Can a Patrimonial Democracy Survive? The Case of Mozambique

Einar Braathen and Aslak Orre

1. Introduction
On gaining independence from Portugal in 1975, Mozambique became a one-party state under the national liberation front, FRELIMO.1

It suffered from Rhodesian/South African destabilisation and civil war. However, after the signing of a Peace Accord in 1992 between the Frelimo government and the rebel movement of Renamo, Mozambique embarked on a triple transition: to peace, multiparty democracy and a free-market economy. Donor agencies tend to regard Mozambique’s subsequent political and economic development as one of sub-Saharan Africa’s rare successes during the 1990s.2

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1 FRELIMO was the acronym for ‘Frente da Libertação de Moçambique’. After independence, it became the proper name of the ruling political party, ‘Partido Frelimo’ (the Frelimo Party).

2 On 25 September 2001 the World Bank and IMF issued a joint statement: ‘Mozambique has taken the steps necessary to reach its completion point under the enhanced framework of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)
This article has two aims. First, it challenges the view that Mozambique’s development has been a success. Focusing on the political level, we seek to examine the rather mixed records of the democratisation process and to show why the main donors – foreign and domestic – need to reassess their strategies. Second, we want to compare the Mozambican experience with the more common patterns in sub-Saharan Africa. This raises the subject of patrimonialism, which we take as the dominant paradigm operating in the African state and politics today. We theorise on the Mozambican case, which we argue represents patrimonial democracy. Can such a political hybrid survive?

Democratisation

As to the first task of examining the democratic process, a distinction should be made between the formal/organisational and cultural/institutional aspects of political development. The organisational aspect of democratisation is the holding of multiparty elections, while the institutional aspect means the building and institutionalisation of a democratic culture. By institutionalisation we mean a process where certain values, norms and rules are recognised as legitimate and are observed by all actors within a given field. As a minimum, all parties should agree elections have been ‘free and fair’. However, while Mozambique has held three elections, they have not been accompanied by a steady institutionalisation and ‘Mozambicanisation’ of democratic values, norms and rules:

- The first-ever multiparty elections were held in 1994, with a major presence of UN personnel and international observers, and donor ‘trust funds’ for the political parties.
- Local elections were held in 1998. This time there was very little foreign technical assistance and hardly any international observers, but the elections were a result of donor pressure and European Union funding.
- The second general elections were held as the constitution stipulated, after five years, in 1999. As in 1994, UNDP offered a substantial measure of technical assistance and there was a

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Initiative. Mozambique becomes the third country to reach this point (after Bolivia and Uganda)...[This] underscores recognition by the international community of its continued progress in implementing sound macroeconomic and structural policies, and of the overall quality of its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper’ (World Bank, 2001). See also, for example, NORAD (1998:26).
large number of international observers. As in 1998, the elections were mainly financed by the European Union.

While the 1994 elections were recognised as free and fair, with an impressive turnout (85 per cent) and the opposition/losing side (Renamo) recognising the results, the 1998 local elections were boycotted by the opposition parties. The turnout was only 14.58 per cent. However, the main sponsor of these elections, the European Union, recognised them as valid. The 1999 elections fared better in terms of participation – no parties boycotted them, and the turnout was 75 per cent. However, the narrowly defeated opposition has not accepted the legitimacy of the election results. Since December 1999, Mozambique has endured a permanent political crisis. The broad electoral coalition of opposition parties headed by Renamo demanded first a recount, then new elections, and finally a share of the appointed Provincial Governors. The President and the ruling party have rejected all the demands. Political violence has re-emerged. This should force the main contributors to the democratisation process – foreign and domestic – to reconsider the way forward.

The neopatrimonial state
As to the second task, comparing the Mozambican experience with that of other sub-Saharan countries in Africa, we follow a Weberian school of thought in two ways. First, although we do not overlook factors such as economic and ideological dependence on external actors, it is the domestic-institutional factors that stand out as those shaping national peculiarities. These obviously include those produced in the colonial past. Second, this leads us to the alleged problem of patrimonialism (see Braathen, 1996). Thus, some distinguished European Africanists claim: ‘[W]hat all African states seem to share is a generalised system of patrimonialism and an acute degree of apparent disorder, as evidenced by a high level of governmental and administrative inefficiency, a lack of institutionalisation, a general disregard for the rules of the formal and economic sectors, and a universal resort to personal(ised) and vertical solutions to societal problems’ (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:xix).

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3 The nearly disastrous 1998 and 1999 elections show that both the rules and the outcomes of the democratic game have been disputed by a large part of political and civil society.
Two leading Africanists in the USA conclude in their seminal work on transitions to democracy in Africa that all across the continent there are signs of erosion of the democratic gains of 1990–94:

Elected rulers have lapsed back into manipulating political rules in order to consolidate their personal hold on power. In these states, big-man democracy is emerging, in which the formal trappings of democracy coexist with neopatrimonial political practice (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997:233).

