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# Justice Above Profit, Sustainability Above Growth, Humanity Above Economy: Vandana Shiva and the Alternative Development Movement

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JUSTICE ABOVE PROFIT, SUSTAINABILITY ABOVE GROWTH,  
HUMANITY ABOVE ECONOMY: VANDANA SHIVA AND THE  
ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT

JULIE BRAKER

THESIS SUBMITTED TO POMONA COLLEGE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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WITH UTMOST APPRECIATION:

TO PROFESSORS ZAYN KASSAM AND JERRY IRISH FOR THEIR WISDOM AND SUPPORT;  
TO MY FRIENDS FOR ENRICHING MY LIFE;  
TO ALL THOSE WHO WORK TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE;  
AND TO MOM, DAD, EMILY AND SARAH FOR THEIR UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

WORDS CANNOT FULLY EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE.



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*If you have come to help me*

*You can go home again,*

*But if you see my struggle*

*As part of your own survival*

*Then perhaps we can work together*

*–Attributed to an Australian Aboriginal woman*

*We need to affirm one another, support one another, help, enable, equip, and empower one another to deal with the present crisis, but it can't be uncritical, because if it's uncritical, then we are again refusing to acknowledge other people's humanity. If we are serious about acknowledging other people's humanity, then we are committed to trusting and believing that they are forever in process. Growth, development, maturation happens in stages. People grow, develop, and mature along the lines in which they are taught. Disabling critique and contemptuous feedback hinders. – Cornel West<sup>1</sup>*

Cornel West's exhortation to engage in critical consideration of our every action comes at a pivotal moment, when notions of development, globalization, post-colonialism and human justice are at the forefront of the international order. West's advice must be incorporated into the issue of development and its aims to alleviate poverty, ensure sustainability and establish social justice. Development is a controversial topic, attracting extreme supporters and fervent denouncers. Multi-national corporations and governmental organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, have pursued a narrow track to development. They promote neoliberalism, claiming to be the bearers of progress and prosperity by encouraging such practices as free trade and trade liberalization. These bodies directly and indirectly affect poor people in both developed and developing countries, with supporters claiming that globalization and liberalization will resolve income and quality of life inequalities. Yet, the World Institute for Development Economics Research at United Nations University reports that, in 2000, the richest 1% of adults alone owned 40% of global assets, while the bottom half of the world adult population owned barely

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<sup>1</sup> bell hooks and Cornel West, "Black Women and Men: Partnership in the 1990s" *African Philosophy: An Anthology* ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998) 475.



1% of global wealth.<sup>2</sup> Despite claims by its supporters, the supposedly miraculous impacts of neoliberal development have not reached the majority of the world's poor.

Multiple activists challenge the established development paradigm, prioritizing issues such as human rights, economic justice and environmental sustainability, as opposed to neoliberal development's focus on macroeconomics and corporations. These activists include Dr. Vandana Shiva. Vandana Shiva aims to "live by transcending polarities—between people and planet, between modern science and indigenous knowledge, between environment and 'development,' between north and south, the local and the global."<sup>3</sup> Her personal philosophy drew her to assume a leading role in the international development community. This physicist/activist/scholar has captured the attention of diverse segments of society, from rural communities in India to the World Trade Organization to liberal-minded elites from the North. Shiva has made a name for herself and the alternative development movement by working from the grassroots up to critically analyze and revolutionize globalization trends. Shiva roots her work in communicating and learning with rural communities in India, through Navdanya, a participatory research and environmental activism organization that she spearheads. Simultaneously, she works to enact systematic change by influencing major international governing bodies, such as the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

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<sup>2</sup> World Institute for Development Economics Research, "Pioneering Study Shows Richest Two Percent Own Half World Wealth." 5 Dec. 2006, 12 Jan. 2009.  
[http://www.wider.unu.edu/events/past-events/2006-events/en\\_GB/05-12-2006/](http://www.wider.unu.edu/events/past-events/2006-events/en_GB/05-12-2006/).

<sup>3</sup> Vandana Shiva, "The Practice of Earth Democracy." 05 Nov. 2008.  
[http://www.navdanya.org/about/practice\\_earth\\_dem.htm](http://www.navdanya.org/about/practice_earth_dem.htm).

Well-renowned activists, academics and politicians criticize the stances that Shiva takes on globalization and development issues, claiming that they are uninformed, too radical or misguided. For example, Deepak Lal, professor of international development at University of California—Los Angeles, criticizes Shiva and the alternative development movement, asserting that “its primary target is to prevent the economic development which alone offers the world’s poor any chance of escaping their age old poverty.”<sup>4</sup> Such criticisms lead to the need for analysis about these movements. It is important to critically examine and analyze Shiva’s ideas and opinions, while simultaneously contextualizing her work in the broader alternative development movement. These thoughts provoke the core question of this thesis—do Vandana Shiva’s theories and practices promote just, sustainable development?

### **Motivations**

Because this thesis is rooted in personal values and interests, it is useful to communicate where I am coming from. My motivations for exploring this topic are multidimensional. I hope to be a good world citizen, meaning that I advocate the wellbeing, self-realization and empowerment of all people, while also promoting the sustainability of the land that we inhabit. I am constantly searching for and learning new ways to live out my (admittedly) lofty ideals. Consequently, the social problems that pervade the world bother me. I have always been confused about why there are literally thousands of governmental organizations, non-profits and policy/research centers devoted to development, but poverty and inequality still exist and, in some instances, are worsening. It worries me to observe that people working in the development field act on

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<sup>4</sup> Deepak Lal, “The New Cultural Imperialism: The Greens and Economic Development.” The Liberty Institute, 2000. <[http://www.libertyindia.org/JSlecture\\_DeepakLal.pdf](http://www.libertyindia.org/JSlecture_DeepakLal.pdf)>.

seemingly good intentions, yet so few results and such marginal attention are heeded to the voices of people who are most affected by development policy. I acknowledge that this thesis will not comprehensively resolve these dilemmas, and that they are issues that may never be wholly “solved.” Nonetheless, progress and improvement are important goals, so it is crucial to explore the problems of development.

In addition to exploring this topic as a means of further informing and solidifying my personal values, I hope to gain insights for my future work in the public interest sector. At Pomona College, I have committed myself to learning about and critically analyzing societal problems. My experiences in the classroom combined with my engagement with community-based work and social policy organizations have engendered more questions about the persistence of social ills, as well as the recognition that these issues are complicated, and demand discussion and deliberation. These experiences have also cemented my career interest in public interest work. The questions in this thesis are issues that I anticipate confronting throughout my career, so it is an appropriate topic for me to explore prior to immersing myself full-time in grassroots public interest work.

### **Introduction to Vandana Shiva**

This thesis investigates the alternative development movement, via the writings and activism of Vandana Shiva. She is a leader and innovator in development theory and practice, so her insights, critiques and theories reflect the discourse within the broader alternative development movement. This thesis describes how her leadership has contributed to the discourse on global politics, development and globalization, in addition to addressing the critiques of the alternative development movement. Accomplishing this

task entails addressing a variety of topics. First of all, the thesis must pinpoint exactly what Shiva advocates for and against, and discuss her rationale behind these positions. What do outsiders, both pro- and anti-mainstream development, say about her positions? How do these positions correspond to the rest of the alternative development movement?

Shiva speaks out against bodies such as the United States government, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. She discusses how globalization affects the poorest: farmers in developing countries, people living in rural areas, the urban poor. She contends that “development” as those in power currently see it is misguided. She analyzes that the supposedly progressive ideals of free trade and globalization actually inhibit growth for the poorest in the world, while encouraging excessive wealth for those who have already attained it.

### **Early life and journey to research and activism**

Shiva was born in 1952 in the valley of Derahdun, located in the foothills of the Himalayan mountains in northwestern India. She grew up with strong connections to nature, her father a conservator of forests and her mother a farmer. Shiva earned degrees in higher education, holding a Ph.D. in physics from University of Western Ontario. After working in science, Shiva defected from mainstream research, what she refers to as the “university research industrial complex,” and returned to her hometown to establish the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, an independent research organization that conducts research in the public interest.<sup>5</sup> Shiva chronicles her journey from academia to activism: “[w]hen I found that dominant science and technology served

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, “Who’s Who of Women and the Environment: Vandana Shiva.” 16 Apr. 2009.  
[http://www.unep.org/women\\_env/w\\_details.asp?w\\_id=107](http://www.unep.org/women_env/w_details.asp?w_id=107).

the interests of the powerful, I left academics to found the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, a participatory, public interest research organisation.”<sup>6</sup>

This decision proved to be pivotal to both her career and the development world at large.

## **Work**

Currently, Shiva’s work is primarily conducted via the books and articles that she writes and through her organization, Navdanya. Navdanya began as a branch of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology and currently executes a wide range of programming. Its stated mission is “to protect nature and people's rights to knowledge, biodiversity, water and food.”<sup>7</sup> Navdanya adopts a multidimensional approach to working towards their mission. A primary activity of Navdanya is seed saving:

For last 2 decades Navdanya has worked with local communities and organizations serving more than 2,000,000 men and women farmers from the States of Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. Navdanya’s efforts have resulted in the conservation of more than 2000 rice varieties from all over the country including indigenous rice varieties that have been adapted over centuries to meet different ecological demands.<sup>8</sup>

Seed saving, a practice of resistance and sustainability, is one of the most important projects that Navdanya undertakes because it ensures that local farmers have sufficient seed for the next season, while also encouraging chemical-free agriculture and subverting corporate agriculture’s interests.

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<sup>6</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Message from the Founder.” 05 Nov. 2008.  
<http://www.navdanya.org/about/founder-message.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Navdanya, “About Navdanya.” 15 Jan. 2009.  
<http://www.navdanya.org/about/mission.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Navdanya, “Seed Sovereignty.” 15 Jan. 2009.  
<http://www.navdanya.org/earthdcrazy/seed/index.htm>.

Navdanya also fosters organic, sustainable practices. It encourages biodiversity as way to cultivate healthy and safe food. Navdanya has established Slow Food restaurants in New Delhi, bringing an organic, sustainable option to consumers, while also encouraging fair trade practices. Additionally, through its branch, Diverse Women for Diversity, Navdanya promotes gender equality and supports grassroots women's movements.

Finally, Navdanya focuses on education and research. The organization conducts research on matters such as chemical usage in agriculture and biodiversity's impact on farming. It also monitors how international economic and trade policies influence local agriculture and the livelihood of farmers. Furthermore, the organization extends its reach by publishing literature on their research and work. It also educates on the grassroots level. Classes are hosted at the organization site on organic, sustainable farming, seed saving and food justice.

In addition to grassroots organizing with Navdanya, Shiva tackles the systemic issues of development through her research, publications and political organizing. Shiva has written numerous books on focused on different components of development, including ecofeminism, biopiracy, and seed saving. Furthermore, Shiva plays a prominent role in the International Forum on Globalization, an alliance of research and education organizations from the North and the South that united to create constructive responses to concerns over globalization. This organization spearheads conferences, publications and political action to spread awareness of the problems with globalization and to increase collaboration and support among the alternative development community. Shiva is involved with other large-scale movements and organizations, including the Slow Food

movement and the World Social Forum. Thus, through her independent publications, as well as her work with political and research organizations, Shiva tackles the systems that perpetrate injustice and environmental harm.

Shiva has received significant recognition for her work. In 1993, she was awarded the “Right Livelihood Award,” an honor that is sometimes referred to as the “Alternative Nobel Prize.” This is an annual award given to individuals for “outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and people.”<sup>9</sup> This honor was conferred upon Shiva for her leadership in “...placing women and ecology at the heart of modern development discourse.”<sup>10</sup> Shiva is the recipient of numerous other awards, including the United Nations’ Earth Day International Award and the Global 500 Award from the United Nations Environment Programme.<sup>11</sup>

### **Shiva’s philosophy**

Before delving into deliberation on Shiva’s work, it is worthwhile to mention her philosophical roots. Shiva’s philosophy is described in her recent book, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace*. She draws upon her Hindu background and India’s Vedic tradition to develop her theories and practices. Shiva grounds her work in Gandhian philosophy. Describing her leadership in Navdanya, Shiva states that “over the past three decades I have tried to be change I want to see,”<sup>12</sup> a clear reference to Gandhi’s exhortation to “be the change you want to see in the world.” Shiva adheres to the Gandhian practice of *ahimsa*, total non-violence. She also believes in Gandhi’s notion

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<sup>9</sup> The Right Livelihood Award, “The Right Livelihood Award,” 20 Oct. 2008  
<<http://www.rightlivelihood.org>>

<sup>10</sup> The Right Livelihood Award, “Vandana Shiva,” 20 Oct. 2008  
<http://www.rightlivelihood.org/v-shiva.html>.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Environment Programme.

<sup>12</sup> Shiva, “From the Founder.”

of *swaraj*, which can be translated as self-reliance, self-sufficiency or independence. Branching off of Gandhian thought, Shiva develops her notion of an “Earth Democracy,” a philosophy that affirms the connections between *vasudhaiva kutumbkam* (the earth family), what Shiva expresses as “the community of all beings supported by the earth.”<sup>13</sup> This community includes different types of people, as well as members of nonhuman species (plants, animals, etc).

Shiva explains that

in Earth Democracy, the concern for human and nonhuman species comes together in a coherent, nonconflicting whole that provides an alternative to the worldview of corporate globalization, which gives rights only to corporations and which sees humans and other beings as exploitable raw material or disposable waste.<sup>14</sup>

Interdependence between various parties (human beings and nonhuman species, producers and consumers, et cetera) is an important theme in Earth Democracy. Shiva emphasizes that the wellbeing of one group of people or species cannot come at the cost of another group’s. Instead, true liberation from the oppression of corporate globalization occurs when different groups of people and species collaborate to affirm one another’s freedom and development. Thus, Earth Democracy is necessarily antithetical to globalization and neoliberal development, because they value the rights of corporations and international governing bodies over the rights of citizens.

Shiva also emphasizes that Earth Democracy is a concept grounded in reality, not an abstract theory that ignores the lives of actual people:

It addresses the global in our everyday lives, our everyday realities, and creates change globally by making change locally. The changes may appear small, but

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<sup>13</sup> Vandana Shiva, Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Shiva, Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace 8.



they are far-reaching in impact—they are about nature’s evolution and our human potential; they are about shifting from the vicious cycles of violence in which suicidal cultures, suicidal economies, and the politics of suicide feed on each other to virtuous cycles of nonviolence in which living cultures nourish living democracies and living economies.<sup>15</sup>

This basis in reality is important to Shiva’s ideals because it means that every person and every species is a stakeholder in cultivating a more democratic earth. It gives all individuals agency in contributing to Earth Democracy. Through daily decisions, individuals opt to participate in or ignore Earth Democracy: “The highest-level political and economic conflicts between freedom and slavery, democracy and dictatorship, diversity and monoculture have thus entered into the simple acts of buying edible oils and cooking our food.”<sup>16</sup> By basing itself in a localized reality, Earth Democracy lives out its own principle of inclusiveness.

### **Literature review**

Because I call upon many prominent development theorists and practitioners, it is worthwhile to overview the main works and scholars that inform this thesis. Amartya Sen is one of the most influential development economists of the age. Sen’s *Development as Freedom* is a significant work on development; it redefines development’s priorities and serves as a foundational work for much of alternative development theory. Sen, a Nobel prize-winning economist, prioritizes individual choice and agency, contending that they should be the primary aims of development. Preeminent post-colonial anthropologist Arturo Escobar’s *Encountering Development* influenced the theory and justice sections of this thesis, as Escobar challenges the dominant discourse surrounding development,

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<sup>15</sup> Shiva, Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace 4.

<sup>16</sup> Vandana Shiva, Stolen Harvests: the Hijacking of the Global Food Supply (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000) 33.

rhetoric and representation, while also prioritizing local practices and grassroots action as important forms of development.

James Ferguson provided similar insights in *The Anti-Politics Machine*. Ferguson draws upon his development experiences in Lesotho to analyze how mainstream development prevents just, sustainable change because it inhibits political engagement and, by suppressing political action, upholds the status quo. Anti-corporation activist and former development practitioner with USAID David Korten provides analysis and criticism of the international economic order in *When Corporations Rule the World* and *The Great Turning*. These books argue that international economic systems must be transformed so that power is removed from corporate interests and returned to the people.

I also use the work of Shiva's colleagues, including John Cavanagh and Jerry Mander's *Alternatives to Globalization: A Better World is Possible*, which overviews multiple issues in alternative development and proposes solutions to issues such as democracy, post-colonialism and renewal of the commons. Klaus Dodds, notable geopolitical scholar from University of London also contributes to this task, analyzing colonial histories and explaining their modern significance, while also devising strategies for change in *Geopolitics in a Changing World*. This thesis was also informed by work from World Watch's *2008 State of the World Report*, an annual publication that highlights pressing environmental issues. The theme for this publication was building a sustainable economy, so the report provided insights on a variety of topics, including industrial agriculture, the renewal of the commons and reform of the WTO. I also supplement Shiva's work with fellow Indian development activist Arundhati Roy's writings. In her essays "Power Politics," "The Great Common Good," and "The Ladies

Have Feelings So... Shall We Leave It to the Experts?" Roy expresses the need for inclusive, anti-imperialist development policies, specifically focusing on the issue of dam construction in India.

My work was further informed by exploring Shiva's grassroots work. This was primarily achieved by looking at Navdanya's extensive website. A great deal of her work is outlined there. Furthermore, Shiva has produced a vast amount of literature herself. I focus on a few of her books. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace* provides insights into the theory and philosophy behind her work. It focuses on how for hundreds of years, public spaces and resources have been shrinking. The forces of neoliberal globalization and systemic social and political exclusion has caused ecological degradation and, through this, a decrease in the human condition. Shiva's *Water Wars* gives an analysis of the pressing water crises occurring in the world and how development fits into those crises. Shiva argues the water privatization caused many droughts and water contamination crises and advocates for local control over water sources.

*Stolen Harvests: the Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* and *Biopiracy: the Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* greatly inform the analysis of enclosure of the commons and intellectual property rights and patents on life, in addition to providing insights on industrial agriculture. Furthermore, Shiva's most recent work, *Soil Not Oil*, highlights the interconnectivity of issues of climate change, oil and poverty. In a similar vein to Shiva's other works, this book advocates for local and systemic change, while also emphasizing the need to address issues of environmental and human justice holistically. I also look to articles that Shiva has written, including "War Against Nature

and the Global South,” criticizing the WTO and “The Historical Significance of Seattle,” reflecting on the success and meaning of the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle.

A significant research gap in this thesis is the dearth of criticism and analysis of Shiva. There are few articles and books written specifically about Shiva. However, I utilize the few resources there are, such as the Liberty Institute’s article about endowing Shiva with the mocking “Bullshit Award for Sustaining Poverty,” Lal’s “The New Cultural Imperialism: The Greens and Economic Development,” which directly refers to Shiva, and Gail Omvedt’s “Open Letter to Arundhati Roy,” which covers many criticisms of Shiva and the alternative development movement as a whole. Many critiques have a neoliberal sentiment to them, harping on Shiva for what they considered regressive practices. Omvedt provides a unique perspective because she is a fellow alternative development activist, but challenges some of alternative development’s viewpoints and strategies. Although there is a dearth of information specifically about Shiva, there is sufficient criticism about the alternative development movement as a whole to inform this work.

### **Roadmap of chapters**

The first chapter explains the history of development and gives an overview of development theory. Its aim is to provide perspective on development, describe how the alternative development movement gained momentum and situate Shiva in the broader scheme of development. Next, the second chapter focuses on the environmental and sustainability issues that Shiva grapples with. It specifically overviews the issues of the enclosure of the commons and patents and intellectual property rights on life, and how these issues impact air, water and agriculture. Then, the third chapter delves into the

issues of development and human justice, highlighting how trends of neocolonialism and corporate control hinder human justice. The final chapter synthesizes the themes discussed throughout the thesis, addresses ways of constructively living out alternative development and provides concluding remarks.

## **Chapter I**

### **Gaining perspective: An overview of development theory**

Now that sufficient background information on Shiva's life, work and philosophy has been provided, it is time to delve into analyzing and exploring her work and theory. In order to evaluate whether or not Shiva's theories and practices promote just and sustainable development, it is necessary to explore what just and sustainable development means. Investigating this topic entails looking at the history of development theory, comparing different types of development and examining how Shiva fits into these schemes. Naturally, the themes of justice and sustainability must be at the forefront of this analysis. The composition of these concepts must be first discussed, in order to establish what form development should take.

First of all, what does just, sustainable development involve? There are multiple perspectives on what justice, sustainability and development entail; entire books have been written on each topic independently. I will begin by separately examining development, sustainability and justice, and then synthesize the information to determine how the three relate to each other.

### **Definitions**

#### **A. Development**

Development is a complex topic that embodies different priorities, depending on who defines it. In fact, many of the disagreements between the neoliberal and alternative development factions boil down to conflicting definitions of development. Consequently, in order to understand both the breadth and depth of development, it is worthwhile to

look at multiple definitions of development and examine their similarities and differences.

An appropriate foundation for a definition of development is the United Nations' human development index (HDI) indicators. These are measurable factors that the United Nations utilizes to determine a country's ranking on the human development index. In their 2006/2007 Human Development Index Report, they state that when measuring development they consider

the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life; access to knowledge; and a decent standard of living. These basic dimensions are measured by life expectancy at birth, adult literacy and combined gross enrollment in primary, secondary and tertiary level education, and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Purchasing Power Parity US dollars (PPP US\$) respectively.<sup>17</sup>

In this report, the authors admit that “the concept of human development is much broader than any single composite index can measure,”<sup>18</sup> but that, for the purposes of a project as vast as gauging the development level of almost every country in the world, the HDI proves useful. Thus, considering development at its most aggregate level, it embodies health and longevity, education and economic power.

Working from the recognition that development entails much more than a single number in an index, there are volumes of other development definitions to examine. Behrooz Morvaridi, a development theorist at University of Sussex, offers a more comprehensive, inclusive definition, describing development as “the progressive improvement in the social, economic well-being of people that they live longer, healthier

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations, *Human Development Report 2007/2008*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 225.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations 225.

and fuller lives within any given political entity.”<sup>19</sup> She goes on to explain that development also necessitates the absence “of major sources of suppression and inequality: poverty, tyranny, lack of economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, and intolerance or over-activity of repressive states.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, development must also include political, social and economic institutions that promote the wellbeing of individuals.

Recently, attention has been heeded to the importance of grassroots participation and voice when considering development. Anthropology professor at University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill and notable development theorist Arturo Escobar also adds to the definition of development by explaining how “a relatively coherent body of work has emerged which highlights the role of grassroots movements, local knowledge and populace power in transforming development.”<sup>21</sup> Empowerment and participation of “stakeholders,” individuals who are most directly affected by development policies and practice, have become greater focuses of what development should be.

