles ('roll-out').³¹

Within this context the PWC is more concerned with worker-training, human capital formation and the need to foment political legitimacy to engender workers' commitment to objectives of profit maximisation through rising productivity, industrial upgrading and diversification, than with simple labour discipline. However, workers are still conceived, principally, as bearers of a factor of production. Thus Stiglitz writes that 'in the short run large scale involuntary unemployment is clearly inefficient – in purely economic terms it represents idle resources that could be used more productively'. And 'growth accounting also attributes a substantial portion of growth in developing countries to human capital accumulation'. There is a need for workers to feel that they have a stake in the system, otherwise employers will be subject to unreasonable claims: 'if workers believe that they are not being fairly treated, they may impose inflationary wage and other demands'. In the worst case scenario 'social and economic costs translate into political and social turmoil'.³²

Stiglitz's relative inclusion of labour in his development theory compared to the WC is, however, strictly limited. This is revealed in his inability to conceptually connect his preferred cases of development, in particular the East Asian economies, with their extreme labour repression and exploitation. Rather, he sidelines these aspects and highlights, instead, the ability of states to create, support and regulate markets. Furthermore, he praises China's leadership for 'engag[ing] in extensive deliberations and consultations' in their attempts to overcome problems ranging from environmental destruction to overinvestment.³³ His focus upon relations between states and markets lessens his ability to integrate a fuller analysis of capital-labour relations into his understanding of human development. Indeed, his portrayal of East Asian states' treatment of labour is partial. In his best-selling *Making Globalisation Work*, he writes that 'East Asian nations feel that it is their responsibility to maintain full employment and actively promote growth, and their governments remain concerned about inequality and social stability'.³⁴ He does not mention how successive governments, from postwar Japan, to Park's South Korea, to contemporary China have used violence to repress their labour movements and mould populations subservient to heightened exploitation and state objectives of rapid economic growth and enhanced international competitiveness.

To be sure, the PWC creates the intellectual, political and policy space for considering a broader range of developmental instruments and institutions than does the WC. It explains theoretically why fuller employment and rising wages are preferable development policies to labour market deregulation. However, in Stiglitz's hands the PWC is beset by a dualism. On the one hand, it advocates fairer treatment of labour. On the other hand, its favoured cases of development, in particular in East Asia, are characterised by heightened labour repression and exploitation. It overcomes this dualism by ignoring the latter cases of exploitation and oppression, and by excluding these concerns from its conception of capitalist development. It can do so relatively easily because across EDT's labour is conceptualised as an input into the development process, and therefore of second-order analytical importance compared with state policies to achieve well-functioning markets. Hence, few EDT advocates would take Stiglitz to task for his oversights and simplified conceptions of capital-labour relations within the development process. They are more likely to focus their fire on his understanding and advocacy of state capacity to correct market failures.

Statist political economy

Statist political economy (SPE) is rooted in the work of Alexander Hamilton, Freidrich List, and the Post-World War Two emergence of development economics, encompassing thinkers such as Gerschenkron, Kaldor, Hirschman and others.³⁵ Contemporary advocates of SPE, drawing on Chalmers Johnson's concept of the developmental state, include Robert Wade, Ha-Joon Chang, Alice Amsden, Atul Kohli and Peter Evans, among others.

SPE represents a partial critique of liberal, Ricardian economics. The notion of development based upon comparative advantage is criticised by SPE, which argues that contemporary developed countries did not industrialise according to comparative advantage maxims. Rather, they pursued 'infant-industry' strategies – including protective tariffs, subsidies and provision of R&D to nascent industries, and facilitation of reverse engineering. The promotion of comparative advantage maxims by already developed countries and Northern institutions such as the World Bank is therefore portrayed by SPE as hypocrisy.³⁶

While many states attempted to facilitate rapid industrialisation through the abovementioned strategies in the 20 to 30 years following the World War Two and decolonisation, not all succeeded. To explain these divergent outcomes SPE emphasises the importance of state capacity, often achieved through the establishment of elite planning bodies. Evan's concept of 'embedded autonomy', drawing on Weber's concerns with bureaucratic rationality, represents an attempt to theorise dynamic relations between developmental state bureaucracies and business elites that generate long-term economic growth and industrial transformation.³⁷

