Global Ethics, Culture and Development
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Introduction

Issues and Dilemmas
The UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development addresses how to meet cultural needs in the context of development. Part of their solution, presented in the 1995 report *Our Creative Diversity*, is to establish a new global ethics. This global ethics has five pillars: human rights, democracy, protection of minorities, commitment to procedures of peaceful conflict resolution, and intergenerational equity. The human rights of women are stressed throughout the report, insisting on the need for protection against gender discrimination.

While many of us share these norms and values, we may doubt whether such a global ethic is part of a practical and defensible solution. Firstly, it seems an open question whether it is possible, now or in the foreseeable future, to obtain binding and universal agreement on these ethical principles. Secondly, and more to the point, it is not clear why current or future acceptance of these pillars by all governments is required to realise the recommendations of the Commission. Thirdly, the report contains several questionable premises and unresolved dilemmas. These weaknesses are not fatal, particularly since the report is intended as a contribution to an ongoing process. But the flaws also make clear why further reflection is required.

Challenges to 'Our Creative Diversity'
The theory sketched in this paper, which I shall refer to as Liberal Contractualism, indicates how the extensive debates regarding development and culture may fruitfully proceed. The main concerns of the paper are the proper grounds and scope of protection of culture. One particular objective is to account for the normative significance of culture. If this account is accepted, three issues in the report *Our Creative
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Diversity require further clarification (Føllesdal, 1997):

(a) Development – not based on autonomous conception of persons. The report offers a broad conception of development, beyond a narrow economic definition. It focuses on development as a process that enhances individuals’ ‘capabilities’, a term of art associated with Amartya Sen (Sen, 1988 and 1993; Sen and Dreze, 1997). Capabilities spell out the effective freedom of people to pursue whatever they have reason to value. While compatible with much of this approach, the liberal contractualist account suggests that this notion of capabilities is based on a worrisome conception of persons as choosers, appealing to an ideal of autonomy which may reasonably be regarded as unduly Western.

(b) Laudatory attitude towards pluralism. The report holds that one should not only tolerate and respect the plurality of cultures, but rejoice in it. It is unclear from the report why such a positive attitude is needed, be it for the sake of stability or in the name of toleration. Liberal contractualism suggests that respect must suffice.

(c) Conception of the value of culture and belonging. The Commission sometimes gives the impression that all reductions in cultural diversity are to be regretted, including the extinction of languages. The report also seems to endorse a presumption in favour of maintaining cultures. However, this presumption is often set aside.

The account presented below suggests that a plausible right to culture should not be so extensive as to regard all reductions in diversity as losses, nor lead to the claim that cultures should not be changed.

Challenges to Theories on the Right to Development and Culture

The grounds and scope of respect for cultures must be clarified. This issue goes to the heart of one of the central dilemmas which must be resolved if the report is to achieve its stated goal. The report seeks to stake out a course where existing cultures are valued, yet toleration of cultures is restricted: not all aspects of all cultures are respected. Cultures which insist on the complete assimilation of minority cultures are renounced, as are cultures which reject democracy and human rights. The need for a political theory addressing the value of culture is apparent when we consider the conflicts between several norms endorsed in the document: domestic democracy, the fight for equal status for women, and minority protections on the one hand, and
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respect for existing majority cultures on the other. Two further challenges to an acceptable account may be identified. A commitment to reasonable toleration suggests that this political theory must not rest on contested ‘Western’ premises about the nature of individuals. Secondly, the theory must withstand objections. Let us consider these issues in more detail.

Democracy, the removal of gender discrimination, and protection of minority cultures are incompatible with some existing cultures. Democracy, regarded as universal political suffrage with majority rule, may easily conflict with existing views in some nation-states regarding the proper powers of women. Feminist theory has made clear that equal concern and respect for women may require the restructuring of some institutions that prevent women from securing real equal access to positions of power and influence. Examples include the lack of facilities for child care, and criteria for career advancement and pension systems which penalise parental leave. Another standard feature of democratic rule is that majoritarianism must be constrained for the sake of minorities, to allow their cultures to survive majoritarian decisions. The protection of minorities’ cultures may require deep structural changes in some societies. So existing cultures may have to be modified for the sake of these other values and goals. To guide this process we need a political theory which can justify majoritarian democracy and human rights, including gender equality, and at the same time explain why culture is to be valued, and laying out the grounds and limits of toleration. In particular, the grounds for human rights and for the cultural rights of minorities must be identified.

One challenge to such accounts arises from the ‘global’ nature of these issues. It would seem that a theory suited for global justice must avoid controversial ‘Western’ assumptions. For instance, some arguments for human rights and democracy rest on a conception of individuals which gives pride of place to their interest in autonomy and personal choice of values and commitments. The individual is considered as agent, with a strong interest in choice and in voluntary contracts. This assumption seems at odds with world views which do not regard the individual first and foremost as an autonomous agent.

The account offered here, rooted in the tradition of liberal contractualism, seeks to shed light on these issues of human rights, toleration and the value of culture, drawing on a conception of the individual which is not focused on the ability to choose one’s life plan and values free from cultural constraints.

Section 1 provides a brief sketch of the normative political theory of liberal contractualism. Section 2 provides a brief normative account
of democratic governance. Section 3 explicates the conception of ‘culture’ used in the report and gives an account of the value of culture within this political theory. Section 4 returns to the report Our Creative Diversity to suggest where further work is required.

1. Liberal Contractualism

Under what conditions do citizens have reason to accept institutions and cultures as normatively legitimate and binding on their conduct? Contractualist theories in political philosophy answer that the set of social institutions as a whole should secure the interests of all affected parties to an acceptable degree. According to these views, institutions are legitimate only if they can be justified by arguments in the form of a social contract of a particular kind. The underlying intuition is ‘equal respect’, which is taken to mean that all individuals must be served by the social institutions. Every individual’s interests must be secured and furthered by the social institutions as a whole (Rawls 1971; Dworkin, 1978). This commitment is sharpened by the notion of possible consent, allowing us to bring the vague ideals of equal dignity to bear on the questions of legitimacy and institutional design.

Normative Individualism

This political theory assumes normative individualism. That is, the ultimate grounds for all arguments regarding the social institutions must be based on the interests of the individuals affected by the rules under consideration. Of course, relevant interests may include individuals’ interests in social activities involving the cooperation of others. However, appeals to the value of maintaining a culture or a language are regarded as abbreviated references to the interest of affected individuals in having such a culture or language.

This political theory also has an egalitarian premise, namely that every affected party is worthy of equal concern and respect. The notion that all affected parties must be served by the institutions is an interpretation of this vague commitment.

The Role of Consent and of the Social Contract

The principles of legitimacy we use to assess institutions are those that the persons affected would unanimously consent to, under conditions which secure and recognise their status as appropriately free and equal. Hypothetical consent plays a particular role in expressing these moral requirements on the legitimate use of power. Our moral obligation to obey the law of the land is justified in part by the claim that this social order could have been the subject of consent among all
affected parties.

Note that this does not entail that such hypothetical consent creates moral obligations or duties, in the same way as free and adequately informed consent binds those who so consent. Liberal contractualism is not committed to a view that individuals only are bound by commitments voluntarily entered into. We have a moral duty to obey the legitimate laws of the land, even in the absence of any consent on our part. We have many duties which we have not explicitly or tacitly consented to. But actual, tacit or hypothetical consent is not the source of moral obligation to comply.

The idea of possible consent in the contractualist tradition does not provide the source of moral duty, but is an expression of one important condition for such duties. Obedience is required only when power and benefits are distributed fairly. Appeals to consent thus serve to identify legitimate authority, but consent is not held to generate the binding claim of institutions (Murphy, 1994). Rather: actual voluntary obedience on the part of individuals can at most be taken as evidence of their belief about the legitimacy of institutions, and not as a justification of these institutions (Raz, 1994: 338). The existing legitimate institutions are binding on us not because we actually consent, or participate in a daily tacit plebiscite (pace Renan, 1939). Even though we usually act according to the practices we find ourselves part of (Walzer, 1977: 54), we do not have, and have never had, a real freedom with regard to the social institutions. Indeed, ordinarily we cannot choose to reject them, and not even the act of voting expresses a morally binding tacit consent to be governed.

It is important for our purposes to stress that this view does not entail that individuals are only bound by obligations voluntarily taken on. Contractualist theory serves to delineate the limits to these duties that hold regardless of actual consent. These duties include what Rawls in his theory of ‘Justice as Fairness’ calls the natural duty of justice, ‘to support and to comply with just institutions that exist and apply to us’ (Rawls, 1971: 115; cf. Klosko, 1994).

Our moral obligation to obey the law of the land is justified, then, in part by the claim that this social order could have been the subject of consent among all affected parties. But this does not entail that such hypothetical consent creates the moral obligation or duty in the same way as free and adequately informed consent binds those who so consent.

Acknowledging Pluralism

Every state contains a variety of religious views and cultural minorities, whose members hold partially incompatible views about the good
life. Across states, this value pluralism is even more extensive.

Disagreements about conceptions of the good increase the need for political theory, to reduce the fear of illegitimate use of state power. However, disagreement about the ends of life also reduces the scope of arguments which can be offered and accepted among citizens of different views. In a state, the government uses force to establish and maintain social institutions among individuals with different practices and beliefs. This use of force requires a justification that does not depend on adopting one particular religious framework or a particular conception of the good life (Nagel, 1987). A theory of human rights and the significance of culture should not rely on an ideal of the individual as an autonomous chooser of life plans, as this premise is contested by some religious and philosophical traditions. Respect for those of other religious and philosophical convictions prohibits assumptions that are deeply at odds with their views.

This notion of respect for others is compatible with a broad range of world views and religions which regard most other conceptions of humans and the good life as fundamentally mistaken. However, these world views must also include a commitment that social institutions should not benefit their own views over the views held by others. Thus rejoicing in diversity may not be required for stable institutions among individuals who profoundly disagree – respect may suffice.

Relevant Interests

For the purpose of justifying social practices, institutions and regimes, contractualism requires that we find suitable descriptions of the interests we are prepared to offer as premises in the arguments. When comparing particular rules or principles, contractualist arguments must therefore appeal to their impact on recognisably important interests.

Given the variety of views about the good life and given the number of divergent world views, there will be disagreement about the absolute and relative importance of the interests we have. Reasonable disagreement is therefore to be expected about the value of a wide variety of goods under institutional control. Nevertheless, some goods may be recognised as forming the bases of reasonable claims:

(a) Security goods, required for survival and basic security. Our interest in survival can, I submit, fruitfully be expressed in terms of Amartya Sen’s concept of ‘Basic Capabilities’. Basic capabilities are abilities to do certain basic things: ‘the ability to meet one’s nutritional requirements, the wherewithal to be clothed and sheltered, the power to participate in the social life of the community’
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(Sen 1982: 367). In order to ensure security and survival, spelled out in terms of basic capabilities, individuals must have command over foodstuffs, public health measures, and other goods. In societies characterised by extensive division of labour and market economies, some amount of money and a certain level of education are instrumental goods required to obtain food and other necessities. I submit that a broad range of human rights can be regarded as demands placed on institutions, ensuring that such security goods and instrumental goods are available to all.

(b) Strategic goods – that is, all-purpose means necessary for a broad range of life plans: Income and wealth, social positions, and educational opportunities.

(c) Political power, to regulate practices and social institutions, must also be considered an important good for allocating goods and burdens fairly among equals. Note that the reason for regarding political powers as goods is not, according to this view, that individuals have a fundamental interest in self-legislation or autonomy. Rather, it is because social institutions shape options and self-perceptions in ways that affect our expectations, and in turn our life prospects. We must accept, for purposes of arguments about legitimacy, that individuals have an interest in influencing social institutions – particularly when alternative arrangements would place such authority with others.

The Case for Development

Liberal contractualism can endorse the claim to development stressed in the report Our Creative Diversity. Development there appears to be defined largely in terms of Amartya Sen’s notion of basic capabilities explained above: the ability to secure certain states or do certain things. Development policies must aim to ensure that individuals are able to enjoy the basic capabilities central to survival and security.

Let us, however, note a challenge to the capability approach to development. It is not clear that everyone’s capabilities are actually valued by all plausible world views or conceptions of the good. Sen’s theory has an individualistic and voluntaristic slant, which is incompatible with the constraint of Pluralism. His account seems to rely heavily on the choices of individuals, since benefits voluntarily foregone are regarded as equal to those capabilities actually achieved by the individual. There are two problems worth mentioning.

Insofar as Sen is concerned with the individual’s genuine choice, the approach must not merely focus on capabilities but also explore whether the conditions for informed choice are secured. For instance,
the individual must perceive the alternatives as feasible, and understand the consequences. Christine Korsgaard (1993: 60-61) expresses this concern succinctly:

We may believe that a human being is free, if ever, when she not only has a range of options but an education that enables her to recognise those options as such and the self-respect that makes her choice among them a real one. Ignorance, lack of imagination, and lack of self-respect are not just external constraints on the range of your options: they can cripple the power of choice itself. The possession of freedom of the will may itself be lucky.

I assume that the notion of capabilities can incorporate the conditions which make informed choice plausible. In operationalising this standard, we might ask if individuals are aware whether they have certain options available, as has been done in some questions posed by the Scandinavian research on ‘Quality of Life’ (Allardt, 1993: 93).

There is a second problem with Sen’s view. Focus on the individual’s range of choice is worrisome insofar as this view is not shared by some quite reasonable world views. Why, some may object, should the theory be concerned at the fundamental level with the individual’s freedom to choose, and not the lives actually lived and the things actually achieved? Sen’s account thus seems to reflect an inappropriate bias towards conceptions of the good life which value choice. Many individuals are often not interested in freedoms, but in the functionings they achieve. Again, this does not seem to be an insurmountable problem, but suggests that more needs to be done when drawing on the notion of capabilities in defining development.

2. The Case for Democracy

Standard accounts of democracy regard it as procedures whereby the preference of the majority of the electorate determines laws and public policies, on the bases of deliberation and competition among candidates (Dahl, 1989: ch. 10, 11).

The contractualist justification of democracy and majority rule must draw on the central moral norm to be treated with equal respect and concern. However, the move from ‘equal respect’ to ‘equal political power under majority arrangements’ is complicated. The arguments must show that such distribution of political control, carefully circumscribed, is, to our knowledge, the most reliable mechanism for securing and promoting the interests of all affected parties to an
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acceptable degree. Empirical evidence of the efficacy of democratic rule suggests that the ability of citizens to ‘throw the rascals out of office’ serves as an important check on the abuse of power. For instance, we know of no sudden famines occurring in democracies (Sen and Dreze, 1990). Thus there are empirical grounds for insisting that the equal dignity of all requires that those subject to state force must also have a say in how that force is to be used, to ensure that it is used in just ways.

The liberal contractualist defence of democracy is comparative and cautious. Two different arguments may be discerned when we move beyond the narrow focus on constitutional allocation of powers. We must also consider the significance of democratic arrangements in providing a backdrop for bargains and co-ordination, preference and option formation, and for defining the parliamentary agenda (cf. Dahl, 1956). These processes are crucial for both interest formation and aggregation. The formal allocation of powers, for instance that of putting issues on the political agenda, may well shape the form, content and results of such informal arrangements.

Interest Aggregation

Democratic rule provides for acceptable interest aggregation among all affected parties. The citizens vote on the basis of information about the alternative candidates. They in turn have the power both to set the agenda and decide by majoritarian procedures. Under certain conditions, this appears to be a more reliable procedure than any alternative for ensuring that the interests of all are secured, when certain conditions are met. Such conditions include protection of minorities, as well as safeguards against permanent minorities.

Interest Formation

Democratic forms also allow for interest formation. Through the political discourse preceding voting, citizens affirm their common commitment to equal worth and respect, and let that sense of justice affect their preferences and conceptions of what is good. Thus the preconditions for majoritarianism include a general acceptance by individuals that democratic modes of decision-making are appropriate for settling conflicts (Macedo, 1995; Bohman and Rehg, 1997). Other social preconditions include public arenas for scrutiny and criticism of politicians, secured by freedom of speech.

Thus the broader effects of democratic elections are important. Democratic elections require and foster transparency to show how institutions work, so that citizens can determine that justice is done,
hence whether they have a moral obligation to obey.

3. Interest in Culture

*Our Creative Diversity* talks of culture as ‘ways of living together’, and as ‘patterns of daily behaviour’ (1995: 24, 7). Moreover, ‘culture gives meaning to our existence’ (23). Nevertheless, while insisting on the value of culture, the report entails drastic changes to many existing cultures for the sake of development, environment and a global ethics.

To shed light over these dilemmas, I shall start by noting that liberal contractualism recognises the individual’s interest in culture and the risks involved in changes in one’s culture (Føllesdal, 1996).

Without seeking more precision than is needed for our purposes, let us consider culture to be practices, that is, rule-regulated patterns of behaviour. We may talk of a social practice existing when people conduct themselves in accordance with public rules, be they rules of etiquette or rules expressed by law.

The rules of a practice regulate behaviour: we act on them, generally abide by them, and often take them for granted. Furthermore, when we decide how to act, we take account of the rules, and hence of the likely though not certain compliance by others. Some such practices are laid down as laws, with legal enforcement, while others are maintained and changed through more informal means. This account seems to fit well with the role of culture often recognised by political theorists: of providing a structure ‘within which individuals form and revise their aims and ambitions’ (Kymlicka, 1989).

We must determine what is at stake for people who share culture – including norms of practices at various levels of generality, among both national groups and minorities. Why is cultural membership of such great value? Indeed, some authors hold that minority rights regarding culture and religious practices should be institutionalised as universal human rights: ‘Only if collective ethnic minority rights are recognised as such, and specifically as human rights, can such communities survive in environments which are often hostile to their very existence and survival’ (Stavenhagen, 1996: 142-43). There are some international conventions to this effect, including the 1989 ILO *Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*, and the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights is currently considering a *Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, adding to the *Declaration on the Rights of Minorities* of 1993.
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What aspects of culture can justify claims to social resources? Such claims must be supported by showing that an important interest is furthered, and that any losses incurred by affected parties must be worth it. So we need to understand the appropriate connections between individuals’ interest in culture, claims to rights, including human rights, and claims to development. The liberal contractualist account offered below focuses on the impact of culture on individuals’ opportunities to develop and maintain a comprehensive world view, and on the conditions facing majority and minority cultures regarding survival and change.

Kymlicka: Culture Provides Choice Structure

Several authors suggest that we must acknowledge an interest in maintaining one’s own culture.

Will Kymlicka argues that cultural membership is valuable as a precondition: it provides the necessary structure for individuals’ meaningful pursuit of their various conceptions of the good life. It is ‘only through having a rich and secure cultural structure that people can become aware, in a vivid way, of the options available to them, and intelligently examine their value’ (Kymlicka, 1989: 165; cf. 1995: ch. 5; and see Buchanan 1991: 53-54 for similar arguments). Cultural membership helps the individual identify available options which appear valuable. Culture can indicate a unity among options, thus making one’s plan of life appear worth carrying out and providing grounds for self-respect (Tomasi, 1995: 584).

What claims follow from this? This interest in participation in a community does not ground a claim to maintaining any particular community, but only that each individual should belong to some cultural community. And this interest does not justify a claim that the culture should be maintained indefinitely without change (cf. Buchanan, 1991: 55; Tomasi, 1995: 594). Individuals may successfully shift cultural affiliations while maintaining their ability to regard their lives as meaningful and structured. So the character of a culture may change, without threatening extinction of the culture or the meaning of life plans (Kymlicka, 1989: 167). In Kymlicka’s view the constitutive interest in culture allows drastic changes in culture brought about by government or others, as long as the individuals face ‘no danger to their ability to examine the options that their cultural structure had made meaningful to them’ (Kymlicka, 1989: 167).

While liberal contractualism accepts Kymlicka’s conclusions, one of the premises is unsatisfactory. Kymlicka explicitly grounds the constitutive value of culture on an ideal of the autonomous individual, as
a chooser of a life plan. One might be able to reinterpret Kymlicka’s argument avoiding this premise. However, in the following I pursue a different strategy for recognising the interest in culture without relying so heavily on the interest in choice.

**Interest in Forecasting the Future**

There is another reason for valuing culture and cultural membership which support the demands of minorities to control changes to their cultures.

Minorities’ cultural rights are legitimate insofar as such legal powers and immunities prevent great sacrifice or promote important interests. Such interests include the ability to pursue meaningful lives, to form and pursue life plans alone or in joint deliberation with others, and maintain some control over changing expectations. This account of the interest in controlling changes in one’s culture does not rest on an assumption of the value of autonomous choice.

Intuitively, changes in culture pose a challenge to coherence and continuity. Individuals have an interest in being able to forecast correctly about their own future, including their likely attainments and needs. Culture understood as practices plays an important role in facilitating such forecasting, but only if the rules of the practices are followed in the future. Changes in values, norms, institutions, history and language cause shifts in what can be expected. Cultural changes should therefore not be too abrupt, since members of a culture have an interest in revising their plans as options and consequences change.

This interest is not based on an autonomous conception of the person, in the sense that the individual values her ability to continually change plans, commitments and values independently of others. Rather, the claim is that expectations formed on the basis of one’s culture are prone to influence by social institutions. Our interest in forming correct expectations requires that we are informed and able to participate, directly or indirectly, in the changes and adaptation of our culture in ways that reduce the risk of false expectations.

Given the threats of alternative allocations of such control, it seems plausible for minorities to insist that they should have the means to influence, if not control, the development of their culture insofar as this is possible. Their interest in control over cultural change supports claims to hold institutional powers which influence the maintenance and development of one’s culture. These powers should be placed with the affected individuals rather than with agents of the state at large.

Note that this interest in influencing or controlling cultural change does not constitute a claim to maintaining a variety of cultures, nor
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does it override interests in securing basic needs. Insofar as the right to development is based on individuals’ interest in securing basic needs, this right may override any conflicting claims to controlling cultural change. However, many such apparent conflicts may be alleviated, both because drastic cultural changes often threaten basic needs, and by noting that the interest in culture does not require that cultures remain unchanged. Instead, this interest has implications for the speed and the authority to change a culture. These considerations may constrain development strategies, without preventing all forms of development.

Cultural Rights – Human Rights regarding Culture?
The implications of this account for human rights regarding culture may be worth noting.

Let us provisionally use the concept ‘human rights’ to include certain legal norms within the UN and regional organisations. I suggest that human rights are conditions of legitimacy for institutional arrangements. The general justification for such human rights is that they prevent many of the threats to individuals’ most important interests – including their basic needs – which may stem from the actions and omissions of governments. Human rights are universal conditions on the legitimate allocation and exercise of sovereignty within and across borders (Føllesdal, 1995). They entail obligations for states and the system of states, serving a critical role with respect to domestic legislation. It falls beyond this sketch to provide an account of the complete set of such rights (cf. Føllesdal, 1991).

Liberal contractualism recognises the value of cultural membership, and in particular realises that individuals have an interest in controlling and influencing the modes of cultural change. But there is an argumentative gap between the interests of individuals and any institutional implications of these interests, e.g. in the form of rights.

An interest in controlling cultural change may in principle establish rights of several kinds. Rights may be needed to provide a threshold of legal protections enabling minorities to explore, share and convey their culture to each other. Rights may be needed to protect a culture from outside forces with regard to change and development. Minority representation on political bodies may be appropriate, particularly because the conflicts can arise in unpredictable ways. Transparency regarding the use of government discretion is often important. The concern for minorities may thus support a requirement that governments develop a public policy regarding treatment of minorities, or that governments actively seek to prevent potentially harmful effects of their policies. Such obligations provide domestic minorities with
leverage against governmental abuses.

This liberal contractualist account also reveals a gap between rights and human rights. A case has not been made for these rights protecting minority cultures to be regarded as human rights. Note that the reason for this hesitation is not based on the argument that only individual rights are human rights, while minority rights are group rights. Liberal contractualism as presented is in principle prepared to grant a variety of collective rights to groups and collectives, as long as interests that justify such rights are interests of individuals. This is because individuals may have sound claims to rights to act jointly, based on their interest in acting together with others. Hence they may legitimately insist on rights to religious practice, rights of association and so forth. Minorities may sometimes claim collective rights to be enjoyed by a collection of individuals or their representatives. Such an allocation of rights may well provide the best sort of guarantee for minorities, for instance to ensure that they influence cultural changes (Green, 1994; Sohn, 1982). Thus there may well be a case for human rights regarding the protection of minorities, but such a right must be supported by the complex kinds of arguments indicated above.

The reason for caution in respect of regarding minority cultural rights as human rights is that the need for such institutional safeguards may differ drastically among sovereign states. Consider the situation in the Netherlands, where there are minority cultures, but no easily identifiable majority. Minorities do not face the risk of being assimilated into one dominant culture, but they may face other risks under the Dutch ‘consociational’ mode of government (Lijphart, 1995). The appropriate minority rights may therefore be different in different states, making it difficult to call for universal human rights regarding minority cultures.

4. Conclusion
The paper has presented and defended a sketch of liberal contractualism which can account for the value of human rights, democracy, tolerance, and cultural rights, without ‘Western’ assumptions about autonomous individualism. Liberal contractualism thus would seem a strong candidate as a political theory supporting the report Our Creative Diversity. However, liberal contractualism also suggests that there are areas where the report is marred by flaws and inconsistencies. Three issues have been noted:

(1) Development, expressed in terms of basic capabilities, should
preferably not be conceived as based on autonomous conception of persons, but on the claims of satisfying basic needs and security. As it stands, the report seems to draw on a contested, allegedly ‘Western’ conception of the individual.

(2) Respect for pluralism need not require that all must rejoice in it, as claimed in the report. It seems sufficient that individuals and communities accept as a fact that others have divergent religious or philosophical views, and that forceful attempts at changing these views are incompatible with a shared commitment to equal respect.

(3) The report notes, correctly, that culture and belonging are valuable elements in our lives. However, it does not follow that all reductions in cultural diversity need be regretted, as the report infers. It would seem that the interests at stake require that those whose culture it is, maintain control over changes in the culture. Losses of cultural diversity need not be bad, and cultural changes are not always contrary to the important interests of individuals.

Liberal contractualism provides a much needed argumentative framework for the systematic defence of much of the report Our Creative Diversity. Such a theory is needed for the important tasks remaining: to resolve the dilemmas found in the report, and to implement the recommendations of the report in ways consistent with the equal dignity of all.

References


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Summary


The report of the UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development, *Our Creative Diversity*, addresses how to meet cultural needs in the context of development. The report includes some questionable premises and leaves some dilemmas unresolved, partly due to its vagueness regarding the normative value of culture. Liberal contractualism is presented and defended as a plausible theory for addressing these dilemmas and structuring further debate. At least three issues in the report require modification: (a) Development should not be based on a ‘Western’ conception of autonomous individuals, (b) Pluralism should be respected, but need not be applauded, and (c) The value of culture and belonging must be better expressed and argued.
Ethics and the Conduct of International Development Aid: Charity and Obligation

Des Gasper

1. Themes and Terms

International aid work proceeds in a context of more or less explicit moral concerns – meant to be sufficient to mobilise and justify cross-border transfers – as well as of national sensitivities, cultural and ideological divides, inherited wounds and mistrust, and competing underproven perceptions of options and effects in long-term processes of massive change. It is a touchy and contentious field.

This paper looks at ethical issues concerning how aid is carried out. Sections 2 and 3 will discuss the way that such ‘how?’ issues have emerged, and situate them in relation to other questions about aid, including most notably the proposed ethical basis for aid. Aid can be based on self-interest; or on obligations of the rich to help the poor; or on charity, the beneficence of the rich, whereby recipients do not receive by right and donors do not give as a duty. Rather than obligation, rich country donors have largely taken self-interest and charity as their bases for giving. These, notably the charity stance, have moulded aid disbursement and evaluation: aid is typically subject to numerous donor-set conditions and must be accounted for in every detail. The obligations are deemed to lie on the side of the recipient, to do as advised and report assiduously; with the exception of the donor’s obli-

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1. Williams (1976) describes the evolution of the term ‘charity’ over the centuries, from meaning Christian love, to now more often meaning something cooler, more condescending and discretionary.
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gation to its fund providers to see that their monies are well spent, which is deemed to give it the right and duty to impose whatever conditions it sees fit on recipients. I will probe and query this position, and argue that even a charity view of aid carries important obligations concerning manner of operation.

Sections 4 to 7 examine several major ‘how?’ questions about the manner and conditions of aid. Is the conventional style of conditionality and control ethically defensible? What are the roles and responsibilities of actors in the aid system? What constitutes corruption, in an ethical sense, in the behaviour and life-styles of aid actors? What forms of exercising power and styles of personal relations might be ethically implied for international aid? Section 8 considers then whether standardised guidelines or codes of ethics could help in such complex and sensitive areas. Section 9 concludes by returning to the theme of charity and obligation.

By development ethics I mean here, following Denis Goulet, work on ‘ethical and value questions posed by development theory, planning and practice’ (Goulet, 1977: 5). I discuss elsewhere (Gasper, 1994, 1996) the scope and boundaries implied by Goulet’s definition; they notably depend on how we use the term ‘development’, but clearly include both policy ethics and the ethics of the individual actor.

As to the possible character and role of development ethics, it can (seek to) function as: (1) an academic sub-discipline; (2) displacement activity, a display of high-mindedness; (3) secular religion, that delineates and promulgates ways of life; (4) a professional ethics; and/ or (5) a broader, looser professional forum than in variant 4 – since ‘development theory, planning and practice’ do not define a single profession or well-bounded set of professions and agents – but with comparable functions to narrower professional ethics. I adopt this fifth, quasi-professional, definition of character and role. Development ethics thus in part reflects normatively on what those working in ‘development theory, planning and practice’ do with and to clients/advisees, students, research subjects, and others, what should they (we) work on, whom should they (we) work for, what criteria should they (we) use; and so on.

Development ethics is concerned with practice, with influencing attitudes and choices. This does not mean it is atheoretical. Much of practical ethics overlaps with normatively-informed policy analysis. Similarly, ideas in development ethics will and should reflect explanatory theories of development, not only general ideas about ethics. If one’s development theory emphasises volumes of investment, directed by the best international advice, then one may fret over ‘diversions’ of
scarce resources and seek to enforce rigorous conditions on aid use. Underlying this are debates on theories about people and change: are people ‘economic men’, comfort-oriented self-interested agents who have to be exclusively guided by rewards and/or threats? How far can goals of fraternity and autonomy be promoted by processes of domination and passivity? If one’s development theory emphasises broad-based commitment in the low-income country, local leadership and entrepreneurship (private and public), and mobilisation of local energies and creativity, then aid policy and guidelines will often not follow the direct-and-control mode.

Aid is not the most important topic in development ethics, compared to assessing policy goals, or commerce and debt, child labour, democracy and human rights, or the exertion of power by the rich through means other than concessional finance. But it remains important, and difficult.

By development aid I refer to external aid to low-income countries as provided in explicit concessional resource allocations to increase welfare in those countries. This excludes military supplies but not emergency relief. And as just implied, it excludes some usually more important ways to help, like modifying and then enforcing regulations on trade, debt, property rights, Swiss bank accounts and speculative capital flows, or modifying life-styles in rich countries. My focus on ‘aid’ as more narrowly and conventionally defined is to keep the paper manageable. Even so, conventional aid spans very widely, across numerous different sectors and activities and a tremendous variety of institutions and countries. Actual or potential resource transfers can also be the lever and cover for extensive policy direction by aid agencies, of greater import than the transfers themselves. I therefore discuss conditionality, in Section 4, though very selectively, with emphasis on political and ethical assumptions.