Employing these different definitions, we can infer that development is the presence of aggregate indicators, such as overall health, high levels of education and relative purchasing power, as well as the presence of certain indicators for individuals, such as individual freedoms. Furthermore, development has an institutional component, necessitating institutions and policies that incorporate development. Finally, a focus on grassroots participation and voice is crucial to any definition of development.

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<sup>19</sup> Behrooz Morvaridi, Social Justice and Development (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> Morvaridi 9.

<sup>21</sup> Arturo Escobar, Encountering Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 215.



## **B. Sustainability**

After looking at the different components of development, it is obvious that, even without explicitly mentioning them, both sustainability and justice are active ingredients of development. Nonetheless, it is important to flesh out exactly what prioritizing sustainability and justice in the development movement should entail. This process necessitates more precisely unpacking what these roles require, first addressing sustainability and then looking at justice. Traditionally, sustainability has been equated with concerns over natural, environmental resources. It refers to the fact that there are limited resources on this planet. However, social and economic factors are increasingly included in the term “sustainability.”

Environmentalist and author Paul Hawken provides a concise, but comprehensive description:

Sustainable development encompasses economic and social development. It takes full account of the environmental and social consequences of economic activity and is based on the use of resources that can be replaced or renewed, meeting the needs and improving the quality of life of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own environmental, social, and economic needs...Its goal is not maximum economic growth but more balanced development of environmental, social, political, and economic resources.<sup>22</sup>

Sustainable development considers multiple priorities, focusing on how resources, whether human or natural, must be secured in the long-term. Furthermore, it highlights how different components of development, environmental, social, economic, intersect and affect one another.

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Hawken, Blessed Unrest: How the largest movement in the world came into being and why no one saw it coming (New York: Penguin Group, 2007) 288.

The World Commission on Environment and Development provides their own definition of sustainable development:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs... Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life.<sup>23</sup>

The themes of these definitions are remarkably similar. Both emphasize that economic progress and increasing standard of living are priorities, but that they cannot be achieved at the cost of future generations' wellbeing. They also acknowledge the reality that natural resources are scarce and that this limitation should be a primary consideration when assessing development.

### **C. Justice**

Now that the sustainability component has been addressed, it is necessary to explore the relationship between justice and development. This task is challenging, because concepts of justice can be explored on multiple levels (philosophical, social, economic), so this section aims to incorporate definitions of justice that most directly include development. Morvaridi identifies equal power structures as a critical facet of justice: "In critical social justice theory the real analytical issue is inequality, which is structural in origin and relates closely to unequal power relations."<sup>24</sup> Development theorist Punham Chuhan describes justice in a more colloquial sense:

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<sup>23</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development. *Report of the World Commission on the Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. 19 Feb. 2009. <<http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>>.

<sup>24</sup> Morvaridi 25.

People everywhere have a general sense of fairness as it applies to themselves and others, which is rooted in the concept of social justice...Persistent poverty, large inequalities between and within countries, and lack of opportunity are not consistent with this sense of fairness.<sup>25</sup>

Justice in relation to development involves social equality, both in terms of economic factors and other quality of life considerations.

Although it is usually not explicitly mentioned in definitions, another important facet of development that touches upon sustainability and justice is its political component. With regards to both society as a whole and to individuals, political power, agency and capacity are important components of development. Although political agency is rarely mentioned in definitions of development, its importance can be seen when examining critiques of unsuccessful development projects. For example, James Ferguson, professor of anthropology at the University of California at Irvine, criticizes how “international aid projects by their very nature, whoever they claim to ‘target,’ do not make the radical changes in political and economic structures that could alone empower the poor.”<sup>26</sup> He goes on to explain that

a first step, many would agree, toward clarifying the goal and the tactics appropriate to achieving [development] is to reformulate it somewhat more politically: since it is powerlessness that ultimately underlies the surface conditions of poverty, ill-health, and hunger, the larger goal ought therefore to be empowerment.<sup>27</sup>

Although he does not provide a definition of just, sustainable development, it is evident from Ferguson’s comments that politics and the restructuring of power are integral.

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<sup>25</sup> Punham Chuhan, “Poverty and Inequality.” *Global Issues for Global Citizens: An Introduction to Key Development Challenges*, ed. Vinay Bhargava (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2006) 41.

<sup>26</sup> James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*. (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 1994) 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ferguson 279-280.

David Hilfiker, a doctor who heads a home in Washington, D.C. for men living with AIDS who cannot afford to live elsewhere, brings to light another meaningful aspect of justice, especially justice in development. Hilfiker does not outright name politics as the core element of justice, but emphasizes how comprehensive social justice can only be achieved through systemic change. In his article “The Limits of Charity,” Hilfiker describes how charity may resolve short-term problems, but fails to create justice: “Injustice...is more deep-seated. It is the inevitable result of the structures of our society—economic, governmental, social, and religious—that undergird inequality. The way things stand now, poverty is built into these systems.” He goes on to explain that “[t]he fundamental problem for the poor...is not homelessness or AIDS or the like—or even any combination of these. They are just symptoms; the problem is injustice.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, it is imperative to address problems such as hunger, environmental degradation and poverty as indicators of dysfunctional economic, political and social systems. Hilfiker’s observations connect to development in a significant way and strike a chord at the heart of this thesis: Just, sustainable development cannot ignore the systemic roots of maldevelopment. Just, sustainable development cannot further entrench these roots into society; it must actively generate genuine, creative, localized solutions.

Thus, in terms of justice, structural change through political and economic reconstruction can equalize social and economic relations for marginalized groups of people, fulfilling Morvaridi’s criterion of equalized power structures. Ferguson and Hilfiker’s analysis of justice are important reminders about the purpose of development and true pursuit of justice. In addition to promoting justice, political action is sustainable,

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<sup>28</sup> David Hilfiker, “The Limits of Charity.” *The Other Side*. Sept/Oct, 2000.

in the sense that politics often impacts environmental and resource policy. Furthermore, equalized political power structures are socially sustainable, in the sense that they foster long-term political solutions to societal inequities.

It also must be mentioned that, with regards to development, justice and sustainability are not separate concepts. In fact, they foster one another. Each is a prerequisite for the other. Hawken describes how

just as unsound ways of extracting wood fiber can destroy the ecological integrity of a forest until it can no longer regulate watersheds, atmosphere, climate, nutrient flows, and habitats, unsound methods of exploiting human resources can destroy the social integrity of a culture so it can no longer support the happiness and improvement of its members. Industrial capitalism can be said to be liquidating, without valuing, both natural *and* human capital—capturing short-term gains in ways that destroy long-term human prospect and purpose.<sup>29</sup>

Unjust practices are unsustainable and unsustainable practices are unjust.

Finally, it is important to note that, in any exercise surrounding the definition of development, we must acknowledge that the definition is flexible and variable. Morvaridi explains why: “First, the meaning of development itself has always been contentious, mediated as it is by political, ideological and time-specific influences. Second, any definition involves values and judgments, which is why there is no one single fixed definition of development.”<sup>30</sup> Whether it is recognized or not, development is a significant component of every individual’s life, regardless of nationality, social status, occupation, age, etc. Because of its universality and contentious nature, development means different things to different people and its dynamic definition must be constantly reflected upon, reworked and reconsidered.

## **Development history**

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<sup>29</sup> Paul Hawken, Natural Capitalism (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1999) 386.

<sup>30</sup> Morvaridi 10.

Delineating definitions is important to development, but it is only the beginning of the exercise of describing this subject. In order to properly analyze development, it is important to look at its history. In a certain sense, the history of development is the history of the human species. People have always aimed to increase their standard of living, to improve their lifestyle. The earliest development theorists hark back to economists such as Ricardo, Malthus and Smith, who deliberated over problems such as population control, unemployment and market systems. Although these economists made significant contributions to development theory, this thesis only briefly mentions them because it focuses on modern development problems. For the purposes of this thesis, it is more worthwhile to examine recent trends and viewpoints.

Current development themes will be discussed in-depth throughout this section. First, this section addresses mainstream development, and then delves into its most recent form, neoliberalism. Then, it explains the critiques of these types of development. Finally, this section articulates the viewpoint of alternative development and describes how Shiva contributes to this line of thought.

### **Mainstream and neoliberal development**

Mainstream development theory must first be considered. This perspective equates development with industrialization and market economy growth. It is often labeled “mainstream” or, in its more recent form, “neoliberal.” It embraces capitalism and reinforces capitalist values by using the market economy to achieve growth. Within this theory lies the assumption that market economic growth translates into development. Jan Nerderveen Pietrese, professor of global sociology at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, describes how “in modern development thinking and economics, the core

meaning of development was economic growth, as in growth theory and Big Push theory. In the course of time, mechanization and industrialization became part of this.”<sup>31</sup>

Mechanization and industrialization are important aspects to mention because, while in capitalist terms, they produce the most efficient outcome, they also replace human work with machines, contributing to unemployment, while also consuming a disproportionate amount of natural resources.

Professor of Geography at Clark University Richard Peet articulates what this emphasis on capitalism, industrialization and growth theory meant for development policy: “Development policy came to consist in withdrawing government intervention in favor of the rationalization of an economy through disciplining by the market and self-interested individuals efficiently choosing between alternatives in the allocation of resources.”<sup>32</sup> He goes on to describe three specific policies: economic liberalization, macroeconomic stabilization and privatization. These policies are the cornerstone of capitalist economics.

In addition to capitalism, mainstream development was founded on the notion that copious amounts of aid and resources were a solution to underdevelopment. This focus seems contradictory to the value that neoliberal policy places in capitalist economics, which urge free markets and non-interference. However, some economists view this as a market-adjustment that will solve transnational inequalities. This view is still prevalent in modern/neoliberal circles. Its most prominent proponent is Jeffery Sachs, economics professor at Columbia University and Special Advisor to the United Nations. As argued

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<sup>31</sup> Jan Nerderveen Pietrese, Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions (London: SAGE Publications, 2001) 6.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Peet, Theories of Development (New York: Guilford Press, 1999) 6.

in his book *The End of Poverty*, Sachs believes that if the rich of the world were to push more money into developing countries, significant progress would be made.<sup>33</sup>

This capitalist form of development still exists, but in a slightly different form and name. It is identified as “neo-liberalism.” Pietrese provides a working definition: “Neo-liberalism, in returning to neoclassical economics, eliminates the foundation of development economics: the notion that developing economies represent a ‘special case’...What matters is to ‘get the prices right’ and let market forces do their work.”<sup>34</sup> Neo-liberalism rejects policies considered “interference,” which includes fair trade and social programs. Morvaridi explains:

In a nutshell, neo-liberalism means less government and more liberalization of the market through privatization and trade and expropriation of the individual theme of liberalism. In this conception the unit of analysis is an individual who is a rational actor that can interact in the market for self-interest and utility maximization. Collective action and community are displaced with the notion of individual agency, placing responsibility for poverty on the individuals who experience it.<sup>35</sup>

Neo-liberalism can be described as a modern, pro-capitalist form of development.

Although it seemingly rejects institutional involvement, neo-liberalism, in fact, has strong implications for governments and other organizations. Postcolonial development theorist Colin Leys explains that “the central idea...is that what makes for an efficient economy is a set of institutions that permit individuals to benefit personally from doing what will also serve the (material) interests of society as a whole.”<sup>36</sup> This

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<sup>33</sup> Jeffery Sachs, *The End of Poverty* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Pietrese 16.

<sup>35</sup> Morvaridi 23.

<sup>36</sup> Colin Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) 6.



entails formulating policy in a way that maximizes capitalist capacity and establishing institutions that promote free markets and open competition.

Leys argues that neo-liberalism is not, economically speaking, an ideal development policy: “It is often possible to see, retrospectively, that the institutional structure has provided incentives for individuals to do things which were inimical to development.”<sup>37</sup> He explains that, although capitalist policies seemingly promote the most efficient social and economic arrangements, these arrangements are not always conducive to development because this type of economics tends to account for economic performance in the past or at the present, but rarely accurately predicts economic performance and change in the long run.<sup>38</sup> In sum, neo-liberalism values capitalism and conceptualizes social and economic situations in terms of individual, rational actors.

Although this policy might make sense in the context of academia, Peet explains why this mentality has revealed itself to be erroneous:

Economics develops in an intellectual vacuum of high mathematics and unrealistic models, isolates itself from fundamental critiques, and reaches precarious conclusions which, while they affect everyone, are conspicuously lacking in democratic input. These tendencies in contemporary, neoclassical economics are highly related: it is exactly the policy powerfulness of economics that protects it from having to take criticism seriously.<sup>39</sup>

Peet’s critique of mainstream development economics is that, while it may make sense on paper, it is founded on inaccurate assumptions about both the nature of markets and the nature of human beings.

It can be established that neo-liberalism does not meet the definition of just, sustainable development. Although neo-liberalism claims to promote individual rights

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<sup>37</sup> Leys 37.

<sup>38</sup> Leys 37.

<sup>39</sup> Peet 57.

(which could be considered a form of justice), it ultimately only perpetuates capitalist structures of power, which imply inequalities and rights for only a select elite.

Furthermore, its short-term emphasis on both the economy and natural resources reveals that it does not foster sustainable practices. Additionally, merely pouring more resources into a country does not address the social and political systems that often underlie and perpetuate maldevelopment.

It is important to note that the international economic organizations (World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank) have adopted a neoliberal approach to development. This is the cause of great controversy and will be discussed in more detail later on. The important point for now is that, although the following section on alternative development describes how development *theory* has made notable progress, this description does not accurately reflect how development is actualized in real life, especially with regards to the roles that governments and international organizations play in development.

## **Critiques of mainstream development**

### **A. Practice and theory**

Although neoliberal development continues to dominate development discourse and practice, it has been challenged on both practical and theoretical grounds. Klaus Dodds, professor of geopolitics at University of London, provides insight into the mistrust of mainstream and neoliberal development:

For the last fifty years, official development policies have tried to promote development through the political and economic transformation of states in the South (Escobar 1995; Rist 1997). It could be argued that, by any conventional indicator of development, these policies have failed...In that sense, World Bank figures for gross domestic product (which do not consider patterns of distribution) tell us little about the lives of people living in the slums, nor do they remind us

that far more people have died from disease and hunger than the 187 million people who perished through wars and conflict in the present century (Hobsbawm, 1997).<sup>40</sup>

The ways in which neoliberal development measures its success are inaccurate, undermining its foundations. Furthermore, large-scale neoliberal development simply has not achieved its supposed aims.

Dodds expands to identify major sources of tension in the development community and outlines the primary problems:

During the 1990s it has become apparent that a number of pressing issues confronting the South and South-North relations have not been resolved: the political and economic consequences of development, gender and human rights, environmental protection, debt reduction and the protection of ethnic and religious minorities (Haynes, 1996). At the same time, mainstream development approaches have failed to tackle the underlying structural causes of poverty, hunger, disease and chronic indebtedness. Major conferences such as the 1992 Rio summit and the 1995 Conference on Socioeconomic Development have tended to reaffirm a commitment to the promotion of free trade, market integration and liberal democratic governance, but for 'Southern' critics and NGOs these platitudes do not confront the profound inequalities of the global political economic system.<sup>41</sup>

The combination of persistent problems and empty, repetitive pledges have engendered immense frustration with the development industrial complex.

Even at the most basic level, neoliberal development has not proven itself to be successful. Simply put, many development projects have not achieved desirable results. The aggregate facts illustrate this point: The inequality gap between the rich and the poor, both in terms of nations and in terms of individuals, continues to widen. For example, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the United States, the Gini coefficient, a statistical indicator of income inequality with 0 being perfect equality and 1 being

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<sup>40</sup> Klaus Dodds, Geopolitics in a Changing World (Essex: Prentice Hall Limited, 2000) 67.

<sup>41</sup> Dodds 69.

complete inequality, has steadily increased from 39.7 in 1967 to 47.0 in 2006, indicating that the national gap between the poorest and the richest has grown.<sup>42</sup> The trend of heightened inequality is observed both within the populations of other countries and in comparisons between populations of different nations. The most recent United Nations Human Development Report reveals that all of the countries exhibiting low human development levels are in sub-Saharan Africa, while the countries with the highest human development index are all Northern countries. The inventory of development shortcomings could continue forever. This failure of development has both technical and theoretical underpinnings.

Escobar analyzes the foundational faults of neoliberal development, explaining how the core problem is that

growth started to be seen as a remedy for poverty and unemployment, rather than an end in itself...similarly, industrialization would be the only way in which the poor countries could undo the structural disadvantage that they faced in the domain of international economics.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, external aid and capital accumulation were advocated for as development strategies. This strategy, which narrowly focuses on attaining high GDP, clashes with the criteria established for just, sustainable development, which values a more holistic approach to development. Even the United Nations, an organization that, generally speaking, advocates for capitalism and neo-liberalism, incorporates more than just GDP when considering human development.

Ferguson provides a specific example of how growth and increased monetary resources do not entail development. He recalls a list of almost one hundred

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<sup>42</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Historical Income Inequality Tables" 20 Jan 2009. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/ineqtoc.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Escobar 74.

governments, international organizations and non-profits that contribute money or other resources towards development projects in Lesotho. He laments that, despite the influx of resources, the country is not much better developed than it was prior to the development craze. He attributes this failure to the lack of substantive change that results from capital inflows: “Political and structural causes of poverty in Lesotho are systematically erased and replaced with technical ones, and the ‘modern,’ capitalist, industrialized nature of the society is systematically understated or concealed.”<sup>44</sup> “Technical” as referred to here does not necessarily allude to technology, but rather to solutions that focus on “expert” (meaning Western, capitalist and foreign-imposed) economic solutions. By narrowly focusing on market solutions and pouring resources into countries, neoliberal development neglects the structural, long-term problems that underpin low standard of living.

Escobar agrees with this analysis, explaining that

by uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of ‘development’ is the principal means through which the questions of poverty is de-politicized in the world today.<sup>45</sup>

Practically speaking, mainstream development has prioritized a singular, narrow aspect of what development must entail. Thus, alternative development theorists critique mainstream development because its practical “solutions” have not, in fact, contributed to grassroots change. This failure can be attributed to the fact that the priorities of development have traditionally been technical and short-term in nature. True development necessitates political engagement and an interrogation of foreign-imposed

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<sup>44</sup> Ferguson 66.

<sup>45</sup> Escobar 256.

neoliberal economic, social and politics systems, the institutions in which the root of maldevelopment lies. Development theory that advocates high levels of aid has failed. At the same time, a non-interventionist, capitalist approach has proven ineffective, despite the fact that its theoretical basis is just the opposite, promoting open trade and free markets. At first analysis, this is confusing, because one would think that one theory or the other would be effective. However, the problem is that these concerns are narrowly monetary, when development concerns a wider scope.

### **B. Representation in mainstream development**

Another aspect of mainstream development that has been critiqued is its representation and language. Representation, labels and names are crucial because, as Escobar explains:

These labels are essential to the functioning of institutions in the Third World (“Third World” itself is a label). Labels are by no means neutral; they embody concrete relationships of power and influence the categories with which we think and act.<sup>46</sup>

Neoliberal development has historically represented developing countries and people from developing countries in a disempowered, helpless manner. That mentality is, obviously, not conducive to generating agency, economic wellbeing or a positive community self-esteem.

In addition to the social and psychological impacts of oppressive representation, it also distorts how development is carried out. For example, development “experts” will lump countries of a certain region or other identifying factors together, when in fact, development in those two countries should not be addressed in the same manner.

Ferguson explains: “Tanzania may be very different from Lesotho on the ground, but,

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<sup>46</sup> Escobar 109.

from the point of view of a ‘development’ agency’s head office, both may be simply ‘the Africa desk.’”<sup>47</sup> This homogenization of diverse places is a problem because proper development must consider the diverse needs of different people and places.

Representation is not only an important consideration when differentiating between different countries, but also amongst groups within a country or region.

Ferguson explains why this concept is important:

‘The people’ are not an undifferentiated mass. Rich and poor, women and men, city dwellers and villagers, workers and dependants, old and young; all confront different problems and devise different strategies for dealing with them. There is not one question—‘What is to be done’—but hundreds: what should the mineworkers do, what should the abandoned old women do, what should the unemployed do, and on and on. It seems, at the least, presumptuous to offer prescriptions here.<sup>48</sup>

There are multiple arguments to extrapolate from his statement. First, he emphasizes the need to consider and affirm diversity. Additionally, Ferguson extols development practitioners to acknowledge difference by diversifying and specifying the questions, programs and techniques employed. Unlike capitalist development, which focuses on macroeconomics, alternative development incorporates theories of representation utilized in critical theory to account for and affirm difference.

In addition to inadvertently representing developing countries poorly, development can confuse its practice and its representation, changing the representation of a country in order to fit the needs of a development agency. This contrived representation can then become the reality on which policy is based. Escobar expounds

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<sup>47</sup> Ferguson 268.

<sup>48</sup> Ferguson 281.

on this idea, noting how development “planners take their practice as a true description of reality, uninfluenced by their own relation to that reality.”<sup>49</sup>

Using the example of Lesotho, Ferguson explains how many development agencies, whether governmental or non-governmental, mismatch their priorities by shaping countries’ needs to match the abilities of the agency:

‘Development’ agencies are in the business of trying to ‘sell’ these packages, trying to locate and justify potential applications for them... Their problem is to find the right kind of problem; the kind of ‘problem’ that requires the ‘solution’ they are there to provide. This is the institutional context within which ‘development’ discourse is located... The discursive regime of ‘development’ thus inevitably ends up reconstructing Lesotho, sometimes almost unrecognizably, as a generic ‘LDC’—a country with all the right deficiencies, the sort that ‘development’ institutions can easily and productively latch on to.<sup>50</sup>

This practice is a problem, both practically and theoretically. Practically, development agencies inappropriately pigeonhole their development work, viewing them as “projects” with start and end dates, instead of long-term processes of change. Theoretically, it is problematic because it employs a neocolonial mentality, homogenizing all developing countries to fit a generic paradigm established by Westerners.

Thus, representation is an important aspect of development because it is a part of both theory and praxis, where representation reflects the mindset of the development community, while simultaneously altering how development is practiced. Ferguson’s analysis is a telling example. There exists the problem of representational homogenization of diverse groups of people in developing countries, as well as of different developing countries themselves. Representation reflects upon, and simultaneously shapes, the fundamental questions and normative theories surrounding

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<sup>49</sup> Escobar 121.

<sup>50</sup> Ferguson 270.



development. As such, it is important to keep the alternative development movement's critiques of representation in mind.