Johnson's discussion of MITI in Japan and Amsden's and Wade's analysis of South Korean and Taiwanese industrialisation, respectively, provide strong empirical support for the abovementioned theoretical claims.³⁸ SPE survived the neoliberal counter-revolution (unlike other traditions, in particular the varieties of dependency, world systems and Marxian theories), and was arguably one of the schools that forced the World Bank to agree to the research which generated the eventual publication of its *East Asian Miracle* report.³⁹ The latter represented a partial admission by the World Bank that East Asian economies did not industrialise rapidly because of their adherence to the doctrine of comparative advantage and limited state intervention.

Much of SPE's popularity within development studies derives from its penetrating critique of the abovementioned neoliberal axioms. However, SPE reproduces the ES–SO conception of development, often in a brutal form. In her study of South Korean industrialisation, Alice Amsden recognises how 'high profits in [its] mass-production industries have been derived not merely from investments in machinery and modern work methods...but also from the world's longest working week! Alongside effective investments, 'cheap labour' and 'labour repression is the basis of late industrialization everywhere'. She observes the impacts of the gender division of labour on women workers:

The average wages of women workers...have lagged far behind those of men, enabling employers in the labour intensive industries to remain internationally competitive alongside the growth of a mass-production sector. Wage discrimination against women in Korea and Japan is the worst in the world.⁴⁰

In his comparative study of late development in South Korea, India, Brazil and Nigeria Atul Kohli illustrates the ability of the former state to allocate resources efficiently and to successfully implement long-term industrial upgrading strategies across the economy. He notes,

like Amsden, the need for strict workplace discipline. He also compares South Korea to the interwar European fascist states. He concludes that:

Generally right-wing authoritarian... [these states] ...prioritize rapid industrialization as a national goal, are staffed competently, work closely with industrialists, systematically discipline and repress labour, penetrate and control the rural society, and use economic nationalism as a tool of political mobilisation.⁴¹

In his critique of SPE Dae-Oup Chang documents how, in General Park's South Korea, trade unionists were sent to concentration camps. Contemporary China is often championed by statist political economists as formulating an alternative path to neoliberal capitalism.⁴² But, as in prior East Asian developmental states, labour repression and lack of democracy have been and remain core determinants of its ability to generate the world's biggest labouring class and subject it to intense discipline and exploitation.⁴³

SPE, while representing a powerful critique of neoliberal comparative advantage theory, rests upon the same ES–SO conception of development. Both view workers as bearers of labour, to be managed, disciplined and exploited in order to yield economic surpluses for further investment. In this respect Pinochet's neoliberal Chile and Park's statist South Korea had much more in common than the intellectual rivalry between neoliberal theory and SPE might suggest.

None of the Asian success stories – Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and now China – even after long periods of rapid economic growth and industrial upgrading and diversification, can be said to have overcome the ES–SO relationship and the deleterious labour conditions that characterised their prior (and in China's case ongoing) developmental efforts.⁴⁴ SPE rejects *a priori* posing the question of whether objects of development can self-transform into subjects of development, and whether this may generate novel and positive human developmental dynamics.

Modernisation Marxism

There are numerous traditions within Marxism, ranging from perspectives that often dovetail with anarchist thought in rejecting capitalism and embracing revolutionary socialism from below, to those that portray capitalism as a progressive socioeconomic force, and which advocate state-imposed socialism 'from above'.⁴⁵

The latter perspective, which was never adhered to by Marx, became an almost religious doctrine in Russia following Stalin's assumption of total leadership of the USSR in 1928. From thence onwards Soviet socialism would be achieved through state-implemented five-year plans designed to accelerate the country's industrialisation and enable it to compete militarily with the West.