In sum, this paper does not consider all the important value issues concerning development aid, not even all those of current attention in ‘the aid community’, but concentrates instead on:

- The evolution of discussions on ethics and development aid; to see historically how attention to quasi-professional ethics has emerged and might proceed (especially Section 2 below);
- The key question of the types of obligation, if any, that are invol-

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2 Following others I sometimes call it just ‘aid’, a usage that slights intra-national aid. ‘International aid’ covers military support too; and while ‘international humanitarian aid’ excludes that and conveys a focus on increasing welfare in poorer countries, it has become reserved for emergency-related aid. The definition here includes emergency relief as well as aid for ‘development’ construed more narrowly.
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ved: Is aid pure charity and beyond obligation(s)? And what implications have different views here? (Sections 3, 4, 5 and 9);

– The significance in international aid, especially in technical co-operation, of work-style and life-style issues, including interpersonal relations, and how these are affected by questions of obligation (Sections 6 and 7); and

– Whether specified ethical guidelines and codes for aid organisations and aid workers could be worthwhile (Section 8).

2. Evolution of Work on the Ethics of International Aid

Through to the early 1980s the intellectual basis of aid remained imprecise, especially its ethics. It was vulnerable to attacks on egalitarianism mounted in the 1970s by Bauer, Hayek, Nozick, Lal and others. For example, calls like Peter Singer’s – for everyone to give up much of what they had so as to produce (much) greater benefits for the poor – seemed to offer critics an easy target: the calls assumed rather than demonstrated moral community, and neglected incentives, disincentives, and matters of past efforts and fair acquisition. In a study that reviewed the attacks and their excesses, and suggested reformulations to give an adequate ethical basis for redistribution, including international aid (Gasper, 1986), I agreed that development theory had used ‘a presumption that LDCs are a different moral sphere, [so that within them] different principles [for example, sweeping redistribution] could be applied than internationally or within DCs. The subject is [therefore, now] likely, if not to disintegrate, at least to change’ (Gasper, 1986: 138). A similar point applied to the practice of development aid. But while substantial work appeared in the 1980s to clarify the possible justifications for aid, less emerged on its manner of operation.

Work in aid ethics has now broadened. I am struck by the field’s continuing growth, diversification, and ramifying nature. Ten or fifteen years ago it seemed possible to do a fairly thorough survey, even if one had to include substantial background material on aid, ethics, and theories of development. Since then the core literature has grown considerably, as have the areas to which one must pay attention as background or special topics. The growth reflects more than paper production by academics under increased pressure to publish or perish. Work on ethics is not the quickest or most prestigious route for those keen to be counted. More significant are the following factors:

– First, work on development ethics, including aid ethics, was young fifteen years ago; most of what has been written has...
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appeared since then.

– Second, work in the related areas has grown equally fast, as part of the tremendous expansion of practical ethics in the past generation, for example in business ethics. Ethical analysis is now more common in social studies than during the positivist regnum of the 1930s through 1970s. It would be hard to imagine major assessments of aid being published now that were as philosophically innocent as, for example, those by Lewis (1980; then chair of OECD’s Development Assistance Committee) or Mosley (1987).

– Third, as new linkages have emerged or been perceived, the number of component and related topics has grown too: participation and empowerment, the nature of well-being and vulnerability, the status of rights and obligations, culture and identity, political and moral community, globalisation, environment, the presumptions of the concept ‘development’, etc. Growing awareness of global connections leads many to talk now of global ethics or world ethics.

– Fourth, the deep causes and catastrophic consequences of ‘complex emergencies’ have demanded attention in development studies, including development ethics. Enormously difficult emergency situations have raised exceptional moral demands and confusion. Aid agencies, unwilling or unable to respond politically to political emergencies, appear to have become integrated as resource providers into processes of violence and oppression (de Waal, 1997a, 1997b; O’Keefe and Middleton, 1998).

– Fifth, while the relative importance of development aid has declined, some of the causes for this decline bring increased attention to aid ethics. Whereas aid (ODA) was previously considerably greater than private capital flows to low income countries, it is now dwarfed by them in aggregate; some low income countries have become middle income, a few even high income; and aid fatigue, doubts and disappointments and the end of the Cold War have weakened commitment. Despite increased resistance to taxation and public expenditure, surveys suggest that aid retains large majority public support in donor countries (except perhaps America) but in subdued form. Amongst intellectuals it has lost some of its backing and certainly much of its passion. While always criticised by some on the Right in donor countries, both in principle and in terms of alleged effects, aid was defended in principle by most on the Left, even if they criticised its conceptualisation, handling, and/or effects of some types. But from the 1980s aid came under comprehensive attack by
more from the Left (like Gunnar Myrdal) and Greens too, in South as well as North. The attacks on aid’s necessity, moral rationale, modus operandi, and observed effects have all grown, and compelled more deeply thought-out responses than earlier.

Sixth, the tremendous rise of NGDOs (both international and Southern) in the past 15-20 years has created a much larger ‘market’ for ethics, including quasi-professional ethics and the delicate how issues. NGDO staff and funders tend on average to be more concerned with purposes of development, equitable process, and multi-directional accountability than are their government, bank and inter-government counterparts. The concerns about ethical ‘dilemmas’ and definition of roles and responsibilities which have grown in the 1990s in NGDOs closely match those seen elsewhere in the caring professions: doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, priests and so on (cf. e.g. Banks, 1995). Professionals in these fields do – typically – care, in both senses. Many work on the ‘delivery’ frontline, face unforeseen implications and failures at closer range, and listen to recipients. Such practitioners need ethical frames by which they can better understand their situation, structure their choices, avoid debilitating degrees of doubt and guilt, and move forward.

Besides growth, diversification, and increased philosophical sophistication in some of the aid ethics work of the past fifteen years, I am struck by a healthier balance emerging between recording of experience, abstracted theorising, and advising on real decision situations. An influential figure like Robert Chambers writes regularly on, in effect, practical development ethics, and spans voluntary and government sector audiences (e.g. Chambers, 1997a, 1997b). In the 1970s and 1980s, a great share of attention went to propounding, applying or rejecting the elegant armchair theories and theorems of leaders in the revival of prescriptive ethical theory from the 1970s, like Rawls and Nozick. In the 1990s we see maturer ethical theory, with wider awareness of the limitations and roles of abstracted theorisation, attention to identifying areas where different ethical theories can agree on their implications or preconditions (see e.g. Nussbaum and Glover eds., 1995; Küng, 1997; Dower, 1998), and growing interaction of ethical theory, practical ethics, and development practice.

3. Structure: Issues in Aid Ethics

Major issues in international aid ethics have included at least the fol-
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lowing: first, whether and why such aid should exist, and in what circumstances, if any; second, the quantities of aid to be offered by, or required from, specific richer agents, and from which agents; third, for which countries; fourth, for which sectors and uses; fifth, questions of how to conduct aid work, about the manner and conditions under which aid is provided; sixth, how to evaluate aid projects and programmes. Before concentrating on questions of the manner and conditions of operation, we need to look selectively at other issues which influence them.

Has international aid to poorer countries the right to exist at all?
Debate on this grew in the 1970s, led by Right-wing theorists antagonistic to aid such as Peter Bauer, and continued actively in the 1980s. Riddell (1985, 1986, 1987) and Gasper (1986) give critical surveys of the debate (see especially Riddell, 1987, discussed in Gasper, 1994). Opeskin (1997) gives a more recent survey. The following set of viewpoints indicates most of the spectrum of opinion.

(1) An obligation exists, the same as intra-nationally: International aid is seen as morally identical to resource transfers to poorer regions, groups and individuals within national boundaries (and domestic transfers are considered legitimate and desirable). A family of positions exists here, according to the perceived moral basis for intra-national transfers (needs/utility/rights/historical debt or connection/...). Sometimes it is held that aid should as a consequence be organized in a similar way to domestic transfers, routinised and with little space for discretion, as one part of welfare policy. But factual constraints differ in the international case and might profoundly affect and limit how and how far the rich can actually help.

(2) Lesser obligation: International aid is considered a moral obligation upon richer countries, groups and individuals, but subject to certain major conditions (for example concerning its urgency and potential efficacy; or whether there exist past and present North-South links), and thus in general has less priority than obligations closer to home.

(3) Charity: International aid is beyond obligation. While to give it is an act of supererogatory virtue and commendable, not giving it cannot be condemned. For example, the former Soviet bloc held that it had no historical links with the South and hence no present obligations to give aid.

(4) My country first and only: Aid to people in other countries is a betrayal of co-community members at ‘home’ who have unsatis-
fied needs and/or other claims – except when international aid furthers their interests better than would domestic uses.

(5) *A matter solely for individuals to decide:* Charity is commendable, and national boundaries insignificant, but individual self-ownership makes both intra- and inter-national *obligatory* (tax-derived) transfers immoral. This is the implication of the influential possessive-individualist philosophy of Robert Nozick (1974), presented for consideration in development policy by Deepak Lal (1976.) Tax-based aid provided by a donor government is deemed illegitimate, unlike voluntary trans-national aid provided by individuals.

(6) *Morally indifferent:* Whether a person or group of persons (e.g. an organisation) chooses to help others, either in their country or another, is considered an entirely optional consumer matter. To do so is no better or worse than any other (legal) use of their wealth.

(7) *Culturally relative:* Here the ‘consumer’, the entity that adopts life-style options, is an entire culture. Some cultures are ‘into’ helping others, others are not, and, it is claimed, there are no defensible ways of saying one value position is better than the other. This more casual ‘post-modern’ stance differs from the nationalist viewpoint, which certainly believes that its own position is better than others, but readily coexists with it.

This spectrum of views has more than academic interest. View 4 – aid as pursuit of national self-interest – influences some governmental aid, though not (I assume) NGDO aid. View 2 – aid as a definite but lower-level obligation – partly fits Scandinavia and the Netherlands, the donors who bind themselves to and implement a substantial target level of support, even if view 3, aid as charity, still influences the manner in which they give. View 5 – that foreign transfers by a national government are illegitimate – was long followed by, for example, Switzerland (which has however shifted to at least view 4, provision of aid for respectability and hence self-interest). View 6 – foreign aid as purely a morally indifferent life-style option – might be how most corporations view their own tightfistedness. In contrast, the work of development-oriented foundations such as Rockefeller and Ford, and Ted Turner’s immense donation to the UN, can reflect a stance of benevolent charity (position 3).

All of views 3 through 7 seem widespread in the USA, including amongst powerful Republican politicians. A generation back, in the early days of the American New Right backlash, Sumberg (1973: 60) ‘looked for...without finding [any] duty laid upon us. There is no such
duty... [Aid] is purely discretionary’, even in emergencies and – according to him – even inside a nation. While many pro- (or anti-) aid developmentalists have taken the World Bank and IMF to be their greatest foes – seen as bastions of world capitalism, who trample on the rights of the poor by both intervention and neglect – much of the US Right sees them as socialistic relics that prop up the undeserving.

The view that guided most aid, both governmental and NGO, appears to be view 3: aid as charity not obligation. When combined with a performance ethic and one-way accountability this has affected the way aid is carried out: full of options for donors, stiff with restrictions for recipients. The performance ethic rarely extended to checking whether close conditionality achieved its own performance targets. Doubts as to whether it does (see Section 4) and the very fact of failure to check could lead one to investigate the power relations, culture and psychology of aid.

These issues of obligation or its absence are not pursued further here (see instead e.g. Gasper, 1986), but influence our discussions by their effects on choices about manner and conditions of operation.

From which agents? Even if aid is administered like charity, tax-funded aid is not just provided by those who feel like doing so. Funds raised on a basis of obligation (as in view 2 above) are doled out on the basis of discretionary charity (view 3). Obligatory contribution might yet be defended on grounds of operational simplicity and necessity; and/or as something that over time balances out. If I am in the majority which likes aid, unlike you, but you are in the majority which likes motorway construction, which I don’t, and tax-funds go to both purposes, then you can think of your tax as going to motorways but not aid, and I can think mine goes to aid but not to motorways (however, the latter expenditure is far greater). A different defence of the combination of obligatory contribution and discretionary allocation holds that if an obligation to give aid rests on a principle of promoting welfare or need-fulfilment and so on, then the aid must be administered and used so as to indeed promote the objective. We will ask later whether the means selected do ensure this.

How to evaluate international aid? Too often, evaluation is seen as a purely technical exercise, and excessively narrow criteria and sources of information are used. Hoksbergen (1986) investigates which and whose views of good development – what are the good life and fair process? – are used in different evaluation approaches in aid, such as in donors’ versions of cost-benefit analysis. Approaches for evaluating
aid expenditure depend too on the core rationale adopted for aid. If that is the same as for domestic transfers, then aid should be evaluated the same way, no easier, no harsher. If it is an instrument of national self-interest, then it is evaluated for that. If it is non-solidarity charity then, deem some, every dollar must be accounted for.

How to conduct aid? On manner and conditions attached; working with real, complex people and coping with real, messy choices

Whether, how much, to whom and for what, have been the traditional aid ethics issues. Aid evaluation too has received great attention, even if its value choices are hidden. These traditional issues matched the locations and training of head-office aid managers and development economists. Now an enlarged range of ‘how?’ questions about manner and style of operation have become prominent. They add a necessary dimension. Section 2 suggested reasons for the trend.

Typical new concerns are the fear that aid can sometimes have disastrous unexpected effects – so how should staff deal with such risks? – and the feeling that aid personnel often face painful dilemmas, where whatever they do will involve severe moral costs. An influential paper by Hugo Slim (1997a, 1997b), for example, notes a series of risks in emergency relief: (1) risks to the helper (who might lose health or life); (2) risks to the supposedly helped (who can be pressured or facilitated to follow a disastrous direction); (3) risks of helping people who prove to be villains or who at least should not be helped, such as oppressive armies or dictatorial governments; and (4) risks of becoming villainous, if the practice of moral compromise (and, perhaps, the exposure to horror) fosters cynicism. The same types of risk can apply in non-emergency aid. Direct risks to aid workers will be less, but the other three types are just as relevant outside emergencies.

In the following sections I analyse some (not all) of the key choices in the conduct of aid, including imposition of conditions by funders, the roles adopted in aid work, expatriate life styles, and dialogical versus monological interaction. The widespread embarrassment and even secrecy in discussing organisational and personal conduct have left information and literature limited. Gaps exist between on-the-record proclamation and off-the-record practice and anecdote. Sometimes there might also be a false pride that ethical problems affect only others (‘the Italians/Belgians/Pakistanis/ Nigerians’); or a wish not to draw attention to a checkered past – ‘You don’t criticise me, I won’t criticise you’. These factors hinder analysis, but do not remove the need for it.
..there is hubris and hypocrisy in what I write; hubris because who am I, who have been wrong so often, to examine others’ errors?; hypocrisy, because I do not live what I say. But hubris and hypocrisy are bad reasons for keeping quiet (Chambers, 1997a: xviii).

4. Conditionality and Control

Hamelink (1997: 15) conveys the reality, weight and dangers of 1990s conditionality:

Development co-operation creates explosive contradictions between political conditionalities that press for good governance, democracy and respect for human rights, and... economic conditionalities that impose such austere measures that the resulting inequalities can only be controlled by highly undemocratic policies!

More routinely, aid resources have continued to be largely made available only for pre-specified broad purposes, under set conditions, via set and increasingly elaborate procedures, and at project level often still in pre-specified forms (‘...one photocopier, three PCs of type X, six airtickets, etc. etc.’). Programme aid and balance-of-payments-support have dropped project-level conditions, but were introduced precisely as vehicles for policy-level conditions, since projects were too slow-moving for that (Saasa and Carlsson, 1996; Stokke, 1996). Conditionality remains normal.

Serious a priori arguments do exist for conditionality. For example:

An obligation to further the fulfilment of basic needs is not an obligation to make transfers which will not have that effect... recipient as well as donor duties may accompany rights: a right for poverty to be relieved also implies a duty on recipients to use aid for that purpose (Gasper, 1986: 159).

We see this later with reference to emergency relief and to gross corruption. And, says a former senior Indian civil servant who is fiercely critical of many other aspects of aid: ‘Although they bristle at the thought of northern imposition, pressure on southern governments to make [pro-poor] choices is both legitimate and necessary’ (Malhoutra, 1997: 146).
Yet we know, first, that fungibility and shunting, in economists’ appealing terms, mean that many conditions are illusory – aid permits growth of other expenditures than those specified, sometimes only to a small extent, sometimes not – and, second, that insistence on new official policy does not ensure changed ground-level practice. In the 1990s increasing attention has gone to how condition-heavy aid compares with condition-light or condition-free aid (e.g. Stokke, ed., 1995). The case for heavy conditionality does not seem to rest on evidence of its effectiveness, whether at project level, or in the first generation (that promoted economic liberalisation and structural adjustment) or second generation (centred on ‘good governance’, democracy and human rights) of 1980s and 1990s policy conditionality (ibid.; Leandro et al., 1999).

Here let us focus rather on conditionality’s legitimacy. Note for example the possible hypocrisy in imposing requirements that one does not apply at home; e.g., especially for Europeans, liberalisation of agricultural markets.\(^3\) Legitimacy and effectiveness do influence each other – conditions perceived as illegitimate are less likely to be effective, and conditions found to be ineffective will lose legitimacy – but are different; thus some illegitimate conditions could be effective. Condition-less or condition-light aid transfers seem to be rejected by donor governments in part because of the following assumptions:

1. Condition-less transfers are sometimes perceived as an admission of historic guilt, and/or as an open-ended statement of obligation within a world community. Donors have exempted themselves from historical responsibility by postulating (i) a dark view and/or extreme uncertainty as to what would have happened without colonisation; or (ii) the alleged irrelevance now of events of fifty to five hundred years ago; or because of (iii) not having held colonies themselves, with the subsidiary assumption that non-colonised/non-colonisers did not benefit from the colonial system and its supply of labour and goods (Gasper, 1986: 168-79, reviews these debates). In fact developing countries do not in general argue for historical compensation, but instead for equitable present opportunities. However, this claim too implies a structural obligation on rich countries which they reject.

2. Aid is charity, so that donors can impose on it whatever requirements they see fit.

\(^3\) Gasper (1986, section 7) considers arguments about hypocrisy and national sovereignty, and presumptions when giving advice, including possible presumptions about moral community across national borders.
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(3) Aid is donors’ money, given out of kindness to non-citizens; hence it must be used well (and donors will say what is fit and well); it is not ‘pocket money’/‘spending allowance’, and should be exhaustively accounted for.

(4) So it must be exhaustively pre-planned, and the degree of achievement of pre-set objectives must be checked ex post. Constituent assumptions here include assumptions 5, 6, 7 and 8 below.

(5) Recipients are unreliable and if left to themselves will not use funds effectively for desirable purposes.

(6) Donors know better than recipients; and donors know enough.

(7) While structural transfers are dependence-creating (though not if in the European Union’s Regional Fund?), tight project-, programme- and policy-conditionalities do not have important adverse effects on trust and recipient ownership and learning. Implicitly it might be held either that these are unimportant, or that:

(8) a passive and indebted recipient has no better options and so – regardless of liberal and democratic language in other parts of aid policy – can be dictated to, steered and driven, and will yet continue wholeheartedly trying and learning.

In many situations, some of these assumptions are questionable, sometimes all.

To consider just assumption 8, in reality recipients have feelings of dignity, react if treated as children or delinquents, and nearly always have counter-weapons. ‘The secrecy of national experts, their refusal to attend meetings, write reports or accept advice from expatriates, and their “misuse” of donor funds could all be seen as forms of resistance’ (Crewe, 1997: 75). This rings true to my experience. Such matters remain unrecorded, but an exception is Robert Klitgaard’s book *Tropical Gangsters*, an account of work as an adviser in Equatorial Guinea during 1985-88. The story is punctuated by ministers and senior officials steadily missing appointments with foreign delegations and advisers, or keeping them sweating long and hard outside in non-airconditioned anterooms.

The IMF agreement with the government stipulated that the only capital investments allowed in the government budget were ‘counterparts’ to existing foreign aid projects. Nothing but what the aid givers wanted to do, could the government do.

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44. No explanation is given for the title besides this (p.12): ‘The harsh conditions of underdevelopment encourage tropical gangsters of every variety – government, business, and international aid giver’ (if ‘giver’ is still the best term).
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So maybe the ministers were busy seeing people like us. Or maybe they were annoyed deep down at aid with so many strings and nooses attached, and avoided seeing us (Klitgaard, 1991: 27).

If one’s theory of development centres not on volumes of investment but on building confidence and capacity, people, organisations and institutions, including capacity to learn, decide and mobilise resources in one’s own unique situation, then co-determination in projects and policies is vital in place of conventional modes of aid (see e.g., Saasa and Carlsson, 1996; Schuftan, 1998a). And this theory often seems to work (see e.g. Uphoff, 1996; Klitgaard, 1991; Dere, 1997). A complementary type of capabilities theory, derived from Amartya Sen, receives much official deference currently as the basis of ‘Human Development’ thinking. But international aid seems still too little conducted in ways really focused on strengthening of capabilities.

Even if one accepts the idea of aid as charity, the form of detailed conditionality does not necessarily follow. It is condition-heavy before-and-after with intensive ex ante specification and control and intensive ex post accounting and evaluation of expenditures and outcomes. Much evidence indicates that this style’s assumptions – points 5 through 8 in our list – are all too often wrong. In addition, intensive before-and-after checking often tends to focus on pre-set programme goals which have become outdated and to miss some important effects. Condition-free/light transfers, sometimes with detailed assessment only ex post and done ‘goal-free’, may therefore often be more effective. Even small amounts offered on an easier ex ante basis might build trust.

The OECD’s Development Assistance Committee in 1996 recommended a move from the present parent-child conditionality relation-

5. Unlike conditions set unilaterally by a funder, those proposed pro-actively by the prospective recipient (perhaps backed by the expertise of various national and transnational bodies) seem immune to criticisms of illegitimacy (Schaft, 1998b).

6. Sen uses ‘capabilities’ to refer to the set of attainable lives that a person could choose between. A second sense of ‘capabilities’, as personal powers and skills, is used by Nussbaum and others, and is more relevant for us. See Gasper (1997c).

7. (a) In philosophers’ language, donors if consequentialist should adopt rule-rather than act consequentialism, i.e. adopt procedures which overall promote good results over the longer term, not seek to second-guess and control every aspect. Deontologists who put major emphasis on recipients’ dignity and rights might also accept such procedures. (b) In evaluation language, ‘goal-free’ evaluation implies no restriction to pre-set programme goals, but instead openness to the actual range of favourable and unfavourable results. It suits situations of 1) divergent stakeholder interests, where a programme’s goals might downgrade or ignore some groups, and 2) weak advance knowledge, where programme learning-by-doing and field-level innovation can create designs better than any set at the outset – in other words it suits many or most development aid situations.
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ships to donor-recipient partnership, a term adopted by, for example, the new Department for International Development under the Labour government in Britain. Advisory committees and aid agency policy statements remain some distance from aid practice, and finance and foreign affairs ministries are more powerful. But aid language is now moving in the right direction.¹

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Language and images mould our conceptions of roles. In the North, the New Right introduced the images of ‘consumers’ and (even though end-users are often not the purchasers) ‘customers’ for public services, rather than the image of citizenship, despite sometimes brandishing that term. In international aid, users are not fellow citizens, and everything remains discretionary. A policy statement such as this one from Newcastle City Council in Britain remains far removed from the style of aid relations: ‘it is unethical and ineffective to be working with people without sharing fully objectives, plans and information on which these are based’ (cited by Banks, 1995: 107). Can the image of global citizenship become a useful influence on thought and action about roles and responsibilities, or will it be rejected by ordinary citizens in more fortunate nations? For how feasible are its implicit requirements for sufficient material support to allow exercise of some rights as ‘global citizens’?

Instead, charity – in the sense of ‘giving voluntarily to those in need’ (Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1996) – has been a principle central to aid. Many now argue that it gives a weak basis, because of its lack of donor obligation and of recipient right to receive. ‘We do not want charity because it demeans. With the money earned from trade you can buy what you want. You cannot demand what you need from people who are helping you’ (Mazide N’diaye, in Barratt-Brown, 1997: 35). In the modern NGDO world to call an organisation a ‘charity’ is not a compliment. Organisations that channel charity are often seen as unbusinesslike, inefficient, condescending and disempowering to recipients, and as complacently judging themselves by the goodness of their intentions or extent of their efforts rather than by impacts. (Patton, 1997, presents this as ‘the charity model of evaluation’.) De Waal castigates ‘Charitable action [that] needs only vague principles; [since] it is driven by an emotive concern for the poor’ (1997a: 134). Allegations of self-regard go so far as to see charity (and ‘philanthropy’) as grounded in Puritan-type concerns

¹8. A Dutch policy under preparation in 1999, for aid to nineteen partner countries, will hopefully add substance to such words.
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with self-improvement through self-disciplining and partial renunciation.

The term ‘development co-operation’, successor to the more unilateral ‘aid’, has itself become suspect (see e.g. Sizoo, ed., 1993), partly because not sufficiently acted upon. The predominant practice in the 1980s and 1990s was strong conditionality and donor control, as discussed earlier. But we should operationalise a good term rather than move on again. The Sizoo study appeared to be in two minds: entitled ‘Beyond Development Cooperation’, it often also talked of ‘How can we participate in development co-operation in another way than the way in which it is currently operating?’ (p.3). These two responses, ‘beyond cooperation’ or new-style cooperation, can be combined by conceiving of co-operation with respect both to development in the South and in the North. This notion was adopted by the Netherlands on a minor scale following the Rio environment summit. The ideal is to move aid beyond short-termish project links, or longer-term patron-client relationships, towards structural partnership for the indefinite future. (Stokke, 1996: 101-3, offers an agnostic assessment.)

So one option has been to shift from a language of ‘aid’ as charity, to one of ‘international co-operation’. And one version of this shift would ground relations more clearly and supposedly more firmly in an idiom of long-term enlightened mutual interest, with negotiated framework agreements for actions in donor and recipient countries to co-manage a dangerous world of environmental threats, international migration, drug trafficking, and global crime and disease.

Another option seeks a stronger grounding of aid in binding obligations, for example to match already internationally agreed fundamental human rights. Broughton (1996: 1) declares: ‘Charity is an inadequate basis for humanitarian action and should not be carried into the next century... The fact is, internationally recognised human rights are the most coherent and forceful expression of humanitarian ideals available’. A commonly felt weakness of positions that assert binding obligations – that they seem to require nearly endless giving – can be remedied by a do-one’s-fair-share principle of contributive justice. This would be compatible with a view that the rich have, in philosophers’ language, an ‘imperfect obligation’: an obligation to provide some aid, but not an obligation to support each and every individual case of need.

Both co-operation and obligation seem a more equal basis for aid
relationships than that found in discretionary charity. ‘The peculiarity of the aid relationship... is its inequality. this means that [its] normal state of affairs is dysfunctional. There is an in-built tendency to marginalising one of the parties.’ (Saasa and Carlsson, 1996: 141). But while the co-operation option emphasises global links, only the binding obligations option implies also a version of global citizenship.

Aid will not be easily moved from the charity mode. The rich are not keen either to accept external involvement in discussing their ‘own’ affairs, or to acquire responsibilities internationally. ‘The bottom line is that donors don’t want to accept the financial obligation that would flow from the recognition of rights. Assistance as it is now structured leaves the donor in control’ (Broughton, 1996: 9). I will therefore highlight obligations entailed in development aid even on a charity basis. They will apply too in the other possible aid regimes (based in cooperative compacts or human rights) that we mentioned.

A 1997 NVCO (Netherlands Association for Culture and Development) conference on ethical choices in development cooperation featured a ‘Socratic dialogue’, or in fact polylogue. Cees Hamelink invited a panel of senior aid officials from government and non-government organisations to reflect on the appalling outcomes in certain cases where their agencies had been heavily involved, for example Rwanda/Zaire and Bosnia, as well as the thousands of avoidable child-deaths each day in poor countries; and to consider the charges against them of non-reciprocity in how they work and the requirements they impose. At the end of the two-hour polylogue he asked the panel if they personally felt any guilt. All said no.

Matters of guilt are complex; even more so in matters on such a large scale. One should not judge individuals by the groups and societies of which they are members, and which constrain and mould them (Gasper, 1986, section 6.3). I do not propose to draw conclusions easily from the NVCO panel: great risks exist of stereotyping and demonising, at the cost of thoughtful diagnosis. We can instead note how the panel members found shelter – by defining themselves into narrow constrained roles. We might see this also if we discussed other policies recommended and/or supported by donors which proved mistaken, such as cases of excessive import substituting industrialisation or misdesigned structural adjustment. Donors accept shares of the credit, but generally not shares of the blame.

In sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s, for example, some states concocted originally by colonial powers, as a frame for primary produce export, were left behind by trends in world markets and then devastated by, first, the combination of the 1970s easy lending and 1980s
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soaring interest rates, second, sweeping structural adjustment programmes enforced from Washington, based on little understanding of local conditions, and third, the ethnicisation of resource conflicts, plus botched interventions by Northern agents (de Waal, 1997b; Middleton and O’Keefe, 1998). 

For operations in the resultant ‘complex emergencies’, Slim (1997a) in effect advocates delimiting the responsibility of relief NGOs by delimiting their mission statements. In two out of four illustrative ‘scenarios’ he advises that relief agencies should follow a mission of supplying relief to those in need and not assume the responsibility for what others will do with the resources supplied. If others misuse resources provided for relief, then even if one knew for sure they would do so, that is deemed their responsibility not that of the NGOs, who should simply provide resources for relief, and not take on more than that.

This vision of responsibility and self-evaluation seems to remain at Patton’s ‘charity model’ level. Two objections arise: first, the prima facie strangeness of putting matches within reach of pyromaniacs, resources at the disposal of killers; and second, concerning a possible misconception in the generalised mission statement, which should be to provide relief, not resources regardless of whether they promote relief. We must not conflate two questions: who is responsible for killings? (the killers); and what should we do now to help? (keep the matches away). ‘We were not responsible’ does not imply ‘We should do the same again’; for the obligation must be to help, not necessarily to supply. De Waal (1997a, 1997b) warns against the inherent temtation and tendency for relief NGOs to raise and supply resources first and try to understand later, demonstrated on a tragic scale with the Rwandan refugees in Zaire and Tanzania. 10

Ethics which judge in terms of alleged moral necessity regardless of expected effects offer one way of coping with responsibility. For example, resting in one’s role as bureaucrat, following orders and especially rules, reduces stress; one’s life as an independent moral agent then begins only outside the office. Banks speaks of ‘defensive practitioners’ who stick to a safe interpretation of agency rules or their contract and no more.

10Slim in fact seems torn in two and later adopts a different language, of ‘trade-offs’, ‘fieldcraft’, pragmatism and compromise (1997a:16), rather than supplying resources regardless of how others will use them. His fourth scenario highlights misuses to which relief resources are prone, including seizure or ‘taxation’ by armies, and fuelling further war, even genocide. In some cases it can be known for sure that this is or will be the case – as in the Hutumilitia-controlled refugee camps in Zaire during 1994-96.
In contrast, ‘reflective practitioners’ (a term from Donald Schön) reflect in and on action, recognise moral conflicts and understand their sources, and take responsibility for handling them and making choices. They will for example not automatically adopt a work-style and life-style as if these were rules-of-the-office, prerogatives of the administrators of charity, but treat them instead as matters for reflection and judgement. Sections 6 and 7 will now look at such questions; Section 8 then considers how far professional codes might guide the sorts of choice we have discussed.

6. Corruption, Life-styles and Personnel

Big money, big car, big salary – they have the local people running around for them. [Comment on officials of some Northern NGOs, by a Thai participant at a 1996 IDEA global ethics conference, Aberdeen].

Donors are dominating politically, culturally, financially, methodologically and in every other respect. In my organisation we think we should cease the sending of personnel. It fosters self-interest and bureaucratic inefficiency. We should be putting money in the budget of the receiving organisations (Anton Johnston, Sida: p. 21 of Posthumus, 1997).