### **Alternative development**

As is evident by the wealth and diversity of authors on this topic, there are multiple development theorists that critique mainstream and neoliberal approaches to development, while conceptualizing innovative development strategies. This type of development will be the focus of the majority of this thesis because, as will be articulated later in this chapter, Shiva falls into this category of development. It has been labeled "human development" and/or "alternative development."<sup>51</sup> Peet describes it as "a truly alternative development, different from development practice as conventionally understood, yet drawing on the modern project of improving life by creating the material conditions for human contentedness and happiness."<sup>52</sup> Escobar also contributes to the definition, explaining that "the authors representing this trend state that they are interested not in development alternatives but in alternatives to development, that is, the rejection of the entire paradigm together."<sup>53</sup> These observations bring to the forefront how alternative development is established on entirely different foundation than mainstream and neoliberal development.

In addition to interrogating development's lack of achievement, experts from different disciplines, as well as "ordinary" people, are re-working the fundamentals of development. From an intellectual and academic perspective, many people critique development as a neocolonial, uncritical practice. This line of thought has come about

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<sup>51</sup> Pietrese 8.

<sup>52</sup> Peet 208.

<sup>53</sup> Escobar 215.

from different perspective: political science, literature, the arts and development theory itself. Pietrese explains:

The classic aim of development, modernization or catching up with advanced countries, is in question because modernization is no longer an obvious ambition. Modernity no longer seems so attractive in view of ecological problems, the consequences of technological change and many other problems. Westernization no longer seems attractive in a time of reevaluation of local culture and cultural diversity.<sup>54</sup>

Increasingly, people from all walks of life are realizing that the capitalist aims of mainstream development neglect the priorities of diverse environmental and cultural systems.

Drucilla Barker, director of Women's Studies at Hollins University and founding member of the International Association for Feminist Economics, argues that mainstream development promises much, but delivers little:

The language of development economics reads like a chapter in the Enlightenment dream, a dream that promised an orderly progress from poverty and ignorance to prosperity and modernity...an ideal that masks the instrumental role that development has played in maintaining global structures of neocolonialism and dependency. Instead of progress and prosperity, much of the world has experienced profound poverty, growing income inequality, high debt burdens, and environmental degradation.<sup>55</sup>

Barker points out that the unrealized promises of neoliberal development are primary reasons for its failure. By hiding its inadequacies under a rhetorical rug, neoliberal development ignores the core issues that cause maldevelopment.

Barker goes on to identify how

privatization, trade liberalization, and fiscal austerity were the new strategies that would enable free-market capitalism to work its magic. Missing from this

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<sup>54</sup> Pietrese 1.

<sup>55</sup> Drucilla Barker, "Dualisms, Discourse, and Development." Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial and Feminist World. ed. Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) 171.

analysis, however, was any awareness of the role that development rhetoric and policies played in producing underdevelopment, exploitation and oppression.<sup>56</sup>

This critique, that mainstream and neoliberal development perpetuates the systems that lead to low levels of development, is common among the alternative development movement. Escobar fleshes out why mainstream development reinscribes oppressive practices:

As long as institutions and professionals are successfully reproducing themselves materially, culturally and ideologically, certain relations of domination will prevail; and to the extent that this is the case, development will continue to be greatly conceptualized by those in power.<sup>57</sup>

On a more theoretical, cultural level, mainstream development has been formulated negatively: “Development has been linked to an economy of production and desire, but also of closure, difference and violence.”<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, mainstream development has been rejected because of its alignment with colonialism and neocolonialism.

### **Alternative development’s contributions**

Given that they make multiple claims against the mainstream development paradigm, one would hope that alternative development activists have formulated constructive ways of theorizing development. What does alternative development look like, and does it meet the criteria of just, sustainable development? Before delving into this venture, it must be kept in mind that “development” is a dynamic subject and its definition is flexible. So, the following descriptions of alternative development are, necessarily, limited, but nonetheless, provide a robust foundation from which to discuss and assess alternative development.

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<sup>56</sup> Barker 177.

<sup>57</sup> Escobar 106.

<sup>58</sup> Escobar 214.

Theorists such as Escobar and Ferguson critique how mainstream development upholds unfair structures of power and that true development must embrace structural change. Peet articulates this point in a more constructive light, describing what alternative development should look like: “We want the crux of an alternative development to lie in the production of more goods to satisfy needs as part of a wider strategy of transforming power relations in society at large.”<sup>59</sup> Alternative development must not only meet the immediate, material needs of people, but also establish longstanding, sustainable change. This transformation necessitates a restructuring of economic, social and political power. Thus, alternative development necessarily opposes mainstream development, which reinforces capitalism and status quo power structures.

There are multiple concrete practices of what this type of development entails. One meaningful case of alternative development is rejecting privatization and embracing cooperative, public ownership. Escobar recommends: “[M]eans of production have to be collectively owned, directly as cooperatives, partnerships, family enterprises, so that ‘development’ does not continually recreate inequalities of income and power.”<sup>60</sup> Capitalist development perpetuates the foundation of inequalities and injustices that development supposedly aims to ameliorate. By embracing economic and social systems that directly challenge those inequalities and injustices, Escobar believes that true, sustainable development will occur.

Another aspect of alternative development is that it must foster genuine democracy. This means that alternative development encourages movements and action by “ordinary” people. It urges that these are the true agents of change, because they (not

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<sup>59</sup> Peet 208.

<sup>60</sup> Escobar 209.

politicians, policy-makers or development “experts”) are most invested in development practice, since it most directly affects their lives. Ferguson explains why this is true:

The most important transformations, the changes that really matter, are not simply ‘introduced’ by benevolent technocrats, but fought for and made through a complex process that involves not only states and their agents, but all those with something at stake, all the diverse categories of people who craft their everyday tactics of coping with, adapting to, and, in their various ways, resisting the established social order.<sup>61</sup>

Alternative development values grassroots, democratic development above neoliberal development that provides only technical solutions and perpetuates colonial political and social structures.

“Development as freedom” is another alternative development theory that merits substantial attention. Amartya Sen, a Nobel prize-winning economist and development theorist, significantly advanced development theory through his concept of “development as freedom.” This theory provides a thoughtful framework in which to discuss central concepts of development. Sen’s theory significantly influenced development, so much so that the United Nations Development Programme utilized a “development as freedom” approach to generate the “Human Development Index,” a widely accepted measurement of aggregate development in a country.<sup>62</sup>

Like many other alternative development proponents, Sen believes that a narrow-minded conception of development as increase in national income or GNP (gross national product) neglects the most significant aspects of development. For example, certain countries, such as Gabon and South Africa, may be wealthier based on GNP per capita when compared to countries such as Sri Lanka and China. However, the latter have

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<sup>61</sup> Ferguson 281.

<sup>62</sup> Pietrese 94.

notably higher life expectancies than the former, revealing that GNP per capita is not always an accurate indicator of development. We can similarly analyze the discrepancies between different groups of people within countries, even wealthy ones. A prime example is the situation of African Americans in the United States who, on average, have shorter life expectancies than the average person in many developing countries. Sen stresses that the measurement of development is more nuanced than a country's GNP; we must analyze other factors of people's conditions.

He explains that we can combat development tunnel vision by "seeing freedom as the principal ends of development." He elaborates by differentiating between the presence of freedom and the lack of significant "unfreedoms." Freedoms include the right to vote, the right to political dissent and the right to religious practice. Significant unfreedoms include issues pertaining to quality of life that can inhibit a person's ability to function at even a minimal standard. These issues include hunger, poor or no health care, lack of education and unemployment. Sen articulates why he employs these categories as standards:

These substantive freedoms (that is, the liberty of political participation or the opportunity to receive basic education or health care) are among the *constituent components* of development. Their relevance for development does not have to be freshly established through their indirect contribution to the growth of GNP or to the promotion of industrialization.<sup>63</sup>

Sen's substantive freedoms hold inherent worth, as opposed to some of the other quality-of-life standards, such as GNP and other macroeconomic indicators, that are invoked to measure development, which are important to wellbeing as means, rather than ends.

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<sup>63</sup> Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom. (New York: Random House, 1999) 5.

Individual agency and community ownership are other important elements of Sen's notion of "development as freedom." This has become an issue because development agencies often act paternalistically towards people in developing countries, assuming that they (not the individuals' whose lives are actually affected by development) know what's best. This neocolonial attitude has caused negative effects, many of which were discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. To reiterate the main points, practically speaking, such an attitude is harmful because the development "experts" often are overconfident and have incorrect perceptions about what is right for communities. In addition, this mentality perpetuates the colonialism that brought about the need for development.

Sen expands on this point:

The more serious issue...concerns the source of authority and legitimacy...If a traditional way of life has to be sacrificed to escape grinding poverty or minuscule longevity (as many traditional societies have had for thousands of years), then it is the people directly involved who must have the opportunity to participate in deciding what should be chosen.<sup>64</sup>

Sen values community ownership above technical expertise. In addition to centralizing community agency, Sen points out that individuals must actively embrace responsibilities as part of this agency: "The relevant freedoms include the liberty of acting as citizens who matter and whose voices count, rather than living as well-fed, well-clothed, and well-entertained vassals."<sup>65</sup> Sen advocates for democratic development, where individuals are active participants.

Sen's theory has implications for international economic organizations, "free" trade and capitalist values:

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<sup>64</sup> Sen 31.

<sup>65</sup> Sen 288.

The rejection of the freedom to participate in the labor market is one of the ways of keeping people in bondage and captivity, and the battle against the unfreedom of bound labor is important in many third world countries today for some of the same reasons the American Civil War was momentous.<sup>66</sup>

Sen believes that economic systems that exclude people violate the freedom to contribute to the economy. This inhibits development indirectly, by limiting the ways in which people can participate in activities that will promote their economic wellbeing, as well as directly infringing upon a freedom that is the cornerstone of his development theory. This point is a direct attack on organizations such as the World Trade Organization and international economic agreements, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Although they claim that they are working to benefit and raise economic standards in developing countries, they systematically exclude developing countries from participating equally in the international economy. This point will be expanded upon in the third chapter.

Although Sen emphasizes the important of equality opportunity to participate in the economy, he also interrogates the capitalist system that mainstream development is predicated upon:

The rationale of the market mechanism is geared to private goods (like apples and shirts), rather than to public goods (like the malaria-free environment), and it can be shown that there may be a good case for the provisioning of public goods, going beyond what the private markets would foster.<sup>67</sup>

The view starkly contrasts with the tenets of neoliberal development, which value market forces over all else. Sen's points bring to light a flaw of capitalist development, which emphasizes monetary advancement, but neglects to address the reasons that capital is important, reasons such as access to education and healthcare.

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<sup>66</sup> Sen 7.

<sup>67</sup> Sen 128.



Although his theory focuses on individuals' freedom, Sen emphasizes that social and political arrangements dramatically impact how his vision of development plays out:

An approach to justice and development that concentrates on substantive freedoms inescapably focuses on the agency and judgment of individuals; they cannot be seen merely as patients to whom benefits will be dispensed by the process of development. Responsible adults must be in charge of their own wellbeing; it is for them to decide how to use their capabilities. But the capabilities that a person does actually have (and not merely theoretically enjoys) depend on the nature of social arrangements, which can be crucial for individual freedoms. And there the state and society cannot escape responsibility.<sup>68</sup>

Sen asserts that by prioritizing freedoms, we can adopt a holistic stance on development and meet the spectrum of human needs, rather than only feeding an economic system.

Thus, the development as freedom approach to social change increases the standard of living for people, and also affirms diversity and individuals' capacity to choose their lifestyle. It adopts a multifaceted view of development, incorporating individuals, communities and political institutions.

In sum, alternative development is based on critiques of mainstream and neoliberal development, but it is more than a critique; it birthed innovative paradigms for development. It asserts distinct development theory and practices. It rejects capitalism and narrow-minded economic theory, and values holism and long-term change. Furthermore, it employs theories of representation that acknowledge and affirm difference, working these theories into its practical work. Referring back to the concepts that constitute sustainable, just development, alternative development fulfills those criteria, especially compared to mainstream development. First, alternative development incorporates political action and democracy, integral parts of just, sustainable development. Additionally, while capitalist development focuses on individual economic

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<sup>68</sup> Sen 228.

achievement, the alternative version prioritizes individuals, and emphasizes their agency, capabilities and freedoms.

### **Shiva and alternative development theory**

Now that different theories and critiques of development have been outlined, where does Shiva stand? Analyzing her priorities, it is evident that Shiva rejects neoliberal development, while embracing the foundations of alternative development. An appropriate starting point from which to analyze her position in the development scheme is to look to her notion of Earth Democracy, outlined in the introduction. The Earth Democracy philosophy embodies many values present in alternative development work. First, the rejection of globalization, a cornerstone of neoliberal development, reveals that she searches for a more critical, thorough form of development. Additionally, her focus on participation and democracy for all (including nonhuman species) aligns her with alternative development, which employs democracy as both an ends and a means of just, sustainable development.

Shiva's emphasis on public goods and critiques of privatization illustrate that she rejects neoliberal conceptions of development. More evidence for Shiva's commitment to alternative development is her theory and praxis of shared space and knowledge. The concept of public goods is central to Shiva's theory and work, and will be discussed in later chapters. Thus, Shiva embraces this component of alternative development, both in theory and in practice. She aims to restructure unfair power relations, rejects individualistic capitalism, and fosters cooperative ownership. Furthermore, Shiva embraces Sen's notion of development as freedom, advocating for democracy in the broadest sense of the term. Her priorities align with much of the alternative development

movement. So, with Shiva's place in the alternative development movement discerned, this thesis now explores what exactly Shiva's theories and practices entail and the extent to which they promote just, sustainable development.

## Chapter II

### Environmental justice: An exploration of sustainability

In *Staying Alive*, Shiva brings to light why sustainability is central to development and observes how mainstream development has contributed to unsustainable practices:

With the destruction of forests, water and land, we are losing our life-support systems. This destruction is taking place in the name of 'development' and progress, but there must be something seriously wrong with a concept of progress that threatens survival itself.<sup>69</sup>

Her words suggest that in order for neoliberal development to continue there must be an inexhaustible supply of resources, but the concept of sustainability reminds us that we must be thoughtful and strategic in how we use resources.

In order to look at environmental issues, I address how the enclosure of the commons and privatization harm sustainability. I then explain how these concepts relate to the sustainability of certain components that prove to be integral to human life: air, water and agriculture. This chapter assesses how these components of human development have been affected by mainstream development practices.

#### The commons

A paramount issue in environmentalism and sustainability is cultivation of the commons. Shiva explains the concept:

The very notion of the commons implies a resource is owned, managed, and used by the community. A commons embodies social relations based on interdependence and cooperation. There are clear rules and principles; there are systems of decision-making... A democratic form of governance is what made and makes, a commons a commons.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1989) xvi.

<sup>70</sup> Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace* 21.

The commons prove integral to environmental justice because they consider multiple community members, rather than a single person or corporation, as well as nonhuman species, as stakeholders in a community's development process. Such environmental and community consideration and ecological interdependence are at the core of environmental justice.

### **The commons and globalization**

Shiva identifies globalization as a contributing factor in increasing enclosures. She asserts that "corporate globalization is based on new enclosures of the commons; enclosures which imply exclusions and are based on violence."<sup>71</sup> Shiva believes that we have shifted to an "ownership society," where everything, even goods that inherently cannot be owned, is arbitrarily assigned a role in a possessor-possessed relationship with individuals or corporations. Examples of the decrease in commons include the rise of intellectual property rights and patents on assets that were once considered communal or natural property, resources such as seeds and crop varieties. Shiva traces this inclination towards enclosures back to the shift from communal property to private property in England hundreds of years ago.

She accuses capitalism, corporatization, unjust development and globalization for this trend. The correlation between the decline of the commons and the rise of corporate capitalism are undeniable:

Enclosures were exalted as allowing 'an unparalleled expansion of productive possibilities.' Productivity was defined from the perspective of the rich and the powerful, not from that of the commoner, and valued only profits and the benefit to the market, not nature's sustainability or people's sustenance.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Shiva, Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace 2.

<sup>72</sup> Shiva, Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace 20.

The narrow-minded definition of productivity betrays capitalism as the source of the increase in enclosures, as capitalism founds itself on exploiting the market value of resources. Globalization, an offshoot of capitalism, stands in an ironic position with regards to the increase in enclosures. Although globalization prides itself as increasing communication and knowledge throughout the world, it has simultaneously spawned the decrease of the commons. Although there is an increase in knowledge exchange, the main beneficiaries of increased knowledge exchange are an elite group of people, unveiling how, with regards to information, globalization stifles the commons.

### **The “Tragedy of the Commons”**

As previously mentioned, the trend of enclosures manifests itself in arenas previously untouched by privatization: natural resources such as water, land and seeds, and technological/creative resources such as the biological, intellectual and digital commons. The theory driving this decrease of commons is based on the notion of the “Tragedy of the Commons.” It is important to understand and analyze the tragedy of the commons theory because it is a philosophical foundation on which current corporatization and globalization stands. In his seminal essay “The Tragedy of the Commons,” the late professor Garrett Hardin formulated this perspective on human nature and economic affairs. In this essay, Hardin addresses the dilemma of global overpopulation and how the tragedy of the commons underpins this problem:

The tragedy of the commons develops in this way. Picture a pasture open to all. It is to be expected that each herdsman will try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons. Such an arrangement may work reasonably satisfactorily for centuries because tribal wars, poaching and disease keep the numbers of both man

and beast well below the carrying capacity of the land...As a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain.<sup>73</sup>

The positive consequences to the individual herdsman of adding another animal outweigh the negative consequences that this individual incurs because of the increase in population. This rational decision-making leads the individual herdsman to keep adding animals.

Hardin continues on to explain that

This is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit—in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.<sup>74</sup>

Although Hardin employed this logic to refer to the problem of overpopulation, academics and policymakers establish theories around social problems and enact policies aimed at solving them using the tragedy of the commons rationale that humans are isolated actors that make decisions based on individual self-interest.

However, the universal applicability of the tragedy of the commons has been questioned on numerous accounts. In *The Parallel Economy of the Commons*, Jonathan Rowe of the World Watch Institute, which produces the well-respected yearly *State of the World* report on environmental conditions, provides theoretical and practical counter-examples that dismantle this myth. He explains that humans do not function as the cold,

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<sup>73</sup> Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” *Science* 13 December 1968: Vol. 162. no. 3859, pp. 1243 – 1248.

<sup>74</sup> Jonathan Rowe, “The Parallel Economy of the Commons” *2008 State of the World Solutions for a Sustainable Economy*. Ed. World Watch Institute (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008) 138-150. 141.

rational beings that a tragedy of the commons mindset assumes them to be. In fact, commons draw upon human capacities not accounted for in neoliberal economics, such as cooperation, value for community and ethical thinking.

Rowe calls upon the example of local agriculture in Bali, where rice farmers share water with one another via a “water temple” system that functions through bottom-up cooperation in which the temples provide a venue for water sharing. Although individual farmers could hoard water for themselves, the ingrained tradition and community involvement of the system, which boasts productivity close to perfect, lead to effective, egalitarian results. In fact, a 1960s government project to dismantle the water temples and replace them with Green Revolution technology, complete with heavy pesticides, failed. The government eventually allowed the farmers to return to their original arrangement, which proved to be successful even against the promises of modern technology. Rowe explains that a chief determinant in the success of the water temples is the social structure of cooperation and accountability that this commons solution creates: “The result is not just effective and generative use of the asset, but also a dividend in the form of social cohesion and trust that can be as important as the product itself.”<sup>75</sup> This commons-based system focuses not only on the material result, but also on the upholding of community values.

Rowe extrapolates from this situation to observe that “Hardin simply assumed that all commons are free-for-alls, and he took no account of the human capacity to create rules to govern access and use.”<sup>76</sup> This notion interrogates the inherently selfish nature of people that the tragedy of the commons mentality professes. Rowe also notes the irony of

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<sup>75</sup> Rowe, 139.

<sup>76</sup> Rowe, 141.



how the self-reinforcing mechanisms inherent in the tragedy of the commons perpetuate selfish capitalist behavior:

Hardin was assuming the psychology of the large corporation and projecting it onto the pasture. This is the very institution that free market advocates, who cite Hardin as gospel, want to entrust the pasture to through privatization. They are purporting to solve the problem by embracing a purer version of it.<sup>77</sup>

Simply put, the tragedy of the commons mentality underestimates humans' capacity for cooperation. At the same time, it establishes incentives that encourage individuals to develop their self-seeking nature. The illustration of the Balinese rice farmers exemplifies how situations can be constructed so that incentives encourage people to act in the good of the commons, rather than out of pure self-interest: one's self-interest can reside in communal wellbeing.

Understanding the substance and significance of the commons debate, it is important to examine where Shiva stands on this issue and how it relates to environmental justice as a whole. The pro-commons camp finds an ally in Shiva. She counters the implications of the tragedy of the commons by arguing that

the transformation of commons into commodities has two implications. It deprives the politically weaker groups of their right to survival, which they had access to through commons, and it robs from nature its right to self-renewal and sustainability, by eliminating the social constraints on resource use that are the basis of common property management.<sup>78</sup>

Shiva provides a concrete example of a problematic enclosure—the increase in intellectual property rights and patents on seeds and other life forms by corporations: “Patents on life and the rhetoric of the ‘ownership society’ in which everything—water, biodiversity, cells, genes, animals, plants—is property express a worldview in which life

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<sup>77</sup> Rowe 141.

<sup>78</sup> Shiva, Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace 29.

forms have no intrinsic worth, no integrity, and no subjecthood.”<sup>79</sup> The mentality that underpins patent laws is problematic. Humans do not have property rights to objects that are not inherently their property. This includes other species and forms of life.

Intellectual property rights and patents on life promote an imperialistic, anthropocentric relationship to the earth.

### **Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights**

In order to understand intellectual property rights and patents on life, it is important to delve into the specific agreements and legalities that set up the structures for them. A specific illustration of these patents lies in the trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) generated by the World Trade Organization at the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1994. The WTO explains the principle behind TRIPS:

Ideas and knowledge are an increasingly important part of trade... Many products that used to be traded as low-technology goods or commodities now contain a higher proportion of invention and design in their value — for example brandnamed clothing or new varieties of plants. Creators can be given the right to prevent others from using their inventions, designs or other creations — and to use that right to negotiate payment in return for others using them. These are “intellectual property rights.”<sup>80</sup>

TRIPS employs a tragedy of the commons mentality, extending “commons” to include human knowledge, even nature. The WTO’s trade related intellectual property rights (TRIPS) states that knowledge, even life itself, must be owned.

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<sup>79</sup> Shiva, Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace 3.

<sup>80</sup> World Trade Organization, “Understanding the WTO: Agreements. Intellectual Property: protection and enforcement.” 11 Nov. 2008

<[http://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatis\\_e/tif\\_e/agrm7\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/agrm7_e.htm)>

The WTO failed to adequately address the impact of these policies on developing countries and on societies that do not function on the same terms that capitalist economies do, “discounting the differences in ethics and value systems of Third World nations, where life is sacred and exempt from patenting.”<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, these regulations are inherently biased towards rich corporations and countries with Western-style legal policies, because they designed in a framework that is identical to such systems. Already, small farmers in India, the United States and Great Britain have been sued for using, saving and trading seeds that have been patented by large corporations such as Cargill and Monsanto. The irony is that, prior to the implementation of TRIPS, these farmers would not have been doing anything reprehensible. In many cases, the seeds that these farmers were using, saving and trading had been cultivated in that area for hundreds of years, but the corporations secured the patent on them, endowing them with juridical ownership.