We call the trend they describe repatrimonialisation, one which is clearly demonstrated in Mozambique. However, unlike the above-mentioned scholars, we do not think that politics goes in one clear direction. We hold that there is an unresolved struggle between two tendencies: on the one hand the forces of democratisation, albeit with problems and weaknesses as suggested above, and on the other repatrimonialisation. The non-settled character of the political system, or better, its lack of capacity to solve the conflicts on constitutional, legal and other procedural matters, weakens its capacity to address more substantive problems of the people. This not only weakens the social basis for democracy, but threatens to destabilise the whole state order, which we characterise as patrimonial-democratic. Hence, we have seen many signs of a third tendency in Mozambican politics, namely destabilisation. A ‘stable’ pattern of unstable patrimonial democracy had emerged by the turn of the century, a type of ‘permanent state of transition’. Moreover, we argue on theoretical grounds that this characteristic is not confined to Mozambique.

Equipped with our own empirical studies of Mozambique – particularly of the radical local government reform, supplemented by direct observation of the elections in 1994, 1998 and 1999 – we also draw on contributions from several outstanding Mozambican social scientists.

In section 2, we present different perspectives on the neopatrimonial state and its formation in Mozambique. The next sections provide empirical discussion of three tendencies that in varying degrees have marked Mozambique during the last decade:

- democratisation (section 3),
- repatrimonialisation (section 4), and
- destabilisation (section 5).
The latter tendencies make the democratisation process contradictory and very unstable, and we ask if democracy can survive in a country like Mozambique (section 6). Finally, we try to induce certain theoretical points and political lessons from our case regarding democratisation in sub-Saharan African neopatrimonial states.

2. State Formation and Politics in Mozambique
In a brief outline of the political trajectory of Mozambique, we first present the common features of the neopatrimonial state. Then we describe both the expansion and the crisis of patrimonialism in post-colonial Mozambique. Our claim is that this crisis led to the escalation of civil war. We then present the problems of the peace and national reconstruction process, as seen by a Mozambican participant observer (Mazula, 1996), in terms of a culture of distrust. Furthermore, the ‘bifurcated’ character of the Mozambican state is considered (Mamdani, 1996), since it creates conflicts between urban and rural, and modern and ‘traditional’ institutions over local power. Finally, the conflicting tendencies of post-war Mozambique are outlined.

The neopatrimonial state
Patrimonialism in sub-Saharan Africa is characterised by the following three features (Médard, 1996; Bratton and de Walle, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999):

1. Personalistic rule and politics centred around ‘big men’. Political-administrative power, instead of having the impersonal and abstract character of legal-rational authority specific to the modern state, resides in personal power.
2. Lack of distinction between the public and private domain. Although ‘modern’ legal and administrative systems are assimilated, they are invaded or co-opted by the private domains of the ‘big men’. Politics becomes a kind of business, because it is political resources that give access to economic resources. However, the formal co-existence of legal-rational and patrimonial logics of action makes the state neopatrimonial.
3. Clientelism – the ‘big men’ (patrons) abuse state resources not only for themselves, but also for their main supporters, and for political legitimation. Mass politics is structured around vertical clientelistic relationships.
In sum, the advantage we see in the use of the notion of neopatrimonialism is that it subsumes many different social and political practices that we observe in Africa. These have in common the confusion between the public and the private, resulting in the personalisation of power combined with the ‘businessification’ of politics.

How and why patrimonial systems are established vary from one social-historical context to another (Mamdani, 1996). Their implications for governance systems vary equally, but the following features tend to be typical. The internal relations of the state are characterised by the imperative of personal loyalty. This, more than formal competence, guides recruitment. Non-monetary resources such as land and coercive powers are more economically important than salaries. State–society relations are a mix of clientelistic inclusion, with no clear boundaries between state and society, and despotic exclusion from the political system of large segments of the population. The state provides the main access to the wealth of society. This is due on the one hand to a combination of the coercive power and despotic character of the post-colonial state, and on the other to the domination of individualised elite networks across the formal boundaries of modern and traditional sectors, state and society, politics and economy.

The expansion of patrimonialism in post-colonial Mozambique

What characterised the Mozambican state immediately after independence was its radical-despotic centralism. However, the rule of law was not totally absent. In fact, the public service and political life became very bureaucratised, and rules and regulations issued from above were duly followed by those below. This peculiar bureaucratic ‘modernisation’ was accompanied by the following notable features: top leaders were elevated above the law, the public sphere became occupied by the Party – a rather closed organism – and most financial and industrial private institutions were de facto ‘nationalised’ and managed by the Party–State elite.

Under Samora Machel’s rule (1975–86), there was some kind of internal control and auditing, but this control was very random and not subject to public scrutiny. There was administrative law, but no independent judiciary to oversee it. Under Joaquim Chissano’s rule (since 1986) there has been a gradual strengthening of the rule of law, of independent judiciaries and of democratic/parliamentary control of state and society. Nevertheless, patrimonialism has continued to operate, but in new forms and in a new political-economic
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context. This will be presented in the section below on repatrimonialisation.

Certain political measures taken in the immediate post-colonial period strengthened the patrimonial structures. Thus, (re-)patrimonialisation took different forms at different stages, such as:

1. **The introduction of a one-party state.** In Mozambique this was the *de facto* state of affairs from day one of independence in 1975.