If I mention to ‘non-development’ acquaintances in Europe that I am writing on ‘development ethics’ the most common reaction is: ah yes, the corrupt misuse of aid, the jerry-built road washed away by the next rains, the cuts for members of the President’s family (including the President). The words ‘development’ and ‘ethics’, filtered through the Western mass-media, convey this issue alone. Conditions attached to international aid about non-corruption are indeed necessary and worth enforcing; the work of Transparency International, for example, has great importance. These conditions are however not the only concerns, and there can be a trade-off between maximum possible reduction of ‘diversion’ of funds, by fierce and frequent monitoring and auditing against fixed targets, and leaving space for people to learn and grow through trial and error. Aid staff would (like the Red Cross) not automatically report apparently criminal activity, if doing so jeopardised their primary roles.

Consider now a lavishly well-paid (especially when visiting) visiting Northern aid agency official or aid-funded adviser berating some locals for sustained abuse of aid-funded resources – perhaps a not uncommon scene (Klitgaard, 1991, recounts some versions). Some ques-
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tions arise.

– Does he or she expect Southerners to live like monks, when faced with the well-fed and well-perked Northern visitor or expatriate?\(^{11}\)
– Are the sorts of social commitments that our official or adviser would probably cite at home, as excuses for not having fulfilled other obligations, not accepted by him/her here for Southern counterparts?
– Can a different but clear form of corruption also be seen in the type and quality of work done by some visiting or longer-contract foreigners?

In each of these three respects, equality of stringency/leniency could be required, for credibility, equity and long-run effectiveness.

‘Perks and perds’ and their possible impacts deserve attention. The United Nations style *per diem* system, practised through most of the aid world, perhaps has roots in colonialism. An official sent ‘out-of-station’ is paid large amounts per day in addition to his/her salary and travel costs, in order to cover all possible hazards of life amongst the heathen and to sustain a style of life sufficient to impress upon them the status and resources of his/her organisation. Rarely is the full amount spent. But is criticism here different from, for example, the niggardly advice not to provide free drinks from an international aid budget when welcoming visitors? I think yes. The ‘no free drinks’ advice misses the point of offering hospitality and displaying friendship. The difference, besides the scale of funds involved, is that rather than bringing people together, as a reception does, the *per diem* might have both distancing and negative demonstration effects with respect to counterparts.

We must allow that individuals, from North or South, cannot organise their lives as if they were philanthropic foundations.\(^{12}\) They live as group members, employees, spouses, parents, residents, in particular contexts of expectations and obligations, whose sufficient fulfilment

\(^{11}\) Our Thai observer contrasted the big money, big car (and no doubt tax-free) NGO expatriates, with others who live like locals and build on local capacities and styles. He compared the latter group to the Thai ideal for (yes) Buddhist monks: those who lead despite having ‘no guns and no prison’.

\(^{12}\) ‘Much of contemporary moral philosophy is concerned with... agent-relative principles... such principles are central to ordinary moral thought... Typical agent-relative principles... [would] allow us to spend income on our friends rather than famine relief [DG: or rather than only on famine relief]... They may also permit each agent to devote attention to their own particular concerns in a manner disproportionate to their value considered from an impartial perspective’ (Honderich ed., 1995: 18-19; rearranged).
is a condition for their continuing membership. However, if international aid officials and consultants cannot see themselves as also involved in forms of structured moral relationship with those they advise or impose on in the course of their work, then the actual relationships are likely to be shallow, shifting and anomic. These relationships have their own minimum consistency requirements. In terms of use of aid staff’s own money and time, the principle of in any case contributing one’s fair share of a reasoned programme of support to those in extreme need (which would be more than many presently give) can form one requirement of moral consistency, when demanding commitments to equity by poor countries (Gasper, 1986: 182-6). Failure to do so could affect even credibility to oneself.

The biggest contribution and duty we should expect from foreign staff remains in the quality of their work. Expatriates, short-term and long-term, consume a great proportion of aid and can vitally affect (well or badly) the capacititation and empowerment of local staff. We often read statements of the type ‘Over 70% of X’s so-called aid is spent in X or on X’s nationals’. A Norwegian professional working for NORAD in Mozambique, or a Dutch aid scholarship for studies in the Netherlands, are indeed examples of tied aid, a form of conditionality: the goods or services must be sourced from the donor country and may thus be more expensive than from the open market. But they are still of significant potential benefit to the recipient and the main question is instead how well do they function, technically and in fitting with local needs and capacititation.13

The answer overall is hard to judge, but the answer in specific cases is often disturbing. Neither innocuous nor rare are highly experienced, skilled, but cynical foreign consultants (‘which conclusion would you like?’; see e.g. Gasper, 1987). Klitgaard’s unusually public, human and frank Tropical Gangsters contains a sad parade of too many useless aid-funded advisers: incompetent, easily discouraged, self-serving, or all of these. Take just two cases: ‘Stanley’, the Canadian mining and hydrocarbons expert, whose work day ran from 9.30 to 12 and 1.30 to 3, ending at the local lunch time; and ‘Jean’, the French consultant hired from aid funds, who ‘would bomb back to Paris once every month or so, flying first class from Douala (“It is the company’s

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13 Crewe (1997:61) reports: ‘Africa, Asia and South/Central America have over 150,000 expatriate residents or visitors working in development projects’. To give perspective, for a population of say 4.5 billion people this is equivalent to 150 expatriate residents or visitors in a country with the population of Norway or Denmark. Crewe identifies common problems with external short term staff, but extends the arguments too automatically to resident expatriates, helped by her use of ‘expatriate’ to cover both types.
policy”, he said)’ (p.177).

Consider four (out of more) possibilities. Situations vary of course across time, place, and sector.

(1) Local staff are available, and better (because of greater local knowledge and sensitivity) or equally good and cheaper. So expatriates should not be used. Crewe (1997) and Chambers (1997a) recount the misconceptions and exaggerations in the 1980s by Northern staff concerning deforestation in the South (blamed on residents’ collection of fuelwood), and the aid-funded wave of mis-oriented ‘better’ stove projects in which foreigners displaced local professionals, after which the projects were abandoned. Crewe adds that locally designed stoves are now selling well in many countries, oriented to actual consumer needs.

(2) The same as case (1) except that the foreign donor finds it less easy to work and keep influence through local staff, yet will be held accountable at home. To exemplify one common practice, Crewe describes her appointment as the inexperienced foreign ‘advisor’ to much more experienced domestic professional counterparts. Though sometimes innocuous, this use of external ‘experts’ can help to apparently depoliticise decision-making – while in reality restoring it to the powerful, who choose and steer the ‘experts’. (Crewe mistakes the practice for a consequence of the category ‘development’, but it is more widespread.) Even in terms of their own present criteria, donors should judge by ex post results, not seek solace through rituals of ex ante control; the implication may be to use locals more often.

(3) Local staff are not more effective, nor more cost-effective; but can become so after a training-and-transition period that includes learning-by-doing and almost certainly some trial-and-error. Implication: train and support.

(4) Local staff are not, and will not become, more effective or cost-effective, but employing them transfers money to a poor country (and, usually, to previously relatively poor people?) rather than to a Northern bank account. Implications here depend on, inter alia, the scale of the performance difference, the importance of the work concerned, and the degree of significance of exposing Northerners to sustained periods of work in the South. This last factor arises for the other cases too; its weight depends partly on how far the Northerners watch and learn in the South and communicate back in the North.
Other possibilities exist too, when Northern staff perform valuable training and capacity-building roles, or when mixed teams have advantages. Overall, however, the analysis tends towards a general policy of phased, but not total, localisation — as is happening. In some countries programmes are largely operated now through local staff and local consultants. This trend occurs even within a perspective of aid as discretionary charity, where funders have no obligations such as a duty to co-operate and work through local nationals. Many consider the pace of transfer too slow. It might occur faster if aid were seen instead as an ‘imperfect obligation’, where one has a duty to help even though no obligation to help any given country or case. Acknowledgement of duty might bring perception of co-operation as a constituent obligation.

7. Power, Work-styles and Personal Relations

...our mission’s leader had sternly lectured a group of ministers in a classroomlike setting at the Ministry of Education. He had simply laid down the law... In order to receive the loan for the economic rehabilitation project, Equatorial Guinea had been obliged to agree to a number of conditions... These measures made sense, but I recalled how some of them were invented: in a suite at the Impala fifteen months ago, in something of the fashion of ‘Let’s see, what else would be a good idea...’ (Klitgaard, 1991: 73).

Aid and aid work require supportive attitudes. This is one benefit of exposure of Northerners in the South (and vice versa), though not to be pursued by displacing well-suited Southerners from jobs. The popularity of direct personal sponsoring of children and schools in poor countries might have lessons too. An approach to aid as if it did not concern people and build friendships (not just ‘friendship’ as in the solidarity slogans) may get into trouble.

I earlier cited Klitgaard’s Tropical Gangsters as illustrating the superiority of aiding and supporting local ownership of policies and projects. In a bifurcated colonial concoction state in the 1980s, enmeshed in structural economic crisis and years-long unresolved negotiations with the IMF, a locally owned and grounded policy framework gradually takes shape with the help of a sympathetic for-
eign advisor, and an agreement with the Fund is finally reached. In parallel to that account the book presents Klitgaard’s relationships as an individual – at work, at play, friendly, ‘businesslike’, neutral, conflictual, and combinations of these. The parallelism is not for light relief, ‘human interest’ around a ‘real’ narrative of disembodied decision processes and impersonal socio-economic action. Rather it suggests the contribution of personal relations in establishing trust and helping strengthen capacities.

Klitgaard’s intimate account of his work illustrates this theme more memorably than could generalities. We do not have to like Klitgaard or make him a moral exemplar to yet see lessons. He is a structural adjuster. He recounts his friendships with attractive local young ladies, oblivious of possible local reactions (male Guinean friends of the same age as the bevy of ladies are little visible in the book). And, working in a key position in a miserably poor country, in effect almost equally involved in life and death matters as Slim’s anguished NGO personnel, Klitgaard writes less of dilemmas (though something on those) or guilt, and more of surfing and partying. Depression and angst are probably not qualities demanded for ‘hardship postings’, rather an ability to work with others.

Centrally, the story conveys how relations with counterparts matter; in his case with a set of ministers. Early on Klitgaard describes the orthodox model of interaction. A World Bank delegation lectures eight sullen ministers like naughty schoolboys.

Greetings were exchanged but their faces weren’t smiling... One had his brow knotted in what looked like anger... Most were listening with their arms crossed. Heinz was laying it on them: the need for maintenance, the need for repairs, the need for a change of mentality about capital goods...

Heinz finally finished. The Foreign Minister thanked him and asked the others for their comments. One minister complained that the amount of the proposed loan was too small. The Vice Minister of Finance said the project should be administered by the Ministry of Finance and should involve fewer expatriates. Heinz commented back. Then the meeting ended, stiffly. Class was over... (p.46)

[According to a Latin American member of the later IMF-World

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15 Klitgaard ruefully records a visitor’s comment: ‘You guys have so much more money than they do. All the women want you because you have money and status and access to culture and fun and things that are just impossible for them to get otherwise. You have your projects with your offices and you have your trips back home. You have too much power’ (p.198).
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Bank delegation:] ‘All the power is in the hands of a clique from Mongomo. The country is very corrupt... You have to treat [the leaders] just like little children.... Don’t discuss or show a lack of resolve, just tell them exactly what to do (p.73).’

If the two premises, on power-holding and corruption, were valid in general for Equatorial Guinea, the proposed corollary – dictate, don’t discuss – is not. The ministers with whom Klitgaard works are dedicated to their country (and understand it better than nearly any foreigner), intelligent, assiduous, determined, and not willing to be treated as children. Rendering them powerless, if even possible, would not build legitimacy and capacity. The alternative model of interaction worked better, for all; but required skill, effort and goodwill.

Barriers include mutual stereotyping. This is worse and more culpable on the funders’ side but present on both.” Practices of blaming the victim (linked to often derisory levels of historical knowledge) and self-idealisation are common on the funder side, even though staff only administer (and share in) the aid funds, not provide them. ‘Giving builds up the ego of the giver, makes him superior and higher and larger than the receiver’, warned John Steinbeck (1951: lxiv; cited by Klitgaard, 1991: 13).

Thus a more downbeat, and more typical, example than Klitgaard’s is the ham-fisted imposition by Sida of its own version of the logical framework approach [LFA] for its projects (its projects). In parallel to increasing talk of local ownership, building local capacity and so on, low-trust management imposes more and more, time-consuming, even humiliating, compulsory procedures upon recipients. Each donor specifies its own required versions and Sida was not an exception – other than in later presenting critical reflections on its own behaviour (Gasper, 1997b: 4-5).

ROPPS [result-oriented planning and project management; the Sida version of LFA] thus became one of many methods and systems which different donors have more or less forced on recipient countries (Rylander, 1995: 6).

In some of the examples...it is clear that Sida’s attitude has not

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16. The IMF repeatedly humiliates the government by declaring unacceptable the expenditures for it to take its turn to host the annual meeting of the Central African Economic Union.

17. ‘Europeans think in dichotomies, we don’t’, declares a distinguished African scholar, self-refutingly (quoted in Posthumus, 1997:15). Klitgaard (in a chapter on ‘Them and Us’) and Crewe give insights into mutual stereotyping and foreign staff tactics to claim superiority.
been characterised by respect for its Zambian and Zimbabwean partners in cooperation... there does not seem to be a ‘corrective mechanism’ which comes into action when unreasonable requirements have been made... a lack of respect for the development aspirations of the partner countries can be a ‘killing factor’ for the LFA method (ibid.: 18).

This applies for development aid in general.

8. Guidelines, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct?

The types of choice and indeed dilemma we have looked at are standard fare in professional ethics. We cannot eliminate tensions and trade-offs. My commentary above contains conflicting suggestions, such as on when to enforce conditions and when not. But codes and guidelines could make us more conscious and skilled in coping with the difficulties.

Banks considers that the idea of professional codes prioritises a professional’s role qua professional. She notes in turn three views of being a professional (1995: 123): (i) as an official: the bureaucrat; (ii) as seller of highly skilled services: the independent professional; and (iii) as servant or even missionary: the committed idealist, whose ideals may concern inter-personal relations and/or structural change. The committed idealist role has suffered from the apparent implication, largely unworkable and perhaps even undesirable, that we should each spend most of our energies and incomes striving to reduce suffering. More workable and justifiable could be a duty that we each do our fair share (Gasper, 1986). In general, a competent practitioner understands and seeks to balance the various roles and values.

Let us distinguish four broad types of code or guidelines.

‘Pointers’ or informal guidelines point out issues and provide general advice; they involve neither absolute rulings nor an enforcement mechanism.

Codes of ethics are more formalised statements of general principles that can help provide identity and morale to a profession and a framework for more detailed codes of practice. Some are simply more formalised guidelines. Others are directive codes of ethics and become in places more determinate: certain types of action are absolutely prescribed or proscribed. In both variants there may be an enforcement mechanism for some matters (such as for plagiarism or mis-reporting of research results).

Codes of practice provide detailed guidance and regulations about
many aspects of procedure (e.g. also about how and how much consultants should charge). They are often specific to a particular agency or sector.\textsuperscript{18}

For the types of ethical issues in the conduct of aid that we have looked at in this paper I suggest that useful ethical guidelines are possible. Codes of practice in specific aid agencies, NGOs, consultancy organisations and so on could sometimes help too; but that is not my focus. I have doubts whether an effective general code of ethics more detailed and directive than guidelines is attainable, for reasons I will explain. However, experience with ethical codes and guidelines for development and relief is fairly recent. So I will refer to the nature of the aid cases that we have looked at, and to the longer and better studied experience with codes and guidelines in some possibly comparable fields of work.

Millerson (1964; summarised by Banks, 1995) looked at several professions and proposed factors relevant to having a code of ethics, including the following.

– The setting of the practice. A professional working alone needs guidance more than does an individual in an institutional setting, since the latter takes few decisions independently, Yet we must note the possibility of what professional ethics now calls ‘administrative evil’ in bureaucracies, and both the importance and difficulty of ‘whistleblowing’.
– When trust relationships should prevail between professional and user, especially trust concerning life and property.
– High complexity of techniques involved. Codes can remind professionals to provide the best service, and counterbalance users’ limited understanding.
– Direct contact with user. Direct personal contact can be abused (by either side).

Broadly these factors concern practitioners’ need for guidance and clients’ need for protection.

Each factor sometimes applies in international aid, but often not. Millerson was preoccupied with the type of profession that deals with individual user-clients. International aid’s distance from its user-clients – they are not even fellow citizens, and are increasingly handled via Southern intermediary organisations – might raise both the dangers of unethical behaviour and the difficulties of countering it. Also

\textsuperscript{18}For example a draft code of conduct for NGDOs appeared in South Africa in 1997; NGDOs in Bangladesh reportedly agreed a code in 1995.
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usually less applicable to international aid are other predisposing factors: that a group of professionals aspires to be treated as a recognised profession; and seeks integration and a stronger shared identity, through a statement of values. Millerson added that introduction of a code is much harder when – as found in aid – there are no standardised forms of training, qualification, employment and work.

The substantial experience with codes in a partly comparable quasi-professional and inter-disciplinary field, social work, gives us a fuller impression of the matters codes can cover and warnings of the difficulties involved. Social workers in the North, argues Banks, are meant to tidy up around some of the contradictions of advanced capitalism. This bridge role, trying to help people who cannot cope by themselves and prevent them from becoming harmful to society, is attempted within very limited budgets and little scope for structural reform to reduce causes of the problems. It produces a stress-ridden and unloved profession. They become scapegoats for the tensions and hypocrisies of their societies, often attacked either as heavy-handed instruments of paternalism or as ineffective slaves to procedure who intervene too little and too late. Might one draw a comparable picture for aid workers internationally?

As surveyed by Banks, drawing on several other authors, experience with ethics codes in social work has been problematic:

- Some codes offer long, pious, ad hoc, poorly ordered lists of values (e.g. without distinctions between levels). These problems reflect standard cognitive and political difficulties in specifications of goals, though some improvement in ordering and logic is usually possible.
- Long lists of principles, even if well-ordered, do not always help much: the principles are typically vague and/or often conflicting or cry out for exceptions. They serve then like proverbs, as a reminder or first intimation of ethical issues.
- Enforcement is very difficult, due to shortage of information. Rules and stated duties cannot substitute for attitudes of caring, compassion, and sympathy. To have more influence, codes should be part of initial and ongoing training which draws links between cases and principles.
- Values tend to be partly distinctive to each profession; it is harder to specify codes for multi-disciplinary teams.
- Similarly, the more diversity in values there is between users and

\[19\] In social studies, a requirement of informed consent for research from those studied surely cannot extend to research on corruption, for example.
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professionals, and the more that users are supposed to be involved, the harder it becomes to write codes: ‘To the extent that the professions are now expected to work through the community rather than on it, the position of codes of ethics has shifted from the centre of professional life to the margins’ (Downie and Calman, 1987: 244; cited by Banks, 1995: 88-9).

Concerning the values covered, the social work experience carries a further warning. The codes stress relations to users and are near-silent on structural roots of social dysfunction. Responses to wider causal forces and injustices receive little or no attention, although most codes mention a commitment to social justice (Banks, 1995: 77). The relevant analogy for us would be a code or guidelines for development aid professionals that said little or nothing on potential roles and responsibility in trying to influence Northern policies, structures and ideologies which counteract and vastly outweigh development aid.

An underlying question concerns the meaning of being a professional: is it a calling, a lifetime vocation, or just a job? System reform is likely to place demands outside a forty-hour work week. The issues apply in development aid too: should one’s personal life and professional life embody the same principles (as proposed in the Swedish social workers’ code), or is personal life quite separate (as in some other codes), or at least partly separate, so that one can more easily survive as a member with ties and obligations in one’s own milieu?

In international development circles, guidelines and codes of ethics are often viewed sceptically. There can be no universal instructions book; each situation is unique. Directive codes are liable to become too definite, and to breed cynicism through their innumerable exceptions and lack of enforcement. Clear-cut rules can be too simple, a source of (‘defensive practitioner’) comfort more than of good choices, as was warned earlier for the case of relief NGOs. Guidelines attempt less and may achieve more. Unlike uniform answers, general principles do not mandate uniform treatment; they must combine with

2020. At the 1997 Netherlands NVCO conference on ‘Moral Choices in Development Co-operation’, a draft Code of Conduct for Development Workers (dating from 1993) brought forth doubts from Southern participants: what can codes do without enforcement mechanisms and sanctions? what can they do if hearts are untouched? (Posthumus, 1997:28). The Code contained: (a) very brief sets of guiding values; (b) proposed ‘Guidelines’, four pages of ‘should’ and ‘should not’ which in my terms are closer to a directive Code of Conduct and came with the idea of (c) a Commission to rule on complaints. It received much criticism and remains unadopted. Illustrating a different approach was the report for NVCO on ‘Beyond Development Cooperation’ (Sizoo, ed., 1993), which offered not a Code but reflections on issues, more lively in both content and style and possibly more effective.
case specifics to generate any conclusions.

The relevant criterion is not: are guidelines a sufficient tool to resolve all ethical problems, but instead: can they help? Some sets of guidelines are extremely brief, no more than a list of good intentions. But other cases show that more can be said without vacuity. The British Sociological Association’s Statement of Ethical Practice is fuller and more helpful, while clear that its role is ‘to inform members’ ethical judgements rather than to impose on them an external set of standards. The purpose is to make members aware of the ethical issues that may arise in their work, and to encourage them to educate themselves and their colleagues to behave ethically (BSA, 1996: 1); thus, in Schön’s terms, to become ‘reflective practitioners’.

Guidelines, well prepared, should help. They will require a mixed content, with attention to (deontological concerns with) treating persons with respect, and (consequentialist concerns with) promoting good effects, including where necessary through system-reform. The mid-1990s Code of Conduct for disaster response programmes, adopted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and many relief NGOs, and the follow-up proposal for an ombudsman to encourage and guide application of the code, to a large extent fit this description, as examples of formalised guidelines. For ‘Humanitarian emergencies... do not lend themselves to clear, explicit rules and set-piece enforcement procedures... an ombudsman ideally should...fulfil the roles of monitor, facilitator and advocate of reform... rather than as a controlling or policing agent’ (OPWG, 1998: 23-24). The few exceptions to this style in the Code reflect the traditional Red Cross absolute rejection of pursuing a political agenda – and indeed what else could be said publicly?

Guidelines and codes are not a substitute for attitudes of care and qualities of character; rules have to be interpreted, and are sometimes lacking or inadequate, and many matters lie beyond the realm of obligation. We need to attend to ethics of care and ethics of character as well as ethics of justice.22

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21 E.g. the Society for Applied Anthropology’s Statement on Professional and Ethical Responsibilities, or the ethics statement from the U.K. Political Studies Association.
22 ‘Ethics of care’ have been advocated by some feminist philosophers as an alternative to rule-seeking ‘ethics of justice’. ‘Ethics of virtue’ stress the role of good character; Slote (1995) notes various types, for example where virtues supplement general rules, as dispositions to obey the rules or behave in ways that further the goals adopted in the rules, or in skilled and well-motivated interpretation and use of the rules in cases. In some usages, virtue is conducive to going beyond duty (Gasper, 1986: 182-3, 197-8).
9. Review and Conclusion

In discussing ethics of development aid, I considered it as part of an emergent quasi-professional ethics around an existing quasi-professional field of development practice and theory. There was little work on the ethics of aid until about the mid 1970s. Its growth since then reflects New Right attacks on cross-border concessional transfers; increasing criticism from the South; various doubts and disappointments in the aid world, for example during the 1990s in ‘complex emergencies’; and increased concern about ethical dilemmas and risks from misjudged action (Section 2). The rise of NGDOs has created a larger market for explicit aid ethics, including guidance on the delicate issues of operating style, not only issues of whether, how much, and for which countries and activities. By the late 1990s the body of work on aid ethics has become extensive and diverse. The questions we have touched on each deserve whole books, and can lead us to further matters concerning ideologies, power, and control of knowledge (see the sombre concluding analysis in Saasa and Carlsson, 1996).

I have concentrated on issues about the manner and conditions under which aid is provided, with reference to how these are influenced by conceptions of the moral basis for aid (Section 3). Most donors accept little effective responsibility (except when there are successes). Rich country donors have adopted self-interest and charity as the basis more often than obligation. The charity stance – that aid is not given as duty nor received as of right – has influenced how aid has been disbursed and evaluated: usually subject to numerous conditions and to be accounted for in every detail with reference to pre-set input and output targets. The obligations are held to be the recipient’s, to do as advised and show one has done so; except for the donor’s obligation – to its fund providers – to check how the funds are spent.

Tensions exist between growing awareness of our limited understanding and control, and hence of the risks of doing harm (Sections 2, 3, 5), and the tendency still to seek security and certainty through detailed pre-set plans and conditions (Section 4). I argued that this tendency rests on insecure assumptions, of strong and superior donor knowledge and unreliable yet controllable recipients. Considerable evidence exists regarding the superiority of co-determination in aided projects and policies, for mobilising information, ideas and commitment and for strengthening capabilities – thanks to its acceptance of recipient rights and dignity.

I further suggested in Sections 4 through 7 that even a charity view of aid brings important obligations concerning manner of operation. Obligations of moral consistency could include (i) to not demand that
others do what one is not willing to practise oneself. A general obligation of effectiveness requires more specifically that (ii) donors be oriented to achievements, not only conscience-salving through the ‘performance’ of accountability rituals. And it then seems to imply that (iii) ex post evaluation be wide-ranging and learning-oriented; (iv) aid-ers should work with others by treating them as people, adults, and in collegial fashion, not in general as children or delinquents; and, typically (v) should co-operate and work through local nationals. These last two claims are contingent on various considerations influencing effectiveness, rather than being inherent obligations – a status that some people might however grant them on other moral grounds.

Charity will retain a role even in a world with aid reconceptualised in ‘development compacts’ or regimes of human rights. Its other directly relevant dictionary meaning is: ‘kindness, benevolence’. Further meanings are ‘tolerance in judging others’ and ‘love of one’s fellow humans’, holding others dear. Charity is non-obligatory, discretionary, and commendable, a virtue. The ‘do-your-share’ principle matches what is feasible as a universal codified requirement; but supererogatory generosity remains desirable. When we look at development organisations, they typically rely on generosity in giving of oneself; in time and spirit not merely money. In both government and non-government milieus, from global to local, the assiduous and inspiring leader – say a James Grant, Mahbub Ul Haq, Mohammed Yunus – who, for example, defines, designs and brokers share-arrangements, remains vital.

I suggested finally that there is indeed scope for useful guidelines on aid ethics in the sense of pointers, advice and sometimes attention-commanding indicative codes; and raised some doubts whether codes of a more definite directive type will have the subtlety, flexibility, and vivacity required (Section 8). I wonder how frequently we can sustain conclusions of ‘Always do A, never do Z’. Consider again the question of appropriate levels of hospitality using development aid funds. Creating a suitable ethos requires good judgement rather than directive codes and statutes. Such a choice of approach is comparable to that for a reflective rather than a defensive practitioner stance. ‘Guidelines’ in my usage are ways to promote discussion, not (unlike directive codes) to substitute for it. They are only one way, and are not self-implementing. Other ways to widen or refresh awareness of issues and options are essential too, plus promoters of action, otherwise guidelines alone will gather dust on the shelves.
Ethics and the Conduct of International Development Aid

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Summary

Des Gasper, ‘Ethics and the Conduct of International Development Aid: Charity and Obligation’, *Forum for Development Studies*, 1999: 1, pp. 23-57. Ethical debate around development aid has gradually grown and diversified, and a field that spans some aspects of policy, organisational and personal practice has partly emerged. After characterising this trend, the paper considers: (1) The key question of the types of obligation, if any, involved in aid, is aid purely charity and beyond obligation(s)? What do different views here imply for roles and conditions in aid? (2) The significance in aid, especially technical cooperation, of inter-personal relations and work-style and life-style issues. (3) Whether specified ethical guidelines and codes for aid organisations and aid workers could be worthwhile? The paper suggests that even a charity mode of aid entails important obligations concerning manner of operation, and that helpful guidelines are possible. Whether directive codes will help is more open to doubt.
Market Ethics as Global Ethics

Desmond McNeill

1. Introduction

The process of development tends to be strongly associated with a process of increasing incorporation into a global market. Development, it seems, necessarily entails entering into the market – and thereby accepting its premises and associated norms. The market is closely associated with the capitalist system, and within development studies it has by some been criticised for increasing inequality and marginalisation.\(^1\) Power in the market certainly lies with those with economic power, purchasing power. But who has power over the market? Does anyone make the rules, or have the power to change them? Though some benefit in material terms from the market, and some lose, we are all, I suggest, in its thrall – all subject to its norms. My concern in this article is with these norms: with the ethics of the market system, and the effect of its increasing spread. It is widely recognised that incorporation into the market entails a process of increasing homogenisation – in terms of products and of labour, for example. Less well recognised, but no less important, is the homogenisation of norms and values that incorporation into the market also entails.

More and more interpersonal interactions, I suggest, are market transactions, and the market is increasingly ‘global’ in the sense that it

\(^1\)The first draft of this article was presented at the 1998 Annual Conference of the Norwegian Association for Development Research on Development Ethics.

1. A political economy analysis of the process of development has laid emphasis on the exploitative aspect of the market. By contrast, modernisation theory has emphasised the positive role that the market plays in economic growth. For an overview of differing theories see, for example, Hetne (1990) or Rist (1997). In recent years, the focus has to some extent shifted from processes of development to globalisation. Also in recent years, an overriding policy issue has been the roles of the market and the state, and attempts have been made to determine a role for so-called ‘civil society’, as some kind of alternative to, or mediator between, the two. (See, for example, the World Bank Development Report 1997.) In response, perhaps, to the seeming lack of alternatives to the capitalist system, and the self-doubts of old Marxists, there has also been a return to some of the fundamental issues concerning development: questions of value and ethics.
transcends national boundaries and national – and even international – control. There are other important dimensions of the process of globalisation, most notably, perhaps, the cultural dimension. And in recent years, largely in response to such processes, there has been concern with what have been called ‘global ethics’. Do they exist, should they exist? If by global ethics we mean universal ethics, ethics for all people of all cultures, then I suggest that the ethics of the market-place increasingly constitute such a universal ethic. The adoption of a market system and its associated values is both an economic and a cultural phenomenon, yet we ourselves seem to be hardly aware of it. And this phenomenon is manifest at many levels: from the family, through the neighbourhood and the enterprise, to the nation and the globe. The process of development carries with it a process of adoption of market norms. If there is such a thing as global ethics, I suggest, then they are – like it or not – the ethics of the market. My purpose here is to elaborate this claim, and to assess its implications.

I shall distinguish between the market as a theoretical construct in economics, and the market as a (social) institution, in order to draw some conclusions about the morality of the market system. My main hypothesis can be briefly stated as follows: the most convincing ethical argument currently being made in favour of the market is its neutrality. Whether the market is in fact neutral may be disputed. But if one accepts this claim, it implies that the market is amoral, rather than immoral, and there remain, I suggest, two objections to allowing the market ethic to prevail. The first is that this is an abrogation of moral responsibility. It implies delegating decisions of major social and material significance to powers which are beyond our control, and whose outcome is uncertain. Second, the neutrality of the market comes at a cost in social and human terms; social relations between persons are replaced by contractual relations between economic agents.

The anthropologist Marshall Sahlins stated in his introduction to the recent report of the World Commission on Culture and Development: ‘It is meaningless to talk of the relation between culture and the economy since the economy is a part of a people’s culture’ (WCCD, 1995: 21). A similar point was made earlier by the economic historian Karl Polanyi: ‘The outstanding discovery of recent historical and cultural anthropology is that the market, in the sense in which it is usually understood, is not an ancient, eternal, natural institution, but a modern invention, peculiar to certain historical and cultural situations, and indeed at bottom the most important effect of a particular set of historical and cultural situations’ (Polanyi, 1944: 29).