Furthermore, the economic impact of a few farmers in rural areas using these seeds is negligible compared to the size of these corporations. Thus, this is an example of corporations exercising their power for the sake of establishing a monopoly, not because they are acting out of fairness with regards to intellectual property rights or, as pro-corporatists claim, in order to economically advance people in developing countries. Similar instances have occurred where poor people’s access to goods, seeds, even life-saving medications, is inhibited because of intellectual property laws. The effects of these policies are harmful, sometimes even fatal, but they are permitted to continue because they serve the interests of the powerful—corporations and First World industries. Clearly,

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<sup>81</sup> Shiva, Stolen Harvests: the Hijacking of the Global Food Supply 89.

intellectual, biological and creative commons are at risk. With the decrease of the commons, we are witnessing increased injustices against poor people and the environment.

Shiva notes how Cargill, an international agriculture corporation, once stated: “We bring Indian farmers smart technologies, which prevent bees from usurping the pollen.” Shiva unveils the imperialistic irony of corporate globalization’s exclusive take on intellectual and natural property:

A worldview that defines pollination as ‘theft by bees’ and claims that diverse plants ‘steal’ sunshine is one aimed at stealing nature’s harvest, by replacing open, pollinated varieties with hybrids and sterile seeds, destroying biodiverse flora with herbicides. To secure patents on life forms and living resources, corporations must claim seeds and plants to be their ‘inventions’ and hence their property. Thus corporations like Cargill and Monsanto see nature’s web of life and cycles of renewal as ‘theft’ of their property.<sup>82</sup>

It must be mentioned that these companies disguise their destruction of nature as “development.” This situation is an appropriate example of the Green Revolution and its ills. They boast that their technologies will resolve world hunger and improve overall quality of life. However, in addition to the fact that their techniques have proven to be ineffective, their version of development justifies imperialist domination of nature. The manner in which these companies interact with nature betrays their colonial mindset. By valuing production over sustainability, corporate action destroys nature and, along with it, the livelihoods of people who engage in a respectful relationship with their environment in order to earn a living. Corporations cannot live up to their hypocritical ideals.

Through environmental degradation and exclusive transfers of information, intellectual property laws harm people in developing countries. In addition to TRIPS,

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<sup>82</sup> Shiva, Stolen Harvests: the Hijacking of the Global Food Supply 16.

other economic policies enacted by the WTO (in addition to other international governing bodies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) work against the interests of people living in developing countries. Shiva explains how the impact of TRIPS and other international economic policies compound to impair developing countries: “This monopolistic control over agricultural production, along with structural adjustment policies that brutally favor exports, results in floods of exports of foods from the United State and Europe to the Third World.”<sup>83</sup> Such exports are a problem because they distort market prices, decreasing the income for local farmers.

These concrete examples of tragedy of the commons policy demonstrate the importance of halting the increase in enclosures. Enclosures do not foster a just relationship to the Earth. The privatization and commodification of natural and intellectual property has negative impacts on the environment and humans, because it reduces natural resources, such as water, land and species, and intellectual/creative resources, such as intellectual property and indigenous knowledge, down to its short-term capitalist value, ignoring other important aspects. This reductionism is dangerous because it rationalizes the exploitation of natural resources and human capabilities. These theories and policies, which underpin mainstream development theory, do not promote sustainable development.

In addition to damaging our environmental ethics, this unjust relationship to the Earth and forms of life results in physical devastation. Shiva identifies specific environmental problems that accompany these intellectual property laws: increase in monocultures, heightened chemical pollution, new and increased biological pollution,

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<sup>83</sup> Shiva, Stolen Harvests: the Hijacking of the Global Food Supply 20.

degradation of the ethics of conservation and deterioration of local communities' capacity to conserve biodiversity through the corrosion of their traditional rights.<sup>84</sup> Shiva highlights the importance of biodiversity in crops: "Diverse crop varieties have evolved according to different environmental conditions and cultural needs. The genetic variability of these varieties is insurance against pests, disease, and environmental stress."<sup>85</sup> Biodiversity ensures wellbeing and long-term survival of species. Its importance is not unique to crops; all forms of life need biodiversity in order to survive.

Monocultures are, simply, the antithesis of biodiversity. They destroy genetic diversity in the long-term through domination by one species line. Monocultures are like plant racism. Shiva provides a concrete illustration of this problem, noting how the 1970-71 corn blight epidemic in the United States could have been prevented. However, because eighty percent of hybrid corn in the United States is derived from a single line, much of the corn crop was genetically uniform and, consequently, more vulnerable to diseases, viruses and fungi, which then spread rapidly and destroyed large portions of the crop.<sup>86</sup> Monocultures deny the necessary benefits that biodiversity offers and can lead to disastrous consequences.

Another environmental problem spawned by intellectual property laws that privilege large corporations is chemical pollution. Shiva explains how intellectual property laws can lead to intensified contamination by chemicals: "Patent protection as guaranteed under TRIPs will encourage biotechnological interventions and accelerate the

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<sup>84</sup> Vandana Shiva, Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge. (Boston: South End Press, 1997) 88.

<sup>85</sup> Shiva, Biopiracy: The Plunder of Knowledge and Nature 89.

<sup>86</sup> Shiva, Biopiracy: The Plunder of Knowledge and Nature 121.

release of genetically engineered organisms.”<sup>87</sup> She further clarifies her argument by explaining that

while the sales appeal of genetic engineering is through the ‘green’ image of chemical-free agriculture, most agricultural applications of biotechnology focus on increased use of agrochemicals. The impact of these applications will be higher in the Third World not only because the native biodiversity is higher, but because livelihoods are more dependent on this diversity.<sup>88</sup>

Another important aspect to account for is that the majority of the companies that pursue the formation of genetically engineered organisms are multinational corporations that aim to sell as much of their product, in this case, genetically altered seeds and chemical fertilizers, as possible. In addition to chemical pollution, increased biological contamination accompanies patents on life. Shiva explains: “Strategies to genetically engineer herbicide resistance, which are destroying useful species of plants, can end up creating superweeds.”<sup>89</sup> Tampering with nature leads to unnatural levels of pollution and contamination.

Furthermore, intellectual property rights damage our environmental ethics, which justifies the degradation of life in its many forms. Shiva explains how this occurs:

Intellectual property rights over life-forms are an extreme expression of an instrumental value built into IRP claims, the ethical basis for biodiversity conservation and compassion for other species is undermined. . . IPRs create a new concept of ownership. It is not just the implanted gene, or one generation of animals, that is being claimed as intellectual property, but the reproduction of the entire organism, including future generations covered by the life of the patent.<sup>90</sup>

This destruction of environmental ethos leads to physical damage because as we squander our ethics, we lose the tradition of conservation. At the point where we think about life as

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<sup>87</sup> Shiva, Biopiracy: The Plunder of Knowledge and Nature 91.

<sup>88</sup> Shiva, Biopiracy: The Plunder of Knowledge and Nature 91.

<sup>89</sup> Shiva, Biopiracy: The Plunder of Knowledge and Nature 92.

<sup>90</sup> Shiva, Biopiracy: The Plunder of Knowledge and Nature 95-96.

a means, rather than something with inherent value, we are seriously degrading our environment, other species and ourselves, because our beliefs about living species will translate into livelihoods and policies that continue to degrade life. Although this problem is more indirect, it has a greater long-term impact on the environment.

In a similar vein, another significant problem that is brought about by intellectual property rights and patents on life is that they restrict local communities' rights and, consequently, their capacity to protect their environment. Shiva explains: "IPRs in seeds, plant material, and indigenous knowledge systems alienate the rights of local communities and undermine the stake they have in the protection of biodiversity."<sup>91</sup> As the needs of corporations are increasingly prioritized, communities are losing their agency and rights with regard to their land. This has an immediate impact on the land. Also, considering the grander scheme of things, IPRs degrade humans' capacity to protect their environment by rejecting environmental principles. When the rights of local communities are restricted, there are multiple losses. Not only are communities unable to protect their land in an immediate sense, but the techniques, skills, and philosophies that those communities utilized to forge a healthy relationship with the environment are forgotten. This is a loss to everyone, because we neglect ways to positively interact with the environment.

Clearly, the enclosure of the commons is a trend that must be curbed. Now that the theories behind the enclosure of the commons and the policies regarding trade and intellectual property laws have been delineated, this chapter provides concrete examples of arenas in which the enclosure of the commons has caused problems.

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<sup>91</sup> Shiva, Biopiracy: The Plunder of Knowledge and Nature 96.



## **Air and carbon trading**

A key manner in which the interconnectedness of the environment, development and poverty becomes obvious is how air, once the ultimate example of the commons, has become an economic commodity. This is evidenced in the recently developed practice of carbon trading. Shiva explains how first, pollution is a violation of the commons, because it ruins what was once a completely public good. This violation is committed by polluting corporations and the consumers who support and, in a certain sense, demand this practice by buying the goods produced under these conditions. This enclosure has become juridically recognized through the practice of carbon trading.

It should first be noted that carbon trading is an improvement upon unchecked carbon emissions. Limiting carbon emissions is a step in the right direction with regards to the environment. However, the way that this is occurring is negative because “most of the discussions and negotiations on climate change have been restricted to the commercial, consumption-oriented energy paradigm rooted in a reductive, mechanistic worldview and consumerist culture.”<sup>92</sup> It seems that, with strategies such as carbon trading and permitting limited emissions for certain industries, pro-globalists are only delaying what must be the inevitable solution to environmental issues—consuming fewer resources.

On grounds of both sustainability and justice, Shiva critiques the carbon-trading solution to global warming: “Economic actors that *never* polluted were never allocated credits and therefore are never able to sell them. There is nothing to encourage truly

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<sup>92</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 6.

sustainable development.”<sup>93</sup> Shiva points out the ironic injustice of awarding credits to polluters, while ignoring the successes and practices of people who never polluted. Furthermore, this practice excludes certain groups of people from participating in and benefiting from the carbon trading process. Only an elite few can go through the administrative and legal process obtaining these credits and, thus, only an elite few will be able to utilize them. Finally, carbon trading is another example of privatizing the commons, a practice that Shiva denounces. This is an especially appropriate example of the problems that surround privatizing the commons, because clean air does not belong to anyone. No one has a justifiable claim to it. So, it is problematic and unfair for the government or the carbon trading industry to assume ownership over and mete out clean air.

The solution of making unsustainable practices such as corporate industry marginally more sustainable seems silly in light of how people are already living sustainable lives. Rather than awarding industries that already pollute with carbon credits, individuals and communities who never polluted in the first place should benefit, because these are the people whose commonly-owned good, air, is being taken away. Instead of degrading or neglecting people who are not living consumerist lifestyles, we should affirm and learn from their lifestyles. It only makes sense to look to people who are already living sustainable lives for solutions to environmental problems. Carbon trading serves as a specific example of the problems with the enclosure of the commons.

## **Water**

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<sup>93</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 23.

Water has also been deeply impacted by the enclosure of the commons. The significance of water is self-evident, as it is the only substance that humans cannot survive without for more than a few days. Additionally, water is integral to plant systems, climate control and agriculture. Water is also crucial because it is an irreplaceable resource. You can diversify your energy sources by utilizing oil, coal, wind and solar energy; you cannot diversify water. However, because of unjust distribution and unsustainable agriculture and resource extraction practices, water has become increasingly scarce. This scarcity often generates conflict. Shiva highlights this concern:

Water wars are not a thing of the future. They already surround us, although they are not always easily recognizable as water wars. These wars are both paradigm wars—conflicts over how we perceive and experience water—and traditional wars, fought with guns and grenades.<sup>94</sup>

Water is both an ecological and a social concern.

### **Origins of water problems**

One way in which development has promoted unsustainable water practices is through industrialization. Water problems originate in unsustainable practices generated by large-scale, multinational corporations. Water is integral to industrial agriculture, production and resource-extraction. Examples include mining, eucalyptus planting for paper and pulp production, and industrial agriculture of all types of crops. Water problems and droughts stem from different origins, all with the common factor that they are practices promoted in order to promote globalized business success and meet the consumption demands in the global North.

For example, Shiva describes how limestone quarrying in the Doon Valley, where Shiva is from, depleted the once-abundant local water supply. Outside companies

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<sup>94</sup> Shiva, Water Wars xi.

intruded into the area in order to exploit the vast mineral resources to use in industry and manufacturing. In addition to destroying land and causing increased erosion, the mining practices literally dried up the region, because mineral extraction demands large quantities of water. Shiva notes how this neglect of environmental considerations in favor of industry is a dangerous, but ubiquitous pattern:

The devaluation of Doon Valley's natural resources was merely an extension of the devaluation of nature by conventional economics and development models. The failure of modern economics to address natural resources in their ecological totality has been noted by many.<sup>95</sup>

The Doon Valley is not a unique circumstance. Similar problems with water and resource extraction occur all over the world—the damage done by mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and water privatization in Bolivia are only two other instances.

Shiva also brings up the example of the Malwa plateau, located in the north Indian state of Madhya Pradesh and once noted for its water abundance, that presently suffers from a water crisis. She traces this crisis to the rejection of indigenous knowledge: “The crisis is a result of dependence on tube wells and the desertion of traditional water-harvesting systems.”<sup>96</sup> Energized wells destroyed the traditional pastoral system of moving herds from one place to another, ensuring that water supply was never depleted in one area and mitigating grazing pressure on the land. Thus, industrialization contributed to the water crisis in the area.

The world's water crisis is widely acknowledged. Given this fact, one would think that there would be organized, cooperative efforts to tackle this problem. However, Shiva delineates how the discord surrounding this topic has further contributed to the dilemma:

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<sup>95</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 6.

<sup>96</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 11.

Everyone agrees that the world is facing a severe water crisis...there are, however, two conflicting paradigms for explaining the water crisis: the market paradigm and the ecological paradigm. The market paradigm sees water scarcity as a crisis resulting from the absence of water trade. If water could be moved and distributed freely through free markets, this paradigm holds, it would be transferred to regions of scarcity, and higher prices would lead to conversation...market assumptions are blind to the ecological limits set by poverty and the economic limits set by poverty. Over-exploitation of water and disruption of the water cycle create absolute scarcity that markets cannot substitute with other commodities...when water disappears, there is no alternative.<sup>97</sup>

It appears that water problems are rooted in not only how people view and use water, but how they conceptualize the entire international economy.

To deal with water pollution, the water industry has adopted a practice similar to carbon trading: tradable discharge permits, which regulate the amount of water pollution that a company can release. Functioning in a manner similar to carbon credits, permits to pollute a certain amount are granted to companies. They can trade these permits among one another for capital or other resources. However, it commits the same injustices as carbon trading. Shiva articulates:

Trade in pollution permits violates ecological democracy and people's right to clean water on several counts. It changes the role of governments from protector of people's water rights to advocate of polluters' rights. Governments assume regulatory roles that are anti-environment, anti-people and pro-polluter industry. TDPs exclude nonpolluters and ordinary citizens from an active democratic role in pollution control, since the trade in pollution is restricted to polluter industries.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, water is not something that governments or private industries own. They argue that, because they invested resources into managing it (i.e. water wells, pipes for water transportation, dams, et cetera), that they are entitled to revenue and administration rights. However, the technologies that they put in place to manage water are impositions

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<sup>97</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 16.

<sup>98</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 32-33.

on the local community. In fact, these technologies often displace local communities while, literally, sucking their resources dry.

Additionally, due to its privatization, water has become an instrument of political and economic gain. Rather than being treated as a commons, water has become privatized by corporations and stolen from the land and communities from which they originate.

Shiva explains what is happening:

In most indigenous communities, collective water rights and management were the key for water conservation and harvesting. By creating rules and limits on water use, collective water management ensured sustainability and equity. With the advent of globalization, however, community control of water is being eroded and private exploitation of water is taking hold.<sup>99</sup>

As private development corporations are granted entitlements to water, the communities who previously utilized those resources are deprived of their livelihoods, with no compensation for their loss.

Shiva likens the privatization of water to colonial mentality of the first explorers in North America:

The cowboy sentiment ‘might is right’ meant that the economically powerful could invest in capital-intensive means to appropriate water regardless of the needs of others and the limits of water systems... Although rights were based on first settlement, the true first settlers—Native Americans—were denied water appropriation rights.<sup>100</sup>

This unjust, neocolonial power structure is constantly reinscribed, as corporations and international economic bodies such as the WTO act as colonizers, assuming control over and manipulating the natural resources of a land.

## **Dams**

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<sup>99</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 12.

<sup>100</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 23.

A key water issue that has provoked affected community members and social justice activists from around the world to take action has been the worldwide increase in dam construction. Dams are built in rural areas in order to provide more electricity to urban centers. A prime example of the controversy surrounding such dams is currently occurring in India through the Narmada Dam Project, a project constructing a series of large hydroelectric dams on the Narmada River, a river that forms the traditional boundary between north and south India. The aim of the project is to increase irrigation and produce hydroelectricity. However, its benefits have yet to be realized for most people affected by the dams.

Political writer and activist Arundhati Roy describes the problems with one such dam, the Maheshwar dam: “According to government surveys, the reservoir of the Maheshwar dam will submerge sixty-one villages. Thirteen, they say, will be wholly submerged, the rest will lose their farmlands.”<sup>101</sup> And this is only one of many dams slated to be built on rivers throughout India. Millions of people throughout the world have been and will continue to be displaced because of dams.

Governments justify this destruction because these dams will permit urban areas to use more electricity, curbing the power outages that occur in many big cities. In fact, these dams are lauded as symbols of India’s “progress” and “development;” citizens are told that they are a source of national pride. However, Roy points out the irony in this situation: “Planners in India boast that India consumes twenty times more electricity today than it did fifty years ago. They use it as an index of progress. They usually omit to

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<sup>101</sup> Arundhati Roy, “Power Politics,” The Algebra of Infinite Justice (London: Penguin Books, 2002) 174.

mention that seventy per cent of rural households still have no electricity.”<sup>102</sup> Beyond the fact that progress occurs for a group of elites, there is nothing progressive or enlightened about a process that literally drowns people’s homes and livelihoods.

Roy protests any more construction of these types of dams on both philosophical and practical grounds. Practically speaking, the dams promise high irrigation and water usage that has not materialized, making them a waste of resources. Philosophically, Roy contests the notion that people should have their lives destroyed for “the greater common good.” Roy extrapolates from this situation to explain how the dam project symbolizes more than just the fate of a river: “From being a fight over the fate of a river valley, it began to raise doubts about an entire political system.”<sup>103</sup> Roy notes how the Narmada Dam Project controversy has pitted the “modern, rational” developers against a group of people who are perceived as “irrational” and “anti-development.” This is a real-life example of the controversies that surround development policy. Roy brings to light complex issues in the alternative development movement: What is considered rational, modern development? What sacrifices should be made in the name of progress, and who should make those sacrifices? Furthermore, who is in a fair position to decide what those sacrifices are and who should make them?

Shiva has also adopted dam construction as one of her primary issues in activism. Shiva explains that “dam conflicts in the past revolved around displacement. Today, the ecological imperative for the protection of nature has added a new dimension to the

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<sup>102</sup> Roy, “Power Politics” 168.

<sup>103</sup> Arundhati Roy, “The Greater Common Good,” The Algebra of Infinite Justice (London: Penguin Books, 2002) 50.



struggle of displaced people.”<sup>104</sup> The activism around dam construction illustrates how many environmental causes have roots in issues of human justice. She goes on to explain how

[i]n postcolonial India, most large dams have been financed by the World Bank. I was personally involved in assessing the impact of the World Bank. . . In each case, the ecological and social costs far surpassed the benefits. Typically, the benefits were grossly exaggerated in order to accommodate the World Bank’s logic of returns on investment.<sup>105</sup>

These dams are just one instance of how priorities in development become mismanaged. The greed of Western development corporations to pursue projects where they can make money, plus the energy consumption of the elites of developing countries trump peoples’ actual needs, the rhetorical motivations for such development.

A further injustice and irony is that many of the people displaced by these dams end up dwelling in the cities that the electricity is transferred to. However, these individuals do not benefit from their sacrifice: “The great majority is eventually absorbed into slums on the periphery of our great cities, where it coalesces into an immense pool of cheap construction labor (that builds more projects that displace more people).”<sup>106</sup> Again, there is nothing progressive or “developed” about displacing people from rural areas where they have established their livelihoods for centuries and then disposing them into urban areas.

This displacement process is a physical manifestation of the greater social, political and economic inequalities. Roy identifies how dams and water distribution reflect and perpetuate systems of injustice:

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<sup>104</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 66.

<sup>105</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 66.

<sup>106</sup> Roy, “The Greater Common Good” 68.

A huge percentage of the displaced are Adivasis... Include Dalits and the figure becomes obscene... The ethnic ‘otherness’ of their victims takes some of the pressure off the Nation Builders. It’s like having an expense account. Someone *else* pays the bills... India’s poorest people are subsidizing the lifestyles of her richest.<sup>107</sup>

The people who share a disproportionate burden of the dam construction are those in lower castes or from indigenous tribes, communities who already experience significant oppression. It seems that the electricity follows the power—political power, that is. Although water is a natural resource, its use and distribution have a direct impact on populations, making it a significant issue of social justice. Because water itself has been privatized and its use re-prioritized, a just theory of development must include a reconsideration of water, focusing on human need and community ownership.

Thus, water supply has been negatively affected by privatization and the tragedy of the commons mentality. The water sources that people who rely on for their livelihoods are sucked dry for industrial and corporate resource extraction. Furthermore, the introduction of privatized dams as a solution to the energy crisis has exacerbated the situation. I now move on to describe how privatization has harmed agriculture.

### **Agriculture**

Food and agriculture are increasingly recognized as having a significant role in sustainability and environmentalism, and Shiva has adopted these issues as a primary focus on her work. A principal reason that the intricacies of food production have been investigated as a source of maldevelopment is because of the ills of industrial agriculture. This industry has risen because it boasts “efficiency” and “high productivity.” To situate ourselves and the average U.S. inhabitant, the food that each one of us buys in a typical

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<sup>107</sup> Roy, “The Greater Common Good,” 72.

grocery store probably comes from and supports an industrial agriculture corporation. It is a widespread, insidious institution.

Brian Halweil and Danielle Nierenberg of World Watch, chronicle how industrial agriculture, both from crops and from meat, have significantly damaged the environment.