The five-year plan model of top-down industrialisation became popular across much of the Third World after 1945, following the USSR's emergence as the world's second superpower and the Chinese revolution of 1949. Stalin's explanation of the need for rapid Russian industrialisation struck a chord with newly independent countries in the emerging Third World.⁴⁶ The millions of deaths under Stalin and Mao, as a consequence of attempts at accelerated industrialisation, deterred neither state leaders in the Third World nor development theorists from adopting variations of modernisation Marxism to explain and facilitate state-led socialist development from above.

Within development studies modernisation Marxism was theorised and given renewed popularity in the 1970s. The title and substance of Bill Warren's *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* captures the positive dynamism ascribed to capitalism by him and his followers. In Sender and Smith's prognosis for sustained economic growth in Africa the authors argue that 'rapid accumulation is unlikely to be achieved without *significant reductions in the real incomes* of a substantial proportion of the population'. To achieve such accumulation African states must become viable political entities, entailing the containing of 'sub-nationalist pressures' through:

[a] combination of hegemonic official nationalism and the *military means to reinforce this ideology*... [A] method (must) be devised for the *appropriation for sufficient surplus* to ensure the smooth functioning of the *military and repressive apparatus*.

While Sender and Smith advocate 'placing the issues of trade unions rights, wages and working conditions on the political agenda', they argue that this is only possible 'within the context of serious attention to feasible economic strategies'. Such concerns, however, are always subordinate to the more pressing issue of achieving rapid capital accumulation. And the latter requires a repressive political economic apparatus.⁴⁷

Sender's later work on the prospects for African socioeconomic development, about which he is relatively optimistic, articulates an updated version of modernisation Marxism. It provides only a small space for worker's secondary agency: 'If capitalist accumulation in poor countries becomes more dynamic, it can create the potential for organized and successful opposition to its own excesses and irrationalities.'⁴⁸

In his reinterpretation of Marx for the global age Meghnad Desai argues that the former would have been 'on the side of the market' and that a contemporary progressive political programme entails support for the expansion and full functioning of market forces, free from state interference. Following Marx, Desai recognises that the capital-labour relation is exploitative as it enables capitalists to capture unpaid labour from workers. However, he argues that the relationship is good for workers, and that the latter *should* actually seek and support such a relationship:

If employability depends on high profitability, workers would want to cooperate with employers in keeping profits high... If workers know the rule 'no profits, no employment' then they will struggle, not for a higher share of wages in total output, but with that share that maximises their chance of employment.⁴⁹

Gavin Kitching argues that capitalism is the most progressive force in human history, and that many on the left misunderstand its potential to eliminate global poverty.⁵⁰ Accordingly, the fastest route towards the amelioration of the poor's condition is not through class struggles from below, but by redesigning the rules governing the world economy to fully realise Ricardo's vision of a globally integrated system organised around the principles of comparative advantage.

Modernisation Marxism often uses socialist language to advocate rapid capital accumulation and integration into global product markets. However, it represents another variant of the ES-SO doctrine of development designed to generate a strong industrial economic base. In this way it has more in common with distinctly non-Marxist conceptions of development than might be imagined. For example, Atul Kohli, an advocate of statist political economy, observes the 'uncanny resemblance between how communist and cohesive-capitalist states [of which South Korea is the prime example] generate power resources to accomplish their respective goals.'⁵¹ And Philip McMichael highlights a broader similarity between East

and West during the development project: 'Although the two political blocs subscribed to opposing representations of human destiny, they shared the same modernist paradigm. *National industrialisation* would be the vehicle of development in each.'⁵² Once labour is subordinated to capital then the question of resource allocation becomes confined to the sphere of elite-dominated politics and economics.

Unsurprisingly the fundamental unity in advocating labour subordination between neo-liberalism, SPE and modernisation Marxism is not emphasised by these traditions. Doing so would limit their claims to exclusivity and might open the door to more critical approaches to human development.