2. This issue is much discussed in the report of the World Commission on Culture and Development ‘Our Creative Diversity’, 1995.
3. I shall discuss definitions of ‘the market’ below. There arises, inevitably, a problem of reification which I do not fully avoid. (If, as I claim, the market is a social phenomenon, an institution whose existence derives from the shared beliefs and values of a large number of people, then is it not dangerous – indeed wrong – to treat it as a thing?)
anthropological research is that man’s economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships’ (Polanyi, 1957: 46). This so-called embeddedness of the economy has important implications which I believe merit further analysis.

One may find it easy to agree with Sahlins’ assertion when applied to a traditional society – of desert nomads or forest hunter-gatherers. I maintain that it applies equally to our own, where the market system is a part, indeed, I suggest, the dominant part, of our culture, shaping the quality of our social relationships. And the system is intimately linked to economics – which defines the terms in which it is studied. But the discipline of economics is asocial and ahistorical. In other words, it takes little or no account of the social context within which activities occur. This way of perceiving the world not only reflects but also reinforces the market system.

All countries of the world are, today, part of the global market system. And even in the poorest countries more and more individuals are being drawn into the national market system, and hence the international also. Peasant subsistence is being replaced by the marketing of crops and the selling of labour. And at the other end of the scale, in the richest countries, the same process continues, as I shall demonstrate below. There are undoubtedly many merits in the market system, and many valuable insights to be gained from the academic discipline of economics. But I suggest that it is important to retain the human dimension in our lives, and to recognise the alienating, desocialising effect of the market.

In the media, and in some of the writings on the post-modern condition, especially in response to the Reagan and Thatcher years, the merits and evils of the market have of course been much in focus. But academic writing on the market has been surprisingly limited (see below). In this article I shall make some reference to work that has been done, and attempt to steer a course between the analytical and the normative, although I do not believe that the two can, or should, be fully separated. And I shall draw upon contributions by different academic disciplines to this debate: economics, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. But first I shall briefly underpin my claim that the scope of the market has been increasing over time.

2. The Scope of the Market

A brief historical introduction
A truly historical study of the market should perhaps begin with Aristotle who, in a famous passage in the Nicomachean Ethics, sought to comprehend the phenomenon of exchange and money, and
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to examine how relations between persons were affected by (and indeed reflected in) what would today be called market transactions. His text has confused commentators and has been the subject of various interpretations; but there can be little doubt that he was describing a society which, to use the words of Evans-Pritchard in his introduction to Mauss’s *The Gift*: ‘exchange of goods was not a mechanical but a moral transaction, bringing about and maintaining human, personal, relationships between individuals and groups’ (Mauss, 1970: ix). Over the centuries, there has been a very gradual shift – if one can trace the society which Aristotle described through to our own – from a society in which the emphasis was on persons and relations between persons, to one in which the emphasis is on things and relations between things (McNeill, 1990: 65).

It would be wrong to claim that Aristotle cast judgement – either positive or negative – on the market; rather he sought to comprehend a novel phenomenon in terms of the norms of his own society. But moving forward about two millennia to the eighteenth century, we find that the market was seen by writers such as Montesquieu and Tom Paine, as a very positive influence, as Hirschman has described so well in his article ‘Rival Views of Market Society’.

‘(Commerce) is a pacific system, operating to cordialise mankind, by rendering Nations as well as individuals, useful to each other ... The invention of commerce ... is the greatest approach towards universal civilization that has yet been made by any means not immediately flowing from moral principles’ (Paine, quoted in Hirschman, 1992: 108).

By contrast, Marx, writing in nineteenth century Britain, was very critical of the capitalist system, both in material terms as pauperising, but also in social terms. He was also critical of the role of economics in supporting this system. Marx began his political commitment to the critique of the capitalist system, as well as demonstrating his analytical approach, in almost his first written work, an article in the *Rheinische Zeitung* on the ‘Debate on the Theft of Wood in the Rhine-land Assembly’. A central point in this article was the link between the institution of private property, and more broadly market capitalism, and morality: Marx developed these ideas in his subsequent work: in

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4. As Finley notes ‘The first principle of a market economy is, of course, indifference to the persons of the buyer and seller: that is what troubles most commentators on Aristotle’ (Finley, 1970: 8).

5. He quotes Montesquieu’s ‘The Spirit of the Laws’ in a similar vein: ‘Commerce ... polishes and softens barbaric ways as we can see every day’ (Hirschman, 1992: 107).

6. As Lukes points out in his study of Marx and morality, there is a paradox in Marx who, though opposed to moralizing, yet was ‘fired by outrage and indignation and the
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regard to politics, sociology, philosophy and economics. The concepts of fetishism (which he first referred to in this early article) and alienation were fundamental to Marx’s powerful critique of the very categories of economic thought. (McNeill, 1988). And he attempted to achieve a grand synthesis in his labour theory of value.\textsuperscript{7} What is perhaps most relevant here is the concept of alienation. For Marx notes how, under market capitalism, the individual is alienated from other individuals; how society becomes atomised through the forces of the market.

But, as Hirschman notes, the perception that ‘Everything was passing into commerce; all social bonds were dissolved through money’ did not originate with Marx. ‘Over a century earlier it was the essence of the conservative reaction to the advance of market society, voiced during the 1730s in England by the opponents of Walpole and Whig rule’ (Hirschman, 1992: 112). The argument, whether of Marx or the conservative thinkers of earlier times, was against the negative impact of capitalism on social relations. A variety of metaphors were used to describe the effect of what Karl Polanyi was to call the ‘juggernaut market’ on ancient social norms, ranging from “the outright “dissolving” to “erosion”, “corrosion”, “contamination”, “penetration”, and “intrusion”” (Hirschman, 1992: 113). Hirschman’s explanation for the eclipse of the positive view of the market in the nineteenth century is that it became a victim of the Industrial Revolution, which brought about severe dislocation to social life. ‘It was widely felt that a new revolutionary force had arisen in the very center of capitalist expansion. That force was often characterized as wild, relentless, unbridled... Only with regard to international trade was it still asserted from time to time, usually as an afterthought, that expanding transactions would bring, not only mutual material gains, but also some fine by-products in the cultural and moral realms, such as intellectual cross-fertilization and mutual understanding and peace’ (Hirschman, 1992: 18).

Thus, according to Hirschman, earlier commentators argued that commerce may replace non-existing or antagonistic relations between individuals or social groups and have a mutually positive effect.\textsuperscript{8} But, later commentators argued that relations of commerce and exchange desire for a better world that it is hard not to see as moral’ (Lukes, 1985: 3).

\textsuperscript{7}Although I am critical of Marx’s labour theory of value, and his ‘scientific’ proof of the exploitation of surplus value, I find much of his critique of the economic system and the attendant economic categories quite compelling, and in many respects still applicable today. But I cannot say the same for his analysis of precapitalist forms.

\textsuperscript{8}This argument has been used to reject the imposition of trade boycotts between countries. It could apply also to very distinct groups within a nation potentially divided along, for example, tribal or ethnic lines.
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may be replaced by capitalist relations of ownership and control with potentially negative effects; and that market relations replace existing social relations which may be harmonious and positive. The central point is that the merits of the market cannot be judged in isolation, but only in relation to that which it replaces. The market is undoubtedly a powerful institution which is increasingly dominating our lives, at different levels: the family, the neighbourhood, the enterprise, the nation and the globe. I will briefly discuss each in turn.

From the family to the globe

In modern society, an increasing number of tasks which used to be undertaken by family members have now entered the market: care of the elderly, for example, or childcare. And the duties of parents are even being seen as responsibilities enforceable by law, with children even suing their parents for failing to carry them out properly. What is lost in this process are personal relations which may also be valued. Social and personal relations (between persons) are replaced by economic and legal relations. Such relations may be unequal, according to some system of values, and indeed, as the philosopher Elizabeth Anderson notes: ‘Some feminist theory ‘locates a source of women’s oppression in the personal sphere’ and some feminists have also criticised personal heterosexual relations for not conforming more to market norms’ (Anderson, 1993: 152). But Anderson disagrees: ‘The ideals of intimacy and commitment provide a perspective from which to radically criticize what currently goes on there (in the personal sphere)’ (Anderson, 1993: 152-3).

Within a neighbourhood social ties are generally weaker than in the family, but similar issues arise. As I live in Norway, and with a child in the school band, it is impossible to resist giving the example of the ‘dugnad’ – collaborative voluntary work carried out to, for example, organise a concert or raise money for new musical instruments. Why not buy a cake for the lottery instead of baking it oneself? Why not simply give money to the band instead of organising jumble sales? The answer is that something is thereby lost – a sense of community. The recent massive, and sometimes ill-directed, interest in the concept of ‘social capital’ is, I suggest, explicable not solely by reference to

9. I do not have the space here to discuss recent work on intra-family economics, some of it inspired by the economist Gary Becker, who has sought – in some cases very effectively – to demonstrate how decisions concerning, for example, marriage and birth are taken on economic grounds (Becker, 1976). These, I maintain, are ‘as-if’ arguments which only indirectly run counter to my argument. But there is a danger that such analysis could be self-reinforcing. See also Hodgson (1988) on Becker and the market.
new ideas and empirical evidence, but also a widespread sentiment that in modern society something important is being lost (McNeill, 1996).

In recent years, the market has increasingly entered into new spheres of economic activity, often in response to neo-liberal economic policies; not only infrastructure such as water supplies and railways, but also health, schools – and even prisons, police, and defence. What is more relevant to my argument, however, is the development of so-called internal markets within private or public sector enterprises, e.g. for the allocation of resources within the health services, or within a university. The gains in efficiency terms are in many cases evident, but the costs in terms of destroying institutions are only beginning to emerge.

As in the case of the family, ‘traditional’ values such as trust, mutual respect, and the common good are seen as under threat. The market ethic is promoted in the interest of efficiency. But experience is showing not only that something intangible is lost, but also that there are longer term costs in adopting a market system. The health system in the USA provides an extreme example; the common good is clearly not being served by a system in which costs escalate in a spiral involving insurance companies and lawyers who make no contribution to health care. The system operates according to a system of incentives and penalties which are damaging in both human and economic terms.

It is at the level of the nation that the market has been most established and is surely least controversial. We are fully accustomed to individuals and enterprises, unknown to each other, interacting according to the norms of the market. Indeed, the nation and the economic system are so closely linked historically that it would be wrong to suggest that the market is in some sense a threat to the nation as a social entity. What may be a threat is the tendency of the market to increasingly ignore national boundaries.

As noted earlier, commerce has been seen as a civilising influence, and a peace-inducing force between nations, replacing relations which otherwise might be fearful or antagonistic. Nations, of course, relate to each other as autonomous self-interested entities, whether or not they reject the market system for internal purposes. And such commerce has been criticised as unequal, for example by those who point to the adverse, and declining, terms of trade for countries exporting primary products. And the rules of the international regime which is now in place are seen as unbalanced in favour of certain countries: for example the pressure to liberalise financial markets while carefully controlling the market for labour. There is good evidence to suggest
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that globalisation leads to exploitation and marginalisation. But this is not my primary concern here. Rather, I wish to draw attention to the extension of market norms into new spheres of activity. I am thinking especially of smaller entities – the family, neighbourhood and enterprise – but also, at the other extreme, the globe.

At this furthest extreme, the global level, there are, I suggest, some causes for concern. One is the environment, the ‘global commons’. Economic growth and technological development have led to a situation in which it becomes necessary to address issues on a global scale: not only CO₂ emissions or nuclear waste, but also ownership of the seabed or even the airwaves. But here it must be recognised that the market can play both a positive and negative role. In the case of global warming, for example, the system of transferable quotas may provide a method of regulating CO₂ emissions which is in everyone’s interest. At the global level, therefore, one might argue that a market system is better than no system at all. At the local level, the situation is often very different, and those who promote market solutions to environmental problems have a very different case to argue. The reason is that here the introduction of a market does not, typically, replace a vacuum but an alternative system of social regulation of behaviour, perhaps developed over centuries, which one may reasonably suggest was sustainable (McNeill, 1998). But at the global level no such system exists. Only recently has there been a call for such an order, as environmental issues such as global warming have come on the agenda. One could thus say the ethics of the globe have until now been entirely lacking, and that the order that the market brings is at least in practical terms more desirable than the anarchy it replaces, and possibly in ethical terms too.

But what sort of an order is this? Who makes the rules and can the outcome be controlled? An obvious issue of concern here is the role of the financial markets, which have shown during 1998 how immensely destructive they can be. Even staunch defenders of liberalisation have been shocked by the crisis in south-east Asia where financial markets grossly ‘overreacted’ to cause damage to economies, impose great

10Interestingly, it is here, in relation to the environment, where the close connection between economics and the market is at present most under strain. Increasing numbers of economists are coming to the view that the market will not provide the answers, and that orthodox economics has deeply built-in biases which are antagonistic to the environment. There is a strong view, increasingly voiced by those in the mainstream, that the environmental problems that are now facing us require searching questions to be asked about the philosophical and moral foundations of economics. Perhaps this is evidence of mainstream economics and the market system beginning to part company. If so, it may have implications not only for the environment, but also for other aspects of our economistic world view.

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hardship and cause political uproar (Bøckman and McNeill, 1998). And this has given rise to some concern that unbridled freedom of movement of money between countries may not be in the common interest, and there is a need to put ‘sand in the wheels’ of the dangerously fast-moving international currency markets; one could almost say to make them less ‘perfect’. It is not simply that some control the market at the expense of others. The market controls all – with results that are not always easy to foresee. The market seems to be becoming not only more extensive but also oversensitive. Thus, one concern is that the global market will be controlled by the powerful: either by certain countries or by multinational companies. An alternative concern is that it will be totally out of control, but yet powerful enough to wreak damage on all, in what has been referred to as the ‘global casino’ (see Henderson, 1996).

In relation to all the above levels, the question that I suggest needs to be posed is: what impact does the encroachment of the market have on people’s lives? What does it replace, and in what sense is it better or worse than this alternative? The answer is likely to vary over time, space and level, but my purpose here has first been to establish that there is a powerful tendency for the market to extend its domain. What, then, are the implications of this process?

The Market in Theory and Practice

I find it useful to distinguish between the market as a theoretical construct in economics, the market as a social institution, and the ethics of the market system. In considering these I shall draw on different disciplines: broadly, economics in relation to theory; sociology and anthropology in relation to practice; and philosophy in relation to ethics.

The market in theory

Despite the centrality of the term, many economics textbooks do not define it, and discussion of the concept in economic literature generally is rare. In his book Economics and Institutions Hodgson (1988) reviews some of the standard definitions, of which he suggests von Mises’ is one of the best: ‘The market is not a place, a thing or a collective entity. The market is a process, actuated by the interplay of the actions of the various individuals cooperating under the division of labour’ (1949: 258 quoted in Hodgson).

1111. What the market replaces is, necessarily, dependent on how one perceives it: simply as a means of allocating resources (as most economists do), or as a social institution.
In economic theory, the market is seen as fulfilling a central function – the allocation of resources; and the concept of a ‘perfect’ market is important – that is, a market which satisfies certain prerequisites such as perfect information, many buyers and sellers, zero transaction costs. If these prerequisites are fulfilled then the market ‘clears’, with all buyers and sellers ‘satisfied’ – in the sense that they do not wish to buy or sell more at the market price. Economists do not, of course, believe that these prerequisites are actually satisfied in practice, and they therefore recognise that no perfect market actually exists. It is an ideal concept which is useful for theoretical purposes. Nor does the word ‘perfect’ imply a moral judgement of the outcome.

To the extent that the merits of the market are assessed in economic theory this is largely within the field of welfare economics, where the concept of a ‘Pareto optimum’ plays an important role. But this is widely misunderstood by non-economists who make exaggerated claims about how economics can demonstrate the superiority of the market system. To quote Solow: ‘The general educated and interested public thinks that economics has “proved” that the free market is efficient “perhaps even the best of all possible worlds”. Not one reader in a thousand of the Wall Street Journal has any grasp of the qualifications without which the theorem, as a theorem, is simply false’ (1989: 77).

My concern with economic theory concerning the market is not that it claims that the market system is morally superior. Rather, that ‘mainstream’ economic theory is based on a representation of the economic agent (‘homo economicus’) as a person who is immoral – or at best amoral – according to widely held views of morality: self-interested, maximising and autonomous. And the economic system which is modelled on the basis of this representative economic agent is subject to the same criticism.

The relationship between the subject under study and the manner in which it is studied is a complex one (Schumpeter, 1954). An economic system is affected, indeed upheld, by the beliefs and values of those who adhere to it. And economists themselves play an important role here. They are not simply independent objective commentators; they are formed by the system, and they themselves influence the system. And there may well be a self-fulfilling, or at the least self-reinforcing, tendency in the manner in which economists portray markets. Economists generally seek to exclude discussion of values as far as possible from the discipline; it is common in economic textbooks to seek total separation between fact and value. But any discipline concerned with social phenomena will, either explicitly or implicitly, be
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concerned with normative issues. Ideology enters ‘at the ground floor’. To portray the market as ‘a kind of natural or moral order’ (Hodgson, 1988: 177) and to treat ‘the market as free and institutions as constraints; the supreme medium for the expression of individual choice’ (Hodgson, 1988: 178) is in itself to adopt an (implicit) normative perspective.

Hodgson’s own definition is: ‘markets, in short, are organized and institutionalized exchange’ (Hodgson, 1988: 174). Or, at greater length: ‘We shall here define the market as a set of social institutions in which a large number of commodity exchanges of a specific type regularly take place, and to some extent are facilitated and structured by those institutions’ (Hodgson, 1988: 174). What is crucial in this definition is the concept of an institution. And some interesting work has been done by economists on markets within what is known as ‘institutional economics’. Even here, however, one finds a notable contrast between those that adopt an individualistic ‘economistic’ approach, and those that adopt a more sociological approach: between the so-called ‘old’ institutional economics – of Veblen (1899), Commons (1924) and others, and the ‘new’ institutional economics, of Williamson (1975) and others. The difference between these two, as I like to express it, is that while old institutional economics treats markets as if they were institutions, the new institutional economics treats institutions as if they were markets. The new, in contrast to the old, plays down the institution and concentrates instead on the interplay between individual actors.12

I thus claim that economics cannot easily separate itself from morality: either in the broader sense of norms, and sociology; or the narrower sense of ethics, and philosophy. It is to these that I now turn.

The market in practice
Considering its importance as an institution forming our lives, it is remarkable how little the market has been studied in empirical terms. It apparently falls between the disciplinary stools of economics and sociology. Economists do not study institutions (that is what sociologists do); and sociologists do not study markets (that falls within the scope of economics).

12. For a recent overview of economics and the market, see Bowles (1988). I would classify his approach as falling within new institutional economics, in that it adopts an individualistic approach, focuses on preferences (albeit questioning their endogeneity), discusses the evolution of cultural traits in terms of incentives, etc. But Bowles notes (p. 104) that: ‘Recognition of the cultural effects of markets (and other economic institutions) may foster a more unified approach to the behavioral science’. It will be interesting to see whether the gap between the new and the old, between the economic and the sociological, can indeed be effectively bridged.
The few sociologists who have studied the market have come to the conclusion that ‘There does not exist a neoclassical theory of the market – that’s the extraordinary thing’ (White, quoted in Swedberg, 1990: 83). Although markets are absolutely central to economics, they have not been subject to study by economists, nor, it seems, by others either:

‘They (sociologists) have implicitly accepted the presumption of economists that ‘market processes’ are not suitable objects of sociological study because social relations play only a frictional and disruptive role, not a central one, in modern societies’ (Granovetter, 1992: 74).

But there has grown up some recent interest in the field, precisely at the interface between these two disciplines (see e.g. Granovetter and Swedberg, 1990). And, as Hirschman notes, some of the great contributors to sociology such as Durkheim (1947), Weber (1958), Simmel (1955) and Parsons (1951) have not totally ignored the subject, although they are somewhat ambivalent with regard to its implications: ‘caught between the older view that interest-oriented action provides a basis for social integration and the more contemporary critique of market society as atomistic and corrosive of social cohesion’ (Hirschman, 1992: 120).

In mainstream economics, little work has been done on this topic, at least since the turn of the century when economics ceased to be political economy – or indeed moral philosophy. As noted above, economists today are trained to distinguish very clearly between positive and normative economics, and to focus on the former. Morality in the sense of mores is absent from economics; the economy and the market are not seen as a social constructs.

As Hodgson notes, markets not only transmit information concerning the prices or quantities of specific products, but also ‘affect the actions and dispositions of other agents which are gathered under the aegis of the market institution.... Thus, in a subtle way, through the operation of market conventions, routines and rules, the individual in the market is to some extent “coerced” into specific types of behavi-

13. Hirschman notes that economists themselves exclude the possible claim that the market can serve a socially integrative function: ‘This is so because the argument cannot be made for the ideal market with perfect competition. The economist’s claims of allocative efficiency and all-round welfare maximization are strictly valid only for this market. Involving large numbers of price-taking anonymous buyers and sellers supplied with perfect information, such markets function without any prolonged human or social contact among or between the parties’ (Hirschman, 1992: 123).

14. A great deal of work in economics has been done on imperfect competition; and, more recently, research on different kinds of market – such as the market for labour – often linking up with institutional economics. See above.
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our’ (Hodgson, 1992: 179). It is precisely the ‘conventions, routines and rules’ of the market, and the mechanisms by which they bring about specific types of behaviour that are of interest in an understanding of the market as an institution.15

It has been suggested that the Western model of capitalism is only one possible version of market capitalism, and more specifically that Japan offers an alternative, based on rather different social mores. Ronald Dore’s work, and notably his article entitled ‘Goodwill and the spirit of market capitalism’ is of relevance. Here, Dore discusses relational contracting where ‘The stability of the relationship is the key. Both sides recognise an obligation to try to maintain it’ (Dore, 1992: 163). ‘They (the Japanese) have never managed actually to bring themselves to believe in the hidden hand. ... They most commonly say: benevolence is a duty’ (Dore, 1992:169).

Other empirical examples could perhaps be found, from Japan or elsewhere. What is crucial, I suggest, is not only the mutuality (a binary phenomenon between two persons, or economic agents) but also the shared knowledge of and belief in this binary relation (a social phenomenon).16 The system that Dore is describing is surely a partial exception to the case I am arguing, and if indeed a significantly different market system operates in Japan this raises important questions: can such a system continue to exist or will the ‘Western’ market system prove dominant? Can such a system be adequately described and understood in terms of standard neo-classical economics, or does the theoretical perspective have to be modified?17

It must be conceded that the market in practice differs in important ways from the theory: whether one is referring to different types of market (for labour, or foreign currencies, for example) or markets in different countries (Japan, USA, Europe). I claim, nevertheless, that the theoretical ideal is the same, and I further suggest that the ten

15. In recent years, some economists have written on one aspect of this issue – namely trust – though not always with marked success. The very assumptions and perspective of mainstream neo-classical economics render it difficult if not impossible, in my view, to come to grips with the problem. On the problems arising, and how economists deal with norms, see the interview with Arrow in Swedberg (1990).
16. He notes that his title refers to goodwill rather than benevolence ‘because benevolence, in my Confucian book, though not I think in Adam Smith’s, is something shown in relations between unequals, by superior to inferior, the reciprocal of which is called loyalty. Goodwill is more status-neutral, more an expression of Hobhouse’s “principle of mutuality”..... the sentiments of friendship and the sense of diffuse personal obligations which accrue between individuals engaged in recurring contractual economic exchange’ (Dore, 1992: 159).
17. Cf. the discussion on Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics above.
18. These issues have recently come to the fore in connection with the financial crisis in Asia. Here, finance and economics become intertwined in important ways which are, however, beyond the scope of this paper to discuss.
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dency is for markets to become more, not less, similar over time – on the Western model.

Philosophers and the market

Philosophers have not in recent years made much of a contribution to the study of market morality. A rare but important exception is Elizabeth Anderson, author of *Value in Ethics and Economics*, who notes, with reference to the market: ‘Liberal theory has not yet come to grips with the full implications for human freedom and flourishing of this most expansionary institution of the modern world’ (1993: 141) (my italics). She argues that libertarianism and welfare economics represent the expansion of the market domain and its associated norms as purely positive, by virtue of the assumed gains for human freedom and welfare, while ignoring how markets fail to realize more adequate conceptions of goods. She offers, instead, what she calls a ‘socially grounded, ideal-based, pluralistic theory of value (which) goes against the grain of a long philosophical tradition’ (Anderson, 1993: 15). Philosophers, like economists, it would seem, also often adopt a rather asocial approach to the study of morality.19

The norms of the market domain are individualistic, atomistic. Anderson identifies five features of these norms, which embody the economic ideal of freedom: ‘they are impersonal, egoistic, exclusive, want-regarding and oriented to “exit” rather than “voice”’ (Anderson, 1993: 145). These five features listed by Anderson, of course, map closely onto the prerequisites of homo economicus in standard economic theory. Freedom is the freedom to disconnect; to treat others as objects. The cost of exercising such freedom is disconnectedness, and to be treated as an object. These are the norms of the market system.

Another of the few philosophers writing on the market is John O’Neill who in his recent book makes a strongly argued case against the position of a number of economists, but most especially Hayek. O’Neill distinguishes between two broad ways of arguing that markets promote the human good: the welfarist, and the perfectionist liberal (O’Neill, 1998: 33). The former argument, that the market promotes human well-being, is well-known since the time of Adam Smith.20 As I

19. ‘Since Socrates, a common philosophical aspiration has been to find some means of grasping the good or the right directly, unmediated by the pluralistic hodgepodge of socially particular evaluative concepts and ideals… The attempts to bypass the varieties of pluralism I affirm leads to a monistic or drastically reductionist theory of value’ (O’Neill, 1998: 15).
20. But, as O’Neill notes ‘there has been a shift from arguments that employ a substantive conception of the human well-being … to arguments premised on purely formal definitions of well-being. That formal concept often comes under the name of utility understood in a technical sense as a preference ordering or structure’ (O’Neill,
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noted above, the basis for this argument is very much weaker than many non-economists suppose. A weaker, more pragmatic, view is merely that the market provides a better alternative than any other that has been attempted (typically meaning the State). 21

The second argument is of greater relevance to my concerns in this article. Here, the market is portrayed as not simply compatible with, but required by, modern pluralism. As Hayek put it: ‘The Great Society arose through the discovery that men can live together in peace and mutually benefiting each other without agreeing on the particular aims that they severally pursue’ (Hayek, quoted in O’Neill, 1998: 19). This certainly seems a virtue of the system, but such radical autonomy may have its drawbacks. And one may certainly question in what sense it constitutes a moral system. As O’Neill puts it: ‘The market is both amoral and arational. It allows individuals with quite different ends and beliefs about the good to cooperate with each other. ... Such cooperation occurs without rational dialogue or conversation about these ends. ... An actor informs others not by voice but by exit’ (O’Neill, 1998: 19).

Neutrality, well-being, liberty, autonomy. These are the virtues which O’Neill identifies, and which perhaps well portray the contradictions of modern life. For they are, I suggest, not unambiguously virtuous. And the market which reflects and promotes these qualities is, similarly, open to challenge on ethical grounds. As Hirsch, the author of *The Social Limits to Growth*, put it: ‘The market is “in principle unprincipled”: “in the modern liberal view, the socio-economic system is seen as amoral”’ (Hirsch, 1976: 119).

A strong *a priori* argument in favour of the market seems to be its claimed neutrality – distinguishing between individuals only insofar as they differ in respect of their purchasing power. This could at best be regarded as an amoral system. But it depends on, and indeed encourages, disconnection between persons as social beings.

**Conclusion**

In this article I seek to draw on perspectives from different disciplines, and although I have referred to the work of economists, sociologists,
and philosophers separately, my intention has been to link them up through the concept of norms. I have referred to the ‘ethics’ of the market, and to ‘market morality’ as well as to ‘norms’. The market, I suggest, is an institution – indeed a very powerful institution. As such it involves norms of behaviour. These may also be regarded as embodying a type of ethic, or morality: one which emphasises autonomy and choice, but also disconnectedness – in social and moral terms.

The market is the dominant institution of modern-day life. Some of the negative aspects of market society which I have pointed to in this paper, such as loss of social cohesion and connectedness, may seem to be luxury problems compared to poverty and exploitation; mere ‘postmodern’ concerns about identity and meaning rather than real, material questions of survival. Although I have some sympathy with such a view, I would counter it in three ways. First, social cohesion can have material as well as more nebulous benefits. Second, it is dangerous as well as misguided to believe that the poor have only material concerns. Third, the potentially destructive powers of the market have very wide ramifications: from the normative, through the political and social to the material.

The market is not in all circumstances either good or bad. But the process of commodification, and the spread of the market ethic, is an enormously powerful and important tendency of which we must always be aware, and where necessary take steps to control or resist. We must ask: what does the market replace or destroy? Does it replace strife between warring parties; or anarchy, leading to insecurity or environmental damage? And does it destroy family relationships, social bonds, trust, and a sense of community?

It is both its strength and its danger that the market is a totalising system. The international, national and local markets cannot easily be kept watertight, so that despite the merits of local solutions, these may be swept aside by global market pressures.

In summary, my argument is that the spread of the market is homogenising, negative and extremely powerful. This is an extreme position which I to some extent qualify. First, because ‘really existing markets’ actually differ considerably from each other and from the ideal, although the homogenising tendency is, I suggest, more and more apparent. Second, I recognise that the market has undoubted positive features and merits that must be taken into account in a balanced assessment. But in relation to my third claim I see little cause for qualification. I believe that the potential power of the market is immense, and there is scant evidence of any countervailing force.
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The first step to such a countervailing force is, I suggest, the very recognition of this fact; which is why I believe the topic is so important – both for rich and poor countries of the world.

The market is amoral not immoral. To defer to the ethics of the market is therefore an abrogation of responsibility. The market is and will remain embedded in political, cultural and moral contexts; but we should be wary that it does not, like a cancerous growth, destroy these from within.

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Summary

The market is the dominant institution of modern-day life. The ethic which it embodies emphasises autonomy and choice, but also disconnectedness - in social and moral terms. This article, which draws on perspectives from different disciplines - economics, sociology and philosophy - is concerned with the norms of the market, and it claims that the spread of the market is homogenising, negative and extremely powerful. It concludes that the market is amoral not immoral. To defer to the ethics of the market is therefore an abrogation of responsibility. The market is and will remain embedded in political, cultural and moral contexts; but there is a danger that it may, like a cancerous growth, destroy these from within.
Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe: A Reconsideration of the Negotiations with the World Bank

Vibeke Trålim

Introduction

In 1991 the Zimbabwean government published A Framework for Economic Reform (1991-1995). The basic components of the programme were macroeconomic stabilisation and adjustment policies, well known from traditional IMF/World Bank reform programmes. Trade liberalisation, devaluation, reduction of the budget deficit and a general deregulation of established control mechanisms on prices, incomes, employment of labour, foreign exchange and investments were key components that were supposed to replace the regulated and protected economic regime in Zimbabwe.

By the end of the 1980s more than half of the sub-Saharan African countries had agreed to implement structural adjustment programmes initiated by the IMF and/or the World Bank. The implementation of these programmes was a condition for receiving aid and new loans from bilateral donors as well as from the multilateral institutions. A great amount of literature has been published on the World Bank’s structural adjustment programmes and their consequences.

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1. I wish to thank Tore Linné Eriksen (Oslo College), Olav Stokke (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs) and an anonymous referee for their valuable comments.

2. This article is based on research carried out when I wrote my thesis in political science about the negotiations between Zimbabwe and the World Bank concerning the structural adjustment programme for the period 1991-1995 (University of Oslo, January 1996). The thesis (Trålim, 1996) was to a large extent based on research and interviews carried out in Washington D. C. and Harare autumn 1994 and spring 1995. The interviewees have approved all quotations. The interviewees are of course biased, as a result of positions and preferences. However, applied together with a diversity of sources, their statements add valuable information to the understanding of this process.