They begin by describing how the meat and fish industries harm ecosystems:

By raising meat in factory farms and grabbing fish and other seafood from the ocean with huge trawlers and other industrial fishing techniques, current production methods are endangering people's health while also threatening the long-term stability of the land, oceans, and genetic diversity that sustain production itself.<sup>108</sup>

These harms are piled on top of the inhumane conditions that animals are kept in.

Another significant problem spawned by industrial agriculture is the damage that fertilizers do to land and water resources. In order to achieve high-production, industrial agriculture utilizes excessive amounts of chemicals, which cause significant damage.

Halweil and Nierenberg cite how industrial agriculture in the American Midwest has devastated ecosystems hundreds of miles away: "The fertilizers used to grow corn...run off into surface water and eventually make their way down into the Gulf of Mexico, where they have created a 'dead zone' the size of New Jersey."<sup>109</sup> This is not a crisis unique to the American Midwest or to corn—in every region where industrial agriculture flourishes and with every crop that industrial agriculture produces, high-chemical usage destroys the land on which the crops grow. In addition, these chemicals are soaked up in rainwater and then drain down rivers and through lakes to contaminate land and water resources thousands of miles away. Industrial agriculture demands high levels of

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<sup>108</sup> Brian Halweil and Danielle Nierenberg, "Meat and Seafood: The Global Diet's Most Costly Ingredients," 2008 State of the World: Solutions for a Sustainable Economy ed. World Watch Institute (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008) 63.

<sup>109</sup> Halweil and Nierenberg 63.

chemical pesticides and fertilizers (which, ironically, actually damage the fertility of the land), which are harmful to human and non-human life.

Shiva is an outspoken advocate of food justice. She focuses her efforts on promoting localization of food sources and dismantling the structures of corporate agriculture. She explains why:

The globalization of food and agriculture systems, in effect, means the corporation takeover of the food chain, the erosion of food rights, the destruction of the cultural diversity of food and the biological diversity of crops, and the displacement of millions from land-based, rural livelihoods. Global free trade in food and agriculture is the biggest refugee creation program in the world.<sup>110</sup>

Corporate agriculture means displacement and further perpetuates an unjust economic system, where corporate interests trump human needs.

Shiva's disdain for corporate agriculture is a sentiment echoed by many communities. The notion of food justice has become an international phenomenon, with movements springing up throughout the world, as exemplified by international organizations such as the Slow Food Movement and the increased presence of grassroots food justice organizations, such as community farms. This is because, increasingly, people from all backgrounds are realizing that corporate agriculture is an unhealthy, unjust way to grow food.

In their book *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: a Better World is Possible*, John Cavanagh, director of the Institute for Policy Studies and Jerry Mander, anti-globalization activist and writer, devote significant attention to the injustices of corporate

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<sup>110</sup> Vandana Shiva, "War against Nature and the People of the South," Views from the South: The effects of globalization and the WTO on Third World countries ed. Sarah Anderson (Chicago: First Food Books and International Forum on Globalization, 2000) 93.

agriculture. They observe how part of industrial agriculture's human harm comes from the public health problems that it generates:

There are also external costs of industrial agriculture. Hailed as more efficient than small-scale farming, this is a kind of efficiency that ignores the costs of air, water, and soil pollution, toxic rivers, dead fish. Many public health problems from food-borne diseases are directly attributable to factory farming systems: infections from salmonella, *e. coli*, and *listeria* as well as Mad Cow disease, hoof-and-mouth disease, and others.<sup>111</sup>

These public health concerns are a significant harm to justice for obvious reasons. Human health is a crucial factor in community wellbeing.

In addition to the physical impact of industrial agriculture, it can be utilized as an instrument of social, political and economic control. Although boasted as a beacon of efficiency, Cavanagh and Mander bring to light that “industrial agriculture brings the social costs of taking care of all the farmers who lose their livelihoods through this system; together, social and environmental costs rise into the billions of dollars.”<sup>112</sup>

Providing a specific example, activist and academic Raj Patel explains in his book *Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World Food System* how the industrial soybean agriculture practices of Brazil have perpetuated social injustice. He describes how small-scale farmers, who represent the poor, subsistence farming industry in the area, are squeezed out of the market by large-scale corporations, their losses a casualty of industrial agriculture. He also explains how industrial agriculture

locks out those who depend on, or exist despite, the soy plantations—landless, labourers and indigenous people. These people, far more numerous than the soy farmers, have been hurt by Brazil's soy boom at the same time as they have been told that agricultural exports have benefited them...At an aggregate level, it's

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<sup>111</sup> John Cavanagh and Jerry Mander, Alternatives to Economic Globalization: a Better World is Possible (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004) 93.

<sup>112</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 42.

easy to see that trade has suited those in the export agriculture business well. Their gains in fortune have dwarfed the losses endured by others.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, industrial agriculture's injustice extends throughout society. This industry reflects and perpetuates the unjust economic power structures of the world. This is an important point to note because just, sustainable development, in addition to resolving the short term development needs of communities, must challenge the political and economic power structures of society and restructure them to provide for a more democratic system.

Shiva echoes Patel's argument, explaining how, by increasing their profits, corporate agriculture is destroying individuals' lives, the earth and agricultural traditions: "While the soil and farmers die, agribusiness corporations like Cargill are making a killing. Cargill's fertilizer profits doubled from 2006 to 2007, with India paying 130 percent more for fertilizers and China 227 percent more for fertilizers during that period."<sup>114</sup> Industrial agriculture literally destroys people's livelihoods by maiming the land on which they rely. The chemical fertilizers that they use damage soil nutrients, while the monocultural crop production harms biodiversity and decreases soil quality.

So, the facts reveal that industrial agriculture does not in fact aid just development and, in fact, prevents it. But why is this? Shiva explains how development policy and globalization play a role in world hunger issues. It is ironic that for the first time in recorded history the number of overweight people exceeds the number of people suffering from hunger. People are confused about why there is frequently an over-stock of food in the United States, but food shortages exist both within certain communities in the U.S. and throughout the world. Shiva provides some insight into this paradox:

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<sup>113</sup> Raj Patel, Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World Food System (Toronto: HaperCollins, 2007) 201-202.

<sup>114</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 100-101.

The food and agriculture crises are a direct result of policies of corporate globalization. Yet globalization is what the government is offering as a cure for globalization's ills. Food prices started to rise as a result of connecting India's domestic market to global markets, especially the edible oil and wheat import business.<sup>115</sup>

The push to liberalize trade has come at the cost of local wellbeing because, when trade is liberalized, food prices rise, making goods that are necessary to sustain life more costly. The global food industry participates in this trend, which is especially problematic because food is necessary to sustain life.

Furthermore, industrial agriculture sucks up enormous amounts of water resources, further contributing to the aforementioned water crises happening all over the world. In World Watch Institute's *2008 State of the World Report*, Ger Bergkamp and Claudia W. Sadoff note that "more than 70 percent of the world's water is used for food and fiber production."<sup>116</sup> Patel clarifies why industrial agriculture, not small-scale, organic agriculture, is identified as the culprit using all the water: "the modern food system demands access to unsustainable amounts of fresh water in order for its 'high-yielding varieties' to have the laboratory-perfect growing conditions in which they were designed."<sup>117</sup> A prime example of this problem is the recent drought in central California, where farmers who are accustomed to utilizing enormous amounts of water must now scale-down or switch their crops in response to decreases in water availability. Although industrial agriculture boasts that it produces high-yielding, efficient crops, this industry ignores the costs of the environmental damage to irreplaceable, priceless resources such

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<sup>115</sup> Shiva, *Soil Not Oil* 95-96.

<sup>116</sup> Ger Bergkamp and Claudia W. Sadoff, "Water in a Sustainable Economy," *2008 State of the World: Solutions for a Sustainable Economy* ed. World Watch Institute (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008) 109.

<sup>117</sup> Patel 296.

as soil, water, and human and non-human health. The industry does not bear these costs—ecosystems do.

There are many important conclusions about food, industrial agriculture and just development to be drawn from this analysis. First of all, industrial agriculture has nothing to do with providing people with food in greater quantity or quality, as the industry claims. It is not resolving world hunger or achieving food justice; in fact, industrial agriculture harms food security. Industrial agriculture is not a noble cause; it is just another corporate industry that further perpetuates the injustices of a capitalist economic system.

The trend of industrial agriculture is worrisome; however, it is comforting to note that agriculture has been done sustainably for years. An appropriate perspective to take on environmental issues is to look at grassroots work around agricultural issues. Shiva provides us with a living example of how to incorporate sustainability into development through her organization, Navdanya. The organization focuses on issues of environmental justice, highlighting resources such as seeds, food, water and land, how they relate to development and globalization and, most importantly, how local farmers fit into these agricultural issues. The organization's practice of seed saving promotes seed diversity and sustainability. It also encourages organic farming, thereby avoiding the harms of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, by maintaining seeds that are naturally suited to the land and seeds that have traditionally been grown.

Although seed saving seems like a common sense practice, the motivations of multinational corporations do not lie in promoting sustainable, common sense practices. Rather, they lie in profit-maximization. And increasing profits entails selling as many



seeds and fertilizer as possible, which does not occur if farmers save seeds. Navdanya chronicles why seed saving has shifted from a universally utilized method to a practice that is itself in need of saving:

Until a few decades ago Indian farmers had been the custodians of diverse croplands, growing over 30,000 different varieties of rice. In recent years, however, many regions have been restricted to growing rice monocultures after biotechnology was forcefully popularised by the Green Revolution. As a result, most of the diverse indigenous varieties of rice are headed towards extinction. What is happening to India's rice is also happening to many other crops, particularly the 'poor man's crops' that might not hold importance for global markets but remain crucial to local subsistence economies.<sup>118</sup>

Shiva also notes how corporations play a significant role in eliminating seed saving, as they "genetically engineer sterile seed, through what is called 'Terminator Technology,' so that farmers cannot save seed and are forced to buy seed every year."<sup>119</sup>

Thus, the Green Revolution, a trend where Northern development practitioners, allied with multinational corporations, forced chemicals and technology upon developing countries, thinking that it would lead to development, contributed to increased privatization and environmental harm. In addition, industrial agriculture's desire for profit, which employs practices that value profit over human and environmental wellbeing, inhibits agriculture from utilizing sustainable, healthy methods.

## **Conclusions**

An important conclusion regarding sustainability that Shiva makes is not only that technical practices must change, but that there must be a cultural, social and economic shift in how we conceptualize natural resources:

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<sup>118</sup> Navdanya, "Saving Seeds: Rejuvenating Agricultural Biodiversity" 15 Jan. 2009 <<http://www.navdanya.org/earthdcracy/seed/seedkeepers.htm>>.

<sup>119</sup> Shiva, "War Against Nature and the People of the South" 104.

The deepening ecological crisis, however, is making it imperative that nature's values and functions be taken into account through proper ecological audits that assign value to natural functions on the basis of the cost of technological alternatives to deliver the same set of goods and services... Recognizing the social and ecological value of a resource leads to its equitable and sustainable use. In contrast, assessing a resource only in terms of market price creates patterns of unsustainable and inequitable use.<sup>120</sup>

Unjust perceptions of natural resources embody the core of this problem, and this core must be dealt with in order for long-term solutions to be established.

Furthermore, Shiva traces the relationship between development and cultural imperialism as acting as the foundational cause of humans' unjust relationship to nature:

Contemporary development activity in the Third World super-imposes the scientific and economic paradigms created by western, gender-based ideology on communities in other cultures. Ecological destruction... ha[s] been the inevitable result of most development programmes and projects based on such paradigms.<sup>121</sup>

There is a foundational aspect of this problem. Imperialist, capitalist, Western notions of privatization and enclosure of the commons promote environmental exploitation in order to achieve economic growth.

The goal of this chapter was to identify key issues in environmentalism and sustainability in development, examine the underpinning issues, and discuss solutions. More concrete ways to promote sustainability are discussed in the conclusion of this thesis. Furthermore, these solutions incorporate both notions of sustainability and of justice. Prior to this discussion, though, it is necessary to give equal weight to the human justice component of Shiva's theories.

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<sup>120</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 6.

<sup>121</sup> Shiva, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development xvii.

## Chapter III

### Human justice: Analysis of international order and community needs

Transitioning from the topic of sustainability to the topic of justice, it is important to note that these topics are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are integral to one another. Multiple scholars and activists have affirmed this relationship, especially as the concept of environmental justice, which encapsulates both environmental and human concerns, has been propelled to the top of many social justice advocates' agenda. In her article "Black, Brown and Going Green," environmental justice advocate and educator Kristia Castrillo describes the inherent connection between the environment and justice: "Every instance of human oppression—whether primarily motivated by race, religion or otherwise—consistently goes hand in hand with oppression of the land and peoples' resources."<sup>122</sup> Communities rely on natural resources; they are an inevitable component of development.

Shiva expands on this idea, arguing that resources are the primary source of struggle, but that, for political, strategic reasons, the government and other people in positions of power frame them as identity-based conflicts. Shiva also notes how unjust development theories have environmentally harmed many developing countries:

The burden of global industrial production is now falling on countries like India, and, in a distorted paradigm, this pollution is presented as proof of India's development. This is part of a new global environmental apartheid in which environmentally destructive and polluting economic activities are relocated to the South.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Kristia Castrillo, "Black, Brown and Going Green." WireTap Magazine 4 Mar. 2009, 10 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.wiretapmag.org/race/44030/>>.

<sup>123</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 33.

Clearly, sustainability is connected to issues of social, economic and political injustice, especially in relation to the topic of development. With this connection in mind, it is crucial to explore the more human dimension of development. This entails addressing the institutional, political and economic components of development.

### **Neocolonialism**

It is important to unpack the neocolonial implications of neoliberal development. Simply put, neoliberal development acts out a neocolonial, imperialist relationship to the land and to the communities living on those lands. In colonial times, the exploitation of developing countries was direct, with governments from Western countries such as Great Britain, France, the United States and Belgium blatantly seizing resources such as cotton, minerals, and crops and utilizing them to benefit their own economies. Multinational corporations run by Western elites, sometimes with the collusion of elites from developing countries who do not represent the interests of the poor, now employ new techniques to extract resources from developing countries. Multinational companies such as Cargill and Monsanto are the new East India Companies: foreign investors extracting goods, capital, human labor and indigenous knowledge from developing countries.

Just as in colonial times, this extraction, though presented as a benevolent, beneficial system for the colonized country, leads to economic advancement for a select, privileged section of society. However, for the majority of the colonized population, in addition to marginalized segments of the host country, these supposedly advantageous economic practices lead to further underdevelopment. This extraction is encouraged by international economic policies, which applaud the practices as trade liberalization and rational, common sense economics. However, these policies are anything but laudable

from a sustainability and justice perspective, because they mimic colonial patterns of exploitation, serving as a new form of abuse of the South by the North.

A word that comes up frequently when describing corporations' relationship to developing countries is "neocolonialism." Transnational trade has become both a reflection and a perpetuation of the unequal power structures in international economics, as well as an extension of colonialism. In most cases, it is not a practice as overt as colonialism—Western governments are not outright replacing endogenous ones, or physically rewriting countries' boundaries. Nonetheless, neoliberal economic policy has had the effect of colonialism.

What evidence is there that the current economic system is an extension of colonialism? Examining how transnational economics functions at the macro-level illustrates the similarities. Western corporations and consumers desire inexpensive natural resources and cheap labor. However, not wanting to exploit their own resources, degrade their own population or destroy their own environment, Westerners export the polluting consumerist industries. They then call this exportation "development" and praise it for lifting up the masses of non-industrialized countries. Shiva notes how

globalization of the economy has outsourced energy-intensive production to countries like China, which is flooding the shelves of supermarkets with cheap products. The corporations of the North and the consumers of the North thus bear responsibility for the increased emissions in the countries of the South.<sup>124</sup>

Western consumption drives corporations to increase their output, heightening pollution in the area. Goods production in developing countries for items that will be sold in richer nations is a point of contention that reflects the greater debate about globalization economics. Neoliberals claim that it is a beneficial practice for developing countries

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<sup>124</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 34.

because it generates employment and builds industry. However, the jobs are usually in sweatshops with low wages and long hours, and the industry pollutes the natural resources of the area.

In fact, the exact policies that supposedly promote development are forms of neocolonialism. Shiva observes:

Throughout the Third World, women, peasants and tribals are struggling for liberation from 'development' just as they earlier struggled for liberation from colonialism...Economic growth was a new colonialism, draining resources away from those who needed them most. The continuity lay in the fact that it was now new national elites, not colonial powers, that masterminded the exploitation on grounds of 'national interest' and growing GNPs, and it was accomplished with more powerful technologies of appropriation and destruction.<sup>125</sup>

Development has been forced upon many developing countries without communication with or consideration of the individuals living in those countries. That is exactly what colonialism was; neoliberal development is just another scheme operating in the same framework.

It is important to examine the histories and trends behind neocolonialism. The colonial system was set up so that colonies were economically dependent on their host countries for trade. Host countries profited from this dependency. Martin Khor, Executive Director of the South Centre, a coalition of organizations and governments from developing countries, explains how

colonial rule—accompanied by the imposition of new economic systems, new crops, the industrial exploitation of minerals, and participation in the global market (with Third World resources being exported and Western industrial products imported)—changed the social and economic structures of Third World societies. The new structures, consumption styles, and technological systems became so ingrained in Third World economies that even after the attainment of

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<sup>125</sup> Shiva, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development 2.

political independence, the importation of Western values, products, technologies and capital continued and expanded.<sup>126</sup>

The colonial legacy entrenched an unjust economic system into these countries, so that even once colonialism had technically ended, its economic structure remained sturdy.

So, the fact that many of colonialism's economic systems were still in place contributed to the pervasiveness of neocolonialism. Additionally, the post-colonial international economy was not radically transformed. Edward Goldsmith, an environmentalist and writer, makes an astute observation that strikes the core of how globalization and mainstream development are forms of neocolonialism: "If development and colonialism...are the same process under a different name, it is largely because they share the same goal."<sup>127</sup> He notes how in the 1870s, when modern colonization began, many French and English businessmen and politicians blatantly stated that their aims in building colonial relationships with countries in Africa were to exploit their wealth of raw materials and human capital. The foundations of neoliberalism are the same. They value profit, efficiency and pursuit of self-interest.

Goldsmith also notes how, from the perspective of developed nations, the official termination of colonialism did not disturb the beneficial economic transactions: "Formal colonialism came to an end not because the colonial powers had decided to forego the economic advantages it provided but because, in the new conditions, these could now be

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<sup>126</sup> Martin Khor, "How the South is Getting a Raw Deal at the WTO" Views from the South: the Effects of Globalization and the WTO on Third World Countries ed. Sarah Anderson (Chicago: First Food Books and International Forum on Globalization, 2000) 48.

<sup>127</sup> Edward Goldsmith, "Development as Colonialism," The Case Against the Global Economy ed. Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996) 254.

obtained by more politically acceptable and effective means.”<sup>128</sup> Economic development after decolonization was constructed in a way that benefitted U.S. interests. Investors, corporations and governments engage in economic activity with post-colonial states in order to profit. However, they excuse any exploitation, saying that just by trading with these countries they are doing them a favor and that liberalizing trade should be enough for a developing country to get off its feet. If these countries are not succeeding, it is their own fault for not being strategic enough or not attending to their self-interest. However, Goldsmith notes that “‘free’ trade is seen to involve competition on a ‘level playing field,’ and nothing could seem more fair. However, when the strong confront the weak on a level playing field the result is a foregone conclusion.”<sup>129</sup> Because, in terms of developing countries’ economic structure, little has actually changed since colonial times; free trade pits mammoth corporate hegemonies against small-scale, local producers.

Goldsmith concludes by identifying corporations as the new colonial powers. “The new colonial powers have neither responsibility for, nor accountability to anybody but their shareholders.”<sup>130</sup> This presents the need for intervention in and regulation of corporations. Although neoliberals present free trade as the most just economic system, the international economic has yet to look anything like the even playing field that neoliberals paint free trade to be. Thus, neocolonialism presents itself as a key factor in the problematics of traditional development.

There are multiple companies to use as concrete examples of this neocolonialism. Shiva cites BALCO (Bharat Aluminum Company), a company that began mining in

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<sup>128</sup> Goldsmith 255.

<sup>129</sup> Goldsmith 255.

<sup>130</sup> Goldsmith 266.



Gandmardhan in India and was met with resistance by locals and tribals: “BALCO’s mining activity is not based on the needs of the Indian people—it is entirely driven by the demands of industrialized countries whose own aluminum plants are closing for environmental reasons.”<sup>131</sup> This is a prime illustration of injustice—Western countries exporting their pollution in order to obtain aluminum for their Coca-Cola cans, cell phones and computers. Westerners live out their consumer tendencies, but displace the environmental and health ramifications that such consumption causes onto developing societies.

This situation also serves as evidence against the argument that globalization occurs as a result of the world economy running its natural course. Corporations and powerful countries are given immense power in the form of supposedly international, inclusive organizations. On a practical level, corporations are stealing. They rob farmers of their right to produce their goods in the way that they have been doing for generations by forcing chemical fertilizers and genetically modified seeds upon them. Furthermore, they violate nature’s authority. They steal water, soil nutrients, and other resources from the land and from people who traditionally use this land.

In addition to affecting individuals, the systematic impact plays out such that the interests of the majority of the world are ignored, while an elite group of people establish economic and political control via international economic organizing bodies. So, neocolonialism is important to explore because it underpins many of the issues that development and globalization brings to the forefront of poor people’s lives.

Furthermore, it exemplifies the imperialism over both the people and ecology of

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<sup>131</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 8.

developing nations. Thus, neoliberal development acts out colonial relationships to the land and the people whose livelihoods depend on this land.

### **Corporations**

Corporations embody the neocolonialism that pervades mainstream development and international economics. The trend of corporate power is spreading and is often cited by neoliberal development practitioners as an indicator of wealth and wellbeing.

However, corporations are in fact an indicator of increasingly unequal distributions of political, social and economic power.

A key misunderstanding about corporations is that they are the natural and efficient product of free, fair markets. The assumption is that, when governments remove limitations to trade, the economy is inherently more just, because there is less interference. However, Shiva explains how these “free” markets are not so free:

People have learned to recognize the lack of freedom built into the rule of the nation-state. They have not yet learned to recognize the lack of freedom intrinsic to corporate rule. As the state withdraws from agriculture, it is not returning power to farming communities and autonomous producers. It is instead facilitating the transfer of control over natural resources, production systems, markets, and trade to global agribusiness, further disempowering and dispossessing small farmers and landless laborers.<sup>132</sup>

Neoliberal developers assert that the removal of government-based market controls leads to a more just market because there is supposedly no interference. However, as Shiva notes, this does not mean that there is a power vacuum or that people suddenly have complete access to the market. Instead, international economic organizations, developed countries and corporations, hiding under the guise of free markets and work for the good

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<sup>132</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 106.

of developing countries, are endowed with the authority to determine how markets function.