Inclusive growth, pro-poor growth and decent work

The PWC's partial transcendence of the WC's market-fundamentalism (through its recognition of the necessity of non-market institutional support for markets) has contributed to the emergence of a range of approaches to economic growth that aim to benefit the poor, such as 'inclusive' and 'pro-poor' growth and 'decent work'.⁵³ The former two are relatively more liberal, while the latter is more social democratic. Advocates of these approaches range across the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and most national governments.

A significant line of differentiation between these conceptions is the extent to, and ways in which, they are pro-poor. The more (neo)liberal approaches advocated by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and Overseas Development Institute (ODI), respectively, and by the World Bank propose an absolute form of pro-poor growth, which is achieved when the poor's economic conditions are improving. The more social democratic approach, as advocated by the ILO, proposes a relative conception, where growth is pro-poor when poor people's incomes are rising faster than those of the better off.⁵⁴

The inclusive growth perspective, by contrast, eschews a pro-poor orientation as it argues that the most effective way to reduce poverty is to achieve widespread, rather than targeted growth. It focuses on 'sources of, and constraints to sustained, high growth, and not on one group – the poor'. It is 'about raising the pace of growth and enlarging the size of the economy, while levelling the playing field for investment and increasing productive employment opportunities'.⁵⁵

The above approaches can be interpreted as partial applications to development thinking of PWC principles. Like the latter they emphasise the importance of institutions, state support for the market, and measures to 'include' the poor and workers in the process of economic growth. For example, in the ODI's conception of absolute pro-poor growth, the institutions that facilitate successful policies and economic outcomes include 'a stable macro-economy; institutions that allocate property rights, lower transaction costs, and [that] permit organised production in companies and collectives'. Poverty reduction requires providing physical access to markets, remedying market failures, investing in the entire population's education and health and countering discrimination. The ODI favours (limited) wealth redistribution because it can contribute to economic growth, reduce inequality and reduce vulnerability, which enables risk-averse households to take advantage of investment opportunities. It objects to 'excessive' redistribution such as large-scale transfers from rich to poor as they may 'reduce incentives to invest, innovate and...to work, thus dampening economic growth'.⁵⁶

The more social democratic concept of decent work, promoted by the ILO, focuses upon labour conditions as a determinant of economic growth, and the extent to which workers can simultaneously contribute to growth and benefit from it. Decent work involves:

opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.⁵⁷

The ILO advocates a tripartite approach to securing decent work, through a corporatist model of state–business–trade union collaboration. States play a central role in fomenting globally competitive business sectors, in ways that bear more similarity to statist political economy's analysis of the successful East Asian economies than to the 'market correcting' agenda of the PWC. However, strong state intervention and support for business are couched in social democratic terms, rather than in the dictatorial terms of some of SPE's stronger formulations. Worker's 'voice' is part of the ILO's conception of a fair economy. It is to be articulated through legal trade unions and heard by employers and the state. In return for listening to, and negotiating with workers, trade unions respect business profits and business's 'right' to organise the labour process. In a similar vein to the ILO, the ODI argues that:

Giving the majority, and particular the poor, a stronger voice in policy making promises to lead both to better policy making as well as demands on the state for accountability, with consequent pressures for more effective and efficient public services... formal democracy and decentralisation can help, but may not be sufficient... Recent development success stories are notable for gains to the poor resulting from the initiative from *enlightened elites*.⁵⁸

Notably, both ODI and ILO cite contemporary China as achieving pro-poor growth.⁵⁹ Like Stiglitz (above), neither explains the significance to its developmental trajectory of China's non-democratic political system, nor its exploitative and repressive labour regime. Neither do any of these organisations recognise the progressive impact of more than a decade of rising struggles by urban and rural workers in influencing the Chinese state's more 'enlightened' (compared to previously) labour policies.⁶⁰

In this vein the ILO's 2014 World of Work Report, *Developing with Jobs*, lists four core objectives to be pursued by developing country states. These are: (1) to boost and diversify productive capacity rather than just liberalising trade; (2) to strengthen labour market institutions rather than neglecting labour standards; (3) to extend well-designed social protection floors as drivers of inclusive development, not just as a narrowly targeted safety net for the poor; and (4) to ensure balanced income developments to avoid harmful inequalities.⁶¹