2. For literature focusing on sub-Saharan Africa see Mosley et al., 1995 (a);
researchers have also studied the process of negotiations between receiving countries and the multilateral institutions.\footnote{Van der Geest, ed., 1994; Lehman, 1990.}

The negotiations on economic reforms are particularly interesting in Zimbabwe, where the debate concerning the structural adjustment programme has been extensive. One of the most contentious issues is to what extent the programme was ‘home-grown’. In this connection the Norwegian political scientist, Tor Skålnes, has made a seminal contribution to understanding the politics of economic reforms in Zimbabwe.\footnote{See Skålnes (1993 and 1995).} The theoretical approach used by Skålnes is generally referred to as institutionalism.\footnote{Defined as follows by the author: ‘An institutional perspective on economic policy-making might therefore start with an analysis of how societal actors organise to bring their influence to bear upon government, and proceed to studying how governments employ their own organisational resources in order to meet, modify or resist societal demands’ (Skålnes, 1995: 7).} In his analysis Skålnes develops a detailed chain of evidence, showing the importance of lobbying by broad-based domestic interest groups in order to convince the government of the need for macroeconomic policy change. Skålnes considers the settler-dominated producer groups’ changing perceptions of their self-interests during the second part of the 1980s, particularly the manufacturing sector’s ‘change of mind’, and their lobbying for economic reforms as the most important factors in explaining the government’s acceptance of the structural adjustment programme. He identifies the Zimbabwean system as ‘a particular form of social corporatism in which producer interests hold sway’, and further argues that such a system has certain beneficial consequences for resolving collective action problems and formulating relatively consistent policies and programmes of fundamental reform (Skålnes, 1995: 8).

In my analysis I have chosen a different theoretical framework than Skålnes to explore this change of economic policy in Zimbabwe. The starting point of my study is an interactive approach to international negotiations, based on Robert D. Putnam’s conceptualisation of two-level games (1988) and further elaborated by Peter B. Evans \textit{et al.} (1993). Evans \textit{et al.} underlined the need to develop a framework for understanding complex international relations, in particular international negotiations, that includes several analytical levels. The core of this theoretical approach is to analyse domestic politics in conjunction with external actors and foreign influence.\footnote{The two-level game approach begins by assuming that statesmen are typically...} This approach also under-
lines the role of the state as an intermediary, balancing the various pressures exercised by both domestic and external actors.

In the following I will argue for the need to understand the agreement between Zimbabwe and the World Bank as a result of extended interaction between domestic and external actors.7 The role of the World Bank, the Zimbabwean chief negotiator, societal- and state corporatism, as well as the role of the Zimbabwean government are issues that are dealt with in this article. By using a different theoretical approach than institutionalism to analyse the change of economic policy in Zimbabwe, I will try to further unravel this complex process of negotiations and to explore to what extent the different theoretical frameworks chosen for the analysis lead to diverging conclusions.

A Changing Political Environment
Economic nationalism and import substitution as main characteristics of the economic regime in Zimbabwe were results of international sanctions during the period of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). After 1980 the Mugabe government, as part of its professed orientation towards socialism, extended the existing system of state-controlled capitalism established during 1965-1980. However, the economic boom that succeeded independence was soon to be replaced by erratic and slow growth rates. In the second part of the 1980s foreign exchange problems, lack of new investments and an increasing level of unemployment were only some of the challenges facing the Zimbabwean government. As a result, in the first part of 1987, economic difficulties and recession provoked intensive internal debate and demands for changes in the extensively regulated economic regime.8

At the annual Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries congress (CZI) in 1987 several influential actors called attention to the need for trying to do two things at once; that is, they seek to manipulate domestic and international politics simultaneously. Domestic strategies and tactics are constrained both by what other states will accept and by what domestic constituencies will ratify' (Moravcsik, 1993: 15).

7. The focus is on the process prior to the formal agreement, not the implementation of the programme. The formal negotiations between the World Bank and the Zimbabwean government did start as late as 1990. An analysis of the informal negotiations from 1987 and onwards gives, in my view, a much more interesting and complete understanding of the final agreement than an analysis of the formal negotiations. This is also underlined by the World Bank Resident Representative in Harare at this point of time: ‘There is no clear-cut line when the negotiations began’ (interview).

8. The year 1987 might well go down as the year in which Zimbabwe realised it was in serious economic difficulty. At this stage, there is no clear indication that it will turn out to be the year in which suitable steps were taken to put things right’ (ZNCC – Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce – in Financial Gazette, May 1987: 3).
some kind of liberalisation of the economic regime. Nevertheless, most of the participants underlined the need for caution, particularly concerning abolition of import substitution. As we shall see, trade liberalisation turned out to be the most discussed and disputed component of the reform programme.

In 1987 the economy of Zimbabwe turned out better than expected. Nevertheless, the pessimistic prognosis had provoked internal debate concerning the future economic course. However, the solution to the economic problems was still, for some years, to be found in a combination of import substitution and export promotion.

**The World Bank enters the scene**

Until 1987 the World Bank Resident Representative in Harare kept a low profile in discussions on structural reforms in Zimbabwe. This was to change towards the end of 1987 as the internal debate took a new course. Also from the World Bank headquarters in Washington D.C. there were clear signs of a new strategy; more direct involvement and pressure were to be exercised vis-à-vis the Zimbabwean government.

Formal contact between Zimbabwean authorities and the IMF/World Bank had to be established carefully. The World Bank’s first Resident Representative in Zimbabwe, the Pakistani Mahmud Burney, had established contact with the Zimbabwean Minister of Finance, Bernard Chidzero, already in the 1970s. Initially an American was supposed to fill this position, but as explained by Elisha N. Mushayakarara, the former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, personal relations were of great importance in the negotiations.

Towards the end of the 1980s the relationship between key Zimbabweans and World Bank representatives improved. This was partly a

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9. This annual event is well visited by key political and economical actors in Zimbabwe.

10. This was also underlined by former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Elisha N. Mushayakarara: ‘There was a notion that of the two Washington bodies the IMF is the “bad boy” and the World Bank is the “good boy”. We took note of that fact, and we decided to play ball with the World Bank in the initial stages. And this is how we managed to get things moving’ (interview). Representatives of the IMF participated in the negotiations, even if the World Bank had the formal responsibility.

11. Also privately the contact between the two negotiators was close: *Financial Gazette* announced the marriage between Chidzero’s daughter and Burney’s son under the headline ‘Chidzero take-over by external investor’ (*Financial Gazette*, 13 May 1988: 1).

12. ‘People here are very sensitive indeed. And all you need to do is to have the wrong man and you run the risk of destroying the whole programme’ (interview with Mushayakarara). The Resident Representative of the World Bank is not necessarily a key actor in the formal negotiations. In this case, however, the Resident Representative must be seen as very important in changing the relations between the World Bank and important Zimbabwean actors.
result of a general change of policy by the World Bank, but more important were the efforts made by individual representatives of the two negotiating parties to develop mutual respect and dialogue between local actors and World Bank officials. World Bank representatives were, however, to ‘sell’ the message of the international institutions on the domestic, political arena in Zimbabwe. In this connection several actors involved at the time underlined that improved personal relations were a precondition for changing the negotiation climate from one characterised by mutual suspicion and misunderstanding, to one described largely as co-operative.

On several occasions the World Bank Resident Representative characterised himself as an ‘honest broker’ between Zimbabweans and the World Bank headquarters in Washington D. C. This illustrates a main theoretical argument made by Evans et al.: the chief negotiator has to take domestic interests into account and negotiate with the opposite party at the same time.

The Resident Representative of the World Bank gradually started to arrange informal meetings and discussions on the future economic course. The objective was to establish a forum for debate within Zimbabwe. Partly as a result of these initiatives the dialogue was broadened and the World Bank’s role as a significant participant in the political arena of Zimbabwe was accentuated. Only after developing good relations with key domestic actors could economic reforms become part of the World Bank’s official agenda in Zimbabwe. A statement made by Burney (interview) illustrates this point:

Very soon it became clear to me that to carry out my assignment, which was to expand and deepen the Bank’s overall working relations and dialogue with Zimbabwe, on projects, on sectors and on macro-issues, would take time. It was a long road and a slow process because the country had just achieved independence with a socialist orientation and it was not ready for necessary fundamental marked oriented changes. To sow the seeds of change you had first to understand the real problems of the country, establish your credibility and then the credibility of the Bank.

Chidzero: The main player on the Zimbabwe side
Key political actors can influence domestic interest groups, build coalitions and to some extent decide which political institutions and procedures of ratification should be used. The fact that especially the Zimbabwean win-set\(^\text{13}\) was restructured during the process justifies a

\(^{13}\)Win-set is the scope of possible agreements which can get support by a majority
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thorough presentation of the Zimbabwean Minister of Finance, Bernard Chidzero. His role both as domestic actor and as participant in the international political arena gave Chidzero some strategic leverage, but also led to strategic dilemmas concerning negotiation tactics.

Several participants in the negotiations have described Bernard Chidzero as the key representative of the government. As stated by the former President of CZI, his role was pivotal: ‘The man was the author of the whole thing. … He was the one person who had the total confidence of the international bodies. At the same time his loyalty to Zimbabwe has never been questioned’ (interview with John Deary).

Chidzero has over the years held several international posts. Among other things he was Chairman of the World Bank Development Committee at the time when negotiations between Zimbabwe and the World Bank started. When Zimbabwe got its independence in 1980, he had 20 years of experience from different parts of the UN system, latest as Assistant Secretary-General in UNCTAD. In 1991 he was one of the candidates for the position as Secretary-General of the UN.

President Robert Mugabe’s support for economic reforms was a precondition for reaching an agreement with the World Bank. As Professor Anthony Hawkins at the University of Zimbabwe underlined: ‘The President will allow a thing to move as fast as he is prepared to move’ (interview). In the second part of the 1980s Mugabe probably realised that there was a need to reconsider economic policy, and in 1988 he gave his approval for the Ministry of Finance to start working on the question of economic reforms (interview with Mushayakarara). The same year Chidzero was appointed Senior Minister for Finance, Economic Planning and Development. Since independence Chidzero’s position in the domestic arena had been based on support from Mugabe. This appointment could therefore be interpreted as a declaration of support from the President.

The chief negotiator occupies a crucial position when analysing the interaction between the negotiating parties. If the chief negotiator acts strategically the negotiation can be seen as an interactive process. The World Bank’s Resident Representative in Harare described Chidzero in a way that supports this assumption (interview with Burney):

Chidzero was a key figure at the political and professional level: he had the experience and status; he knew the issues involved and he could take a firm stand even with the Bank President, Vice-

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14 According to Herbst (1990: 253) few African Ministers of Finance are as important in national decision-making as Chidzero was.
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President, and other officials on what he believed was the right approach and what was good and practical for Zimbabwe. He also had the difficult task of convincing his cabinet colleagues, senior Zimbabwe officials and the private sector on the timing and nature of the reforms. The latter was often more difficult than the discussions with the Bank.

Based on the assumption of Evans et al. (1993) it is reasonable to expect that Chidzero’s strategy reflected an assessment of domestic interests as well as an understanding of the World Bank’s win-set.

There are several factors indicating that Chidzero at an early stage wanted to change the economic regime in Zimbabwe in accordance with World Bank prescriptions. In an interview with Africa Report in 1988 Chidzero stated: ‘We are working with the World Bank to see if we can evolve a programme of liberalisation which is consonant with the realities of Zimbabwe’ (Sept./Oct. 1988: 46). His daughter, Anne-Marie Chidzero, has also described his relationship with the World Bank in similar terms (interview): ‘I think it was a relationship of mutual respect and understanding. I have a feeling that he certainly wanted to have the World Bank backing, but not to be told by the World Bank what needed to be done. ... He wanted to have a partnership, not to have the Bank impose the changes’.

According to Evans et al. (1993) international negotiations most often are a result of initiatives made by political leaders who seek international solutions to national challenges and problems. It is most likely that Chidzero was the key person in placing economic reforms on the agenda in Zimbabwe. However, an international negotiation will normally mobilise domestic interest groups. As a consequence the autonomy of the chief negotiator will be reduced throughout the process, and different domestic interests will have to be taken into account. The strategy, influence and power of the chief negotiator, therefore, can only be understood in relation to the interests and preferences of other key domestic actors.

On the other hand, the preferences of the chief negotiator cannot be reduced to merely reflecting domestic interests. Evans et al. (1993) categorised the chief negotiator’s preferences as either hawk, dove or agent. A chief negotiator as an agent is defined as having the same preferences as the mobilised domestic constituency. The chief negotiator as a dove is described as a position which is closer to the win-set of the opponent than to his or her constituency, whereas the chief negotiator as a hawk is the opposite situation. Furthermore, they argue that the position of hawk or dove implies that the negotiator has to
manipulate the preferences of certain domestic groups. Another factor of importance in this regard is that ‘[w]hen specific domestic interests are involved, ‘COG [chief of government] as a dove’ may be indistinguishable from COG as a traitor in the eyes of the interests involved’ (Evans et al., 1993: 406). The need for an active and offensive negotiation strategy combined with domestic opposition places the chief negotiator in a position of several dilemmas. This was the case for Chidzero.

As a consequence of Chidzero’s international career and his limited participation in the Zimbabwean struggle for national independence, he was met with scepticism on the domestic political arena. This tended to weaken his position as regards taking strong positions on economic reforms, and indicates that the government, the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and the trade unions probably regarded Chidzero as representing the interests of the World Bank. As a consequence the Minister of Finance had to act carefully. What might at first be an advantage in international negotiations (contacts and experience from the UN system), was probably constraining Chidzero’s influence at home. However, towards the second part of the 1980s this seemed to change.

In addition to important changes in the domestic setting, also international events, like the collapse of communism, improved Chidzero’s influence. The ‘leftist’ alternative to economic development had been weakened. Still, Chidzero continued to work for reforms in a discrete manner. However, the changed conditions gave him more room for manoeuvre. At this point in time Chidzero could take advantage of one important element underlined by Evans et al. (1993): use the opposite party to reshape the domestic win-set. By involving IMF and, in particular, the World Bank, Chidzero got stronger ammunition vis-à-vis domestic opponents to economic reforms. At the same time the changing economic situation made it easier for Chidzero to openly collaborate with the settler-dominated private sector. An alliance between domestic interest groups and international financial institutions was gradually to emerge. I will return to the changing positions of some important domestic actors.

15 As stated by Dzingai Mutumbuka, former Minister of Higher Education, Chidzero was always viewed as an outsider by the inner political leadership in the Party and Parliament (interview).

16 ’Chidzero came from the UN, and the leftists … were quite suspicious of UN types. So initially his hands were tied. However, because of poor economic performance and lack of growth, his warnings were heeded first by the moderates and eventually by probably the majority of his colleagues. But the ultra-left remained antagonistic to his market orientation’ (interview with Mutumbuka).
Building a Coalition for Economic Structural Adjustment: A Study in Emerging 'Ownership'

In Zimbabwe there exist several broad-based settler-dominated interest groups. These organisations represent industry (Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries – CZI), commercial farmers (Commercial Farmers Union – CFU), mining (Chamber of Mines) and commerce (Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce – ZNCC), and were established in the first part of this century. They all have long experience as pressure groups and as participants in national political processes. In addition these organisations represent a major part of the potential membership in their sectors. Upon independence, these organisations were allowed a certain amount of autonomy, and thereby some influence on the economic policy of Zimbabwe (Skålnes, 1995; Hifab/Zimconsult, 1989).

Prior to independence the political activities of the African majority were severely restricted. Immediately after 1980 workers as well as peasants established their own organisations: the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), Zimbabwe National Farmers Union (ZNFU) and the National Farmers Association of Zimbabwe (NFAZ). In contrast to the well-established settler-dominated organisations the authorities did not allow the African-dominated interest groups to develop an independent position in the political system. This was, among other things, a result of the government’s fear of political competition.

The protectionist regime of the UDI period was initially beneficial for both the settler-dominated industrial sector and commercial farming. When independence came in 1980 social expenditure increased, credit and subsidies were extended to broad parts of the population.

17 The settlers were originally farmers. Even if the interest groups referred to are representing other sectors as well, and include both local European and foreign interests, this term will be used when they are referred to as a group. For a thorough presentation of the history of the different interest groups, see Skålnes, 1993.

18 According to Skålnes the relations between the government and interest groups in Zimbabwe can be described as a kind of societal corporatism, in the sense that organised groups are given some autonomy in decision-making vis-à-vis the central authorities. The Norwegian political scientist Øyvind Østerud defines state and societal corporatism in the following way: In the authoritarian variant [state corporatism] this was the model for a top-down system of decision-making, where the most important function of the corporative institutions was to discipline the membership, especially the Labour movement and the labour organisations. Liberal corporatism [societal corporatism] means that a manifold of interest groups participates at different levels in public decisions’ (Østerud, 1991: 82, my translation). In my view, both types of corporatism are important for understanding the political system in Zimbabwe. For a discussion of the concept of corporatism in an African context, see Nyang’oro and Shaw, 1989.

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and infrastructure was improved. In addition, increased state control concerning prices, improved wages and workers conditions, increased taxes, lack of foreign exchange, large budget deficits, few new investments, etc., led to a changing attitude among the private sector towards the economic regime. In 1987 there was a broad consensus between CFU, ZNCC and the Chamber of Mines that the extensive state control of the economy prevented economic growth, and that gradual trade liberalisation, among other things, was necessary for the economy to improve. The organisation that was most reluctant at this point in time was CZI, a key actor in the process. It is therefore necessary to look more closely into the position of this organisation.

The starting position of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries

The development of a well-functioning industrial sector in Zimbabwe was largely a result of import substitution and a state-controlled system of foreign exchange allocation. For a long period of time, protectionism and monopolistic tendencies had constituted the framework for industry, not least in order for the industrial sector to stand up against the international embargo during UDI. Gradually, lack of foreign exchange and limited import opportunities were strongly felt as problems by most parts of the sector. As stated by Alan Paterson (managing director of Hunyani Holding): ‘In 1987 industry will face many difficulties and frustrations. The shortage of foreign currency for imported raw materials has featured in most company annual reports published during the latter part of 1986’ (Financial Gazette, 2 January, 1987: 7).

At this point of time CZI lobbied for the abolition of most control mechanisms as a step towards a general liberalisation of the economy. However, CZI’s position concerning trade liberalisation remained ambivalent. CZI represented not only companies that based their production on import substitution but also companies with some degree of export-oriented production. Therefore, members did not have homogeneous perceptions of their own ability to survive if increased competition emerged. Several of the industrialists feared that trade liberalisation would lead to deindustrialisation. Even if CZI to some extent supported selective and gradual import liberalisation, the organisation was not yet ready to abandon import substitution as an important element of their sector strategy.” CZI realised that there was a

19 As expressed by Mr. Long, CZI: ‘We welcome government’s acknowledgement of the importance of our secured domestic base, and of the need to ensure that, despite the considerable progress in exports and the validity of an export strategy at present, import substitution savings must not be undermined’ (Financial Gazette, 10 July 1987: 4).
need to balance different preferences inside the organisation’s membership. As explained by its former Chief Economist, the organisation worked hard to ensure support for structural adjustment among its members, but whereas they all wanted removal of control for their own supply of imports, they did not want competition for their own finished goods (interview with Mike Humphrey).

The World Bank at work: restructuring the domestic win-set

In some instances, perhaps even unintended, international pressures ‘reverberate’ within domestic politics, tipping the domestic balance and thus influencing the international negotiations (Putnam, 1993: 454).

The World Bank’s pressure for liberalisation of the Zimbabwean economy peaked in 1987 when the World Bank halted its expansion of the Export-Revolving-Fund (EIU, 1989-90: 35). One of the key conditions for the funding was that Zimbabwe would have to liberalise 20 per cent of its total import.20 At this point of time Zimbabwe was not ready for this change of policy. Since lack of foreign exchange was one of the most severe problems facing the Zimbabwean economy, support for the country’s export programmes was of great importance. To avoid trade liberalisation, Zimbabwe chose to finance the expansion of the programme with loans from private banks.

This change of policy by the World Bank was initiated at the same time as the World Bank’s Resident Representative increased his participation in the debate on economic reforms in Zimbabwe. A statement by Mahmud Burney at the annual CZI congress in July 1987 illustrated that the Resident Representative considered it to be the right time for the World Bank to officially take part in the restructuring of the Zimbabwean economy:

We are now waiting for the government to tell us, probably after the Budget, how they want a programme structured and what technical help or final role is envisaged for the bank. The reform programme must be prepared within the Zimbabwean framework, with technical know-how and political commitment. Given the time constraint, the question is whether external assistance can expedite the process, he [Mr Burney] said (The Herald, 16 July 1987).

Whereas the domestic actors who were more sceptical to economic

liberalisation and a change of direction did not have enough competence and capacity to present alternative analyses and economic strategies, the World Bank was in a position to present a clear direction, support the domestic actors who were in favour of the structural adjustment programme and convince the doubters.

In 1987 the World Bank published two major reports analysing the Zimbabwean economy: *An Industrial Sector Memorandum and A Strategy for Sustained Growth*. The findings of the reports were discussed both with the private sector and the Zimbabwean authorities. The World Bank Resident Representative stated that much of the debate on economic reforms in Zimbabwe was summarised in *A Strategy for Sustained Growth* (interview).

Also *An Industrial Sector Memorandum* carried great influence, especially vis-à-vis the CZI, by emphasising the competitiveness of the industrial sector: ‘Zimbabwe is in a better position than many other African nations to undertake a liberalisation programme. First, industrial firms are in sound financial condition and, by and large, are efficient producers’ (World Bank, 1987a: 80). The report stated that the industrial sector was surprisingly efficient and competitive, taking into account that it had been protected both from internal and international competitors for a long period of time, and concluded that these findings indicated that several firms would be able to survive in a more open economic regime. These findings even surprised the CZI, and the report probably reduced their worries about increased competition and deindustrialisation.

Michael Walton, head of the World Bank delegation responsible for the strategy for sustained growth, considered these reports as several of the many milestones in a complex and time-consuming process: ‘I suspect the process of preparation of those reports, interacting over so many years, gradually shifted them. I do not think they read those reports and changed their minds. So I must see those as signposts along the way’ (interview). A government representative who for a long time was sceptical to liberalisation commented in the same vein: ‘The report was seen as analytically strong, and had identified some of the inappropriate policies the government was pursuing’ (interview with Mutumbuka). The reports were used as ammunition in the internal debate, and considered very useful in swaying both the people and the Cabinet Committee in favour of the reform programme (interview with Mushayakarara).

Informal discussions and consultations prior to, and after, the launching of the two reports must be seen as an important starting point and key elements in strengthening the World Bank’s contact with both
the private and the public sector in Zimbabwe. According to the World Bank Resident Representative the government ‘was gradually convinced that economic structures had to change, but they were not sure of the depth, scope, timing and sequence of the changes. As discussion broadened between the political decision-makers, civil servants and the private sector, a package of reforms began to emerge. Many suggestions, which were earlier looked upon with suspicion by the government, became part of the reform agenda’ (interview with Burney).

The making of ‘ownership’: the trade liberalisation study

In the beginning of 1988 the Zimbabwean government decided to form a committee whose mandate was to examine the existing trade barriers and the state-controlled system for allocation of foreign exchange. This study was a result of a World Bank initiative. According to Rob Davies, an economist at the University of Zimbabwe and one of the local consultants participating in the analysis, the study was a condition for new loans for export-promotion programmes (interview). This extensive study was sponsored by the UNDP.

The recommendations of the report concerning import liberalisation were hardly taken into account in the final structural adjustment programme. The report was not even made public. An important element of the report that did get some attention, however, was the complexity of the existing system. In the report it was also underlined that several of the mechanisms for allocation of foreign exchange were established as far back as in the 1950s. The problems of the established system had also been underlined by the editor of The Herald in the beginning of that year (13 February 1988): ‘It is accepted, however, that our system of foreign exchange distribution is not perfect, can be misused and should be rationalised.’

Even though there was a lot of scepticism and resistance to import liberalisation, focus on the weaknesses of the established system was probably important in convincing the domestic actors about the need for change. The report supported the findings of the industrial study made by the World Bank, stating that if the sector was given time to adjust, rationalise and invest in new equipment, large parts of the industrial sector would be competitive. During its work the committee also got the impression of a widespread optimism amongst industrialists: ‘In this respect, we were surprised, when talking to industry, by the widespread optimism about their potential to compete if these problems were solved – even in the areas of the electronics industry which we measured as one of the least competitive’ (Trade liberation
study, 1988: 133).

Even though the report was not made public there are reasons to believe that the consultations with representatives for both the private and the public sector during the preparation of the report contributed to a change in attitudes towards the established control mechanisms, especially the system of foreign exchange allocation. Also the generally optimistic view of the industrialists was an important finding that might have helped the CZI in arguing for gradual import liberalisation among their membership. The political and economic environment in Zimbabwe is relatively narrowly based. It is therefore likely that the key actors knew about the main findings and conclusions of the report.

In May 1989 the question of reforms were once again put on the agenda, this time at a conference in London. The participation of representatives of the CZI, the government (Bernard Chidzero and Kombo Moyana – head of the Central Bank) and the World Bank’s Resident Representative, Mahmud Burney, illustrates the close collaboration that had developed between these actors: ‘CZI took an initiative on the suggestion of a number of the politicians and one Cabinet Minister specifically, to set up an investment conference in London in 1989. That conference was established with a very specific purpose of forcing government to produce guidelines for investment, because up to that point in time they had resisted that’ (interview with Deary).

The Main Opposition Towards Economic Structural Adjustment

The most important domestic group that articulated opposition to the economic reforms was the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). According to a Zimbabwean social scientist, Lloyd Sachikonye, the ZCTU was a weak organisation until the mid-1980s. The leadership had little experience in lobbying the government and the unions were short of resources. In addition to organisational problems, two other factors may explain the limited influence of the ZCTU: state corporatism and the lack of external supporters.21

In 1985 the election of a new ZCTU President and General Secretary marked a watershed in the trade union’s relations with the government and the ruling party. The newly elected leadership wanted to develop an independent political position, and at the end of the 1980s the ZCTU moved towards increased independence in its relationship with the state. This resulted in a more offensive stand on political and economic issues. As observed by Sachikonye, (1995: 142):

2121. For a historical overview, see Raftopoulos and Phimister (eds.), 1997.
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Whereas in the first few years after independence, the labour movement broadly endorsed what existed as the ‘socialist’ policy of the regime, sharp criticism of its ideological inconsistency began to be made in the second half of the 1980s. The ZCTU began to express its scepticism over ZANU-PF’s Marxist-Leninist credentials. The less repressive of the ideologies from the labour movement’s standpoint was socialism which ZANU-PF was discarding in favour of full-blown capitalism.

Prior to the parliamentary elections in 1990 ZCTU refused to publicly recommend their members to vote for the ruling party. ZCTU also criticised President Mugabe’s plans to make Zimbabwe a de jure one-party system. In addition to these general signs of the reluctance of the trade unions to endorse the politics of the ruling party, the organisation was turning out to be the key domestic actor fighting against the structural adjustment programme.

ZCTU feared, among other things, decreased wages, higher prices, reduced job security and dismissal of workers as consequences of a liberalisation of the economy. The experiences in other sub-Saharan African countries obviously contributed to ZCTU’s fear of social unrest as a result of structural adjustment. The ZCTU accused the government of capitulating to international financial interests, and for moving away from its socialist programme (Sachikonye, 1993: 262). As reported in Financial Gazette the General Secretary of the ZCTU, Morgan Tsvangirai, stated that ‘the government, in its desperation, is now at the complete mercy of the forces of capitalism. It has now decided to open up the economy to super-exploitation by imperialism under the policy of trade liberalisation. We will fight hard to oppose and condemn this retrogressive policy’ (27 January 1989: 6). Neocolonialism, exploitation and increasing social differences were accusations repeatedly used to describe the government’s approach vis-à-vis the World Bank. This stands in stark contrast to the good relationship developed between other key actors in Zimbabwe and World Bank representatives.

The ZCTU, on its side, was met with demands to put forward an alternative to the World Bank programme. In a commentary by Eric Bloch it is stated that: ‘[I]f the ZCTU genuinely believes that the programme is not in the best interests of Zimbabwe and its people, then it should present a credible alternative programme concurrently with its outspoken criticism of that proposed by government. Undoubtedly, the authorities would welcome constructive criticism and suggestions, but
cannot be expected to react to negative attitudes unsupported by any positive alternative proposals' (*Financial Gazette*, 2 May 1991: 6).

ZCTU did not have influential external supporters who could assist in challenging the World Bank analyses, expertise and resources. As a consequence ZCTU’s ability to propose alternative solutions was, not surprisingly, severely limited. Changes in the international political situation also had an influence. As stated by Brian Raftopoulos at Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies, ‘it was very difficult at this stage to put forward an alternative to the adjustment programme. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe served to make the ideology of international capitalism more attractive. This meant increased isolation of the left wing inside ZANU, as well as outside, and that the opponents of structural adjustment had to manage without ‘an opposite pole of attraction’ (Raftopoulos, 1992: 65, part 2). The collapse of socialism in practice marginalised that alternative.23

ZCTU did not enter the scene until the beginning of 1989. At this point of time consensus had already been achieved amongst the important political and economic forums in Zimbabwe about the need for some kind of liberalisation. In addition the authorities did not allow the African-dominated interest groups to play an independent role in the process of decision-making. ZCTU challenged the government and questioned its politics towards the weakest groups in society. The unions, therefore, were seen as a potential threat to the government’s own power base. As a result, co-optation and force were used by the Mugabe government to deal with this newly developed interest group. The government wanted to be alone in representing the African majority, and ZCTU was hardly consulted by either the government or the World Bank prior to the signing of the agreement.23

This presentation of the ZCTU shows that the influence of mobilised domestic interest groups should not only be understood as a result of their preferences and their lobbying, but must be analysed also in relation to the political institutions and procedures of ratification. These factors are significant for the understanding of the distribution of power and influence amongst domestic actors and will be dealt with in the next sections.

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22 Interview with Raftopoulos. As early as 1989 Colin Stoneman had underlined that opposition towards market liberalisation was not enough, but that development of an alternative strategy was a precondition to resist IMF/World Bank pressure for structural adjustment in a situation of economic recession (Stoneman, 1989).

23 ‘Notably absent were inputs from the party, trade unions and people: few of the issues were subject to informal public debate’ (Shaw and Davies, 1993: 24). See also Herbst, 1990, for reflections on the subordinate role of the party vis-à-vis the ministries and the government.
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The Limits of Societal Corporatism

As these cases make clear, mapping the incidence of costs and benefits yields, in itself, no prediction whatsoever independent of the institutional arrangements that define enfranchisement. The political consequences of costs and benefits are always considered by the institutions that define enfranchisement and ratification procedures. An analysis of the former must always be accompanied by an analysis of the latter (Evans, 1993: 414).

In a de facto one-party state like Zimbabwe the government’s opportunity to ‘manipulate’ political institutions and ratification procedures is significant. The government was formally the key actor in the negotiations with the World Bank, and as such responsible for making the final decision. The influence of the settler-dominated interest groups, and the importance of societal corporatism as a channel of influence, must be analysed with this in mind.

In connection with the debate on liberalisation of the economy the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) to a larger extent than any other domestic interest group was consulted by the authorities, and CZI representatives participated in several of the more analytical reports that were made prior to the final agreement. CZI representatives, however, have subsequently underlined that the organisation had less impact than they desired, and that the dialogue was conducted on terms decided by the government. As observed by Mike Humphrey, Chief Economist of the CZI, ‘in the early 1980s CZI was perceived as being representing the enemy. By the mid-1980s that began to change, and by the end of the 1980s CZI was listened to in the sense that the government allowed CZI to come to various meetings. It did not listen very much to what CZI said, but at least talked to CZI, which they were not doing in the early 1980s’ (interview).