Cavanagh and Mander explain how these discrepancies arise because corporations and citizens measure development by different criteria:

Corporate globalists generally measure progress by indicators of their own financial wealth, such as rising stock prices and indicators of the total output of goods and services available to those who have the money to pay... In contrast, citizen movements measure progress by indicators of the well-being of people and nature, with particular concern for the lives of those most in need.<sup>133</sup>

Using corporate standards, it would appear that development is, in fact, occurring. You can find signs of corporate wealth throughout the world—in the glittery high-rises located in developing countries like Sudan, India and Uganda. But these dazzling facades distract us from the grassroots injustices that exist there. This brings us back to Patel’s point about how corporation’s “gains in fortune have dwarfed the losses endured by others.”<sup>134</sup> Measuring development with the corporate yardstick would have us believe that neoliberal development achieves its goals of growth and prosperity. However, this growth and prosperity benefits a tiny population that has access to political and economic power, and simultaneously disenfranchises and exploits the broader population.

### **International economic organizations as agents of neocolonialism**

A discussion of corporations and neocolonialism leads to many questions about how the dominance of corporations has arisen and how it is permitted. Corporate activity is facilitated by international economic organizations. Shiva heavily criticizes the international economic organizations and agreements that determine development policies—the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World

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<sup>133</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 23.

<sup>134</sup> Patel 202.

Bank, and the North American Free Trade Agreement, just to name a few. Although there are many organizations, policies and agreements that shape the international economic landscape, given the limitations of length and the breadth of topics that this thesis aims to cover, I will focus on the World Trade Organization. This makes sense because it is the organization that most widely affects trade, because its scope spans countries and encompasses all aspects of trade.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the World Trade Organization facilitates neoliberal trade and patent policies, practices that benefit corporations. Shiva harshly criticizes the WTO, stating that

[t]he WTO's overall goal of promoting "market competition" serves two functions. Firstly, it transforms all aspects of life into commodities for sale. Culture, biodiversity, food, water, livelihoods, needs, and rights are all transformed and reduced to markets. Secondly, the destruction of nature, culture, and livelihoods is then justified on the basis of the rules of competition.<sup>135</sup>

Shiva's dislike for the WTO has been affirmed by many other organizations and activists. For example, an event that was brought up in many works on sustainable, just development was the protest at WTO talks in Seattle in 1999. These protests contributed to the shutdown of the talks and brought significant media attention to issues of globalization, corporatization and international economics.

There is a diversity of people who have found WTO policies problematic. Describing the growing alliance of people who have protested the WTO, Cavanagh and Mander observe how

[t]he evolving alliance of civil society organizations brings together union members, farmers, landless peasants, youth organizations, small business owners, artisanal producers, economic justice organizers, prison reform advocates, environmentalists, AIDS and other health activists, politicians, independent media

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<sup>135</sup> Shiva, "War Against Nature and the People of the South" 92

organizations, civil servants, the homeless, peace and human rights organizations, gay and lesbian groups, intellectuals, consumer advocates, and even a few corporate CEOs of every age, religion, race, and nationality. It is the product of a largely spontaneous awakening of millions of people to the reality that their future and the future of their children depends on exercising their democratic right to participate in the decisions that shape their future.<sup>136</sup>

Thus, Shiva's anti-WTO views are widely supported.

In fact, Khor, contends that Northern countries utilize the World Trade

Organization as a tool to govern the South:

Trade agreements that are legally binding and have strong enforcement capability have become the most important vehicle for disseminating and implementing economic and social policies across the world, policies that have been planned by the few developed countries for the developing countries to follow. The WTO, which is the main governing organization of the multilateral trading system, has in fact become the vehicle of choice of industrialized countries for organizing and enforcing global economic governance.<sup>137</sup>

Examination of the WTO's policies, a task that is undertaken at various points throughout this thesis, reveals that this organization is not a force of positive development.

Additionally, Khor explains how the organization's system of decision by census and principle of "one country, one vote" is rarely realized. He notes that

should the major powers (especially the United States, European Union [EU], and Japan) agree on a particular issue, while a sizable number of developing countries disagree and a larger number remain silent, the major powers are likely to embark on a process which they call 'building a consensus.' In reality, this means a process...of wearing down the resistance of the outspoken developing countries until only a few, or even one or two, remain 'outside the consensus.'<sup>138</sup>

Thus, the rhetorically democratic conditions under which economic policies are formulated are not, in fact, as democratic as they present themselves to be.

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<sup>136</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 29.

<sup>137</sup> Khor 11.

<sup>138</sup> Khor 15.

Khor continues on to explain that many developing countries simply lack the organizational capacity (i.e. support staff, computers, printers) to keep ahead of the negotiations, and so are excluded from participating on equal terms as compared to developed countries. Thus, the combination of unjust negotiations and unequal resources result in the literal and metaphorical silencing of developing countries' voices and interests. These arguments exemplify how the WTO is a tool constructed for developed countries and the corporations that they serve to further expand their global economic hegemony, not an organization that serves the interests of developing countries.

### **Privatization**

Privatization is a theme that pervades the policies and philosophies of corporations and the international economic organizations that support them. As described in the previous chapter, Shiva emphasizes how commonly owned goods and spaces are increasingly being privatized, and how development's increase in enclosures of the commons dramatically harms the environment. This trend also has consequences for the human justice component of development. Multiple other activists support Shiva's outspokenness around the issue. David Korten, a notable anti-corporation activist who worked for years in mainstream development through organizations such as USAID and currently serves as the founder and member of multiple alternative development globalization organizations, including Positive Futures Network, describes the problems with the trend, observing that

[m]ost development interventions transfer control of local resources to ever larger and more centralized institutions that are unaccountable to local people and unresponsive to their needs. The greater the amount of money that flows through these central institutions, the more dependent people become, the less control they have over their own lives and resources, and the more rapidly the gap grows

between those who hold central power and those who seek to make a living for themselves within local communities.<sup>139</sup>

Privatization deteriorates communities' agency in acting as a steward for their land, and degrades their capacity to promote their own wellbeing.

In her works, Shiva provides multiple specific examples of how privatization of common resources creates inequities. A prime illustration of this is how water resources have been forcibly and inequitably redistributed:

The emergence of modern water extraction technologies has increased the role of the state in water management. As new technologies displace self-management systems, people's democratic management structures deteriorate and their role in conservation shrinks. With globalization and privatization of water resources, new efforts to completely erode people's rights and replace collective ownership with corporate control are under way. That communities of real people with real needs exist beyond the states and the market is often forgotten in the rush for privatization.<sup>140</sup>

Privatization is evident in multiple arenas. In addition to the privatization of water, the increased privatization of knowledge, technology, energy, education and all other sorts of important social institutions leads to the same problems that water privatization spurns. Communities lose their collective ownership, while their concrete needs are neglected in favor of corporate possession.

The trend of privatization dissolves any chance of achieving economic democracy. As Roy explains, “[p]rivatization seeks to disengage politics from the market. To do that would be to blunt the very last weapon that India's poor still have—their vote.”<sup>141</sup> Privatization is presented as a way to more equitably allow individuals to obtain their share, to own a piece of the earth or of the collective body of knowledge. Perhaps

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<sup>139</sup> David Korten, When Corporations Rule the World (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2001) 15.

<sup>140</sup> Shiva Water Wars 20.

<sup>141</sup> Roy “Power Politics” 160-161.

this system would function effectively if its core tenets were truly observed. However, privatization currently functions in an elitist manner, its regulations set into place by the governments of wealthy nations and international economic organizations such as the WTO. These problems echo the issues seen with corporations—they flout their right to expand as an issue of liberty and “free” trade, when in fact, they are operating under an inherently unjust system, and thus cannot achieve their rhetorical benefits.

Khor identifies the core of this problem, describing the problematics of how developing countries are being forced, through the WTO, to establish national patent and intellectual property laws: “Since most patents are owned by transnational companies, in effect this meant the legal protection of technological monopoly by these northern-owned firms and a drastic curtailment of possibilities by the South to learn and use new technologies.”<sup>142</sup> The enclosure of the technology commons will only result in further separation of and inequality between developed and developing nations. Ironically, globalization prides itself on facilitating increased knowledge and technology sharing; patents and intellectual property laws explicitly deny those benefits. Privatization is an extension of neocolonialism and does not promote just development.

### **Hierarchies of knowledge**

Deeply connected to the problem of neocolonialism are issues of cultural imperialism and Westernization. Privileging certain voices and experiences above others, neoliberal development affirms a narrow minded capitalist conception of the world. At the root of these injustices are problematic productions of knowledge and value judgments on knowledge. What information is respected and which sources of

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<sup>142</sup> Khor 22.



information are deemed legitimate or illegitimate sets the course for what development policies are enacted and how development shapes humans' relationship to the environment and the economy.

Shiva interrogates the notion of privileged knowledge as a large-scale problem with development. The organization that she founded and currently participates in, Navdanya, emphasizes that indigenous knowledge and farmers' understanding of their land, crops and ecology should be valued. When describing her experience working with women, peasants and farmers, Shiva affirms non-dominant forms of knowledge:

I learnt in the seventies that literacy is not a prerequisite for knowledge, and ordinary tribals, peasants, women have tremendous ecological experience. They are biodiversity experts, seed experts, soil experts, water experts. The blindness of dominant systems to their knowledge and expertise is not proof of the ignorance of the poor and powerless. It is in fact proof of the ignorance of the rich and powerful.<sup>143</sup>

Although Shiva recognizes the importance of validating diverse sources of knowledge, the trend has been to dismiss local and indigenous knowledge and favor information obtained by “experts” employing the Western scientific method. This pattern is a problem for two main reasons. First of all, it causes ecological and cultural damage, because outside “experts” arrogantly ignore the valuable knowledge of local and indigenous education. Additionally, it further entrenches the colonial tradition by privileging Western standards.

Sandra Harding, professor of education at University of California—Los Angeles, traces this pattern back to European Enlightenment ideals, when the notion was that “other cultures had local knowledge systems, but only modern science produced claims

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<sup>143</sup> Shiva “The Practice of Earth Democracy.”

that were universally valid, according to the Eurocentric view.”<sup>144</sup> She elaborates, pointing out how “the Enlightenment philosophies were preoccupied with eliminating the local in scientific processes so as to obtain transcultural, universally valid and knowledge claims.”<sup>145</sup> During the course of attempting to achieve universal truths, people did not achieve universal truths, but only erased local truths, leaving just their conception of the knowledge and science as the dominant one.

Despite being debased, these local knowledge systems significantly contributed to the advancements that European societies made at the time, revealing that the signs of progress that occurred during the Enlightenment cannot be solely attributed to Europeans. Harding notes that the local knowledge that Europeans extracted from people in Asia and the Middle East

greatly advanced the development in Europe of oceanography, climatology, geology, cartography, diverse engineering projects, tropical medicine, pharmacology, agricultural sciences, evolutionary biology, and many other modern sciences. Culturally local discourses have positive effects on the growth of science, not just the negative effects on which conventional philosophies focus.<sup>146</sup>

This analysis unveils the importance of valuing indigenous knowledge. It also points out the hypocrisy of intellectuals at the time—appropriating local understanding to advance their own technologies, while simultaneously devaluing this understanding as information from “backward” cultures.

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<sup>144</sup> Sandra Harding, “Gender, Development and Post-Enlightenment Philosophies of Science,” Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial and Feminist World, ed. Uma Narayan et al. (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2000) 249.

<sup>145</sup> Harding 254.

<sup>146</sup> Harding 249.

One would think that people in power would have learned from the Enlightenment and value local knowledge and its contributions to the greater body of knowledge. However, these same errors are currently repeated. This is especially important to consider when thinking about how international organizations dominated by Western powers (bodies such as the United Nations and World Trade Organization) concoct policies with the ostensible intent of improving poor countries. Harding notes how development has specifically been affected by this mistake: “Development was initially conceptualized as economic growth. Thus human progress was thought of in terms of increased production and consumption.”<sup>147</sup> Development was misconceived as mere economic growth, but, increasingly, experts are recognizing that development must include other components, such as education, sustainability, public health and human rights.

Harding expands on why the West’s pattern of assuming power without sufficient understanding must be considered when thinking about development:

Reevaluations of modern science and its philosophy figure in these assessments because development was conceptualized as transferring to the South sciences, technologies and their philosophies that were presumed to be responsible for the industrial development of Europe and North America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Modern science is also at issue because of the terrifying escalation of environmental destruction in the South, as well as globally. Northern philosophies of nature seem to be implicated in that debacle.<sup>148</sup>

Developing nations are facing significant problems with how aid agencies and international governing bodies attempted to construct their economies, because the West did not incorporate local knowledge into their development plans for other nations. Thus, in a very practical sense, globalization’s emphasis on expert knowledge harms

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<sup>147</sup> Harding 245.

<sup>148</sup> Harding 240.

development projects by preventing holistic understanding and generating poorly designed development projects.

Harding specifically articulates the problems with only employing Western “expert” knowledge:

Cultures have distinctive locations in heterogeneous nature and distinctive interests in those surroundings. People living in deserts or beside oceans will tend to produce different patterns of knowledge (and ignorance). Their hypotheses (usefully) always extend considerably beyond the available evidence, which is one reason why these patterns of knowledge cannot fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. There is no one scientific method or, more generally, one way of organizing the production of knowledge that different cultures have produced—or even that modern sciences have produced. Fruitful inquiry methods are as varied as human styles of thought and social organization.<sup>149</sup>

Valuing diverse forms of knowing is important because it gives us more accurate, holistic information. Furthermore, history demonstrates that knowledge is not collected in a uniform manner; the most accurate understandings always involve diverse sources and methods of research. These arguments echo the claims of the alternative development movement concerning cultural imperialism and knowledge.

Shiva also brings up practical points about how people who have avoided the pitfalls that industrialists have made should be looked to for solutions:

Solutions will not come from the corporations and governments that have raped the planet and destroyed peoples’ lives. Solutions are coming from those who know how to live lightly, who have never had an oil addiction, who do not define the good life as ‘shop till you drop,’ but rather define it as looking after the earth and their living community. Those who are being treated as disposable in the dominant system, which is pushing the planet’s ecosystems to collapse and our species to extinction, carry the knowledge and values, the cultures and skills, that give humanity a chance for survival.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Harding 250.

<sup>150</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 46.

Sadly, as Shiva points out, the individuals who live sustainably are not only ignored, but coerced into abandoning their lifestyle.

Western notions of globalization, development and progress emphasize how humans have advanced since the Enlightenment, but experts still commit the same errors with regards to knowledge. Although neoliberal development boasts that it is transforming the world into a more knowledgeable, more culturally competent place, globalization is in fact decreasing understanding by enclosing intellectual, technological, and academic commons. Shiva also notes that “we are not living in a knowledge society if we don’t have the very basic choices that allow us to lead a human life.”<sup>151</sup> Because of technology, trade agreements and agricultural techniques that are forced upon poor people, they have little opportunity to exercise and advance their own ways of knowing. Globalization and “progress” may have generated an increase in technology, but that does not mean that society is any more knowledgeable. Current development trends sacrifice wisdom for “knowledge” and sustainability for “growth.”

Neoliberal development’s interaction with different types of knowledge is faulty because, practically speaking, it leads to inaccurate or incomplete information. Such misinformation then serves as justification for practices that harm the environment and local communities. However, in addition to the overt injuries caused by incorrect information, there are greater implications of valuing “expert” ways of knowing over indigenous ones, implications that are problematic and unjust because they reinforce colonial constructs. The “experts” are most often Western males, with an occasional non-Western individual who was educated in a Western system. The debasement of

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<sup>151</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 38.

knowledge from rural or indigenous societies signifies disrespect for that culture and group of people. Additionally, the production of knowledge is economically intertwined with globalization and mainstream development because knowledge and expertise motors the market, determining the locations, prices, and means of goods and their production and trade.

Harding explains how a development theory that values diverse forms of knowing contributes to unraveling the colonial tendencies that are perpetuated by dominant forms of knowledge:

The Enlightenment philosophies defined the growth of scientific knowledge and the social progress this was supposed to bring in ways that devalued women, nature and “backward cultures.” The new philosophies of knowledge and power emerging from the gender, environment, and sustainable development discussions and the analyses on which they draw represent the return of the Enlightenment’s others—the return of women, nature, and “backward cultures” from positions of more than instrumental value (at best) in modernity’s thinking.<sup>152</sup>

The oppressive nature of knowledge construction necessitates a reaction and a reframing of the discussion about all forms of education, so that marginalized groups shift from the periphery to the center of the discourse. This lesson must also be applied to development, especially because the people who are most affected by development have historically been silenced.

Roy echoes this point. She guides the discourse in a constructive direction by placing agency and responsibility in the hands of individuals to know their political, social and economic situation, and to communicate their views on issues that have traditionally been left to “experts.” In her essay “The Ladies Have Feelings So... Shall We Leave It to the Experts?,” Roy calls for an increased outspokenness about politics,

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<sup>152</sup> Harding 241.

development and international affairs on the part of ordinary citizens. She problematizes the notion of “experts.” Roy illustrates how, because of the advice of “experts,” development, trade and globalization have taken a dangerous track. She urges that there is a need

to de-professionalize the public debate on matters that vitally affect the lives of ordinary people. It’s time to snatch our futures back from the ‘experts.’ Time to ask, in ordinary language, the public question and to demand in ordinary language, the public answer.<sup>153</sup>

By learning from and affirming diverse forms of knowledge, alternative development activists such as Shiva fruitfully work against this trend. Thus, the issue of dominant forms of knowledge presents itself as a significant factor in development and a topic that must be tackled.

### **Cultural perceptions and development**

A critique of hierarchies of knowledge in development naturally flows into an examination of how cultural perceptions of poverty influence justice in development policies. Following the critiques of another alternative development activists, Shiva identifies how cultural perceptions of poverty impact development. Culturally imperialistic perceptions of what an acceptable standard of living is distort development: “The paradox and crisis of development arises from the mistaken identification of culturally perceived poverty with real material poverty, and the mistaken identification of the growth of commodity production as better satisfaction of basic needs.”<sup>154</sup> Shiva identifies a significant problem in development theory—the notion of development itself is dominated by Western standards.

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<sup>153</sup>Arundhati Roy, “The Ladies Have Feelings So... Shall We Leave it to the Experts?” *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (London: Penguin Books, 2002) 210.

<sup>154</sup> Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* 13.

Western cultural imperialism and misperceptions harm development projects, even when intentions are benign. Such a tragedy occurred with Debbie Rodriguez and her development work in Afghanistan. Rodriguez wrote the New York Times bestseller *Kabul Beauty Salon* about her work with women in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. The narrative, which gained enormous popularity in the United States, chronicles how Rodriguez, a hairdresser from Michigan fleeing from an abusive husband, travelled to Afghanistan to help rebuild the country. Recognizing that she lacked the skills of an experienced development practitioner, but still wanting to help, Rodriguez carved a niche for herself. She put her hairdressing skills to use by teaching a small group of local Muslim women hair styling, cutting, perming, coloring and waxing. Rodriguez wed a local man, already married with seven children, after a three-week whirlwind romance communicated through translators (neither spoke the other's language) and set up a small beauty school and salon, teaching women skills while also allowing them to earn money.

Dean Nelson of the UK Times described how the shop functioned as more than just a beauty salon, serving as a “zone where Afghan women, foreign diplomats and aid workers talked freely, and the newly trained salon girls felt able to lift the veil over the violent relationships, sexual abuse and domestic slavery endured by women throughout Afghanistan.”<sup>155</sup> He goes on to describe how the women “grew in confidence and began to believe they could become independent providers and buy a bigger stake in their own

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<sup>155</sup> Dean Nelson, “A\$1m bad hair day in Kabul,” *The Sunday Times*. 15 July 2007. 19 Apr. 2009: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article2075199.ece>.



lives.”<sup>156</sup> Rodriguez conveys the emotional changes in women as they shared their stories of patriarchal households, social pressure to submit to their husbands and sometimes even physical abuse. The book portrays a surprisingly successful project, where women were liberated from male oppression, gained economic agency and formed a supportive community. In fact, the story was so Hollywood-esque that Sony Pictures paid Rodriguez \$1 million in exchange for the rights to take her tale to the silver screen.

However, years later, the cultural backlash from the project has harmed the women. Many individuals from Afghanistan accuse the book and, subsequently, the women who shared their stories, of unjustly portraying all of Afghanistan and Islam as oppressive and patriarchal. Furthermore, the women received backlash from their community for participating in the salon in the first place, as such activity was not deemed appropriate by community standards. National Public Radio reporter Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson followed up on the story, reporting that, despite the dramatically optimistic picture portrayed in the book:

[B]ack in Afghanistan, the subjects of her book say Rodriguez and her newfound fame have put their lives in danger. They say they've seen none of the money or help to get them out of Afghanistan that Rodriguez promised them in exchange for having their stories appear in the book.<sup>157</sup>

Furthermore, the women working in the shop have received threats and are socially ostracized. Sarhaddi Nelson reports that

at least one of the girls from the school has made an escape plan. One, who is called "Topekai" in the book, says her husband, who read the book, is moving

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<sup>156</sup> Nelson.

<sup>157</sup> Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, “Subjects of 'Kabul Beauty School' Face New Risks” National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered* 1 July 2007, 19 Apr. 2009 <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10634299>>

their family to Pakistan. The others—whose husbands are unaware of the book—say they don't know what to do.<sup>158</sup>

Also, Rodriguez's husband now controls the shop, threatening the women with blackmail if they do not obey him and hoarding money from the salon.

Meanwhile, Rodriguez, who has made a significant amount of money off of both the book and the film, states that she will not return to Kabul, out of fear for personal safety. Rodriguez does not appear to be interested in maintaining a relationship with the school, stating that "I had to leave, but I can do more good for them here."<sup>159</sup> Nelson even reports that Rodriguez "fears she has inadvertently made their troubled lives worse."<sup>160</sup> Ironically, the shop, which was supposed to empower the women has in fact left them further disempowered because of the shop's debt and their community's backlash.

Although Rodriguez and the others involved in the project presumably perceived it as a means of female empowerment through economic agency, education and community building, they did not take into consideration the cultural context in which they were acting. Unintentionally, Rodriguez created out a tragically typical instance of Western cultural imperialism—executing a Western-style development project without considering its unintended consequences, and then backing out of the situation, leaving the stakeholders confused and without resources or support. Thus, perceptions, cultural context and the often-unintended ignorance of Westerners influence development.

The issue of cultural perception can be especially contentious with regards to indigenous people or people who live in rural areas or simply anyone who does not operate their life focused on increasing their material wellbeing. Shiva challenges how

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<sup>158</sup> Sarhaddi Nelson.

<sup>159</sup> Sarhaddi Nelson.