All of the above perspectives share a conception of the market as a sphere of opportunity, which, provided the correct state and non-state support is provided, will enable participation by the poor, leading to the alleviation of poverty. In its conception of inclusive growth, the World Bank argues that:

The main instrument for a sustainable and inclusive growth is assumed to be productive employment... The ability of individuals to be productively employed depends on the opportunities to make full use of available resources [including labour] as the economy evolves over time.⁶²

Common to all these conceptions of pro-poor or 'inclusive' growth is the axiom of labour as a factor of production, where its use is to be determined by profit-orientated corporations. The ILO, ODI, DFID, the World Bank and most national and global development agencies argue for 'win-win' development, where rising firm-level productivity, facilitated by state-implemented policies, generate increasingly rapid economic growth, rising social surpluses

and rising wages. This virtuous circle not only pulls workers out of poverty, but also enables them to participate increasingly in public and political life by articulating their 'voice'. Workers enjoy limited secondary agency in that, when they are organised into trade unions, they can push for greater transparency and enlightened policy by state bureaucrats and/or better employment standards by employers.

The discussion of different strands of development thinking has revealed their common base-line axioms, which have been characterised as resting upon an ES–SO conception of social change. Such a conception, in turn, legitimates various forms of coercion and subjection of labouring classes to elite-led development processes.

Labour as a subject: towards labour-centred development

The final substantive section of this article moves from the deconstruction of established theories of development to reconstruct a conception of development that attempts to overcome the ES–SO conception. It argues for a labour-centred conception of development (LCD). Such a conception illuminates both the ES–SO basis of EDT and simultaneously the developmental processes that are hidden by it. What, then, is LCD? The following nine theses provides a basic starting point:

- (1) Capitalism is a dynamic wealth-generating system based upon the exploitation of labour by capital (through the latter's capture of the former's unpaid labour).
- (2) Capital's ability to exploit labour enables it to concentrate social wealth (including the means of producing social wealth) overwhelmingly in the hands of the owners and managers of capitalist production, distribution and exchange.
- (3) 1 and 2 enable and require capitalist classes and states to institutionalise labour regimes that preclude labouring classes from controlling, directing or consuming the majority of the wealth that they produce.
- (4) The geographical expansion and temporal reproduction of 1–3 is the essence of immanent capitalist development.
- (5) Immanent capitalist development is contested by those who are dispossessed and exploited by it.
- (6) The contestation of processes 1–3 generates developmental processes, institutions, and outcomes that were not intended by the actors (capitalist classes and states) attempting to (re)produce capitalist social relations. These cases, when they are more favourable to labouring classes than the outcomes intended by proponents of capitalist expansion, are examples of labour-centred development.
- (7) Labour-centred development occurs within the sphere of capitalist production (around the labour process) and extends to contestation of the labour regime, which may be constituted domestically, regionally, nationally or globally.
- (8) Labouring class collective actions range from attempts to improve wages and conditions, to attempting to gain access to and to control (state and private) resources, to the combatting of the (re)commodification of social relations and the environment, to attempts to enhance and extend labouring classes' influence within political and economic spheres.
- (9) LCD analysis focuses upon labouring classes' collective attempts to ameliorate their conditions and entails an investigation of class compromises and institutionalisation of (conflictual or cooperative) class relations.

Attempts by labouring classes to ameliorate their livelihoods are numerous, but are often overlooked within much development thinking because they are not part of an elite-led project of intentional development. Such cases of LCD may include the shack-dwellers' movement in South Africa, Brazil's Landless Labourers' movement, Argentinian unemployed workers unions and recuperated factory movements, and collective actions by South Korean and Chinese industrial workers to improve their pay and conditions.⁶³

These examples have in common a number of dynamics. Their internal dynamism is generated by their own collective actions rather than by elite actors; they have ameliorated the conditions of their members; and they interact with capitalist states and business sectors in ways which transform the latter's actions in order to accommodate the former's existence and requirements. Such movements and the processes they generate should be considered under the umbrella of development just as much as the actions of states and corporations.