2. **Nationalisation of private resources and/or Africanisation of state resources.** This was particularly achieved in 1976 and 1977, using the white exodus – the flight of Portuguese and other foreign private capital and abandonment of properties – as reasons. The economy was run by cadres trusted by the Party.

3. **Prebendalisation of nationalised property.** Abuse of state office became a regular source of private income (prebendialism). Barter trade with public resources, alongside markets and state planning/rationing, became an ever more important mechanism of economic distribution. This development escalated with the civil war and worsening national economy in the 1980s.

4. **Commercialisation (privatisation) of nationalised property.** This started particularly after 1990.

The main rationale for stages 1 and 2 was that instead of competition among the local elites for scarce resources, a joint front against the colonial power and/or white settler privileges was needed. Once the Party took power, deracialisation and redistribution of wealth were to take place in a ‘brotherly’ manner across regional and ethnical divides (Mamdani, 1996). These measures nurtured ‘hidden’ patrimonialism. The rationale for stages 3 and 4 was usually pragmatic – they were a matter of survival locally (stage 3) and internationally under the Western financial hegemony of the IMF and World Bank (stage 4). During these two stages and the local state-based elites exposed their patrimonial practices more openly and shamelessly.

**The crisis of patrimonialism: civil war**

The neopatrimonial state can produce political stability and peace only as long as it can co-opt, on ‘business’ terms, any local strongman who wants ‘his’ piece of state power and wealth. It reproduces what Bayart (1993) called the reciprocal assimilation of elites. This
mode of politics based on personalisation and businessification can be sustained only as long as the state can ensure a steady increase of financial inflow – from aid, military assistance, exports of mineral resources, parastatal companies, etc. Once this inflow decreases, the neopatrimonial state enters a deep financial and political crisis. Mozambique reached this moment of truth as early as 1975, at independence, and did so again in the early 1980s, when aid from the socialist countries waned and the internal commando economy got out of hand. In general, the neopatrimonial state in crisis experiences two turning points. First, the financial crisis forces the state to retreat. Its network of patronage has to halt its expansion. Its social services are stopped either partially – usually in peripheral regions – or entirely. On the one hand this creates massive social exclusion both of former co-opted elites and of mass clientele, as well as political unrest and opposition. On the other hand, the retreat of the state prepares the ground on which individual officials or local strongmen can build themselves up, even militarily, and take over local power. However, to the extent that the state is still the arena for the distribution of the main economic resources, local strongmen have to fight for central state power. Anyway, they have to become warlords. This creates the second turning point: socio-economic and political struggles become militarised and a politico-military crisis ensues. In Mozambique, this crisis started in 1978, when Renamo backed by Rhodesia embarked on its first operations. The crisis was aggravated throughout the 1980s, when Renamo gained more and more internal support, mainly from chiefs in the rural areas of the centre-north regions of the country (Geffray, 1990). At this point, the capacity to solve the conflict by political means is crucial. If there is no internal national leadership (e.g. civic or religious) that enjoys a certain legitimacy in all domestic camps, and/or if there is no intervention from the international community to solve the conflict by peaceful negotiations, civil war will break out and persist (Cahen, 2000). Here, one may observe the inscribed effects of regime differences, e.g. in their domestic and international relationships.5

4 For a further theorisation of the crisis of the neopatrimonial state and its ‘turning points’, see Braathen, Bøås and Sæther (2000).

5 Rwanda and Mozambique represent two different types of civil war. The different outcomes of conflicts might be explained by the prior regime characteristics. In Rwanda, social structural conflicts escalated into ethnic war and genocide. The prior conservative regime had cultivated ethnic rights and regulated customary tenure; the conflict became largely rurally based and inter-ethnic (see Lema, 2000). In Mozambique, ethnic citizenship and other ‘tribal’ institutions were
The strong external linkages of the governments of Angola and Mozambique to Portugal and the European Union, through investment/donor projects which could mobilise the UN, at least partially explains why these countries avoided the fate of Liberia and Somalia. With both parties in Mozambique recognising the moral authority of the Catholic Church, a Peace Accord was signed in October 1992, with the Italian government, the EU and the UN as guarantors. To the positive surprise of Mozambicans and foreign observers alike, the Peace Accord held for the rest of the decade.

Three conflicting tendencies in post-war Mozambique

Mazula (1996) has identified the process of peace and democratisation as one of three scenarios in the complex business of political development. We prefer to view these scenarios as development tendencies that have been salient simultaneously for some time. We identify these tendencies as democratisation, repatrimonialisation and destabilisation.