By the end of the 1980s there was undoubtedly a certain degree of internal disagreement in CZI about which strategy to choose vis-à-vis the government. Some have underlined that the President of CZI, John Deary, should have been more offensive and independent in his relations with the government, and some even went as far as to say that Deary was representing the interests of the government more than the interests of CZI. This can partly be explained as a result of the close relationship that existed between Deary and the Minister of Finance, and to some extent President Mugabe himself. But it also has to be seen as a result of the general policy of the government concerning internal debate and lobbying. The government did not allow an open, public debate on the details in the changes of the economic course. In
this connection, John Deary and Stella Mushiri of the CZI, among others, have both stressed the importance of informal discussions with the government. Lobbying through statements in the media was not considered an efficient strategy. Interest groups have to work from the inside of the system, and a more offensive strategy might have been regarded as provocative by the government, and could have resulted in the government rejecting the input of the organisation referring to the so-called ‘confrontational approach’ of the private sector. This can be illustrated by a statement made by the Minister of Industry and Technology, Callistus Ndlovu, which ‘caused dismay among some CZI congress delegates when he repeated the accusation of the previous years that Zimbabwean industrialists had withdrawn the zeal they showed for import substitution projects during Rhodesia’s UDI years, and refused to cooperate now that a black government was in power’ (Financial Gazette, 15 July 1988: 7, enclosure CZI congress 1988).

In essence CZI was largely content with the final structural adjustment programme, even if there were some key issues where the organisation did not get support for its demands. Among other things CZI would have preferred a longer period of transition for trade liberalisation. As observed by Financial Gazette, the World Bank delegation visiting Zimbabwe at the end of February 1988 suggested a timeframe around five years. For the CZI, however, the issue was not so much the setting of a deadline by which the process had to be completed. Rather, the most important thing was that the agenda and pace of liberalisation should be controlled by Zimbabwe to ensure that deindustrialisation did not occur (Financial Gazette, 29 July 1988: 17).

Gradually CZI came to accept the timeframe of five years. Much more important to CZI was the actual framing of the import liberalisation programme. The government, however, agreed to follow the recommendations of an internal committee that had looked into the implementation of trade liberalisation. Their recommendation was to start with liberalisation of the import of raw materials, then capital goods and at the end of the period, ordinary consumer goods. CZI lobbied hard for the government to liberalise trade in spare parts and capital goods before the liberalisation of import of raw materials. According to two key representatives of the CZI, John Deary and Mike Humphrey, this was an important objection to the programme, not least because of the sector’s need to modernise to be able to meet increased international competition at the end of the five-year period. The World Bank did not, according to some of the participants in the negotiations, have strong preferences regarding what products that

24The Industrial Review Committee (1989).
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ought to be liberalised first. Both the government and the World Bank saw the industrial sector as very important for achieving economic growth. When the CZI did not reach its goal concerning this key element, it shows that the government had some room to manoeuvre, at least within the frames of the World Bank’s win-set.

Interaction with the Government

Internally in Zimbabwe the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance were in charge of formulating the reform programme. It is likely that both these institutions, responsible for macroeconomic balance, were positive with regard to a change in the economic course. According to Kahler (1993: 377) this is why IMF tries to build informal alliances with representatives of these institutions. There were plenty of signs telling that this also was the situation in Zimbabwe. Employees in the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance have emphasised the importance of the good working relationship they established with IMF and World Bank representatives, and several domestic actors, as pointed out earlier, have underlined that the reports and analyses made by the World Bank were valuable ammunition in the domestic arena. According to Lionel Cliffe (1991), at the end of the 1980s World Bank representatives operated from inside the system to an increasing degree.

In addition, the internal capacity to produce a coherent reform programme was limited. John Robertson, managing director of Robertson Economic Information Services, and a key participant in the debate on economic reforms, observed that the reform programme was not imposed, ‘but sort of pushed on to the Zimbabwean team. They were persuaded to accept it and call it their own and the World Bank was not unhappy about saying this is a Zimbabwean product. But I know for sure that their [the World Bank’s] influence is very considerable’ (interview).

25. ‘The internal brain drain from the public to the private sector had for some time presented problems in terms of the state’s capacity to deal with the private sector, and is likely to increase if conditions in the public sector continue to deteriorate’ (Raftopoulos, 1992: 66, part 2). Among other things the wages are far lower in public than private sector (ILO, 1993: 124). For reflections on accordance between the preferences of the World Bank and the Central Bank/the Ministry of Finance, see Mosley/EIU, 1995; Green, 1993).

26. ‘By far the most significant coalition building by the IMF is the construction of transnational alliances with technocrats in government ministries that share IMF policy preferences, typically the finance ministry and the central bank. These ministries, responsible for macro-economic and budgetary oversight, are often in agreement with the prescriptions of the IMF, whose programs provide them with valuable ammunition’ (Kahler 1993: 377).
Lloyd Sachikonye has underlined that while both Zimbabwean and foreign consultants contributed to the negotiation power of the government, this could only to a limited extent compensate for the lack of expertise, especially in the Ministry of Finance. In contrast the World Bank and the IMF had a lot of experience with this type of negotiations, and they also possessed valuable information that the local bureaucrats and negotiators did not have access to (interview with Sachikoyne). The former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance has pointed out this lack of capacity too: ‘it became necessary to rely on consultants from the outside both during the negotiations on trade liberalisation and in the implementation stage’ (interview).

Moving Towards an Agreement – Changing the Balance

According to Herbst (1990), Zimbabwean politics can be described as a dichotomy, where technocrats and ideologists have different agendas and responsibilities. The technocrats are instrumental in dealing with economic questions, whereas the ideologists play an important role in foreign policy, presenting Zimbabwe as a radical state. This means that tension between the two groups is most marked when these issues overlap. This was certainly the case in the discussions about liberalisation of the economic regime. Lehman (1990) used the same approach when explaining the locally initiated structural adjustment during the 1980s, as a result of the government balancing between the preferences of the radical ideologists and the pragmatics in shaping the economic regime.

It is difficult to identify exactly at what point in time the government decided to agree to implement a structural adjustment programme. Key actors, like Permanent Secretary for Finance, Elisha Mushayakarara, and the Minister of Finance, Bernard Chidzero, talked about liberalisation of the economy as early as 1987. However, as we have seen, the government did not agree with the World Bank until 1990-1991. The signals coming from the government were for a long time contradictory and reflected the ambivalence of the government concerning the future economic course.

Zimbabwe is a de facto one-party state. The government controls both the elections and the lobbying of the African-dominated interest groups. In addition, the government to a large extent defines the rules of the game concerning the participation of the settler-dominated interest groups. This gives the authorities a unique position in weigh-

277. See also Lehman, 1990; Riddell, 1992; Shaw and Davies, 1993.
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ing and balancing the different interests, both with regard to internal and external actors.

Many of the government ministers, and most likely the President himself, met with scepticism the proposals for an extensive liberalisation of the economy and abolition of traditional mechanisms of control. Ideology, national control and fear for short-term negative consequences for the majority of the population were some of the factors explaining their scepticism. The World Bank’s bargaining leverage only increased when it became obvious that Zimbabwe would need loans to modernise the economy.28 However, the Zimbabwean economy was quite strong and, in contrast to other African countries, Zimbabwe could not be forced to accept a structural adjustment programme.

The importance of the interaction between the World Bank, the Minister of Finance and settler-dominated interest groups in changing the balance is obvious. The World Bank’s offensive, directly and indirectly, did matter in convincing key domestic actors, and as a result the government was pressurised both by domestic and external actors.

The internal debate was characterised by several restrictions. In an African context, however, it can be described as involving domestic actors to a large extent. The World Bank had learnt its lesson based on several failed experiences with structural adjustment programmes in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1980s. Local ownership and domestic support were seen as important when implementing structural reforms. The need for a success story in sub-Saharan Africa was also obvious. In the World Bank study from 1994, Reforms, Results and the Road Ahead, Zimbabwe is described as one of the countries with successful implementation of structural adjustment programmes.29 In the second half of the 1980s, Zimbabwe was one of the few countries in the region without a World Bank programme.

Internal debate concerning economic reforms was in the interest of both the Zimbabwean government and the World Bank. Even if the government was in control of the opposition and defined the rules of the game, it was obviously interested in giving the agreement a ‘Zimbabwean face’. In the same way, according to the critical literature, the World Bank was more open and patient than was the case in many other countries.30 There are several indications that Chidzero’s position internationally increased the World Bank’s understanding of domestic

29. For a critical review of this report, see Adam, 1995; Killick, 1995; Mosley et al., 1995 (b).
30. See Engberg-Pedersen et al., 1996; Makandawire et al., 1995; Simon et al., 1995.
politics in Zimbabwe, and the need for local participation and acceptance. The Minister of Finance opened up for external participation in the internal debate, at the same time as he made the World Bank understand that to reach consensus, even if only amongst the political elite, the internal process would take time.

The Zimbabwean authorities had a certain amount of relative autonomy controlling the domestic procedures of ratification. This has been illustrated above by a brief presentation of state corporatism and societal corporatism as co-existing characteristics of the political regime in Zimbabwe. In addition, the government controls the elections. For a long time the government balanced between the various interests. The fact that it took a long time before the government reached an agreement with the World Bank underlines the complexity of the process.

As we have seen, several factors and extensive pressure during a long period of time did in the end change the Zimbabwean win-set from 1987. The internal debate, at least within the government, was a precondition for an agreement, and a result of the President’s effort to reach consensus. To some extent, internal debate and local studies prepared Zimbabwe for liberalisation of the economy. Contrary to what happened in other African countries, the process was clearly involving local actors. However, I tend to agree with Roger Riddell (1992: 49) who describes the official document, ending long-lasting and complex negotiations, in the following way:

> Clearly originating in Washington – printed with the World Bank’s typeface, replete with US spelling, but without any explicit reference to its sources – the appearance and form of this document was widely viewed as politically inept. For the sharpest critics of the SAP, it showed from within which intellectual garden the final programme had been plucked, and raised the question of where Zimbabwe’s economic decisions were being made.

**Different Theoretical Approaches – Different Conclusions?**

The relationship between the Zimbabwean government and the World Bank concerning structural adjustment of the Zimbabwean economy attracted the attention of Tor Skålnes (1993 and 1995), approaching the process from the theoretical perspective of institutionalism. This relationship has also been the main focus of my research, from an interactive approach to international negotiations. In conclusion it can
be worthwhile looking at to what extent different theoretical approaches may lead to different conclusions in the two studies. However, Skålnes does not define the process leading to the economic reforms in Zimbabwe as negotiations; our points of departure therefore differ significantly.

Skålnes emphasises that the Zimbabwian government changed its economic politics as a result of pressure from both domestic and external actors. He also emphasises that domestic politics should be analysed in conjunction with external influence (1995: 118). However, when Skålnes is analysing why the Zimbabwian government in the end agreed to a structural adjustment programme with the World Bank he seems to restrict his focus to the lobbying by domestic actors in Zimbabwe in general, and CZI in particular. He underlines that towards the end of the 1980s CZI changed its attitude towards trade liberalisation, and describes this change as decisive for the establishment of a pro-structural adjustment alliance between the settler-dominated interest groups in Zimbabwe, parts of the Zimbabwian civil service and the World Bank (1993: 389).

Skålnes also points at areas where CZI did not get acceptance for its demands, but seems to describe CZI's objections as being merely details (1993: 264). This is surprising, taking into account that trade liberalisation was the most central and difficult part of the debate, and for a long time essential in the industrial sector’s scepticism towards structural adjustment in accordance with the World Bank recipe. He underlines that the World Bank’s influence increased when CZI changed its position towards trade liberalisation, but argues that domestic political processes must be emphasised since Zimbabwe could not be forced to undertake an agreement.

Examples of key World Bank documents, informal as well as formal discussions on economic reforms initiated by the World Bank, etc., are also given by Skålnes. However, in his analysis he never systematically integrates the influence and pressure exercised by external actors upon domestic interest groups and the government. The World Bank’s influence and importance are largely treated as ad hoc explanations. The empirical pieces of evidence provided by Skålnes are some of many indications confirming the World Bank’s extensive and ever-increasing participation on the domestic scene in Zimbabwe towards the end of the 1980s. The fact that domestic interest groups underlined the need for a coherent programme and that ‘the elements of this package amounted to something very similar to what the World Bank had been promoting under the name of structural adjustment’ (Skålnes 1993: 244, my italics) is also pointed out by
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Skålnes. Since the programme to a large extent appears similar to other IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes implemented in sub-Saharan Africa it is somewhat surprising that Skålnes claims that ‘external factors are only loosely constraining’ and subordinated to domestic politics (1995: 5). The fact that the preferences of the settler-dominated sectors in general and CZI in particular were moving in direction of the World Bank win-set and recommendations indicates, in my view, that the Bank, in addition to its direct influence and pressure towards the government, also exercised indirect pressure on the government by actively participating in changing key domestic actors perceptions of what to consider as efficient economic strategies. Even if Skålnes argues well for the importance of domestic politics, the institutional approach chosen as the theoretical framework makes it problematic to integrate the international context, the donors and the IMF/World Bank’s influence in the analysis. Based on my own research it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Skålnes systematically downgrades the role of external factors, making the Zimbabwean case even more unique in sub-Saharan Africa than seems justifiable.

This brief overview of the main arguments of the two studies makes it clear that the conclusions based on an institutional perspective to a large extent differ from the conclusions based on my analysis, emphasising the importance of a two-level game approach. Taking into account the active and important role of the World Bank in restructuring the Zimbabwean win-set, I find it questionable to reduce the Bank’s influence to a supplementary factor, subordinated to domestic processes and explanations. The institutional perspective, as adapted by Skålnes, might well be suitable for focusing on domestic demands and pressure towards the government. However, from my point of view the agreement cannot be completely understood without studying the intricate and complex interaction between internal and external actors. This is especially important since it was only the settler-dominated interest groups in Zimbabwe that could rally important external supporters behind their positions. The resistance from the ZCTU was easier to overlook, as external actors who could assist the trade unions in formulating alternative economic strategies were lacking.

Furthermore, also the state, or the Zimbabwean government, is seen by Skålnes as secondary in importance compared to the influence of the settler-dominated domestic interest groups. In this connection Skålnes appears to contrast his analysis of the political economy in Zimbabwe with Jeffrey Herbst’s State politics in Zimbabwe (1990). Skålnes sums up Herbst’s analysis of several case studies as follows: settler-dominated interest groups remained influential during the
1980s, but state autonomy increased after independence in 1980. On the other hand, Skålnes (1995: 99) presents his own findings as follows:

The next chapter documents the large role played by settler-dominated economic interests in the politics of structural adjustment in Zimbabwe, and shows that the alleged increased autonomy of the Zimbabwean state was of temporary and limited nature and does not well explain the adoption of ESAP.

Comparing his own findings to those of Herbst, Skålnes finds the Zimbabwean government less autonomous and largely influenced by the groups lobbying for economic reform. A few brief comments could be of interest in this regard. Firstly, the Zimbabwean government and the ruling party to a large extent controlled both the elections and the African-dominated interest groups like NFAZ, ZNFU and to a lesser extent ZCTU. Secondly, even the settler-dominated private sector organisations have to a certain degree to comply with the rules of the game set by the government. Furthermore, it took several years from the debate of economic reform started in 1987 until the final reform programme was launched in 1991. As we have seen, this shows the importance of the state as an intermediary in this kind of processes. The state has to consider the different interests of domestic lobbying groups as well as pressure exercised by external actors. A theoretical approach that focuses on the interaction between domestic politics and the international institutions could, therefore, be a rewarding alternative to the institutionalist approach. An interactive approach is more capable of capturing the dynamics and complexity of an international negotiation. Using a theoretical perspective based on a model that seeks to integrate the two levels of analysis seems more fruitful than an institutionalist approach when trying to understand this kind of processes. To a larger extent it is possible to avoid ad hoc explanations which often result from theoretical approaches underlining only one dimension when analysing and explaining complex domestic as well international processes. As observed by Howard Lehman (1990: 65):

In considering the selection and implementation of structural adjustment strategies in Africa, it is critical to analyse the role of the state as the main intermediary between societal interests and external creditors … With this role of the state in mind, an adjustment strategy becomes a series of policies by the state as it re-
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sponds to the cross-cutting pressures and demands from both levels.

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Summary


This article analyses the negotiations between Zimbabwe and the World Bank on the structural adjustment programme for 1991-1995. The negotiations are analysed as a two-level game, highlighting the complex interaction between domestic and external actors and the state as an intermediary balancing different interests and demands. In spite of a not insignificant degree of internal debate and domestic participation in discussions on economic reforms, particularly by the settler-dominated interest groups, this article concludes that the international political situation and external actors (IMF/World Bank) played a crucial role in the process, as did the Zimbabwean government. This conclusion stands in contrast to the main conclusion arrived at from the theoretical approach of institutionalism (Skålnes, 1993 and 1995), where the settler-dominated interest groups are seen as the main actors in convincing the government of the need for structural adjustment of the economy.
Burning with Enthusiasm: Fuelwood Scarcity in Tanzania in Terms of Severity, Impacts and Remedies

Fred Håkon Johnsen

1. Introduction

Deforestation and fuelwood scarcity are problems that have attracted a great deal of attention in Tanzania. Former President Julius K. Nyerere described the situation with the following words (Mnzava, 1981: 745):

Large areas of our country have already been denuded of trees and still people cut without planting. We are beginning to feel the effects but not everyone has yet made the connection between water shortage alternating with flooding and tree cutting in which we causally indulge. We in Tanzania still have time to avoid disaster if we take action now.

In the Tanzanian context fuelwood is a main concern in any discussion on energy. This is obvious from the fact that 88 per cent of the total energy consumption in Tanzania is estimated to be firewood and 4 per cent charcoal, leaving only 7 per cent for petroleum and 1 per cent for electricity from hydropower (Mnzava, 1990). Surprisingly, the overwhelming importance of fuelwood has not always been well understood. In a world-wide assessment of energy resources done in 1979, a 23 page country study of Tanzania didn’t even mention fuelwood (WENDS, 1979).

Opinions differ widely on essential issues such as to what extent fuelwood consumption causes deforestation, whether or not there is a fuelwood crisis, and what measures to employ in order to improve the availability of household energy.

This article discusses the severity of the fuelwood shortage in
Tanzania. In literature fuelwood shortage is described as a problem for two different reasons. First, fuelwood gathering has been described as a major cause of deforestation and environmental degradation. Second, there are social impacts of inadequate supply of household energy. Both these kinds of impacts are discussed.

Many measures against fuelwood scarcity have been suggested and implemented with great enthusiasm. The discussion in this paper shows that most such measures have not had any significant impact on environmental degradation or availability of energy. The discussion of remedies to alleviate fuelwood scarcity is limited to directly energy-related interventions including investments in woody biomass production, introduction of improved stoves, and switching from fuelwood to other energy sources. An alternative approach was suggested by Hofstad (1990), who claims that agricultural development and reduced population growth would be the most important contributions to reducing deforestation and fuelwood scarcity. In a more recent work (Hofstad, 1997) he also suggested that road construction and insecure land tenure are important driving forces behind deforestation. Such causes and measures, relating to the general development of the society, are not the focus of this article.

The article is limited to fuelwood for household use. This is the overall dominating use of fuelwood, as 85 per cent of the total energy consumption in the country takes place within the households (Mnzava, 1990). Some fuelwood, however, is used for village industries, including tobacco curing, burning bricks, lime and cement making, fish smoking, baking, local beer brewing, tea drying and village metal works, while relatively small amounts of fuelwood are being used for large scale industrial activities (Mnzava, 1981). Out of these activities, tobacco curing is a process reported to pose a real threat to forests (Ishengoma, 1987).

In this article, firewood is defined as woody biomass used for fuel without processing, in contrast to charcoal. Fuelwood or woodfuel is a concept covering both firewood and charcoal.

2. How Severe is the Fuelwood Problem?

1. Fuelwood supply and demand

Until recently, estimates of demand and supply of fuelwood in Tanzania tended to be utterly pessimistic. One typical report estimated the annual fuelwood consumption at 35 million m³, while only 19 million m³ could be harvested on a sustainable basis (Ishengoma, 1987).
A thorough study by Hosier et al. (1990) indicated that the situation may not be all that bad. Four different regionalised fuelwood balance studies for Tanzania were compared. Though the four studies used the same methodology, the results seemed rather conflicting. Out of Tanzania’s 20 regions, the number of regions that faced a fuelwood deficit varied from 6 to 15 within the four studies. Moreover, the total fuel-wood balance for the country was positive (i.e. increment larger than consumption) in two of the studies, and negative in the two others. One conclusion by Hosier et al. (1990) was that the emphasis on wood balance ‘tends to exaggerate the need for action, ignoring the capabilities of the local population to respond to a wood shortage’.

Even if the consumption may not exceed yield at national level, local fuelwood shortages do occur. As Munslow et al. (1988: 11) put it, ‘supply-and-demand balances and projections hide a complex pattern of surplus and deficit. Fuelwood shortages occur in pockets or mosaics of varying levels of stress’.

Consequently, it may not make much sense to talk about a national fuelwood crisis. Fuelwood shortages can only be described and handled in a meaningful way on a local level. Quantitative assessments of local fuelwood consumption have been made in a sample of 15 villages in the semi-arid area of Tanzania (FAO, 1984), in a sample of 12 villages representing 9 regions (Nkonoki, 1983), in Dar es Salaam (Mnzava, 1985; Andersson and Holm, 1990), in Morogoro (Ngowi, 1986), in Zanzibar town (Masoud, 1990), in Sumbawanga town (Sabuni, 1990) and in Hai district of Kilimanjaro region (Ishengoma et al., 1992). The results varied widely, from around 1 m$^3$ to more than 3 m$^3$ of firewood per person per year, suggesting that people adjust their consumption patterns in response to the availability.

The total impact of fuelwood scarcity can be separated into environmental impacts and social impacts, as expressed in a seminar on national energy policy for Tanzania in 1990 (Kilahama, 1991): ‘The development of national energy policy in relation to woodfuels can be summarised in two objectives:

i) to decrease pressure on the already overexploited traditional sources of wood supply in order to avoid further environmental degradation; and

ii) to reduce the household fuel bill for many people who are forced to spend over 30 per cent of their income on domestic energy alone.’

2. The environmental impact of fuelwood consumption
Fuelwood gathering has been mentioned as an important cause, and
often the most important cause, of deforestation. One example is Misana (1988: 111), who estimated the Tanzanian annual fuelwood demand at 40.2 million m$^3$ while the annual increment was only 19.6 million m$^3$. The deficit of 20.6 million m$^3$ was according to Misana ‘to be met by over-exploiting the few existing forests causing a deforestation rate of 400 000 hectares’.

This view has been seriously challenged. A broad assessment of the fuelwood situation in the SADCC region concluded that rural subsistence households do not, broadly speaking, cause deforestation (Bhagavan, 1984: 25). They gather fuelwood ‘on and in the vicinity of the farm, from land lying fallow, not from forests’. Bhagavan argued further that the subsistence farmer does not cut down a tree to obtain firewood; at most he or she breaks off branches from it. Instead, the dominant causes for deforestation are charcoal production, firewood for curing tobacco and tea, timbering, and clearing land for agriculture.

Ramadhani (1989) studied four villages in Dodoma Rural District and found land clearing for agriculture to be by far the most important driving force behind deforestation, though commercial charcoal making, grazing by livestock and fuelwood collection also had some impact.

Lundgren and Lundgren (1983) pointed out three major forces enhancing the deforestation in Tanzania: The villagisation programme which has concentrated the pressure on the forests, the fast population growth in the mountain area and the expansion of agricultural uses such as tobacco, which needs firewood for curing. The effect of the villagisation programme has been explained more in detail by Kihiyo (1991) and Kikula (1997).

To conclude about the deforestation issue, there seem to be strong indications that firewood gathering is not the most important cause. The fact that there are other important forces seems to be recognised by the Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Tourism (1989, annex 4: 6):

> Supply-demand gap models therefore tend greatly to overestimate the contribution of woodfuels to deforestation, and hence the need for energy-focused remedies for it. If all woodfuel consumption ceased tomorrow, deforestation in Tanzania would not be halted.

The production of charcoal for sale is probably a much more severe cause of deforestation than firewood gathering for home consumption in rural areas, because charcoal burners cut the whole tree. It has been estimated that 4354 ha of woodland are cleared per year in order to
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supply Dar es Salaam with charcoal (Monela et al., 1993).

Apart from the general concern about deforestation, there is also a worry that rare habitats are threatened. An assessment of coastal forests in Tanzania showed that the total remaining area of such forests may be less than 400 km² (Burgess et al., 1992). These forests are described as habitats for globally important flora and fauna, which may be completely removed. The forests are being destroyed, ‘following the sequence (a) logging for timber and fuel; (b) pole-cutting to build houses; (c) wholesale burning for charcoal; (d) wholesale conversion to agriculture.’

3. The welfare effect of fuelwood scarcity

In rural areas, firewood is normally not a commodity which the average household would consider buying in the market. Welfare effects of reduced fuelwood supply are therefore indicated by the time spent for fuelwood gathering rather than by monetary measures. Too much time spent on fuelwood gathering may have serious implications on the welfare, particularly of women and small children. It has been reported that ‘because of overworking and walking long distances, women do not have enough time to cook for children at least three times a day, even when food is available’ (Mongela, 1991: 84).

In the survey by FAO (1984), village averages of walking distances for firewood collection ranged from 2.5 to 4.2 km, with a median of 3.1 km. Village averages of time spent per trip ranged from two and a half hours to four hours, and the number of trips per week from 1.3 to 3.9. The village averages of total time per week spent on fuelwood collection ranged from 2.6 hours to 10.7 hours.

Helmfrid and Persson (1987) reported from Karatu, Arusha that women and children spent up to eight hours to bring home a backload of firewood. This is probably an extreme case. In his survey of 12 villages distributed on 9 regions, Nkonoki (1983) found that the average villager spent a total of 5.77 hours on bringing home 3 bundles of firewood per week. In Nkonoki’s survey, only 7 per cent of the households had more than 5 km distance to the firewood.

Rajeswaran (1983) found that the labour cost of firewood collection for one family was TShs 821 per year, when using the minimum wage rate as a shadow price on labour. The corresponding cost for charcoal bought on the market was TShs 2190 per year and for kerosene TShs 4873 per year.

1. The Tanzanian Shilling (TShs) had a relatively stable official value at around 12 TShs to 1 US$ during the first half of the 1980s. After deregulation of the currency market, the official value of Tshs dropped dramatically.
In exceptional cases, firewood has a monetary market even in rural districts. As an example, Johansson (1991: 25) reported from Babati that fuelwood is sold in the villages with prices ranging from 30 to 70 TShs per headload.

In the towns, fuelwood is certainly a market commodity. However, there is no single Tanzanian market price for fuelwood. The price varies greatly depending on location, season, amounts bought, and also the quality of the fuelwood.

Nkonoki (1983) found firewood prices ranging from TShs 1.50-2 per bundle in rural Kondoa to TShs 8-10 in Kinodoni town. Prices of charcoal ranged from TShs 3-4 in rural Kondoa to TShs 12-15 in Kinodoni town.

In their study of Hai district in Kilimanjaro region, Ishengoma et al. (1992) found the price of fuelwood to range from TShs 500 to TShs 1600 per m$^3$, with an average of TShs 1000. The charcoal price varied from TShs 400 to TShs 700 per bag of approximately 28 kg, with an average of TShs 560.

Ishengoma (1984) surveyed Morogoro town and found that those who buy charcoal in small amounts pay more than twice as much per unit as those who buy whole bags. Ishengoma also observed a price increase of 30-50 per cent during the heavy rains.

The income share spent on fuelwood is even more interesting for understanding the socio-economic implications than the fuelwood prices cited above. According to Chandrasekharan and Davis (1986: 1), an average family in Dar es Salaam spent 20-25 per cent of its income on fuelwood. Nkonoki (1983) found that a poor urban dweller used 28-34 per cent of his income on fuel, while the rural poor spent 12-18 per cent. People with higher income spent a lower percentage on fuel.

Following standard economic theory, serious resource scarcity is indicated by a sharp rise in the price of that particular resource. Such an increase in price has been observed in Zanzibar where firewood is the most important energy source (Masoud 1990: 80). The annual increase in the firewood price in the period 1985-1989 was 37 per cent, while the nominal growth of household income was only 22.6 per cent. This caused an increase in the share of household income needed for an adequate fuelwood supply from 25 per cent in 1985 to 40 per cent in 1989.

In a study of Sumbawanga town, Sabuni (1990: 79) found that the percentage of one person’s income being spent on energy for a family was 101, 65 and 35 respectively for low, medium and high income earners.

According to ETC-Foundation (1987: 19), ‘the burning of crop or
animal residues as fuel is a strong indicator of local fuelwood scarcity’. The report argued that such burning was not common in the SADCC region, compared to other regions such as South Asia. It was suggested that such fuels represented only 5-10 per cent of household energy use across the SADCC region. Ishengoma (1987) reported that ‘shortage of firewood has forced people to resort to substitutes like animal dung and crop residues’. However, among the case studies from Tanzania, there are not yet many signs that such residues constitute a substantial part of the energy supply. Still, the trends indicate that some areas might experience such a development in the future.

In the survey of four villages in Dodoma Rural District by Ramadhani (1989), fuelwood was not ranked by the villagers as a serious problem compared to other socio-economic problems like food, water and social services. This corresponds well with the attitudes to tree planting described in the following section.

In urban areas, the fuel problems are generally more serious. As can be seen from the examples mentioned above, fuel for cooking puts a serious stress on the economy of the urban poor.

3. Possible Solutions for Reducing the Fuelwood Scarcity

Fuelwood scarcity can be relieved by increasing the supply through investments in woody biomass production, or by reducing the demand. The demand may be reduced by increasing the technical efficiency of utilisation through the introduction of improved stoves. Demand reduction may also take place as a result of switching to other energy sources.

1. Investments in Woody Biomass Production

Village forestry was proclaimed a national programme in the Arusha declaration in 1967, and the main objective of the efforts was to provide fuelwood (Leach and Mearns, 1988). A national tree planting campaign was launched in 1980. The main emphasis of the campaign was on village woodlots, either separate from other activities or as agroforestry projects (Dykstra, 1983).

According to Nilsson (1986: 171), it ‘seems clear that, even though there are also other possible ways ahead, e.g. development of energy-saving cooking and heating instruments, tree planting must retain its major role’. A thesis by Kaale (1981: 109) concluded that ‘intensive tree planting throughout the country must be undertaken as an integral part of socio-economic development’. Along the same line, a thesis by Kilahama (1985: iv) suggested: ‘Severe and critical shortages of fuel-
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wood are foreseen for urban populations. It is concluded that the only feasible alternative for meeting these shortages is the establishment of fuelwood plantations close to the centres of populations. Similarly, Chandrasekharan and Davis (1986: 39-40) suggested a highly mechanised ‘pilot scale’ fuelwood plantation of 1500 hectares of trees planted within five years in Kibaha in order to supply Dar es Salaam with fuelwood.

In spite of all this enthusiasm, tree planting for fuelwood in Tanzania has not been a great success. According to Nilsson (1986) only 0.7 million m$^3$ out of a renewable annual cut of 19.6 million m$^3$ is expected to come from planted trees. A survey conducted in 1983 indicated that at least 200,000 ha of woodlots needed to be established annually in order to achieve a sustained supply of fuel, while only 10,000 ha were planted (Kaale, 1984). According to Weaver and Temu (1987) 24,775 ha of forests were planted within the village afforestation programme in the period 1975-1979. At the same time, the annual clear-felling of indigenous forests was 400,000 ha per year. According to documents from a development plan for Dodoma region, ‘almost all village tree plantations aimed at improving the shortage of woodfuel have thus far failed’ (Agrar- und Hydrotechnik GMBH, 1984). In some cases, tree plantations established in conflict with local land use priority have been burnt by the local people (Leach and Mearns, 1988). Mpinga (1982) complains that ‘few of the village woodlots are lasting long enough to produce usable wood’.