Conclusions

Development studies and development theory aim to uplift the world's poor. However, EDT, ranging across a wide political spectrum, contributes to the reproduction of ES–SO relations that preclude many forms of human development of the poor. EDT's elitism is manifested in three ways: through the identification of elites, ranging from state planners and policy makers to capitalist corporations, as primary actors in the development process; by ignoring and delegitimising the poor's actions to uplift themselves, unless these actions complement elite conceptions of development; and by legitimating the exploitation and repression of the poor, in the name of helping the poor. This ideological construction is visible in each of the theoretical approaches reviewed in the third section above. The Washington Consensus's theory of labour market distortions, and statist political economy's and modernisation Marxism's identification of strong states as necessary to extracting sizeable surpluses from labouring classes legitimate the political repression and heightened exploitation of labour.

While milder incarnations of modernisation Marxism place greater emphasis upon labouring class collective actions, the latter are derivative of successful prior and ongoing capital accumulation (which itself requires exploitation of labour). Moreover, these actions are considered useful only in tempering the worst effects of immanent capitalist development. Modernisation Marxism may hold to a vision of socialism in the distant future, but this is only possible after extensive and intensive capital accumulation. The contradiction of Marxists advocating labour exploitation is not intellectually (or politically) fatal within development studies because the ES–SO conception of development is hegemonic within the discipline.

Joseph Stiglitz's advocacy of the Post-Washington Consensus, and varieties of pro-poor growth and decent work, potentially create more space for progressive policies towards labour. They also theorise and advocate some space for labouring class organisations in the development process, through the exercise of the latter's 'voice', rather than conceiving only of workers as bearers of a factor of production. However, conceptually they ignore and externalise from their accounts of 'successful' development the very harsh labour repression and exploitation which were and are central to East Asian and now China's rapid economic growth, respectively. Such externalisation and non-theorisation render PWC conceptions of development (whether immanent or intentional) partial at best.

LCD as a practice (by labouring classes) and as an intellectual framework (for development theorists) aims to conceptualise and promote politically developmental processes generated

by labouring classes. Does this preclude LCD advocates from proposing elite (state)-implemented policies? Not necessarily. But it does understand such policies and practices from a radically different vantage point from EDT. A fundamental difference between LCD and ES–SO conceptions is that the former illustrates how more benign elite-led development processes are often so because they have been shaped, in one way or another, by labouring class collective actions and subaltern pressure upon elites. Such policies and practices range from improvements in wages and conditions, to state provision of welfare, to access to land, to the establishment of democracy. More far-reaching developmental gains achieved through labouring class collective actions include gaining (less or more) control over the means of producing social wealth and the political capacity to decide upon its distribution.

To be sure, these are fundamentally political issues. However, theorising them, as attempted here, may contribute to their realisation by deconstructing and delegitimising the elite development theories that deny the possibilities of and seek to preclude labour-centred development.

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Notes

1. Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*.
2. Wood, *Pristine Culture*; and Selwyn, *Global Development Crisis*.
3. Wright, "Understanding Class."
4. This is a Marxian conception of exploitation. See Marx, 1990. However, even if a more liberal conception is adopted, which emphasises (low) pay, (bad) conditions and (a lack of) political rights, the arguments of this article stand – that labour is conceptualised as an input into production which in turn justifies its political and economic coercion. See, for example, http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_106207/lang-en/index.htm.
5. Piketty, *Capital*.
6. Selwyn, forthcoming 2015.
7. Selwyn, *Global Development Crisis*; and Robinson, *Global Capitalism*.
8. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, ix–x.
9. The concepts of primary and secondary agency are derived from Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception*.
10. Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, 11.
11. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 117.
12. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*.
13. Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development." This weakness in Smith's account of the emergence of capitalism was solved by Marx, in *Capital*, in his analysis of primitive accumulation.