1. *Democratisation* corresponds with what Mazula regards as ‘real democratic cohabitation’, or ‘integrative democracy’, where a democratic culture is established. Under circumstances of extreme poverty and 75 per cent illiteracy, he argues, integrative democracy can be achieved only through dialogue involving all political parties in programmes of national reconstruction:

This alternative gains strength from the fact that in the Mozambican (if not entire African) context, political party action only has meaning when exercised in government. One must make structural reforms in socio-economic systems for good governance... The parties regard themselves as parts of society; society possesses political parties... A relationship of mutual trust is established which stimulates participation by citizens in development projects. This participation involves the decentralisation of power, which strengthens the role of

suppressed. Customary or other exclusive land rights had been effectively downplayed by the radical Frelimo regime. On the other hand, the regime exacerbated the rural–urban divide. For the rebel movement, Renamo, the civil war was a struggle for civic citizenship and political changes, not for land or ethnic privileges. With the Frelimo government pursuing, at least rhetorically, a corporatist and inclusive ‘nationalist’ ideology, a negotiated political settlement of the civil war was within reach. Although both parties employed certain ethnic cards in their struggle, the conflict could not be defined as an inter-ethnic conflict (see Cahen, 2000).
the state … There is no fear of subjecting to public debate questions of vital importance such as amending the constitution, land policy etc. before taking a decision (Mazula, 1996: 64–72).

2. **Repatrimonialisation** is not a term used by Mazula, but he illustrates the concept in his references to centralisation and concentration of power, with attempts on the part of the governing party to co-opt individuals or fractions of the opposition: ‘The co-opting party regards the other parties as an obstacle to its hegemony, and to some extent turns society and the state into its own property’ (Mazula, 1996:27). This revives old mechanisms of central despotism, bifurcation, and political and social exclusion, particularly of the rural population (Mamdani, 1996). Although it may not result in explosive social discontent, it revives **structural distrust** based on different social and cognitive allegiances. The opposition (Renamo) decides not to ‘fall into the trap of integration – the strategy through which Frelimo had wanted for years to assimilate Renamo, not giving it any political worth’. This in turn generates passive resistance in society (Mazula, 1996: 63–64). Written in 1995, Mazula’s observation provides a very clear-sighted forecast of what happened during the next five years.

3. The **destabilisation** scenario is marked by ‘a continuously unstable state, confused by inter- and intra-party struggles, without any benefit to society… This is a situation of anarchy and ungovernability. Tendencies of dual administration are strengthened and this might lead to politico-military instability. Distrust is radicalised’. The various parties perceive that there is nothing to negotiate about, nothing to share but a radical mutual distrust. This is the negative turning-point where **militarisation** of politics starts. ‘But it seems unlikely that this can explode into a war, given the impossibility of arranging funds and a domestic social base in the current regional and international conjuncture’ (Mazula, 1996: 63).

The three tendencies provide the conceptual framework for the more empirical discussion in the next sections. We examine how strong these tendencies have been in various periods of the last decade.
3. Democratisation (1990–)

From a top-down perspective, the democratisation process started with inter-elite peace talks and trust-building. They led to the holding of national multiparty elections, accompanied by preparations for decentralisation and local elections. However, from a bottom-up perspective, the democratisation process started with strikes and mass action just after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

A bottom-up perspective: mass action for political-social change

According to Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 129–131), urban protests and civic movements played almost no role in the transition to democracy in Mozambique compared with other African countries. Chabal and Daloz (1999: 17–44) go further and claim that horizontal ties of solidarity had no political significance in any sub-Saharan African country, and that democratisation has been the work of ‘recycled elites’. These claims are contradicted by many observers of events on the ground in Mozambique.

First, President Chissano’s announcement of proposals for constitutional democratic reform on 9 January 1990 came in the midst of a month-long wave of ‘wild-cat’ workers’ strikes in the largest cities. Although the workers’ demands were not explicitly political, the Frelimo government had seen the writing on the Berlin wall and was quick to announce political liberalisation. The first peace talks with Renamo followed in July 1990. These talks were reinforced by pressures from below, and fears of mutinies and ‘peasants’ revolts’. Mozambique, like the rest of Southern Africa, was suffering from the worst drought since early in the century, which threatened starvation not only for ordinary people in Mozambique, but also for the combatants on both sides out in the bush. The government and Renamo first agreed on ‘guiding principles for humanitarian assistance’, pledging security for relief operations. The two parties had been advised that large-scale humanitarian assistance would be sent in only if they came to a convincing peace agreement.

Second, after the final Peace Accord was signed on 4 October 1992, its implementation was slow. The core programme of military demobilisation did not gain momentum until soldiers in both armies threatened mass mutiny. As the state-owned information agency,

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6 ONUMOZ, 1994, Section 2: Background Information on Mozambique. (This interpretation of the drought and starvation factor is shared by Vines, 1994.)
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AIM, commented: ‘They just want to be demobilised. They want wages, food, blankets and shoes, and they want to go home.’ By 31 July 1994, the government had demobilised 28,878 soldiers, and Renamo 11,131. The process then speeded up remarkably, so that two months later the UN representative announced that the target on Frelimo’s side had almost been reached: ONUMOZ had demobilised 74,764 registered soldiers out of a total of 89,187.

When it came to the election on 26–29 October 1994, the voter turnout was massive. More than 4 million men and women – 85 per cent of registered voters – spent on average a whole day travelling and queuing to cast their votes. The overall vote was interpreted by most analysts as an expression of popular support for the continuation of the peace and democratisation process, in the hope of socio-economic improvements, rather than enthusiastic support for particular political parties and patrons (Braathen, 1994; de Brito, 1996).