<sup>160</sup> Nelson.

cultural imperialism justifies the uprooting of indigenous people: “Those who would uproot indigenous people define life in a forest as ‘below the dignity line.’ Dignity is an experience and consequence of self-organization and sovereignty, of sufficiency and satisfaction.”<sup>161</sup> Western development “experts,” displaying Western arrogance and hierarchies of knowledge, make assumptions about proper standards of living, and then generate development policies based on their culturally imperialist assumptions. Ironically, Shiva’s definition of dignity, which emphasizes autonomy, self-sufficiency and localization of power, is the opposite of the consumerist culture that neoliberal development and corporate globalization advocate.

Generally speaking, Westerners equate wellbeing with material goods. This perception impairs genuine development because of its improper priorities. Increasing consumption fosters neither justice nor sustainability; in fact, it impairs both. So, why is consumption the dominant criterion for development? Corporate ads, coupled with mainstream media’s positive portrayal of material consumption and Westernization’s propagation of this portrayal throughout the world, lead to the conclusion that individuals and societies as wholes should be aiming for increased material goods, despite the reality that these goods were produced unjustly and unsustainably. Development has mistakenly bought into this paradigm.

## **Conclusion**

Shiva’s views on human justice and how development can be an instrument of social inequity reveal that current development trends fail to promote sustainability and social justice. Thus, alternative development activists fight multiple, converging

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<sup>161</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 45.

injustices—neocolonialism, corporations, international economic organizations, hierarchies of knowledge, and cultural imperialism. Examining issues of human rights and justice with regards to development and Shiva’s development theories brings to light a theme that is saturated throughout this thesis: how narrow-minded, culturally imperialistic priorities harm genuine development. These theories are often based in a capitalist conception of society.

Referring to the capitalist economics’ obsession with “productivity,” Shiva observes that

[p]roductivity is a measure of producing life and sustenance; that this kind of productivity has been rendered invisible does not reduce its centrality to survival—it merely reflects the domination of modern patriarchal economic categories which see only profits, not life.<sup>162</sup>

The problems seen in environmental and economic development policies reflect a deeper misconception about what the priorities of development should be. These misconceptions are the result of a cultural imperialism that privileges Western knowledge and Western standards of wellbeing. Ultimately, mainstream development strategies fail to foster political, social and economic justice because they work within and even perpetuate the unjust systems that spawned inequality and underdevelopment in the first place. The complications of this chapter beg for a working-through of these issues, so the conclusion will attempt to synthesize much of the analysis that has been presented to determine what just, sustainable development might look like.

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<sup>162</sup> Shiva, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development 5.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Generating themes and conclusions**

By exploring the sustainability and justice aspects of development, we have hopefully gained some insights into the macro-level trends and themes surrounding development. This purpose of this chapter is to, first, answer the core question of this thesis. Next, I analyze the arguments that critics have against Shiva and provide responses to these critiques. Then, I identify and discuss the prominent themes that arose from the analysis in this thesis. I also look at two particular people's movements, the Pani Panchayat movement and the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, as instances of effective grassroots action. Finally, I discuss converging themes that arose throughout this thesis. There are multiple unexpected conclusions that this project birthed, and, although they do not directly relate to the core question of this thesis, they are critical to discuss.

### **Vandana Shiva and just, sustainable development**

To wrap up, it is necessary to reflect on the original question of this thesis: "Do Vandana Shiva's development theories and practices promote just, sustainable development?" Exploring this question entailed formulating criteria for just, sustainable development, looking at Shiva's theories and practices surrounding justice and sustainability in development, and examining other development theorists' discussion of these topics. Now is an appropriate time to synthesize the information gleaned from this endeavor. First, I reiterate the key findings of the first chapter, which aimed to generate a framework to fit just sustainable development into.

Just, sustainable development is a multi-faceted concept and practice. This type of development must take into consideration multiple priorities and should reflect how these priorities relate to one another. Such priorities include environmentalism, human rights, community culture, post-colonialism and international economics. Development must acknowledge the foreign-imposed and/or colonial roots of a significant portion of development theory and devise genuinely postcolonial practices. Furthermore, development does not merely consist of increasing the GNP of a country or the quantity of material belongings that individuals own. It must address the established social, political and economic systems that have spawned the inequality, poverty and environmental destruction that development aims to resolve.

It is evident even from the first chapter describing Shiva's theories and practices that she is an advocate of alternative development. Rejecting capitalism and neo-liberalism, Shiva affirms local practices and looks to indigenous knowledge as a guidepost for achieving just, sustainable development. Starting from Shiva's work as a paradigm for alternative development, analyzing her work, and supporting it with the viewpoints and works of other alternative development supporters, it appears that her theories and practices support just, sustainable development. In fact, from Shiva's perspective, true development must focus on sustainability and justice. According to her, policies, theories and practices that are not founded in sustainability and justice are not truly development.

Shiva interrogates and reworks unjust, unsustainable systems while promoting development. She achieves this both by challenging practices that do not foster just, sustainable development and by affirming and generating methods to create just,

sustainable development. For example, she challenges notions of capitalism and privatization through her work fighting intellectual property rights for corporations. Employing her skills as an academic, Shiva constantly produces books, papers and editorials expressing the importance of her work. This research brings the issues surrounding globalization and development to the attention of policy-makers, academics and citizens throughout the world. She also challenges corporatist development by facilitating farmers' rights to save their seeds through Navdanya and by promoting local, organic food via the Slow Food Movement. Thus, Shiva challenges the mainstream development paradigm on both a local and a universal scale. This multi-tiered approach is a key way in which Shiva lives out the principle of just, sustainable development—she looks to and affirms the local, while restructuring the macro-level systems.

### **Criticisms of Shiva**

Although Shiva appears to have valuably contributed to development theory, she is not without her critics. For example, Lal criticizes Shiva and the alternative development movement, asserting that “its primary target is to prevent the economic development which alone offers the world’s poor any chance of escaping their age old poverty.”<sup>163</sup> Lal critiques how Shiva prioritizes issues such as environmentalism and the fact that Shiva undermines the neoliberal development paradigm. This argument appears to be either a misunderstanding of Shiva’s goals, or an unsolvable difference between the development priorities that Lal and Shiva espouse. Shiva does not prevent development; she does, however, protest the corporations and neocolonialism that have birthed maldevelopment. It seems that Lal’s criticism is rooted in a definition of development

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<sup>163</sup> Lal.

distinct from Shiva's. Shiva prioritizes justice and sustainability in development. Lal equates the rejection of neoliberal development with the rejection of development as a whole.

Other notable critics of Shiva include the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Liberty Institute of New Delhi, who awarded her the mocking "Bullshit Award for Sustaining Poverty" in 2002. Barun Shankar Mitra of the Liberty Institute explains why they disagree with Shiva's stance:

Millions of people rely on backbreaking labor and low-intensity subsistence farming, not out of choice but out of necessity, yet Ms. Shiva claims that modern agricultural technologies are too dangerous for the poor. But given the choice, poor rural farmers seize the opportunity to use modern technologies to improve their agricultural productivity. Ultimately, it is farmers who should make the choice over what technologies they use, not eco-imperialists such as Shiva. Farmers are the most important stakeholders in this debate and their voice must not be ignored. Farmers are choosing modern agricultural technologies out of their own free will—and for good reasons. And by so doing they are benefiting the environment. Low intensity farming not only hurts farmers, but also endangers environmental quality. Poverty and environmental degradation go hand in hand—and modern technologies alleviate poverty and enable environmental protection. This means that we should empower poor people to use these technologies, to increase their consumption of resources, which will benefit them as well the environment.<sup>164</sup>

Mitra and the Liberty Institute contend that, by focusing on forms of development other than neoliberal, technology-based development, Shiva is inhibiting the voices of farmers and preventing them from improving their standard of living. Mitra and the Liberty Institute's interpretation of Shiva's work is misleading, because Shiva centers her work on affirming the voices and experiences of rural farmers. The work of Navdanya and the other organizations that Shiva supports directly engages farmers with the issues that they

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<sup>164</sup> Liberty Institute, "'Bullshit Award for Sustaining Poverty' Awarded Today to Vandana Shiva." 28 Aug. 2002, 20 Oct. 2008  
[http://www.libertyindia.org/events/bullshit\\_award\\_28august2002.htm](http://www.libertyindia.org/events/bullshit_award_28august2002.htm).



are facing because of development policy and exhorts them to utilize their knowledge to formulate solutions. Furthermore, Mitra's argument that the increased consumption of natural resources produces benefits for farmers and the environment is not substantial; clearly, increased consumption of the earth's limited resources is not advantageous for either in the long run. It seems that Mitra and the Liberty Institute either are not familiar with Shiva's work, or that they outright deny the value of it.

Because Lal and the Liberty Institute have similar claims against Shiva's work, I will address them together. It appears that Lal and the Liberty Institute hold neoliberal belief systems with regards to development. Shiva, Lal and Mitra agree on many important points—that there is a correlation between environmental harm and poverty, that farmers' voices should be prioritized. So, it appears that these two camps disagree with the means by which to achieve these goals. The practices that Lal and Mitra contest are Shiva's dislike for Green Revolution technology that may increase short-term agricultural output, but harms the environment in the long run. Additionally, they contest her interrogation of free trade, neoliberal economic practices that increase the wealth of corporations, while exploiting the human and natural resources of developing countries. Lal and the Liberty Institute are of the mindset that such exploitation is a boon to developing countries' economies. However, these criticisms do not change the fact that Shiva is more committed to just, sustainable development.

Interestingly, some of Shiva's opponents are not neoliberals, but fellow alternative development activists. In her open letter to Arundhati Roy, American-Indian sociologist and human rights activist Gail Omvedt attacks some of Roy's key views on the Narmada Dam Project. Although this letter to addressed to Roy, it is highly relevant

to a discussion of Shiva and her policies, because Shiva adopts nearly identical views to Roy's, especially with regards to dams. In fact, many of Roy's outlooks originate with and are informed by Shiva. Furthermore, multiple activists and development practitioners have criticized Shiva employing arguments identical to those that Omvedt uses to critique Roy. Thus, although the letter is addressed to Roy, it is useful for the purposes of analyzing critiques of Shiva's development theories and practices.

First, Omvedt criticizes how many of the local organizers around the anti-Narmada Dam movement felt that leaders such as Roy and Medha Prakar, another prominent activist, took the credit for the movement and that non-indigenous leaders were given greater recognition. She explains how most of the leaders are not Adivasi, the community who live in that area, but instead outsider urban elites. She points out that there has been a pattern of neglecting to recognize the history of struggles and the native/indigenous leadership. This is a legitimate claim, especially considering that alternative development leaders such as Roy, Shiva, Mander and Korten all come from highly educated backgrounds and, of these activists, only Shiva completes work in her hometown.

Omvedt also addresses the crux of Roy's (and Shiva's) arguments—that these dams are useless and that they steal land and livelihoods from people who are not going to benefit from them. Omvedt asserts that these dams are necessary because they provide water for poor people who are make their living off of agriculture. Omvedt interrogates the notion that India and other developing countries should be preserving traditional practices, explaining that these traditional practices are what keep them from reaching higher standards of living:

Development to so many people in India means getting out of traditional traps of caste hierarchy and of being held in a birth-determined play. It is not simply economic progress, but the capacity to participate in a society in which knowledge, grain and songs will be available in full measure to everyone. When you so romantically imply that such development is not possible, when you give all publicity and support to anti-development organisations, are you not yourself helping to close such doors?<sup>165</sup>

Omvedt accuses Roy of being an intellectual urbanite who essentializes the lives of “traditional,” “rural” people.

Furthermore, it is important to reflect on Omvedt’s arguments concerning the historical tendency to value voices of well-educated, elite individuals. As addressed throughout this thesis, hierarchies of knowledge embody a core issue with development. Omvedt adds an interesting voice to this discourse because, she favors alternative development, but critiques activists like Shiva and Roy, even though they are all working within the same movement. Omvedt’s letter unearths a legitimate critique of the Narmada Dam movement and anti-globalization struggles in general: Many of them are supported or even directed by people who are not the primary stakeholders in development policy. The voices of wealthy North American and European liberals are valued, but there is little space for people from developing countries to participate in and create their own development processes.

However, Omvedt’s argument must be challenged because Shiva, Roy and other alternative development advocates do not commit the same harm that those who value elite, “expert” knowledge over local, indigenous knowledge commit. Because of her education and background, Shiva has more access to elite media. Shiva does not seem to

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<sup>165</sup> Gail Omvedt, “An Open Letter to Arundhati Roy” Friends of River Narmada <http://www.narmada.org/debates/gail/gail.open.letter.html>.

be overshadowing local leaders. Rather, through her research, books, interviews, speeches and appearances, Shiva utilizes her position of power to serve as a liaison between communities in developing countries and individuals who might not otherwise interact with or even acknowledge these communities. Her commitment is evidenced by how she prioritizes indigenous and local knowledge in her work. Shiva, in fact, values the knowledge and participation of local communities, and strives to allow these voices to be heard by a wider audience. As will be discussed later on, a crucial component of the alternative development movement is informing consumers how their decisions affect the economic, social and political status of communities throughout the world. So, the fact that Shiva speaks out about issues that impact individuals besides herself is not an indication that she is drowning out their voices; in fact, she aims to draw attention to their value and wisdom.

As for Omvedt's point that the alternative development movement romanticizes poverty and rural living, Shiva's balanced approach counters this criticism. Shiva does affirm the capabilities and knowledge of individuals who live in rural areas, but she does not romanticize their lives. Shiva never exaggerates the benefits of rural lifestyles, and acknowledges that it is important to continually be improving people's wellbeing. Thus, although the criticisms of Shiva are important components for the alternative development movement to bear in mind, they do not dismantle or invalidate her work.

### **Introduction of development sub-topics**

In addition to the validity of Shiva's theories and practices as means of achieving just, sustainable development, an important conclusion of this thesis is that there are multiple dimensions of development. Sub-topics arose as significant points of discussion

in this thesis exercise. These issues include: intersectionality and diversity in development, capitalism and neoliberalism, globalization, North-South relations, media in development, peoples' movements for alternative development, democracy and the role of cultural consciousness in development. Now, I expand on these subjects.

### **Intersectionality and diversity**

A crucial aspect of this thesis is to recognize and synthesize the multiplicity of issues that arose in exploring development. An important point to draw from Shiva's work is to note both the breadth and depth of the issues that she takes on. This is significant because it brings to light how deeply entrenched development theory is in our lives and the lives of communities throughout the world. Furthermore, Shiva's work illustrates how interconnected issues of poverty, environmentalism, globalization and colonialism are. Shiva aptly articulates this point: "We are increasingly realizing there is a convergence between the objectives of conserving biodiversity, reducing climate-change impact, and alleviating poverty."<sup>166</sup> Thus, it is important to explore and validate the connections between the environment and poverty.

Historically, the environmental movement only focused on humans' impact on the nature. However, it neglected the influence of the environment and quality of surroundings on people. Recently, this correlation between environmental concerns and human concerns has been brought to light, as environmental activists, and people who are poor and their allies, have realized that poverty and the environment are deeply connected issues. Environmentalists are recognizing that environmental degradation is found in poverty-stricken areas and disproportionately harms poor people, people of color and

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<sup>166</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 110.

communities in developing countries. At the same time, people who are working towards improvement in standard of living for people who need it are emphasizing how one's natural surroundings dramatically affect quality of life.

The same systems that promote maldevelopment—capitalism, neocolonialism and corporatism—play a key role in environmental justice. Shiva articulates how “from an environmental justice perspective, it is perverse to burden the poor twice—first with the externalized costs and climate disasters caused by the pollution of others and then with the burden of remediating the pollution of the rich and powerful.”<sup>167</sup> The significance of the intersectionality and diversity of the issues that Shiva addresses is a crucial point for development. Development theory must be inclusive, in the sense that it must take into consideration a wealth of factors—resource conservation, human rights, land stewardship, local governance, et cetera. The violence of narrow-minded development practices is exemplified by the capital-focused development that has dominated the international order. The intersectionality and diversity that Shiva highlight remind us that development is an inclusive, holistic process, and multiple issues and interests must be taken into consideration.

### **Capitalism and neoliberalism**

As mentioned throughout this thesis, mainstream development's focus on GNP and capital growth birthed maldevelopment. Two clearly identifiable sources of these misplaced priorities are capitalism and neoliberalism. Shiva aptly articulates a primary reason why this is the case: “Markets fail to capture diverse values, and they fail to reflect

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<sup>167</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 18.

the destruction of ecological value.”<sup>168</sup> Increasingly, people from both rich and poor countries are noticing the increasing environmental damage, degradation of human rights and increase in income inequalities that are current trends. Cavanagh and Mander corroborate this notion: “After nearly a decade, the poor countries of the world had clearly grasped that the current global economic system was never designed to be for them, despite public relations rhetoric to the contrary from rich countries.”<sup>169</sup> The ills of capitalism are constantly being unraveled.

Because of capitalism’s focus on market success, externalities such as the environment and human rights are ignored. Gary Gardner and Thomas Purgh of the World Watch Institute agree with Shiva’s point, observing that “[t]hree issues—climate change, ecosystem degradation, and wealth inequality—illustrate the self-subversion of economies today.”<sup>170</sup> Capitalism’s priority is, obviously, capital. However, development’s priority is not capital. As delineated in the first chapter and expounded upon throughout this thesis, development encompasses myriad aspects of human wellbeing, only a fraction of which is capital.

Korten, drawing upon his vast experiences in the development industry, also maintains that the ills of development stem from macro-level systems:

The problem is not business or the market per se but a badly corrupted global economic system that is gyrating far beyond human control. The dynamics of this system have become so powerful and perverse that it is becoming increasingly difficult for corporate managers to manage in the public interest, no matter how strong their moral values and commitment.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 27-28.

<sup>169</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 2.

<sup>170</sup> Gary Gardner and Thomas Purgh, “Seeding the Sustainable Economy” 2008 State of the World: Solutions for a Sustainable Economy. ed. World Watch Institute (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008) 6.

<sup>171</sup> Korten 23.

Korten's view is distinguished from Shiva's in that it abdicates corporate leaders from their responsibility in this system. Nonetheless, Korten affirms the notion that the international economic system is fundamentally flawed.

In addition to prioritizing values that are opposed to development's aims, a problem with the capitalist economic system is that people equate capitalism with democracy, when the former does not inevitably foster the latter. George Soros, international financier and founder of the Open Society, provides some important insights into the relationship between capitalism and democracy:

We can speak about the triumph of capitalism in the world, but we cannot yet speak about the triumph of democracy...Capitalism and democracy do not necessarily go hand in hand...Perhaps the greatest threat to freedom and democracy in the world today comes from the formation of unholy alliances between governments and business.<sup>172</sup>

When describing what he labels an "open society," what Soros considers to be the ideal society, Soros notes that "the promotion of market principles has gone too far and become too one-sided. Market fundamentalists believe that the common interest is best served by the untrammelled pursuit of self-interest. This belief is false, yet it has become very influential."<sup>173</sup> Soros provides a worthwhile perspective on this issue because of his experience and highly respected position in the finance world. If someone who has benefited greatly from and even promoted international markets and finance identifies fundamental problems with the system, clearly, capitalism and neoliberalism must be rethought.

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<sup>172</sup> George Soros, Open society: reforming global capitalism (New York: Public Affairs, 2000) xi.

<sup>173</sup> Soros 117.



Thus, in order to achieve just, sustainable development, neoliberal market structures, value systems and the development policies that accompany them must be reconceptualized. It is impractical to say that we can obliterate the capitalist system and rebuild from nothing. A more reasonable conclusion, however, is that we need to begin dismantling the components of capitalism that impede genuine development from flourishing.

### **Globalization**

It is fitting to follow a discussion of capitalism and the market-based economy with a conversation on globalization. As alluded to in first chapter, globalization significantly factors into development. To further explain, free trade and neoliberalism serve as cornerstones of globalization. At the same time, these processes contribute to the rise of corporations and human- and environment-harming industries such as industrial agriculture. Thus, globalization has been identified as a source of maldevelopment. Shiva explains: “Globalization is, in effect, the globalization of energy-intensive, resource-wasteful, fossil fuel-driven industrialization of our production and consumption patterns.”<sup>174</sup> Much of globalization has spread environmentally harmful practices and inhumane, market-centered values. The positive aspects of globalization (increased technology, expanding opportunities, greater knowledge exchange) only benefit an elite minority of the world.

The over-arching theme of Shiva and other anti-globalization activists is that we need to re-conceptualize globalization’s relationship to development. The notions of free trade and liberalization, pillars of globalization, have not proven to be effective:

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<sup>174</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 16.

Free trade is not leading to freedom. It is leading to slavery. Diverse life forms are being enslaved through patents on life; farmers are being enslaved into high-tech slavery; and countries are being enslaved into debt and dependence and destruction of their domestic economies.<sup>175</sup>

Clearly, problems of poverty, poor standard of living, low education and insufficient health care must be solved. Neoliberals often cite globalization as the solution to these problems. However, globalization is merely acting as the new colonialism, mimicking the same patterns of exploitation and cultural and economic imperialism. As Cavanagh and Mander explain: “[a]dvocates of globalization like to argue that the beneficiaries of all this growth will be the poor because the increased wealth will ‘trickle down’ to them...all evidence shows that the opposite is true. The benefits of hypergrowth mainly trickle *up*.”<sup>176</sup> In the same vein that capitalism needs to be dismantled, globalization needs to be reconceptualized and reworked.

### **North-South relations**

A rhetorical benefit of globalization is increased understanding and mutually beneficial relationships between the global North and South. However, antagonism between these two parts of the world has only seemed to increase with the spread of globalization. With the North denouncing the South for jobs lost overseas and immigration, and the South blaming the North for environmental damage caused by consumerism and increased militarism, there needs to be a dramatic change in the ways that these two parts of the world address one another. Thus, another component of

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<sup>175</sup> Vandana Shiva, “The Historic Significance of Seattle” *Synthesis/Regeneration* 22 Spring 2000, 15 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.greens.org/s-r/22/22-18.html>>.

<sup>176</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 35.

development is repairing the tattered relationship between what is largely a developed North and an underdeveloped South.

Before delving into this point, it is important to note that distinctions between North and South, between “developed” and “developing” are constantly transcended. Although there certainly are aggregate differences between the two groups, it is inappropriate to conceptualize them as dichotomous, because they share significant relationships and because they engage in similar social, political and economic patterns. First of all, there are elites in every country, just as there are communities experiencing poverty throughout the world, in rich countries and poor area alike. Dodds reminds us: “Poverty and hunger continue to affect vast areas of the world including ethnic minorities, the disabled and the elderly in the North.”<sup>177</sup> This thesis does not advocate further entrenching the distinction between the North and the South. However, for practical purposes, it is appropriate to discuss them as different regions, recognizing that this is a generalization and only applies on the aggregate level.