Based on this record it seems fair to say that the national impact of tree planting on fuelwood availability is almost insignificant, though the tree planting probably has produced important benefits in some villages.

Several authors have attempted to explain these failures. Offermans (1989: 53) found that ‘the success of the country’s tree planting programmes are being restricted by lack of funds, lack of organisational structures and also a lack of motivation’. Mpinga (1982) offered the following explanations for the failures of village woodlots: ‘Cattle graze in them and trample seedlings; termites attack the young trees and villagers cannot be persuaded to care for something that will not bring a profit for 10 years.’ According to Mnzava (1985: 36), ‘one of the main problems in tree-planting, and especially in communal woodlots, is the coincidence of this planting with agricultural crop plantings and their subsequent maintenance’. Noronha (1981) suggested several reasons for the limited success of village afforestation in Tanzania: Tribal attitudes towards trees vary, some don’t like trees because they believe that trees attract birds which destroy crops. There is a pressure
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on the land for farming and grazing. Many farmers see their holdings as temporary; they are not convinced that they will reap the benefits of tree crops eight to ten years after planting. In some areas, there is continued fragmentation of land holdings through inheritance, consequently each farm is too small for setting any land aside for trees. Another obstacle is that the villagers are unwilling to use softwood for fuel.

In a study of four villages in Morogoro region, Kajembe (1991) found a significant positive correlation between the number of trees planted within the farm on the one hand, and land size, household labour and education level on the other. Skutsch (1985) surveyed 18 villages, of which nine had started communal woodlots and nine had not. Factors increasing the probability of a village starting a woodlot were a great fuelwood requirement (because of cold climate), former successful communal farming projects and a high percentage of newcomers in the village. The usual bottleneck in the extension service, according to Skutsch, is timely delivery of seedlings.

There have been attempts to explain the limited success of tree planting from a gender perspective. Mgeni (1984: 248) argued that firewood gathering belongs to women’s duties in most tribes. Therefore, ‘the success of village afforestation is a matter of national concern with the women and children being the chief beneficiaries’. There is not much evidence, however, that women are more interested in tree planting than men. According to Mnzava (1985: 37), the national women’s organisation ‘is fairly active in organising local women for various projects, but it is hardly involved in any kind of fuelwood- or treeplanting’. In a survey by Skutsch (1985: 157), men tended to be slightly more interested than women in starting communal woodlots. A possible explanation to this phenomenon was offered by Helmfrid and Persson (1987) based on their field study in Karatu district, Arusha: ‘Women and children are responsible for watering the families’ trees. But when it comes to felling, men have the decision-making power. There are reasons to believe that tree-planting adds to women’s burden, but they cannot be sure of profiting from the trees.’

The above statement points at land tenure as an important explanation. While the government has the formal ownership to land in Tanzania, the de facto ownership, or an inheritable right to use the land, often follows traditional customs. In most cases, this means that the land is the property of men.

The villagers’ perception on shortages might be different from the perception of the outsider. In a household survey, Mung’ong’o and Shishira (1990) conducted 431 interviews in Mbulu district, Arusha
region, an area where ‘... the degree of deterioration is said to be so large that some observers believe the district ranks second only to Kondoa as the most ecologically degraded area in the country’ (p. 2). One would believe that firewood availability would be seen as a major issue in such a district. However, in interviews, 25.6 per cent of the respondents claimed that the firewood was ‘plenty’, 48.6 per cent ‘just enough’, only 20.2 per cent said there was ‘shortage’ and 5.6 per cent did not answer (p. 33). The paper does not attempt to explain the relatively optimistic assessment from the villagers. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that walking long distances for firewood and spending considerable time on firewood gathering has been integrated into the villagers’ life as a normal thing.

Ellegård et al. (1996: 2) reported on a participatory approach to ranking priorities within two villages of the Kilimanjaro region. In Maharo village, fuel/energy was the lowest ranked one out of six priority issues. In Simbi Mashaniki, fuel/energy was ranked 12 out of 14 issues.

From Newala district, it was reported that local people had no interest in planting and maintaining fuelwood trees; their main interest was rather fruit trees (Zollner, 1981). This agrees with the findings of Kajomulo-Tibaijuka (1985) in Kagera region. She found that for most tree species, firewood played a secondary role, while the primary role was timber for sale, wood for construction, and fruits. From this observation, it was concluded that multipurpose trees are necessary in order to gain acceptance for village afforestation. Also Sambali (1990) found that ‘tree planting for a single purpose – provision of fuelwood is not an appropriate approach’. This agrees with an observation recorded by Mnzava (1985), that one of the main reasons for failure of tree-planting among the Masai communities was that they were often given species only for firewood, while their need was species suitable for feeding their animals. A similar finding was reported from Karatu in Arusha region (Helmfrid and Persson, 1987). Most of the planted trees were Eucalyptus spp., for which seedlings were supplied by village nurseries. However, the farmers disliked this species, which was too vulnerable to drought and termites. The farmers preferred Grevillea robusta, which could be sold as timber and which also could be interplanted with other crops.

The explanations for the limited success of woody biomass production that are reflected above, partly point in different directions. It still seems fair to suggest that the main reason is that fuelwood availability is not among the highest ranked needs or concerns among most villagers. Villagers generally prefer to continue their current practice of fuelwood gathering rather than investing their time and money in
planning and caring for trees. This seems to be a rational choice from the individual’s point of view. Based on data from Morogoro region, Allen (1985) employed a multi-objective linear programming model to find that the cost of preserving the woodland was prohibitively high. In other words, all realistic alternatives for energy production were much more costly than the current practice of collecting firewood in the natural woodland.

Failures in fuelwood related projects seem to have made some authors desperate. One article suggested ‘more of a “military” approach’ because ‘deforestation and land degradation may be regarded as enemies threatening the nation, requiring coercive mobilization in its defence’. Such coercive mobilisation was suggested based on new legislation where ‘each household is compelled to plant a fixed number of trees every year’ (Ahlbäck, 1995).

One may have to admit that based on the records, it can be questioned whether voluntary tree planting at all is feasible in Tanzania. Fortunately, some constructive suggestions have been forwarded to develop a better concept for fuelwood production.

Firstly, there are other ways of propagating trees than expensive production of seedlings in nurseries. Referring to a village afforestation project in Shinyanga, Munslow et al. (1988: 63-65) claimed that the traditional approach of nurseries supplying seedlings to the farmers is unlikely to succeed, because of water shortages, transport problems and lack of protection of young trees from cattle. Instead, they suggested relying on traditional techniques like cuttings and direct seeding. One could go even further, relying on natural regeneration. The ETC-Foundation (1987: 26) reported: ‘... while the Shinyanga plains are bare of trees, there is a 40-50 hectare Forest Division reserve from which cattle have been excluded since 1981. The rate of acacia regrowth in this area, which has adequate water, has been phenomenal. After 5 years the canopy is about 5 metres in height.’

Secondly, the fuelwood produced on agricultural land is important, though widely neglected in many fuelwood studies. It has been estimated that as much as 47 per cent of the fuelwood in Kenya is produced on agricultural land (Lundgren and van Gelder, 1983: 12). There is reason to believe that even in the Tanzanian case a large proportion of the fuelwood for rural consumption is taken from the cropland rather than from the forest. In a study from Sumbawanga district in Rukwa region, Mohamed (1989) suggested that intercropping the nitrogen fixing tree *Leucaena leucocephala* with maize would provide the farm family with sufficient fuelwood in addition to supplying the maize with nitrogen. Ishengoma et al. (1997) have made experiments and chemical analyses to find that wood from *Leucaena leucocephala*
can even be used to produce charcoal of good quality.

In Kenya it has been observed that within the high potential areas, where 80 per cent of the country’s population lives, planted woody biomass increased by 4.7 per cent annually during the years 1986-1992. It was also observed that ‘cultivation of trees on farms is a common feature, even in the most heavily populated areas’ (Holmgren et al., 1994: 390). One important reason for this success is assumed to be that ‘for many farmers, forestry products are not freely available outside of their farm area’ (p. 395).

Along this line, Gerden (1989: 154) suggested that ‘the smallholders have an essential role to play in supply of woodfuel, to both urban and rural areas’ and proposed ‘research which focuses on the smallholder as the producer of the woody biomass – be it an agriculturalist, agro-pastoralist or pastoralist’.

Otsyina et al. (1996) suggested a new invention within such agroforestry systems in the form of ‘rotational woodlots’ where tree seedlings are intercropped with annual crops for 2-3 years, then follows 2-4 years with trees in a pure stand until they are harvested and the open area can be cropped for 3-4 years before trees are allowed to start growing again. The authors reported that farmers had shown great interest in experimental trial woodlots, which ‘will provide for their most acute needs – firewood, fodder and food production’. The paper therefore seemed optimistic that farmers themselves will implement the system with assistance from extension workers.

Thirdly, it seems clear that multipurpose trees are a better choice than trees that provide only fuelwood. In Babati district, tree-growing in the villages has expanded rapidly as a response to depletion of the forest resources (Johansson, 1991). In a survey the most frequently mentioned reason for growing trees was the household’s need for timber. Other important reasons were cash income by selling timber, fruits, the function of trees as savings, securing of land tenure, fuelwood and environmental protection. Fuelwood was frequently mentioned, but none of the interviewed farmers were growing trees exclusively or primarily for fuelwood production.

Fourthly, there are indications that people will be motivated for planting trees when the fuelwood scarcity has reached a certain level. A survey of three villages within a tree planting project area in Karatu in 1993 compared the situation at that time with the situation at the inception of the project in 1986 (Axelsson and Hagborg, 1994: 5):

Today it is probably more time-consuming to collect firewood in Karatu than in 1986. The women experience large problems in
finding naturally growing firewood and the distances to these sites can be several kilometres. A notable change since 1986 is that some families have started to use cow-dung as fuel. This mostly concerns older people, widows and single women.

At this stage, when people are unable to find firewood within a reasonable distance, the motivation for planting trees is there, as reported by the same study (Axelsson and Hagborg, 1994: 6): ‘The concern for tree-planting in the studied area is much higher than in 1986. Almost every household in the area has planted trees. The most favoured species are Grevillea robusta and different fruit trees.’

2. Improved stoves

According to Sørensen (1989) the cooking efficiency in firewood use in Tanzania is one third to one half of that in Asian rural areas in comparable situations and only one tenth of the efficiency of European wood-burning stoves. As an example, the traditional open fire cooking has an efficiency of only 5-7 per cent, compared to the Indian Junagar with 30 per cent efficiency (Ishengoma, 1987). Still, traditional techniques are the most common ones. The percentage of households using improved stoves ranges from 1 to 12 depending on region (Mnzava, 1990).

Carl Bro International (1983: 26-27) found the calorific efficiency in traditional cooking systems to be 10 per cent for charcoal and 5 per cent for firewood. It was suggested that a successful development and diffusion programme for energy efficient stoves would result in a 50 per cent reduction of the fuelwood consumption (p. 9). Schneiders et al. (1985: 163-164) reported that an improved charcoal stove produced locally in Dodoma showed an efficiency of 36 per cent against an efficiency of 20 per cent in the traditional charcoal stove. The price of the improved stove was TShs 250, against TShs 60 for the traditional stove. The authors claimed that ‘if we consider an ideal case where all charcoal users in the country own the Dodoma stove, the rate of forest depletion would be reduced by half, since the new stoves use half the fuel needed when cooking with a traditional stove’. This view, however, is a bit too simple. First, charcoal production is not the only reason for forest depletion, probably not even the most important reason. Second, it is very likely that many households would cook more if they could cook a meal with half of the fuelwood consumption they were used to. According to Ishengoma (1987) consumption levels may be three times as high in villages with easy access to wood compared to villages without woodlands within reach.
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Munslow et al. (1988: 140) found five main reasons why the idea of rural improved stove programmes had not taken off. First, the traditional alternative is free of monetary costs. Second, when firewood becomes scarce, people tend to improve traditional fire management practices rather than buying a stove. Third, improved stoves don’t fulfill all the multiple functions of the traditional fire, like heating, lighting, repelling insects and acting as a social focus in the evenings. Fourth, most projects have focused on research and development, not on mass production and distribution. Fifth, the traditional fire stones are portable, amenable to complex fire management practices and burn all sorts of fuel.

The observations on the improved stove programmes seem to confirm the view that most villagers don’t see fuelwood scarcity as a high priority problem. Consequently, there is no good reason for spending their scarce cash on an improved stove. The situation is different in the towns. This was shown by a stove production project in Morogoro region. There proved to be a demand for improved charcoal stoves among urban households. However, there was no or very little demand for a firewood stove in rural areas, where open fire was the prevailing way of cooking (Sefu, 1989).

3. Switching from fuelwood to hydropower

Switching from fuelwood to hydropower has been suggested as a solution to household energy shortage in Tanzania. And it is a fact that Tanzania has a large hydropower potential, estimated at 48,000 MW, while only 300 MW are utilised by existing plants (Kjellstrøm et al., 1992: 51).

In a very optimistic article, Fergus (1983) suggested hydropower development as the solution to the firewood crisis. Fergus assumed that cheap hydropower development and rising fuelwood prices would make hydropower competitive. Temu and Weaver (1986) argued that ‘Tanzania’s energy development programme should focus on the nation’s hydropower potential’. They found that a shift from charcoal to electricity in urban areas would save wood equivalent to 100,000 ha of natural woodland annually. These authors also argued that the annual electricity bill for a family would be lower than the present annual charcoal bill. In his survey of Zanzibar town, Masoud (1990) also found electricity to be much cheaper per energy unit than the other available energy sources (firewood, charcoal, coconut residues and kerosene). Andersson and Holm (1990) suggested the increased use of electricity for cooking as a main strategy for alleviating the situation in Dar es Salaam. For those who have already installed elec-
tricity in their houses, the monthly fuel costs for electricity were less than for firewood, charcoal and kerosene. The cost of the stove, however, was not taken into consideration in any of these analyses. An other estimate made in Dar es Salaam included the cost of buying an electric stove, but no interest was assumed on that investment (Monela et al., 1993: 257). This analysis showed almost equal costs of electricity for cooking, compared to charcoal.

At present, about 3 per cent of the families in Tanzania have access to electricity in their homes. These families must be assumed to belong to the relatively wealthy segment of the population. Even most of these do not use electricity for cooking. Electricity is considered too expensive, even when it has been made available. Mosha (1991: 113) explained the reason: ‘As for electric cookers, prices are way out of reach of common people.’ There are indications, however, that hydropower has some potential as cooking fuel. Sabuni (1990: 68) found that as much as 8 per cent of the cooking in Sumbawanga town was done with hydroelectricity as the energy source.

In the rural areas, electricity for cooking is very rare, as expressed by Kjellstrøm et al. (1992: 2): ‘Out of the 8600 villages, probably less than 1 per cent have so far been provided with electricity. More than 80 per cent of the households in the electrified rural areas are not yet connected.’ Moreover, ‘kerosene and electricity are used for cooking to a limited extent, particularly in electrified households. These energy carriers are mainly used for making tea and cooking snacks; their use for cooking main meals is relatively rare’ (p. 5). Kjellstrøm (1992: 20) drew the conclusion:

It is to be expected, however, that cooking with electricity will become more popular with increasing family income. This will require continued economic development, and it is highly unlikely that electrification will result in an observable reduction in the demand of biomass cooking fuel in the coming decade ... Fuelwood related deforestation must therefore be slowed down by other means.

In agreement with the above statement, the report from a workshop on rural electrification in Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe also stated that ‘because so few rural consumers use electricity for cooking, the impact on fuelwood consumption of most rural electrification programmes is generally likely to be negligible’ (Foley 1993: 16).

4. Switching to other alternative energy sources
A lot has been written on alternative sources for cooking energy in Tanzania. Very few of these options have had any impact so far.

Next to woodfuel, kerosene is the most common fuel for cooking. Mnzava (1990) reported from a survey in Dar es Salaam that 12.8 per cent of the respondents used kerosene stoves, while according to Andersson and Holm (1990) 50 per cent of the population in Dar es Salaam used kerosene daily for some purpose (not necessarily cooking). However, very few, if any, authors have regarded kerosene as an interesting policy option. Kerosene has to be imported, but has been subsidised by the government (Andersson and Holm, 1990). This means that a switch to kerosene would add to the stress on both the state’s finances and Tanzania’s scarce foreign currency.

According to Reichel (1978), most of the windmill installations in Tanzania are for water pumping. Reichel found, however, that electricity from windmills could be economical at existing Tanzanian electricity selling rates. On the other hand, Brown and Howe (1978) found electricity from windmills more expensive than electricity from the existing grid and also more expensive than small scale hydropower schemes, but cheaper than diesel generated electricity.

Sawe (1991: 104) summarised the situation regarding windmills in Tanzania: ‘There has been no systematic development of windmills technology besides those imported for special projects. There has been no successful effort to transfer the technology.’

Solar cookers and solar ovens have not gained acceptance in Tanzania, for several reasons. They are expensive, and it is inconvenient to cook outside, in the sun. The cooking has to be done in the middle of the day, which is outside normal cooking hours. It has also been reported that there is a risk of injuries to the user’s eyes if the user gets his eyes near the focal point of the cooker (Carl Bro International A/S, 1983).

According to Mubayi et al. (1979) anaerobic digestion of wet biomass and pyrolysis of dry biomass together have the potential of covering the entire future energy needs in rural Tanzania. The economic and cultural feasibility of such a proposal was not discussed in that report. Mauer (1981) found bio-gas digesters to be a competitive alternative, referring to digesters produced by the Arusha Appropriate Technology Project at less than 100 US$ giving an energy price of less than 0.01 US$ per kWh. According to Mauer, biogas could meet as much as 60 per cent of the future energy needs of the villages of Tanzania. This optimistic price estimate agrees well with Brown and Howe (1978), who found that the energy cost of biogas used directly for cooking was less than 20 per cent of the cost of electricity from the
existing grid. The labour consumption in running the biogas plant and collecting the manure and other organic raw material was not included as a cost. Lyamchai and Bhatia (1981) claimed that ‘the cost of installing a gas plant is an inhibiting factor at the present stage’. Still, a financial analysis is made, showing a small, but positive, net return. In this analysis, a price was set per m³ of gas, without explanation of how this price was arrived at. If the gas is meant to be a substitute for firewood, and firewood is considered as a free good, then the gas price in this analysis is irrelevant to villagers.

The enthusiastic optimism shared by most authors around 1980 is not supported by evidence. In a recent paper the number of biogas digesters in Tanzania is estimated at ‘more than 1000’ (Kassenga, 1997: 259). This is still modest compared to the total number of between 4 and 5 million households in Tanzania. Besides, it is doubtful whether as much as 1000 digesters are operating. A recent visit to 26 small scale biogas digesters showed that 11 were found to be working, 4 were new and not yet taken into use, and 11 were not working for various reasons including too low pressure and gas production, problems with burners and lack of water (Cortsen et al., 1997). The survey also revealed that household lighting rather than cooking was often the main reason for wanting a biogas digester.

According to Rajeswaran (1983) the price of a 2 m³ digester was TShs 16,700 in 1982. If we assume a technical lifetime of 10 years and a discount rate of 10 per cent, this will give an annual investment cost of TShs 2717. This was a rather unfavourable price compared to a cost of 821 TShs per year for a sufficient amount of firewood, according to the same author. In spite of considerable efforts, biogas has not had a very significant impact on Tanzania’s energy supply. It is also unlikely that it will have significance in the near future, both for economic and other reasons. Among the preconditions that a farm has to fulfil in order to be considered by the Biogas Extension Service for the installation of a family size plant is ‘3-7 cows kept under zero grazing conditions in a stable with concrete floor’ (Kombe and Hoffmann, 1990: 435). This condition will clearly be met by only an insignificant proportion of the households in Tanzania.

Mashayekhi (1983) estimated the marginal cost of developing natural gas in several developing countries. In the Tanzanian case, he found a city gate delivery cost of 6.18 US$ per barrel of oil equivalent, which is very favourable when compared to imported petroleum products. Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (1987: 127-128), however, found that the potential domestic market for natural gas in Tanzania is too small to justify the necessary investments. In order to
cover the costs, it would be necessary to include an export project, in the form of either methanol or fertiliser. The study concluded that ‘there is no overwhelming case’ in favour of a natural gas project, and Tanzania is considered as ‘a border-line country’ when it comes to the profitability of exploring this resource.

The Tanzanian resources of mineral coal are not fit for household use in their raw form. According to Perlack et al. (1986), however, Tanzania appears to have the conditions for producing coal briquettes for household use. Perlack et al. (1986) estimated the total coal resources in Tanzania at 1900 million tons, while the reserves were estimated at 304 million tons and the present annual production only 0.01 million tons. According to Foley and Buren (1980), coal could be made available in Dar es Salaam at approximately the same price as charcoal. However, a ‘switch to coal would require changes in equipment and cooking methods and would impose both financial and social costs. Under such conditions a substantial price difference between charcoal and coal in favour of coal would be required to make people adopt an even partial use of coal’ (p. 19). It was therefore concluded that the use of mineral coal in households was unlikely unless charcoal became scarce.

The contributions from alternative energy sources are mostly disappointing. A workshop in Tanzania in 1977 concluded (Tanzania National Scientific Research Council, 1978: 5):

The technologies recommended, principally on the basis of cost-effectiveness, availability of resources, and long-range power requirements of villagers, are photovoltaic electricity generation, biogas generation, small-scale hydroelectric generation, and solar refrigeration and drying for food and/or crop preservation.

It seems obvious that none of these techniques have become widespread enough during the 20 years that have elapsed to have any significant impact on the consumption of fuelwood in the villages. The reason for the limited success in implementation of alternative energy sources is fairly easy to understand. Sambali (1990: 57) concluded that a large number of the renewable energy technology projects are ‘beyond the financial reach of their target groups: the rural and urban poor’.

4. Conclusions
It seems obvious that fuelwood scarcity is an increasing problem in
Burning with Enthusiasm: Fuelwood Scarcity in Tanzania

large parts of Tanzania. The driving force behind increased scarcity is the population growth leading to urban sprawl and to agricultural expansion and thereby a shortage of accessible woodlands in part of the country.

While some authors emphasise the deforestation effect of fuelwood consumption, other sources claim that other factors are more important in causing deforestation. On the other hand, all relevant studies seem to indicate that fuel puts a considerable stress on the household budgets, particularly in the towns, and particularly among the poor. Several studies also indicate that the real prices increase, and that an increasing share of household budgets are spent on fuelwood in the towns while increasing time is spent on fuelwood gathering in the rural areas.

It seems useful to discuss rural and urban fuelwood supply separately, as suggested by Munslow et al. (1988):

Separate fuelwood energy policies are required for rural and urban areas. This is because in rural areas fuelwood is both produced and consumed with few viable alternative domestic energy supplies. In urban areas, fuelwood is only consumed and alternative fuels and the cash to buy them are more readily available.

In the rural areas, there seems not to be any good alternative to reliance on firewood. Still, the approaches of village woodlots and afforestation projects have obvious shortcomings. Emphasis on other propagation methods than seedlings, on agroforestry systems and on multipurpose trees rather than trees only for fuelwood, are elements that would be important in a future strategy for the rural areas. Particular emphasis should be on agroforestry. When considering Tanzania’s high population growth and therefore the high rate of land clearing for agriculture, it seems clear that the forests will diminish in importance as a source of energy.

Attempts to force people to plant trees by a ‘military approach’ (Ahlbäck, 1995) are clearly not needed in future rural programmes. Such an approach would be a bizarre magnifying and exaggeration of everything that failed during the villagisation programme. Instead of such a ‘military approach’ one has to listen to the priority needs of local people. In cases where trees are not among their priorities, one should not try to launch tree planting at all. If trees are among their priorities, one should ask what kind of trees and what benefits people want from trees and design projects accordingly. Energy related projects should be launched only where local women and men perceive
energy shortage as a serious problem, or where energy can be sold at attractive prices.

In the towns, there are generally several energy options, at least in theory. The urban dwellers also have to pay in cash for their energy supply. Therefore, with some reservations related to the cultural acceptability, the urban dweller is assumed to use the energy alternative that gives the lowest total cooking cost. Increasing shortage of fuelwood will increase the charcoal price. The increased price may make new possibilities feasible, like fuelwood cultivation for cash in the nearby rural areas.

Increasing charcoal prices may also increase the use of improved stoves in the towns, while attempts to sell improved stoves to villagers who can collect firewood for free are likely to continue failing.

Out of renewable energy sources apart from wood, hydroelectricity seems to be the only one that has some potential of supplying even a modest proportion of the cooking energy to the towns at a competitive price.

Increased energy prices will lead to investments in wood production, energy saving technology, and alternative energy sources. Unfortunately, serious deforestation as well as social and economic problems among the urban poor will take place before a free market can bring fuelwood consumption equal to woody biomass increment by the price mechanism within the densely populated areas. The government policy options which can be effective in alleviating such a situation, are yet to be explored.

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Summary


Fuelwood constitutes 92 per cent of the total energy supply in Tanzania. In this article fuelwood and alternatives to fuelwood for household use are discussed. Estimates vary considerably when it comes to national figures for demand and supply of fuelwood in Tanzania. Fuelwood seems to be scarce in the densely populated areas and also seems to represent a large and increasing burden to the household budgets in the towns. Fuelwood gathering is probably a less important cause of deforestation than land clearing for crop production. In spite of much enthusiasm about various ‘solutions’ to the fuelwood problem, none of these ‘solutions’ have had much impact on the deforestation or the availability of household energy in Tanzania. Many traditional tree planting projects have failed. It is suggested that emphasis on other propagation methods than seedlings, on agroforestry and on multi-purpose trees would be a better approach. Improved stoves seem to hold some promise in the towns where fuel is normally paid for. In the rural areas, where fuelwood is still considered as a free good, there is not enough incentive for fuel saving equipment and there seems not to be any realistic alternative to fuelwood. In urban areas, kerosene and hydropower have some, but limited potential as substitutes for fuelwood. In general, energy related projects should not be launched unless local people perceive energy shortage as a serious problem.
Fact or Fiction?
A Response to Terje Tvedt
Arne Tostensen

Introduction
It is commendable that Terje Tvedt (in his article in the previous issue of Forum for Development Studies) raises for debate a number of ethical issues related to development research. We do need to take time out and reflect on our activities as development researchers. As far as I can judge, his claim is correct that ethics have not been a central concern in development research; we have taken it more or less as given that conducting development research is in itself an ethically worthy activity. It is this implicit smugness that Tvedt is out to question.

He covers a large number of issues, not all of which will be commented upon here. I shall only address selected points about which I have reservations. Tvedt identifies three inter-related foci for discussion, but the bulk of his article is devoted to the third one listed below:

– The ethical justification for doing development research;
– The ethical implications of being a development researcher;
– The ethical problems involved in referring to ‘something’ as ‘research’ when in fact that activity is guided by considerations other than scientific criteria.

I agree with many of the points Tvedt has raised, perhaps most of them. Indeed, some of them are so obvious that he seems to be spending a lot of effort in breaking down open doors. For instance, few development researchers would take issue with him when he, by way of introduction, states emphatically that note must be taken of variations in moral systems across time and space. Otherwise, he tends to make too many sweeping statements without adequate substantiation. Perhaps that was intentional, in order to provoke debate.

Early on in his article Tvedt says he wishes to focus attention on the ethical implications of different value systems within the same society: that of development research versus that of the aid institutions. What he is getting at, is not the difference in value systems as such, but rather what he claims to be an inclination on the part of development researchers to be influenced by, and indeed become subservient to, the values expounded by the aid industry. Tvedt is concerned that the development research community is careless in upholding the values of science when dealing with the aid institutions, and
that, as a result, the scientific quality of development research will tend to
deteriorate.

Sweeping Statements

What is fact and fiction in this regard? Or, to put it in relative terms: how
much of what is being claimed is fact and how much is fiction? This is where
I find Tvedt’s assertions too sweeping and largely unsubstantiated. First, he
claims (p. 213) that there is very little ethical reflection within development
research about the relationship between science and politics and power. He
may be right in one particularly narrow sense: there is very little reflection in
written form on these issues. Development researchers may be justly criti-
cised for this failure to communicate their ethical concerns in writing.

On the other hand, I do not quite recognise the purported reality Tvedt
depicts. In my experience there is a continuous struggle over the professional
autonomy exercised by researchers vis-à-vis aid bureaucracies whenever
applied or commissioned research is on the agenda. These struggles com-
menge right from formulation of projects or terms of reference, through
selection of research teams, relevance and definition of research problems,
choice of methodology, to presentation of findings. Time frames, wide
enough to allow researchers carry out in-depth studies rather than ‘quick-and-
dirty’ exercises, are also bones of contention. I join ranks with Tvedt in
deploring the unfortunate state of affairs that the nature and scope of these
struggles have rarely been documented in writing. But I take exception to his
general claim that development researchers are oblivious of the ethical issues
involved and that they fail to relate to them. Tvedt seems to attach too much
weight to written sources. He could have conducted interviews with a sample
of researchers before making his blanket statement.

Tvedt’s audacity takes him even further. Very boldly he alleges that ‘…
there has been a long-standing and close alliance linking both individual
researchers and the collective institutions of the scientific professions to the
economic, industrial and political powers of the aid system’ (p. 213, emphasis
added). To substantiate his allegation he refers to research centres in OECD
countries being funded by ministries of foreign affairs or aid bureaucracies,
which is definitely the case in Norway. While he was at it, why did he not
include all the public universities and, indeed, most of the so-called institute
sector as being in the pocket of the powers-that-be, because the bulk of the
funding is public? Such a simplistic one-to-one relationship between funding
sources and research does not exist, and I am astounded that Tvedt seems to
imply that it does!

While it is true that development research is overwhelmingly funded by
institutions affiliated to the aid system, it does not follow that the research
conducted is controlled by the aid authorities. To be true, money is the most
important research policy instrument and thematic research programmes are
being launched with funding from aid agencies with a view to building up
domestic research competence to be used by the aid system whenever profes-
sional advice is needed in designing and evaluating aid programmes. But it is
also true that there have been tough struggles between the aid authorities as
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funders and research interests in formulating the substantive contents of research programmes as well as in composing steering committees. This is evidence, in itself, that the research community does not take all its cues from the aid authorities, even if the latter has an upper hand in controlling the money flow.

Furthermore, it has been documented in evaluations that, once launched, the projects funded under research programmes do not necessarily live up to the initial expectations, partly due to inadequate competence and capacity in the aid agencies and partly due to the ongoing struggles between users and researchers. It is ironic, therefore, that an evaluation of three such research programmes, undertaken by Terje Tvedt in 1989 on behalf of the then Ministry of Development Co-operation, noted, with respect to the Women and Development Programme, that ‘… so far the programme has only to a limited extent been able to achieve its objective to generate research results that are “relevant and accessible” to the aid organisations’ (Tvedt 1989: 42, author’s translation).

With regard to the Recruitment Programme, Tvedt wrote ‘… agreement evolved fairly soon [in the steering committee] that the objective of the programme was to produce researchers, quite independently of the relevance criterion’ (Tvedt 1989: 38, author’s translation). It is noteworthy that an aid agency was funding a general programme for recruitment of new researchers, even if it wished to influence the thematic orientation of the grantees.