Top-down perspective: inter-elite peace talks and trust-building

The war-makers in Mozambique were eventually more or less bribed into signing the General Peace Accord in Rome in 1992. In December 1991, Renamo had said its transformation into a civilian party would cost US$ 3 million; by June 1992 the figure had been raised to US$ 10 million; and by December the Italian government had agreed to pay the bulk of US$ 15 million into a Trust Fund earmarked for Renamo (Vines, 1994). However, some Mozambican non-partisan middlemen committed to peace were also encouraged. Brazão Mazula, a politically independent social scientist, was the chairman of the first National Electoral Commission (CNE), 1993–95. Inspired by Habermasian theories of communication and trust, he identified trends towards positive democratic development in Mozambique (Mazula, 1996).

Mazula traces some of the main developments from 1990 onwards, which he divides into three stages. First, the beginnings of a transition from civil war to peace was characterised by the building

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7 Mozambiquefile, August 1994, p.8. Mozambiquefile was a monthly news magazine published in Maputo by the state-owned information agency AIM.
8 Mozambiquefile, October 1994, p.18. ONUMOZ was the acronym for ‘United Nations Operation in Mozambique’.
9 Mazula is explicit in his references to Jurgen Habermas, in particular the notions of communicative competence and rationality (Mazula, 1996: 61).
of personal trust, albeit limited, between the war-makers; at this stage, efforts were largely confined to the inter-elite level. At a certain point the main parties realised they were confronted by a ‘joint enemy’ – namely, a fierce drought, afflicting the country since 1990. Both sides had their own economic and political interests in mind when making peace. The mutual trust between them was ‘operational’, and the parties recognised each other as fellow countrymen with common obligations. The Peace Accord of October 1992 represented a fundamental commitment on both sides to demilitarise politics, to attempt to resolve disagreements and overcome distrust by peaceful means, and to operate within a shared national, institutional framework. This created subjective trust: when the joint bodies overseeing the peace process began to function in 1992–93, representatives from both sides had a joint sense of mission and recognised each other as co-actors, co-leaders and co-administrators in a historical process.

Second, the peace process needed intrinsically to be combined with a democratisation process, and this meant that steps had to be taken to institutionalise personal trust. According to Mazula, a key element of the 1992 Peace Accord was the organisation of free and fair multiparty elections for parliament and the presidency. The elections were preceded by preparatory, round-table talks, involving all registered political parties – a process that nurtured what Mazula calls ‘basic social trust’. Both those in power and the opposition learnt to respect each other and their differences. There was an embryonic impersonal rule of law ‘which guarantee[d] the balance of a multicultural society; that is, an institutional attention that does not look at citizens’ politics or ideology, but only at their humanity, citizenship and technical competence, their knowledge and skills’ (Mazula, 1996: 60).

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Third, it was crucial that the building of personal trust led to generalised impersonal trust, which paved the way for democratic trust. According to Mazula, in such circumstances a certain culture prevails, in which there is a collective search for forms of democracy that make for ‘a genuine rule of law [and] an open state’. Thus ‘opposition is nourished, and this is always constructive’, and debates take place ‘institutionally, in Parliament’. Democratic trust ‘challenges the actors’ capacity for dialogue, understood as the clash of ideas and opinions, with a view to the peaceful solution of conflicts and the building of decisions based on consensus’ (Mazula, 1996: 59). As shown earlier, Mazula underscored the importance of democracy being socially integrative and participatory, leading to democratic decentralisation (devolution of central power and economic resources to democratic bodies of local self-government).

The difficulties for Mozambique lay in the third step – the transition from personal trust to institutionalised and impersonal (democratic) trust. In Table 1 we sum up how political relationships should look like at stage two and three, partly following Mazula (1996).

**Revolutionary decentralisation**

Among technocrats dealing with local administration, a consensus began to emerge that what was needed was ‘a gradual change from an organisational culture based on centralization and quantitative expansion of the state into another that stresses management and development, effectiveness and responsiveness in conditions of extreme scarcity of resources and uncertain environment’ (Graça, 1992).\(^{10}\) Thus, a technocratic agenda converged in this time period with that of democratisation.

On 17 August 1994 the outgoing one-party Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique passed a law relating to local government, central to which was the establishment of district municipalities linking urban and rural areas. From the perspective of the bifurcated and centralised state (see below), this was a revolutionary break with the past. Prior to the enactment of this law, there had been lively discussion in the Assembly – reportedly one of the most vital and substantial debates in its history, and definitely its last.\(^{11}\) A former

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\(^{10}\) Jorge da Graça was the National Director of State Administration from 1984 to 1991, when he left Mozambique to complete his law studies in Portugal; subsequently he obtained a degree at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.

\(^{11}\) The Assembly was dissolved the same week as part of the preparation for the first multiparty general elections.
information minister said the proposed law would ‘[turn] upside down
the way in which we have been governing the country. It calls for a cultural revolution in our concepts of governance’. Many other former ministers, dominating the debate, agreed. The Municipalities Law was unanimously adopted.