There are notable differences and conflicts between the overall conditions and interests of the global North and South. Bridging these chasms is a crucial component of incorporating justice and sustainability into development. A primary means of achieving this includes reforming the economic and political institutions that dominate the geopolitical arena. As the ills of the WTO have been a focus of this thesis, I expand on this topic and discuss suggestions for improvement.

In his article “New Approaches to Trade Governance,” Mark Halle of the World Watch Institute outlines multiple suggestions to mend the WTO’s reputation and to more

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<sup>177</sup> Dodds 65.

equitably and democratically rework international trade. Halle urges the WTO to focus on “eliminating trade distortions that benefit rich countries rather than simply protecting their vulnerable economic sectors from foreign competition.”<sup>178</sup> The WTO must revoke trade agreements that privilege Western interests and ensure that the negotiations processes that it engages in are inclusive and truly democratic.

In addition to the practicality of reworking and, in some instances, revoking, unjust trade policies, the WTO needs to consider its goals. The WTO’s stated aims are noble and include fostering development in underdeveloped nations. However, the goal has not been met; in fact, the WTO has taken steps that counteract this goal. Halle expresses this point aptly: “In short, the world’s trading system needs to go back to the goal set out in the Preamble of the WTO Agreements—the optimal use of the world’s resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development. Only this time it needs to be taken seriously.”<sup>179</sup> International trade is not inherently harmful, and the WTO does have laudable aims. Unfortunately, these aims have been sidelined by political and economic greed. It is time to re-center the work of the WTO.

Finally, Halle offers some thoughts about the reconstruction process that the WTO must undertake. The WTO must examine itself in the context of the greater international economic order and position itself in a way that promotes international economic democracy. Halle identifies considerations for the WTO to keep in mind when thinking about its purpose:

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<sup>178</sup> Mark Halle, “New Approaches to Trade Governance” 2008 State of the World: Solutions for a Sustainable Economy ed. World Watch Institute (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008) 208.

<sup>179</sup> Halle 208.

Can they contribute to a system designed for citizens, not consumers? Can they help design a system that can mediate effectively among unequal powers or in a situation of enormous complexity and diversity? Can they help craft a system dedicated to the joint goals of promoting political stability and advancing justice?<sup>180</sup>

The WTO needs to be able to answer these questions and to examine the ways in which it can contribute to meaningful change. Thus, an important component of improving North-South relations is reconstructing the international economic institutions that influence trade and political relations.

Furthermore, extra-institutional work must take place. The vestiges of colonialism that pervade international economics and politics must be erased in order for relations to be mended, but there is also significant progress that needs to occur in the form of cross-cultural understanding and affirmation. As mentioned throughout the thesis, many maldevelopment policies are rooted in culturally ignorant or even imperialist theories about the purpose of development. This imperialism must be dismantled, and policymakers, as well as citizens-at-large, must rebuild from a foundation of humility and cross-cultural understanding.

Like reforming development, repairing and reconstructing North/South relations necessitates multidimensional change. Dodds contributes his ideas: “North-South cleavages can only be tackled by the progressive strengthening of a global civil society bolstered by an agenda of demilitarization...cultural security, sustainable development, environmental protection...human rights...and global governance.”<sup>181</sup> There are systemic issues to tackle, as well as interpersonal, intercultural reform to be forged.

### **People’s movements**

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<sup>180</sup> Halle 207.

<sup>181</sup> Dodds 55.

Much of this thesis concentrates on the need for reform in the political, economic and social processes of development and international markets as a whole. However, it would be remiss to neglect the empowering people's movements and alternative development successes that occur everyday. Shiva acknowledges that

[f]ar away from the glare of global media, ordinary people are making history, not by organizing arms to fight a global empire, but by self-organizing their lives—their resources, their cultures, their economies—to defeat the empire by turning their backs to it, rejecting its tools and its logic, refusing its chains and its dictatorship.<sup>182</sup>

The theoretical and practical aspects of Shiva's notion of Earth Democracy bring to the light the importance of resistance and citizen action.

Although this task appears daunting, Shiva reminds us:

The convergence of these...crises provides us with the convergence of three opportunities—to create living economies, living democracies, and living cultures. Earth Democracy grows in the fertile soil shaped by the earth, the human imagination and human action.<sup>183</sup>

Just as earthworms convert refuse into fertile soil, grassroots citizen action can transform the challenges of a corporatist, neocolonial international order into homegrown, organic achievements. There is a cornucopia of illustrations of such action. I describe two instances: the Pani Panchayat movement in India and the mass protests at the 1999 World Trade Organization Millennial Conference in Seattle. Though they only are only a fraction of the successful alternative development movements, they embody important elements that are present in many alternative development movements. Furthermore, they represent two different, but equally crucial components of alternative development—local change and systemic change.

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<sup>182</sup> Shiva, Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace 182.

<sup>183</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 7.

People who aim to promote just, sustainable development can look to the examples of successful anti-globalization movements that sprouted up from grassroots action. These movements have been prominent and widespread with regards to water issue. Shiva explains that “[w]hile water privatization is the preferred policy by governments and global financial institutions, masses of people across India and around the world are mobilizing to conserve water and regain community control over their resources.”<sup>184</sup> Shiva provides the example of the Pani Panchayat movement, spearheaded in the state of Maharashtra, India in reaction to the industrial sugarcane cultivation that began in 1972 when the state was hit by a severe drought. This drought was linked to the sugarcane industry, which was appropriating the water from the area.

Reacting against the sugarcane corporations, local citizens demanded community control over the water systems. Shiva recalls how

workers launched a movement called the Mukti Sangarsh, and mobilized more than 500 peasants to grow fodder for four months of the year on 2,000 acres of land and provide it free to the entire taluk, an administrative subdivision, if the government supplied the water.<sup>185</sup>

This community continued their activism as

1,000 peasants participated in a march and pressed their demands. They also organized a conference on drought eradication. . . the chairman of the Maharashtra State Drought Relief and Eradication Committee argued that if sugarcane cultivation were abandoned, 250,000 hectares of land could be irrigated, instead of the proposed 90,000 hectares.<sup>186</sup>

Community members identified the problems that the sugarcane industry was causing in their water supply and took action steps to ensure community control over this water.

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<sup>184</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 124.

<sup>185</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 125.

<sup>186</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 125.

Their efforts proved fruitful, both in terms of achieving their short-term goal and with regard to building a sustainable community:

After much resistance, the peasants gathered at Balawadi in 1989 to inaugurate the Baliraja Memorial Dam—a people’s dam built with people’s resources to meet people’s needs. Popular participation prevented corruption, waste, and delay. The next step was to ensure the equitable distribution of water through social and collective control. Toward that end, the peasants agreed to stop sugarcane cultivation and instead plant mixed tree species on 30 percent of the land. They also opted to harvest staple grains using protective irrigation.<sup>187</sup>

Shiva goes on to explain how, years later, signs of community improvement were evident—“Local residents had built water harvesting systems made up of small dams and they are now growing crops worth \$146,000 to \$188,000 a year. Illicit liquor sales have also tapered off.”<sup>188</sup> This community asserted their right to control the water systems, while also creating an innovative, localized solution.

To this day, a local, elected council regulates the water systems. These movements have spread throughout India, with panchayats (local, elected councils) administering water regulation. Multiple other water rights movements have sprung up throughout India, such as the Swadhyaya and Tarun Bharat Sangh movements in Gujarat. These movements demonstrate how

[m]an-made water scarcity and ubiquitous water conflicts can be minimized with the recognition of water as a common resource. Water conservation movements are also showing that the real solution to the water crisis lies in people’s energy, labor, time, care and solidarity.<sup>189</sup>

Water rights movements in India are one of multiple examples of how localized, communal work can generate authentic resolutions to problems.

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<sup>187</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 126.

<sup>188</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 126.

<sup>189</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 127.



In addition to local movements against maldevelopment policies, there have been multiple citizen movements in both developed and developing countries that challenge the foundations of capitalism, neocolonialism and unjust trade, representing how action is demanded on both the local and the systemic level. As mentioned throughout this thesis, the WTO has been a source of maldevelopment, as well as a symbol of the ills of globalization, corporatization, capitalism, neocolonialism and neoliberalism. This reality has been recognized by a diversity of individuals and organizations. These groups coalesced to protest the 1999 World Trade Organization Millennial Conference in Seattle.

Practically speaking, what did these protests consist of? Anup Shah provides an overview of the event:

Estimates ranged from 50,000 to 100,000 protestors. Protesters came from all over the world, not just the developed countries. They ranged from human rights groups, students, environmental groups, religious leaders, labor rights activists, etc, wanting fairer trade with less exploitation.<sup>190</sup>

The overwhelming majority of protestors were non-violent, although, as Jeffery St. Clair, an author and participant in the demonstrations, recalls, a small segment of protestors took more extreme means, including damaging “the boutiques of Sweatshop Row: Nordstrom’s, Adidas, the Gap, Bank of America, Niketown, Old Navy, Banana Republic and Starbucks.”<sup>191</sup> Although the media focuses on those renegade few who took destructive action, the vast majority of protestors were non-violent in their means. These protests shut down the WTO talks, a monumental achievement.

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<sup>190</sup> Anup Shah, “WTO Protests in Seattle, 1999” 18 Feb. 2001, 5 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.globalissues.org/article/46/wto-protests-in-seattle-1999>>.

<sup>191</sup> Jeffrey St. Clair Five days that shook the world: Seattle and beyond (London; New York: Verso, 2000) 47.

The “Battle at Seattle,” as the event is often referred to, was successful in its immediate goal of halting the WTO deliberations. But its impact extended far behind the talks. Shiva explains how these protests

demonstrated that globalization is not an inevitable phenomenon which must be accepted at all costs but a political project which can be responded to politically. 50,000 citizens from all walks of life and all parts of the world were responding politically when they protested peacefully on the streets of Seattle for four days to ensure that there would be no new round of trade negotiations for accelerating and expanding the process of globalization.<sup>192</sup>

Shiva also describes how much of the power of the protests resided in its symbolism:

“Seattle had been chosen by the US to host the Third Ministerial conference because it is the home of Boeing and Microsoft, and symbolizes the corporate power which WTO rules are designed to protect and expand.”<sup>193</sup> The demonstrations against the WTO were not merely actions of disapproval towards the organization; they represented the dissatisfaction and frustration with an international economic and political order that privileges First World corporatization over human rights, environmental justice and community wellbeing.

Furthermore, the Battle at Seattle initiated a process of deliberations over international economic policy where true democracy demands to be valued:

A new threshold was crossed in Seattle—a watershed towards the creation of a global citizen-based and citizen-driven democratic order. The future of the World Trade Organization will be shaped far more by what happened on the streets of Seattle and in the non-governmental (NGO) organization events than by what happened in the Washington State Convention Center.<sup>194</sup>

These protests were significant because they called attention to the fact that the current international and economic world order are sources of injustice for the majority of the

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<sup>192</sup> Shiva, “The Historic Significance of Seattle.”

<sup>193</sup> Shiva, “The Historic Significance of Seattle.”

<sup>194</sup> Shiva, “The Historic Significance of Seattle.”

world's citizens. The impact of these protests went beyond shutting down the talks, because they lead to more coalition-building and further action on the part of the protestors, as well as consideration of change on the part of international economic organizations.

A fitting point to conclude this section on is the notion that it is important that there are people who benefit from the structural power that globalization perpetuates, but want to change these systems because they value justice over materialism. The political mantra is that people “vote with their feet.” Instead of voting with our feet, we vote with our money. Individual consumers choose to either reinforce or to subvert the unjust, polluting economic incentives that corporations create. This strengthening or subversion takes place in the form of buying and increasing the demand for certain products.

The important thing for rich and/or Western consumers to remember is that, through our consumer choices, we are not simply purchasing a product. We are literally and symbolically buying into a lifestyle and an ideology. Korten exhorts people: “It is within our means...to reclaim the power that we have yielded to the institutions of money and re-create societies that nurture cultural and biological diversity.”<sup>195</sup> The choices that we make about where to shop and what we eat make a small difference as individuals. But, as an aggregate, consumer demand coupled with or, in some instances, fuelled by, corporate greed, is the force behind globalization, capitalism and the exploitation of developing countries. This reality implicates Western/Northern consumers in maldevelopment. However, it is hopeful, because it provides ordinary citizens with a degree of agency. The pervasive forces of globalization, capitalism, neocolonialism and

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<sup>195</sup> Korten 23.

Western imperialism can seem overwhelming at times. However, our roles as consumers and agents of local change contribute to either just, sustainable development or a system that engenders maldevelopment.

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the Pani Panchayat movement and the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle represent a tiny fraction of the efforts being made to promote just, sustainable development. However, they illustrate the power of local efforts to establish community control over common resources, as well as the influence of citizen movements for systemic change. These examples are signs of hope in a number of ways. First of all, they indicate that there are many individuals committed to a just and sustainable international political and economic world order. Furthermore, they prove that action yields results. Certainly, achieving just, sustainable development is a work in progress, but these examples illustrate that progress is not only possible, but taking place.

### **Converging themes**

An important component of this thesis is the unanticipated themes and realizations that it brought to light. Because development is such a broad topic, multiple topics were bound to inadvertently come to the surface. I overview these themes and articulate how they are connected to development and, specifically, alternative development.

#### *Media*

As previously mentioned, the glorification of materialism that pervades mainstream media distorts the notion of development at its foundational level. The politics of representation play an additional role in how mainstream media frame development issues. Although Shiva never directly implicates the media in her work or

writings, it became clear throughout the research process that media and perceptions of development issues significantly alter how development is carried out. A prime example is how mass media misrepresents alternative development movements. Cavanagh and Mander explain: “Rarely have mainstream media attempted seriously to inform the public on the issues behind the protests, usually preferring to characterize demonstrators as ‘ignorant protectionists’ who offer no alternatives and do not merit serious attention.”<sup>196</sup> Mainstream media belittles alternative development activists and economic justice advocates.

This disparagement is presented to the general public, who then gather an incomplete impression of the key issues. Cavanagh and Mander provide a concrete illustration to substantiate their claim, explaining how the manner in which the media describes controversies surrounding immigration neglects to bring up the foundational elements that impact migration:

The mainstream media does report on the anti-immigrant backlash...but it neglects to mention the role of international trade agreements in making life at home impossible for those who migrate...In India, Africa, and Latin America, megadevelopment schemes have displaced millions of indigenous people and small farmers to make way for gigantic dams and other development projects. The result is that more people join the landless, jobless urban masses.<sup>197</sup>

By failing to mention the systemic roots of transnational migration, the media politicizes development issues in a biased way.

Such incomplete representation does not just occur with migration issues. As Cavanagh and Mander note, environmental problems, public health concerns such as disease outbreaks, financial crises, and other major world events are discussed in a

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<sup>196</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 19.

<sup>197</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 54.

manner that conceals their root causes. Furthermore, the media presents the information in a way that hinders readers from making conclusions themselves. A lack of proper information inhibits readers from formulating independent thought, especially when news corporations exhibit themselves as presenting the entire story. Cavanagh and Mander expound on why this is a problem:

This is a disservice to an insecure public that is trying to figure out what is going on. People are not being helped to understand that dozens of major issues—overcrowded cities, unusual weather patterns, the growth of global inequality, the spread of new diseases, the lowering of wages as profits and CEO salaries soar, the elimination of social services, the destruction of the environment—are all part of the same global process.<sup>198</sup>

This problem speaks to the demand for more independent news sources, and the need to dismantle the monopoly that a fractional number of corporations have over the majority of information sources. The Media Reform Information Center cites Ben Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly* in observing that in 2000 only six corporations controlled about 90% of mass media, compared with about 50 corporations in 1983.<sup>199</sup>

In addition to pointing out the media's responsibility to accurately and holistically convey the news and focus their efforts on working on news in the public interest, it is worthwhile to think about how public reaction to economic and development policies would be altered if these issues were presented in a more accurate, holistic manner. We should also consider how public demand for information influences what stories are covered and how information is presented. Audiences need to become more active and hold news corporations accountable to their genuine needs. The media could in fact have

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<sup>198</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 54.

<sup>199</sup> Media Reform Center: Links and Resources on Media Reform 10 Apr. 2009.  
<<http://www.corporations.org/media/>>

a transformative impact on development if audiences generated the incentives for news corporations to do so.

### *Democracy*

Clearly, peoples' movements and action must serve as the foundation for just, sustainable development. The central role of people must be fully integrated by achieving true democracy. A meaningful component of this thesis exercise has been exploring the diversity of ways to follow Shiva's lead in creating alternative economic and political schemes that foster genuine democracy. Cavanagh and Mander supplement Shiva's work with a diversity of suggestions for how to ingrain just, sustainable development into the current economic and political system. A prime issue that Shiva focused on in her work and one that Cavanagh and Mander fully affirm is the notion of localization as the most genuine form of democracy. They explain:

As vital as fair elections are to democracy, we want to focus more attention on the dynamic processes initiated by civil society organizations around the world to instill new energy and meaning into democratic processes. In some countries, primarily in the Southern Hemisphere, these movements focus on winning community control over natural resources...accountability is central to living democracy. When decisions are made by those who will bear the consequences—such as when a community democratically decides how to manage forests immediately around its homes on the watershed it depends upon for flood control and water—they are likely to give a high priority to the sustained long-term health of those forests because their own well-being and that of their children is at stake.<sup>200</sup>

Localizing control is a natural means of achieving true democracy.

Cavanagh and Mander expand to identify specific steps that promote localized democracy:

The principle of new democracy means creating governance systems that give a vote to those who will bear the costs when decisions are being made. It also

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<sup>200</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 179.

means limiting the rights and powers of absentee owners and ensuring that those who hold decision-making power are liable for the harms their acts bring to others.<sup>201</sup>

One way that they suggest to achieve this is establishing governance founded on the principle of subsidiarity:

Subsidiarity respects the notion that sovereignty resides in people. In other words, legitimate authority flows upward from the populace through the expression of their democratic will. Thus, the authority of more distant levels of administration is *subsidiary*, or sub ordinate, to the authority of more local levels, which allow a greater opportunity for direct citizen engagement.<sup>202</sup>

Achieving true democracy entails more than voting for elections. It demands equal participation for all individuals to determine the economic, social and political processes that impact their lives. Furthermore, the needs of nonhuman species must be considered. This point returns back to Shiva's notion of Earth Democracy, outlined in the introduction. The earth, the environment must have a voice in this democracy, in order for it to be genuine.

#### *Localization and renewal of the commons*

Branching off of the section on democracy, a recurring theme in alternative development work is how local control and promotion of the commons act as long-term solutions to maldevelopment. An important element is fostering true democracy through more local control. In addition, promoting localization and the commons in all arenas fosters democracy in its truest form. Some of Shiva's suggestions relate to food. With regards to food, she recommends: "We should be reducing food miles by eating biodiverse, local, and fresh foods, rather than increasing carbon pollution through the spread of corporate industrial farming, nonlocal food supplies and processed and

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<sup>201</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 80.

<sup>202</sup> Cavanagh and Mander 84.



packaged foods.”<sup>203</sup> Looking to local sources for food puts the control for food back into the hands of citizens, rather than agricultural corporations.

Following in the steps of local, organic food, localizing other goods such as clothes can combat corporate control and foster economic democracy and communal cooperation. Another important solution to this problem is literally cultivating soil: “The most creative and necessary work that humans do is to work with the soil as co-producers with nature.”<sup>204</sup> Truly incorporating Earth Democracy entails actually working with the earth to promote its and our wellbeing. These locally based steps are ways of living out theories of localization and cultivation of the commons.

#### *Humanity, consciousness and development*

Korten’s suggestions for social change extend beyond systemic and institutional change to also encompass personal, spiritual consciousness:

Empire’s fabricated culture creates a kind of trance. Awakening from that trance occurs one individual at a time, but each occurrence creates a new role model to inspire others... We facilitate the processes of awakening through our individual engagement and dialogue with others, creating cross-cultural experiences, encouraging deep reflection on meaning and values, exposing the contradictions of Empire, spreading awareness of unrealized human possibilities by changing prevailing stories.<sup>205</sup>

Working towards true Earth Democracy also entails developing an individual personal consciousness about issues.

Korten expresses that “the challenges of our time call us to revisit our deepest defining questions: Where did we come from? What is our purpose? And, what are our

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<sup>203</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 10.

<sup>204</sup> Shiva, Soil Not Oil 6.

<sup>205</sup> Korten 316-317.

values?”<sup>206</sup> Issues such as genetic modification of human and non-human species, ownership over natural resources and debates over communalism versus self-interest are rooted in religious, spiritual and ethical belief systems. Acknowledging these systems and then questioning them is crucial to building a more understanding, accepting world community. Individuals must actively inform themselves about the value systems that they have unconsciously adopted. Furthermore, they must accept responsibility for becoming aware of what systems of oppression they participate in and what systems of oppression harm them, and the action steps that they can take to combat these systems. Thus, just, sustainable development requires action on the part of every individual to continually interrogate and revise their normative beliefs.

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<sup>206</sup> Korten 324.

## Conclusion

Shiva's work as both an academic and an activist is admirable and worthy of attention for multiple reasons. Shiva highlights the need for a holistic, multidimensional look at development. A primary problem with neoliberal development is its valuation of capital gain, accompanied by its dismissal of other significant human and environmental considerations. Shiva reveals that you cannot tackle certain components of development, such as economic growth, without taking into consideration other factors, such as the environment, human rights and community culture. Even more importantly, you cannot obtain one while sacrificing another. Finally, development is a wide-reaching, multidimensional task. It demands systemic change, via governments and international economic organizations, as well as local action, through grassroots mobilization to truly achieve justice and sustainability.

At its root, maldevelopment stems from conflicting priorities. Shiva describes this point aptly: "The struggle between the right to clean water and the right to pollute is the struggle between the human and environmental rights of ordinary citizens and the financial interests of businesses."<sup>207</sup> Shiva's point extends beyond water rights to nearly every issue in development. Lack of true, inclusive democracy has resulted in development driven by capitalism and neocolonialism, systems that spawned the need for development in the first place. This problem is further exacerbated by the tendency of neoliberal development to ignore the interconnectivity of prominent components of development—poverty, the environment, public health, et cetera.

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<sup>207</sup> Shiva, Water Wars 33.

Thus, this thesis reveals the demand to reconceptualize and critically reconsider neoliberal development. Furthermore, it unearths the reality that, in order to attain just, sustainable development, the problematic international systems of politics and economics must be reformed. Change must occur at both the local and the systemic level. In terms of local steps, community governance and cultivation of the commons must be encouraged. At the same time, international economic institutions such as the World Trade Organization that advocate for Northern/Western interests must be dismantled and reconstructed to more democratically govern international trade. Vandana Shiva's theories and works provide a fitting foundation upon which for development to establish itself. True development can be achieved by valuing justice above profit, sustainability above growth, and humanity above economy.

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