In the concluding chapter of his evaluation, Tvedt had this to say: ‘Two of the programmes were administered by NORAS, i.e. an applied research council for which user orientation and dissemination of findings to the users are central concerns. Despite this fact, members of some steering committees argued as if the objectives of the programmes were to gain new knowledge in a cumulative process internal to science. This reflects a certain disregard for the separation between exploratory, free research, and applied programme research in the terms of reference for the programmes and their implementation by the steering committees’ (Tvedt 1989: 77, author’s translation). The insights gained from these and similar programmes have actually been used in criticising the policies of the aid system.

Tvedt does not confine himself to criticising researchers in Norway. With equal fervour he takes on the international development research community (p. 214). How on earth can it have escaped Tvedt that among the most vocal critics of the World Bank have been members of the development research community, internationally, in Third World countries and in Norway? Osten-sibly, Tvedt is preoccupied with researchers entering politics while invoking their authority as researchers, and with research thus turning into a continuation of politics. If his preoccupation were serious I would have expected him to make critical remarks about those development researchers who have engaged in political Bank-bashing based on meagre research findings. There is ample reason to criticise the propensity of certain segments of the research community to reify their thought patterns and models. This practice is just as unethical as the alleged ‘softness’ of development researchers vis-à-vis the aid authorities – arguably more so, because it undermines, in effect, the credibility of criticism directed at the aid system.
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Academic freedom suffers even more in developing countries, Tvedt maintains, not only because of oppressive regimes, but, almost as important, because development researchers are dependent on funding from aid agencies (p. 214). It is tempting to ask the rhetorical question: how much greater would academic freedom have been without donor funding? Would it not be possible to credit donors for providing a respite to starved research centres in developing countries, rather than seeing donors as a cause of limited academic freedom?

It is problematic to relate to Tvedt’s article because many of his statements and concepts are not specific enough. Research communities are not homogeneous entities. No doubt, Tvedt may find examples to support his claims, but are they representative enough to constitute proof that his claims are justified? He appears to be stretching his overriding argument to the hilt, to the extent that he disregards or misses data, which do not support it.

Separating the Positive and the Normative

Notwithstanding the merits and validity of Tvedt’s criticisms levelled against the development research community, I fully subscribe to his view that researchers ought not and cannot engage in a normative project – whatever its nature – while claiming that it is based on scientific findings. Researchers are involved in knowledge generation, not in the promotion of specific normative projects. Their business is to separate the positive from the normative. To the extent researchers go beyond their vocation of knowledge production, they enter politics and cease to be researchers. It may or may not be ethically defensible to take a neutral stand on the persistence of poverty in the world, but it cannot be done with reference to science.

As a matter of principle, I would expect most development researchers to agree with statements above to that effect. On the other hand, it is an empirical question whether, in fact, they live up to the principle. Tvedt’s article is, in its entirety, an argument that researchers are grossly negligent in this regard. Sometimes I wonder, however, whether he is making his sweeping statements and assertions because he considers them to be reflections of fact. Or, alternatively, whether he is merely making a provocative plea for debate and sensitisation on these ethical issues. It looks to me that he is inviting debate, precisely because he considers the deplorable factual situation to warrant it.

Tvedt also voices concerns on epistemological grounds, related to how development researchers conceptualise phenomena, especially how we perceive ‘we’ and ‘the others’ in a dichotomous fashion. This dichotomisation masks variation, and deceives researchers into believing that ‘we’ are the mirror of the future of ‘the others’ (p. 221). Tvedt says (p. 220-221) the research community is bombarded by aid-speak, which influences our thinking when adopting concepts and constructs only too readily and uncritically. His point is well taken. But, again, his penchant for exaggeration and dramatising becomes apparent. While Tvedt is doubtless right that notions such as Western values and African culture are gross generalisations, they do capture some sort of commonality. They may not be useful for analytical purposes in
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specific studies, but Tvedt goes much too far in dismissing such and similar generalising concepts. He even seems to imply that the discourse employing these concepts is driven by the aid system and that development researchers are willing fellow travellers.

Again, the general nature of Tvedt’s formulations makes it difficult to refute them outright. He lumps too many things together. Surely, he must know that the notion of African values, embedded in the Pan-Africanist movement, was a reaction against Western values and neo-colonial domination. Although the Pan-Africanist movement is no longer as vibrant as it used to be, Pan-Africanist congresses are still being held with participation including blacks of the Americas. The latest was held in Kampala in 1994, at the time of the outbreak of civil war in Rwanda. Pan-Africanist sentiments still linger and assert themselves in various declarations, e.g. in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Similarly, so-called Asian values have been propounded by Asians – governments and NGOs – in response to Western pretensions about the universality of human rights.

I sympathise with much of what Tvedt has to say about the pitfalls of overgeneralisation and the habit of putting dissimilar phenomena in the same bag (pp. 220-225). He seems to attribute this inclination to the ambitions of the aid system to formulate development theories and strategies with universal validity (p. 221). Whereas most donors – and to some extent the development research community – subscribed to those ambitions in the 1950s, 1960s and even in the 1970s, albeit from differing perspectives, the 1980s saw a breakdown of grand theory with claims to universal applicability. A period of theoretical pluralism ensued from the mid-1970s into the 1980s, acknowledging that theories of limited range would have to suffice. The post-1989 situation has again produced greater consensus, but it would be a gross exaggeration to say that a hegemonic theory of development exists today. There may be certain tenets, which have garnered wide support, but they can in no way be said to constitute a theory. Rather, the 1990s have been characterised by testing of theoretical propositions, without reaching an unequivocal conclusion.

Tvedt might be too influenced by his own disciplinary affiliation: history. As an historian he appears to consider historical phenomena as unique. Hence his apparent aversion to positivism and nomothetic inquiry with its generalising ambition (p. 221). Or is it just with the excesses of generalisation that he takes issue? Having encountered examples of what I consider to be a parody of nomothetic research, I have also adopted a sound sceptical attitude to such methods. But it does not mean that I wish to dispense with those methods altogether. Personally, as a researcher trained in sociology I find merit in nomothetic and ideographic methods alike. Neither produces truer or more valid findings than the other. To me they are complementary and could be combined beneficially in so-called triangulation.

Legitimising Research

The question remains, however, what legitimises research endeavours. Some, but rather few today, would argue that research should be left alone, com-
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pletely free from any political influence. Most scientists – even those involved in basic research – acknowledge, whether they like it or not, that their activity needs to be legitimised somehow. After all, public money is being spent and normal accountability applies. However, most quarters resent the narrow, short-term utilitarian conceptions that are so common among politicians who control budget allocations. Even if basic research may be very useful from an applied point of view, its application is not necessarily apparent a priori or when it is being conducted. Application only has a longer ‘gestation period’.

For development research, the struggle against short-term, utilitarian notions is arguably more pronounced than in other fields of study. Demands for immediate application are commonplace. This is reflected in the accent given to relevance in most thematic research programmes funded by the aid authorities. Whatever the case may be, development researchers are compelled to relate to this demand lest they be left without funding altogether. Hence, the bulk of development research is applied, and often commissioned at that. In this particular sense the aid authorities exercise some influence over the researchers’ choice of topic or geographic coverage. But it is a far cry from influencing the choice of theoretical approach, methodology and findings.

Aid authorities are in a position, due to their control of the purse strings, to determine choice of theme and geographical orientation of the largely applied research being conducted, but it does not follow that they may determine a priori the findings. Whether some researchers ‘adapt’ their findings to the expectations of the funders, because they fear reprisals or non-renewal of contracts if they do not, is a moot point, which can only be ascertained by empirical research. If it is found to be the case, such ‘doctoring’ of findings is certainly unethical, if not fraudulent.

Presumably, Tvedt thinks the mechanisms at work are more subtle than deliberate falsification of findings to appease the funder in order to ensure funding in the future. He refers to connections and links, exchanges of roles and personnel, as well as the ethical justification of the ‘aid project’ (which he fails to define precisely) to which most development researchers allegedly subscribe. By doing so he advances a plausible argument that “[t]he ethical imperative makes it logical to identify with the aid project’s aims and with both donors and beneficiaries” (p. 219, emphasis added). However, his argument is flawed and he does not adduce adequate evidence to support it.

First, to my knowledge, regardless of how the ‘aid project’ is constituted, there is an array of divergent positions as to its design and implementation. The research community is heterogeneous and, as a result, the politics of individual researchers is likely to vary. For instance, two researchers posturing as politicians – in Tvedt’s schema – may very well take opposing policy positions with respect to the design or implementation of the ‘aid project’. Hence, the aggregate effect may render the multitude of positions neutral. Or, does Tvedt suggest that there is a hegemonic position in this regard within the research community?

Second, I fail to see the logic in the alleged identification on the part of researchers with the ‘aid project’, stemming from its ethical imperative. Whereas such an identification may exist – subject to empirical substantiation
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– there is nothing logical in it.

Third, Tvedt lumps all donors together, as if they were involved in the same ‘aid project’. While they are, no doubt, pursuing an ‘aid project’ of sorts, it is not necessarily the same one. Although the range of aid policies may have narrowed in the 1990s, rallying behind the so-called Washington consensus, there are still considerable differences among donors.

Fourth, and worse still, Tvedt puts all recipients together in the same basket. Arguably, there is more variation in development policies among recipient governments than among the donors. If civil society is taken into account the variation is likely to become even wider.

Policy Research

How, then, is and how can development research be legitimised? By its usefulness? If so, who decides what is useful, and to whom? Tvedt concedes that it is not his intention to destroy the ethical, justifiable ‘aid project’ (p. 219). Rather, he wants to play a positive role for the poor and oppressed, and to contribute, at least indirectly, to improving the aid system. How can development researchers do that, without falling into the trap of using research as the continuation of politics by other means? Policy research – seemingly a contradiction in terms by Tvedt’s standards – may provide one answer.

In this regard, there appears to be a world of difference in the ways in which policy-makers (in aid bureaucracies and elsewhere) and researchers think. Tvedt, on the other hand, would appear to think that they are rather too similar in their thinking, which is what he finds problematic. Having distanced myself from Tvedt’s categorical position I find that the modes of thinking of policy-makers and researchers may be characterised as the two different cultures of government and academia. The quotation below from a book on the subject (George 1993: ix) puts the problem in a nutshell:

From the point of view of the policy-maker, the scholar is ‘too academic’, all too often prone to abstraction and jargon. The academic can operate in a more relaxed time frame. The policy-maker must nearly always act with imperfect information, before a fully satisfactory analysis is complete. He or she does not have the luxury of saying, ‘Other things being equal …’ Scholars, on the other hand, may complain that practitioners are too haphazard and ad hoc in their approaches to situations, and too ready to apply pat formulas or supposed lessons of history in uncritical ways. Practitioners place too much faith in intuitive judgement, scholars say, and make simplistic generalisations.

Although this quotation is not directly related to the ‘aid project’, it underscores the reluctance of the part of scholars to become enmeshed in policy-making. This reluctance does not necessarily stem from ethical qualms, but is rather based on a notion that prescription may not be justified on the basis of the available knowledge of the problem at hand. The reluctance could, however, just as well be based on ethical considerations in Tvedt’s sense.

Whereas this gap in thinking cannot probably be eliminated entirely – if
indeed it were desirable – it can surely be bridged to some extent. This requires, however, that the two camps (a) are willing to engage in meaningful dialogue with one another, and (b) acknowledge without prejudice their differing roles and relative comparative advantages in the policy-making process. A useful distinction can be made between diagnosis and prescription in policy-making. The academic analyst would be better placed to offer a sound diagnosis of the problem at hand, but not particularly well equipped to handle policy prescription, should he wish to dispense with whatever ethical reservations she/he might have. Conversely, the practitioner would in most cases be ill prepared to provide in-depth diagnostic analysis, but be better at prescribing a course of action.

Generally, effective policy research and analysis depend on the ability to identify and measure the anticipated impact of various policy options, to assess trade-offs, and to present thought-out choices in a well-prepared manner to policy-makers and managers. Policy researchers and analysts need special abilities to analyse and synthesise; to weigh various alternatives for solving complex problems under conditions of uncertainty, inadequate data, competing interests, and limited time; to explain persuasively and clearly to policy-makers the strengths and weaknesses of the various options, founded on technical and research competence in keeping with the economic and socio-political realities of the area in question.

Many researchers would not be willing to engage in such policy research at all. Such a purist position may seem ethically defensible, but only superficially so. By refusing to engage with policy-makers in providing information, decisions might be taken on an erroneous or incomplete basis, and ultimately lead to disastrous consequences. Would that be a more ethical stance? I submit that it would not.

The challenges of policy research are often couched in maximalist terms, which is fair enough as a point of departure. But academics and policy-makers alike must acknowledge that in reality maximalist ambitions are not achievable. That is not to say that one should stop striving for optimal conditions in the prevailing circumstances. The choice is not between detailed, precise, high-confidence prescriptions for action or nothing! It is worth while trying to improve the data and knowledge base as far as possible. Reducing uncertainty as much as possible is desirable, of course, in order to minimise the risk of missing the policy target.

The point to be driven home is that policy research can best be undertaken by combining the skills of various categories of personnel, rather than expecting one category to perform equally well in all functions at all stages of the process, i.e. by delineating the respective roles. In this regard, a three-fold distinction may be useful to make between (a) problem analysis and diagnosis; (b) policy selection and prescription, and (c) policy implementation. Assigning these tasks to respective categories of staff with suitable skill profiles would then be in order, though without compartmentalising them rigidly. Crudely speaking, academics would have a comparative advantage in diagnostic analysis, whereas politicians and senior civil servants would be better placed to select appropriate policy instruments, and finally, civil servants at senior and middle level would be best suited for the implementation phase, in


The primary task of the academic analyst is problem diagnosis. Towards making a diagnostic analysis it may be helpful to decompose the task into three distinct knowledge elements: (a) an abstract conceptual model; (b) general knowledge of conditions that are deemed to favour the success of a particular policy, and, conversely, the conditions that are thought to make failure likely; and (c) an actor-specific behavioural model.

An abstract conceptual model or strategy identifies the critical variables and the general logic associated with the use of the particular policy instrument in question. But the simple logic of a particular strategy is too general for direct application. It cannot be the basis for universal generalisations of the type ‘if intervention A, then effect B will ensue’. Social phenomena are too complex for that to be possible. The variables and logic need to be qualified and specified in various ways.

Rather, the type of generic knowledge which it is feasible to strive for, is that of conditional generalisations. Generalisations are referred to as conditional when they identify factors that appear to favour policy success, and, conversely, when they specify conditions under which a particular policy option is likely to lead to failure.

To arrive at valid conditional generalisations, the critical element of actor-specific knowledge needs to be added. Policy-makers need an accurate and true image of the other actors involved, e.g. governments and civil society. This entails gathering data on political culture and decision-making practices, and an array of similar issues to enable a qualified assessment of the probable outcome.

Once the problem diagnosis has been made to the extent possible under prevailing time constraints, the policy-makers take charge, albeit in continuous consultations with the research diagnosticians. The better the diagnosis, the more likely the selected policy is to produce the anticipated results. However, an excellent diagnosis is no guarantee for policy success, because the policy-makers are under pressure from diverse constituencies and are liable to be swayed for reasons other than diagnostic knowledge.

By strictly observing the role of a development researcher in providing diagnostic problem analysis to a policy-making process as described above, the research endeavour could be legitimised without compromising ethical standards. There is nothing inherently wrong with the proximity between researchers and policy-makers as long as they stick to their respective roles. The guilt-by-association argument underlying Tvedt’s criticism of development researchers does not necessarily hold. It should be emphasised that engaged policy research is not at all uncritical in nature by virtue of its closeness to the aid authorities. The interchange between researchers and policy-makers often entails criticism.

It is an empirical question whether, or to what extent, development researchers act as politicians (or ‘missionaries’) in an unethical manner. Tvedt’s article has not provided the empirical basis for making that judgement. It merely contains a number of sweeping assertions, which may be reasonable hypotheses for serious research, but they cannot be taken at face value as true reflections of reality. I do not pretend to be able to disprove
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Tvedt’s claims; the burden of proof is on his shoulders. At this stage I can offer no more than personal experience and anecdotal evidence which does not support his sweeping statements. However, it serves to nuance the rather categorical nature of Tvedt’s pronouncements.

Policy research of a different brand – perhaps better suited to the purists – would be a disinterested, *ex post* deconstruction of particular policy-making processes with a view to revealing, in a critical vein, the power dynamics at play and the respective roles played by stakeholders, including that of the researchers. Among the research issues to be covered should also be the actual impacts of various normative positions and policies, relative to the stated objectives. There is certainly a need for this type of critical policy research, in addition to its counterpart outlined above. To some degree it is already being done by way of evaluations. But subjecting development research itself to critical research could be a useful exercise in self-criticism, and serve to conscientise researchers on ethical issues.

**Conclusion**

I welcome Terje Tvedt’s plea for more debates on ethical issues among development researchers; this response is a modest contribution. I am in complete agreement with his general statement (p. 220) that “… it is ethically important for researchers to try to identify the particularities and normative content of the aid rhetoric and also to disclose power mechanisms within the aid system, and thereby try to maintain individual autonomy and promote the search for truth.” But I would prefer an extension of the agenda to include dissemination of research results, language use and accessibility of findings, as well as various forms of reification in development research – be they based on aid rhetoric or ideological stereotypes peddled by critics of the ‘aid project’. It is also important to discuss – yet again – some of the epistemological questions raised by Tvedt, and to investigate how they bear on ethics.

**References**


**Summary**

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This response to Terje Tvedt’s article on development research and ethics in the previous issue of *Forum* attempts to nuance a number of Tvedt’s sweeping statements, while agreeing with his general point that the positive and the normative should be kept apart. It is argued that the dominant position of aid authorities as a funding source does not necessarily translate into control over the orientation and values of development research. It is suggested that policy research, provided the respective roles of researchers and decision-makers are observed, may serve as a useful vehicle for legitimising development research.
Social Engineering and Self-reflexivity. 
Rejoinder to Arne Tostensen

Terje Tvedt

In *Forum for Development Studies* 1998: 2, I wrote an article entitled ‘Some Notes on Development Research and Ethics’. In this number (1999: 1) Arne Tostensen, former Director at Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway’s biggest and most prominent institute for commissioned research on development issues, presents a response. This is an overdue and most welcome discussion.

I will use Tostensen’s article as a point of departure to try to elaborate further on the more general analysis presented in my article. I will therefore leave it to the reader to judge whether he is right when he asserts that I, in the article, pose as a ‘purist’, being opposed to aid institutions funding research; that I dismiss concepts like ‘Western ideas’; that it contains ‘sweeping generalisations’; that I think evaluation studies are dirty businesses and that most of the institute sector is in the pocket of the powers that be. Instead of doing what is very tempting indeed – to discuss how such misreadings are possible – I will focus on those of Tostensen’s arguments that deal with issues of more principal interest in this connection.

I will argue that they represent and express conventional and unfruitful views on researchers’ roles and ethical challenges. They are based on outdated assumptions about the a priori existence of clear and rigid role differences between researchers on the one hand and aid bureaucrats and politicians on the other hand. I think that Tostensen’s views as presented in the response are precisely those which impede that kind of self-reflexivity I think is a precondition for making social science possible at all.¹

¹ Tostensen agrees with my main empirical observation: there has been and is very little ‘ethical reflection within the development research community about the whole issue of the relationship between science and politics and power’ (p. 213, my italics). Or to be more precise: he agrees there has been little reflection about this issue in written form. He is consoled by the fact that, according to his experience, the individual researcher in his dealings with bureaucrats and politicians wage a ‘continuous struggle over the professional autonomy exercised by researchers’. I do not quite understand what he means by the expression ‘professional autonomy exercised by researchers’,

¹¹ The sociologist Bourdieu makes this point for social science in general and sociology in particular. See, for example Bourdieu (1990) and Wacquant (1987). Due to the very short history of development research as compared to the history of social science in general, and due to the field’s comparatively rapid institutional growth, it is even more important to historicise the rationality and the conceptual traditions of this research field.
since autonomy does not exist as a fixed category and cannot therefore simply be exercised as if it is an attribute to being a researcher. But if he wants to argue that many individual researchers fight to maintain different forms of autonomy vis-à-vis aid bureaucracies, he might be correct. Nobody knows, and it will be very difficult to ascertain in any precise way. What we can explore, however, and what is easy to study and where assumptions can be falsified, is what goes on within the research community.

I maintain my proposition: There has been virtually no debate, whether written or oral, in the research community on the issues raised in my article. Few articles, reports or working papers have discussed the issue during the last two decades. And very few seminars or discussions have been held on the issue. When the Norwegian Association for Development Research in 1998 organised a conference on Ethics and Development, a number of important ethical issues were brought up in the invitation to the seminar, but mostly issues belonging to the world of politics. The most crucial one for researchers – what are and how to maintain the core value codes that one might say distinguish the research system from other systems and activities – was neglected. That was the immediate background for my article, which originally was given as a paper at the conference. I do not think that Tostensen can dispute my assertion based on personal experiences either. I would suggest that there have been close to a thousand seminars at the CMI while Tostensen has been working there, but very few, if any, about these issues. This is typical for the situation in general, and it is also very easy to understand, since very few researchers have been concerned with this topic. Since a research community fruitfully can be understood as the communication that constitutes and maintains it, the communication among researchers and between the research system and other systems it interacts with, is the important issue. The character of this communication, or discourse if you like, is I think also of importance when it comes to the individual researcher’s ability to exercise self-reflection and autonomy. It is not difficult to envisage practical Utopias, or research communities, that are very different from this situation.

**Distinctive ethical values or different roles**

The crux of the matter as seen from my point of view is revealed unwittingly by Tostensen. He states that researchers are involved in ‘knowledge production’. When they ‘go beyond this vocation, they enter politics and cease to be researchers’ (p. 136). Although this way of thinking is popular and influences research policy and research policy debates, it is not fruitful – if the aim is to maintain autonomy and freedom or to stimulate self-reflexivity in the context of individual research efforts.

1. Researchers are not simply involved in some sort of value-free ‘knowledge production’. The never-ending discussions among researchers about ‘The Fall of the Roman Empire’, the ‘Background to the Industrial Revolution’ or how to define ‘the state’, ‘rights’, etc., demonstrate this. Development researchers suggesting development strategies, assessing how democratic institutions are built or how non-
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governmental organisations work definitely do not deal with value-free knowledge production (just ask the governments in Zambia and Korea, or the poor peasants in Bangladesh or the Shilluk in Southern Sudan). Tostensen suggests a way out. If two researchers writing the same report take opposing policy positions with respect to design or implementation of an aid project, then the ‘aggregate effect may render the multitude of positions neutral’, he argues (p. 138). This will imply that since many of the articles and reports produced by Tostensen (for example: ‘Review of NORAD’s research support’, for NORAD, or ‘The political economy of poverty reduction in Kenya’, for SIDA) have been written by more than one researcher, his final reports are neutral. Within this ‘neutrality’ perspective, the need for self-reflexivity on how different communicative situations and various relations to funders and the topic affect the researcher and the research will be irrelevant.

2. Politicians and aid bureaucrats are also involved in ‘knowledge production’. Ministers of education initiate nationwide plans for knowledge production and knowledge dissemination. Aid bureaucrats and aid activists also deal with ‘knowledge production’. They implement projects, based on former experiences or copying experiences of others, while hoping to contribute to practical knowledge of project implementation. Since value-free knowledge production does not exist, and also other social systems deal with knowledge production (the journalistic system, the political system, the football system; David Beckham performing his crosses, etc.), this cannot be the criteria on which the distinction between what is research and what is not research ought to be drawn.

Not only does Tostensen argue that the researcher is different because he is a ‘knowledge producer’ unlike other professions in society. His quotation from Alexander George suggests that he thinks that there exist other and very definite important role distinctions between researchers and non-researchers. George focuses on conventional arguments about the role differences between researchers and policy-makers, i.e. that ‘the academic can operate in a more relaxed time frame’ while the policy-maker ‘must nearly always act with imperfect information, before a fully satisfactory analysis is complete’.

As a general description of the research system and the world of politics or aid administration this is empirically incorrect and substantially uninteresting. Just to mention a few examples: In modern voluntary aid organisations there are, for example, employees with PhDs, who may concentrate their work and thoughts on the same region for years, dealing with the same few projects. Their time frame is often much more relaxed, and their knowledge about both local setting and individual projects will

2 I have elsewhere showed how many researchers were state activists in the 1950s and 1960s and NGO- and civil society activists in the 1980s and 1990s. The research tradition on NGOs in aid is a tradition in which fundamental concepts have not been thought through, and where, I suggest, hundreds of evaluation reports have reproduced the idea about the ‘comparative advantages’ of NGOs – at face value (see Tvedt, 1998).
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generally be much more in-depth than that of a researcher ‘passing by’ (whether with a PhD or not), be it for a quick-and-dirty consultancy job lasting some few weeks or a research project requiring field studies over a year or two. And I am sure that also Tostensen, who has produced about one evaluation study per year for the last decade must have felt, like myself, that he (now and then, at least) put the final word to a report or an article, before a ‘fully satisfactory analysis was complete’. There are of course differences between researchers and practitioners in this regard, or between aid organisations and research institutions, but such role differences are not so rigid as conceived (just think of the rapid growth in consultancy firms), and they do not provide a reason for the complacency on behalf of the researchers as Tostensen suggests.

If one accepts the existence of such rigid role differences, it is also natural that one will argue, as Tostensen does, that researchers by definition have relative comparative advantages in ‘the policy making process’. A useful distinction, Tostensen argues, is that between ‘diagnosis and prescription in policy making’. He wants to reinstate the researcher as a kind of Master of Diagnosis, i.e. as the crucial actor in the policy process. The researcher is, according to Tostensen, particularly skilled at performing ‘policy analysis and diagnosis’. It would have been nice for us if he was right, but I do not believe that the implied systematic differences exist between different professions and I do not believe that this skill is automatically linked to the title of researcher (also Tostensen must have come across some of the very many people who call themselves and are called researchers by others, who operate as advocates for a particular product, be it for a certain medicine, or the usefulness of eating potatoes instead of pizza, to drink milk instead of beer, wine instead of cola, etc., or who send out prophesies every other day about how the economy is going up and down, how the stock market is developing, etc.). And neither do I believe that to conceive these role differences as real or having a practical and decisive impact on behaviour, or to maintain them as if they are important, are conducive to research.

To maintain these mechanical distinctions will not only make it more difficult to analyse and reflect on the complex research environment of today. It will also, if taken literally and seriously, lead to criticism of those researchers who, like Tostensen himself, do different things. I think it is worthwhile and ethically fully justifiable to move between different systems and between different types of research, and have tried to explore these issues both theoretically and methodologically in published articles, as Tostensen will know. For a researcher to turn politician may even be good for politics. And it may be good for the person’s research, if he or she later returns to a research career. I have many places argued in favour of the fruitfulness of shifting positions, as a way to gain new insights and to detect more clearly the limits of one’s own perspectives and to enable oneself to draw a distinct line between what is research and what is not research. The problem is not that people do different things. The problem is a research community where many researchers act more or less as politicians while they at the same time claim to be researchers, or believe that they do research when they do what practitioners could have done just as well (if they had been asked). This
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practice disregards what should be the research system’s distinctive core values – the concern about what is true/not true and what is good research/bad research, a concern that we as researchers universally can agree on and maintain as core values, provided there are some autonomy and freedom, without never coming to an agreement about what is true/not true or good research/bad research.

I think it is problematic when Tostensen legitimates development research by its usefulness for the aid authorities. I am not saying that development research should not be useful for aid authorities, or for others, for that matter, and that individual researchers may well have this as a motive for doing research. But if the same researcher is interested in acting ethically as a researcher, he or she ought to be concerned with how this affects the distinctive core values of research activities as compared to those values being distinctive for other activities in society. Let me take one example: Seen in a long historical perspective, and, let us say, from the standpoint of an African village or a bazaar in Islamabad, there can be no doubt that the development research community and the aid bureaucracy have cooperated to improve aid efforts and to make aid more efficient and beneficial. This does not, of course, imply that everybody agrees with each other or with the dominant aid policies at every point in time. My point was not that researchers take ‘all cues from the aid authorities’, as Tostensen asserts. Fredrik Barth, Johan Galtung, Gunnar Håland, Arne Martin Klausen, Tore Linné Eriksen, Olav Stokke, Kristi Anne Stolen, Mariken Vaa and Tostensen himself, just to mention a few, show that researchers dealing with development issues in Norway have been critical to both aid bureaucracies and to concrete development projects. My point is that to be a development researcher implies situating oneself in certain structural power relationships, belonging, for example, to a segment of the dominant civilisation in this civilisation’s effort to change the world according to its script. These relations cannot be wished away. It becomes a problem for research ethics first when the potential and structural impact of these relations on one’s own studies is not realised. The problems I raised were those which develop when researchers dealing with this type of ‘policy analysis’ and ‘policy descriptions’ are disinterested in or unable to reflect on the implications this structural situation will have on research ethics and autonomy – and if this kind of activity dominates the research community as a whole.

Aware of and critical towards that self-confidence which the assumption about inherent role differences will produce and reproduce, I tried to focus on a set of conflicting core values that should be the concern of all researchers, within, what certainly is a very heterogeneous community in most other respects. This is the more important since Tostensen legitimises development research as such according to the relevance the research has to the aid authorities.

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A central question or perhaps the most central question of normative ethics is to determine how basic moral standards are arrived at and justified. By
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focussing on a particular set of core values being constitutive for the research system as such, it might be possible to overcome a not very useful dichotomy in our context: that between theories that do appeal to value considerations in establishing ethical standards, and theories considering the goodness or value brought into being by actions as the principal criterion of their ethical value. My focus on ethical issues does not call for doing certain things on principle or because they are inherently right, and neither do I suggest that certain kinds of actions are right because of the goodness of their consequences. I think like this: A researcher does not carry a definite, rigid role, ascribing him definite abilities or characteristics. He may, as researcher, do (and ought to do) different things, like what is normally called basic research, commissioned studies, evaluations, etc. But these terms are problematic, not primarily because they are difficult to define, but because they are terms that are not directly linked to the individual research process, but basically external to it. They may be helpful terms within a political-bureaucratic system, but not within a research system, because they imply that there are different criteria about truth/not truth or good/bad research for different research activities. The questions about what is right/wrong and what is good/bad research should be just as important when carrying out an evaluation study as when doing basic research and vice versa, not because these values are good or universal (they are not), or because they have good consequences (bad or untrue research does not have good consequences), but because these are the questions we as researchers should ask if we want to maintain research as something else than politics, aid administration, etc. The situation now is that everybody seems to accept that one should be more ‘liberal’ when it comes to commissioned studies, because it is short-term, ‘quick-and-dirty’, etc. (I should like, one day, to do a historical analysis of concepts, methods and how ethical issues have been handled in such evaluation studies). Instead of roles and different types of research, I will rather talk about ethical values and different communicative situations. I think this will be conducive for establishing what there is a dire need for: what may be called an ethics of resistance against the tendency for research to become politicised and bureaucratised and in very subtle ways affected by the conceptual power of the powers of the day, at the same time as we can continue to do all kinds of research activities. My suggestion in the article in Forum was based upon the idea that development research as a distinct activity in society is becoming impossible if the research system’s distinctive core values are not defended and discussed repeatedly, since this by

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3 Tostensen argues that I am ‘spending a lot of effort in breaking down open doors. For instance, few development researchers would take issue with him when he, by way of introduction, states emphatically, that note must be taken of variations in moral systems across time and space’ (p. 133). But Tostensen’s article shows that he does not agree with me. My point was precisely what Tostensen neglects; the need to be aware of such differences within the same society. His article does not contain reflection on distinctive values of the research community, only differences in roles. The door is not wide open. Tostensen’s article argues that it should not be unlocked.

4 For a more thorough theoretical perspective on the history of Norwegian aid, see Tvedt (1999).
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implication will also mean stressing the need for relative autonomy and self-reflexivity, also for people acting as both researchers and social engineers.

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