A close reading of the report on the debate\(^\text{12}\) leads to the conclusion that the main concern of the decision-makers was to strengthen national unity through decentralisation. Three answers to the challenges to national unity posed by decentralisation were formulated:

1. ‘Local self-government strengthens sense of citizenship.’ The law made peasants equal to urban dwellers within the new units of local democratic self-governance, and aimed to incorporate the chiefs or regulos. A strong executive led by a directly elected mayor and a directly elected district council, and controlled by a district assembly with proportional representation, was encouraged by the law to ‘establish relationships with the traditional authorities’. The municipality was expected to define both ‘traditional authorities’ and the nature of the relationships to be established. Thus, the law acknowledged the need to integrate the peasants’ social and leadership structures into the state – this time to a larger degree on the terms of the peasants and their ‘traditional’ leaders.

2. ‘Decentralization puts on the agenda a national system for regional redistribution of resources.’ One ex-minister claimed that there was ‘a contradiction between decentralization and the fact that resources are concentrated in a few [urban] areas’: the new district authorities had the power to raise their own taxes, but the great bulk of taxation was raised in just two places – Maputo and Beira; thus the bill risked ‘institutionalizing existing inequalities’. In response, the minister gave his assurance that the government envisaged compensation mechanisms whereby regional imbalances could be reduced, since the law stated that district authorities would receive a percentage of the taxes raised centrally.

3. ‘Decentralization opens the way to a more rational division of national labour.’ The new division of labour within the national political and administrative system responded to the above-mentioned technocratic agenda.

Decentralisation and the issue of ‘power-sharing’

A problem for the technocrats who lobbied for local government reform was that decentralisation was actually about power-sharing. Renamo was expected to take control of quite a few local power centres through the municipal elections. However, like the whole power-sharing issue, decentralisation had not been included in the negotiation process following the General Peace Accord. There had been no compliance with the clause in the General Peace Accord that called for attention to ‘the role and the position of the party that loses the election’, or to working out a formula for power-sharing. This raised increasing concerns among the main donor countries, which favoured a government of national unity, as in South Africa, to guarantee stability in the transition to democracy. The European Union (EU) finally proposed instead ‘real guarantees for the leader of the opposition, similar to what happens in Britain and in third world countries such as India’. Moreover, the EU urged that in the provinces won by Renamo, the president should not appoint governors who were members of the Frelimo Party.

The Minister for State Administration, Aguiar Mazula, sensed these concerns and took practical steps to initiate power-sharing. In June 1994 he visited the Renamo strongholds of Manica and Sofala provinces in the central region of Mozambique. The first government minister to make such a visit, he publicly signed the contracts with Renamo officers to be sworn in as local state administrators. One month later, sanctioned by the government, Renamo had taken control of seven districts (two more than it had demanded in May) and 53 administrative posts (16 more than demanded). As we shall see in the next section, this was both too much and too little: too much for the hardliners in Frelimo, and too little for Renamo. Aguiar Mazula, who was a younger brother of the above-mentioned scholar, was not allowed to move on and negotiate the fate of the national decentralisation reform directly with the Renamo leadership. After the general elections, he was moved to a less important post in the government, and his plan for universal decentralisation was derailed by both Frelimo and Renamo parliamentarians, albeit for different reasons.

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15 Mozambiquefile, July 1994, p. 16.

How democratic were the political elites?
An analytical issue that arises is the cognitive–normative and organisational cultures of the political elites and the extent to which these were conducive to democracy. Let us mainly look at Frelimo, although the Renamo elite was moulded in the same tradition and to some extent emerged from the same movement. The national liberation front – FRELIMO – was formed in 1962 and brought together an urban elite, dominated by students, and professionals from the south of the country. Its socio-cultural origins in the Europeanised assimilado17 elite helped make the mimeosis18 of the European nation-state. Its principal social model was Portugal, Europe’s oldest nation-state, whose frontiers had hardly changed since the 13th century, was unusually homogeneous in linguistic and religious terms, and had a powerful universalism developed by Catholicism. As pointed out by Michel Cahen (2000), the Mozambican elite’s project on gaining independence in 1975 was to create a European – if not necessarily Portuguese – nation-state in Africa by means of authoritarian modernisation. The models underlying these imitation processes changed over time:

- First they were anti-liberal; pre-1974 Portuguese corporatism was amalgamated with Eastern European Marxism-Leninism. Selectively inclusive political arrangements were imitated. In a taxonomy of patrimonial regimes, the Frelimo State is classified as a ‘plebiscitary one-party state’ – a one-party state that consults the people (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994). Consultations are undertaken in a populist fashion, but only with selected segments of the population and/or in a hierarchic setting.
- After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, liberal-democratic models were followed. Nevertheless, the 1990 Constitution was fashioned in the French/Portuguese manner, a relatively strong and directly elected president cohabiting with the parliament.