Despite his limited historical perspective on capitalism's emergence, Smith was much more nuanced and sensitive to its contradictory effects upon the majority of the population than self-proclaimed latter-day Smithians. For example, in Book 5 of the *Wealth of Nations*, he illustrates the debilitating effects of the division of labour upon the working population (which he praises in Book 1 as being the source of huge productivity increases).

14. Marx, *Capital*.
15. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.
16. Esteva, "Development," 3.
17. Van Waeyenberge and Fine, "A Knowledge Bank?"
18. World Bank, cited in OECD, *Perspectives on Global Development*, 70.
19. OECD, cited in Cammack, *Socio-economic Rights*, 3.
20. Toye, *Dilemmas*
21. Lal, *The Poverty of Development Economics*.
22. Davidson, "The Neoliberal Era in Britain," 24.
23. Reed, "Adolph Reed, Jr. Responds," 68.
24. Solow, "What is Labour Market Flexibility?," 1.
25. Harris and Todaro, "Migration, Unemployment and Development"; and Kreuger, *Trade and Employment*, 10.
26. World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle*, 19.
27. Stiglitz and Hoff, "Modern Economic Theory," 390.
28. Stiglitz, "More Instruments," 1.
29. Stiglitz, "More Instruments," 22, 18.
30. Stiglitz, "More Instruments," 31, 33.
31. Davidson, "The Neoliberal Era in Britain," 25.
32. Stiglitz, "More Instruments," 25, 29, 1.
33. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-s-roadmap>.
34. Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, 49.
35. See Selwyn, *Global Development Crisis* for an outline.
36. Chang, *Kicking away the Ladder?*; Wade, *Governing the Market*; and Amsden, "Third World Industrialization."
37. Evans, *Embedded Autonomy*; and Weber, *Economy and Society*.
38. Johnson, *MITI*; Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant*; and Wade, *Governing the Market*.
39. World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle*.
40. Amsden, "Third World Industrialization," 13–14, 18, 30.
41. Kohli, *State-directed Development*, 381.
42. Chang, "Korean Labour Relations."
43. Breslin, "The 'China Model'."
44. For example, Hagen Koo writes how 'approximately one third of South Korean workers suffer from insecure job conditions, receiving only around 60 per cent of regular workers' wages with no medical insurance, severance pay or company welfare subsidies.' See <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/07/01/inequality-in-south-korea/>.
45. Draper, "The Two Souls."
46. 'The pace must not be slackened!' Stalin said in February 1931. 'On the contrary we must quicken it as much as is within our powers and possibilities... We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us.' Quoted in Deutscher, "Prophet," 328.
47. Sender and Smith, *The Development of Capitalism*, 77, 112 (emphasis added), 132.
48. Sender, "Africa's Economic Performance," 110.
49. Desai, *Marx's Revenge*, 3, 65–66.
50. Kitching, *Seeking Social Justice*.
51. Kohli, *State-directed Development*, 384.
52. McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 30 (emphasis in the original).
53. That economic growth needs to be thought of in 'pro-poor' or 'inclusive' terms reflects the recognition that growth is often 'pro-rich' and 'anti-poor'. The literature discussed in this

section does not dwell much upon the issue of why economic growth under capitalism may systematically favour the rich rather than the poor. The literature tends to explain the poor's failure to benefit from growth in terms of their economic 'exclusion' from the benefits of the market or because of market rigidities. Such a mode of explanation precludes a fuller interrogation of what it is about 'the market' that consistently favours one social class over another. For an alternative, see Selwyn, *Global Development Crisis*.

54. Saad-Filho, *Growth, Poverty, and Inequality*.
55. Ianchovichina and Lundstrom, *Inclusive Growth*, 3.
56. ODI, *Pro-poor Growth and Development*, 3.
57. See <http://ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>.
58. ODI, *Pro-poor Growth and Development*, 4 (emphasis added).
59. *Ibid*; and ILO, *Development with Jobs*.
60. Silver and Zhang, "China."
61. ILO, *Development with Jobs*, xxi–xxiii.
62. Ianchovichina and Lundstrom, *Inclusive Growth*, 37.
63. See Selwyn, "Beyond Elitism."

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