Although most individual cadres of the Party State were not brought up in a democratic tradition, the state bureaucracy had developed a

17 The ‘assimilados’ refer to indigenous people recruited into the Portuguese educational system, and who later became officials in the local colonial administration. They could apply for, and were usually granted, a limited citizenship status within the Portuguese metropolitan state.
18 Mimeosis means imitation; the concept is an important mechanism in new institutional theory – in opposition to coercion on the one side and deliberative political processes on the other, and identifying structural similarity between units in a global system. ‘Individuals and organizations deal with uncertainty by imitating the ways of others whom we use as models’ (Scott, 1995:45).
certain autonomy, with some cultural-ideological coherence and hence discipline. There were some optimists who thought that the state, if it were governed by democratically elected institutions, could be reformed substantively (Saul, 1993). The greatest optimists were found in the donor agencies.

Frelimo won the 1994 elections by a very slim margin; 129 Frelimo deputies were elected; the opposition won 121 seats (Renamo 112, and the small coalition Democratic Union (UD) nine). The question now was whether Mozambique could consolidate democracy and build democratic trust.

Repatrimonialisation means that the patrimonial features of state and politics become more salient. We have identified on a general basis three such features: personalisation of power, privatisation of the state, and businessification of politics. In Mozambique, the strengthening of these features was evident from the first-ever general elections in October 1994 until the completion of the local elections in June 1998. Two spatial dimensions raise important questions about repatrimonialisation in Mozambique:

▼ Central–local relations. What changes were there in the centralised and verticalised structures of state power?
▼ The ‘included–excluded’ relations. Which changes were there in the relations between centre and periphery, and between the urban–rural dimensions in the political-administrative system?

The theory of the bifurcated state (Mamdani, 1996) will help us answer these questions, along with our study of local government reform.

The bifurcated state and conflict over local power
There are many ways in which the ghost of the past – colonialism and structural cleavages underlying the civil war – lived on in Mozambique after 1992. One of them is to be found in public administration. Mahmood Mamdani’s analysis of the bifurcated state (1996) fits well with our understanding of Mozambique. The bifurcated state was characterised by a dual system of administration set up by the colonisers – direct rule in the urban areas, and indirect rule in the rural ones. The crucial point was the system of indirect rule in the rural areas where the majority of the peasant population resided.
(and still resides). There, the traditional authorities, in particular the chiefs, were allowed to rule over the peasant ‘subjects’ under a customary law that was redefined to suit the interests of the colonial rulers and also the chiefs who, collaborating with the colonial power, were given a despotic authority they never had before the introduction of indirect rule. The power of the chiefs was delineated by the ethnic group over which they ruled. Thus, the political significance of both ‘tradition’ and ‘ethnicity’ was greatly distorted.

At independence, more conservative states maintained this system of indirect rule, for the benefit of the more typically neopatrimonial rulers. Radical regimes such as Frelimo’s ‘Popular Republic’ attempted to reform this system. The Portuguese had used the traditional authorities, the *regulos* (chiefs), for administrative purposes in the rural areas. Most *regulos* were given a salary and other privileges for their services to the colonial masters. After independence, the radical Frelimo had no room left for these ‘collaborators’. Whatever local legitimacy the *regulos* might have had, they were stripped of their positions. Customary ethnic law was abolished and replaced with a national judicial system deemed to be compatible with the modernisation project. Whereas the administrative position of the *regulo* was abolished, the positions of ‘district administrator’ and ‘head of administrative post’ were maintained, merely replacing a party-nominated cadre for their Portuguese predecessors. The new system of local administration quickly became bureaucratised and authoritarian (Lundin, 2000a).

However, in most parts of the country, the social position of the traditional authorities (*regulos*) was deeply rooted in peasant culture, and could not simply be abolished. The attempt to do so created great friction. One of the endogenous factors that fuelled the civil war was the dispute over traditional authorities. Having alienated the *regulos*, Frelimo found Renamo rallying behind these traditional authorities, which at first led to reinforced Frelimo hostility towards the rural chiefs.

As we shall see, this cleavage has continued to divide the two major parties.

Local government reform
Municipal reform seems to have perpetuated the system of dual administration inherited from the colonial bifurcated state: centralised and undemocratic rule in the rural areas, and (formally) democratic and decentralised rule in the cities and towns.
**Political and social exclusion along territorial lines**

After the 1994 general elections, the policy to introduce district-based municipal councils, including both rural and urban areas, was abandoned. Instead the Parliament majority decided that municipalities should be created, and local elections held, in 33 cities and towns. These municipalities were made up of the 23 urban areas with official city status and ten selected rural vilas (towns) that were to be territorially demarcated from their rural district surroundings. How and why did this take place?

In early 1995, President Chissano reshuffled his Cabinet. Younger technocrats took over the main ministerial posts, while leading figures within the Frelimo old guard became frontbenchers in the new parliament, where Frelimo held a narrow absolute majority – 129 out of 250 seats. The decentralisation process became one of the earliest tests of the new government parliament relationship. The previous minister for state administration, responsible for the radical decentralisation initiatives, had been ‘promoted’ to another ministerial post. He was succeeded by a governor from a northern province and a newcomer to central government. This weakness was exploited by the Frelimo parliamentary leaders as a means of showing their muscle (Lundin, 2000a).

Within Frelimo there were cleavages between ‘decentralisers’ and ‘centralisers’, represented by the Ministry of State Administration and the parliamentary bench leaders respectively, and between the top and the base. Lack of internal democracy in the ruling party had major consequences for the government’s decentralisation policy and for the local elections. At the policy level, the Frelimo programme for democratic decentralisation was approved by the party’s elected national body in 1994 and became part and parcel of the government’s Five-Year Plan 1995–2000. However, there was strong opposition from the old guard leadership of the party, ‘the centralisers’, led by the Frelimo bench in Parliament, and the party policy was distorted. The new parliament took the initiative in 1995 to declare the 1994 local government law unconstitutional. A constitutional amendment was made, and afterwards the Ministry had to redraft the whole package of local government laws. The result was a new law on municipalisation, Law 2/97, ‘seen to be a partial victory of the opposers to decentralization’ (Weimer, 1999).

The new law meant a dramatic redesign of the future municipalities: cities and towns, not districts, were to be the cornerstones of the

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local government system. With this urban bias, it was likely that Frelimo and not the more rurally based Renamo would be strengthened by municipal power. Devolution of powers to cities and towns could enhance the interests of the Frelimo leaders and their political clients.

Behind the presentation of a constitutional amendment as one that created a more self-governing and flexible structure of local democracy, and that emphasised civic participation, is the fact that more than 75 per cent of the population was excluded from the democratic right to vote for a local council in the May 1998 elections. Of the 139 districts, 106 would see no local elections or municipal structures. Besides, there was no commitment as to how many more districts or cities would take part in the local elections in the next round, presumably in 2003. Observers, advisers and opposition representatives feared the consequences for a country whose economy depends greatly on agricultural production and the natural resources of the rural areas.

There were several concerns. Firstly, the majority of the rural population would effectively be excluded from local democracy. Secondly, leaving the rural areas out of the municipal local government reform also meant leaving unresolved the question of how the state and the traditional authorities were to cohabit. Thirdly, the elite controlling the central state and the capital city would be in control of the vast natural resources, and hence, of the rents sought for. The crushing of the idea of district municipalities, which had been introduced in the 1994 law, paved the way for direct state administration of 90 per cent of the country. This would ensure continued central-patrimonial control of the main economic resources of the country: fish, beaches for tourism, forests, mines, agriculture. The widespread opinion was that the principal impediment to democratic decentralisation based on districts and including the rural population was the resistance from the Frelimo old guard (or the ‘hawks’ within it). The old guard feared two things, closely intertwined: the loss of national unity, and the loss of control over vital economic and natural resources (Soiri, 1999).

Verticalisation of power

The nomination process for the local elections revealed cleavages between emerging local coalitions who pursued municipal power
and the central power structure. As expected, the advent of municipalisation created its own local dynamics; however, ‘members of the Political Commision (former Political Bureau) pre-dominated the final choice, sometimes frustrating the individual and collective local interests (…) There was clear evidence for this in the cases of Chimoio, Inhambane, Beira, Nampula and Pemba’ (Weimer, 1999).

Our own fieldwork confirmed centralistic intervention in Beira and Chimoio, the provincial capitals in the mid-regions of Mozambique. During his visit to Chimoio, Prime Minister Mocumbi ousted the candidate nominated by the city branch, the incumbent mayor José Maria, allegedly because he was an ethnically divisive mayor candidate. He was replaced by Dario Jane, a resident of the neighbouring smaller town of Gondola, and a philosopher educated in the former Soviet Union.

When the subject was analysed in the national print media, increased patrimonialisation of the party state was held to be the main reason for the high abstention rate in the local elections. A Frelimo veteran from the anti-colonial war pointed out the following factors:

- marginalisation’ of the electorate caused by the ‘privatisation of the Frelimo Party’;
- generalised poverty and unequal distribution of wealth;
- loss of contact between top and grassroot levels of the party, lack of internal democracy and the absence of dialogue with the opposition.21

The politics of elections: ‘businessification’ and ‘patronagisation’22

In 1994, the elections were 95 per cent financed by the donor community. The total cost of the elections including voter registration was US$ 41 million.23 There was an enormous ‘Trust Fund’ of US$ 10 million dedicated to financing the political parties, mainly the opposition parties, and their participation in the elections. The

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21 Article titled ‘Problemas relegados’ in the daily electronic newspaper Metical (10 July 1998).
22 By ‘patronagisation’ we refer to a process where patronage is increased – a system where political/administrative offices are distributed as rewards for political support. ‘Businessification’ means that offices are for sale, or used to enhance private businesses of the office-holders.
main issue in the first elections was not how to create the best possible democracy, but how to consolidate the peace process, or more concretely – at the elite level – how to appease or co-opt the opposition by giving them a fair slice of the trust fund (Braathen, 1994). This instituted multiparty liberal politics as a new type of commercialised business. In addition, political appointees to the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and even its technical secretariat (STAE) received salaries and allowances. In this way, the donor community financed the opposition parties and their campaigns.

In 1998, however, Renamo and the other opposition parties – with no access to a Trust Fund or representatives on the STAE and CNE – cried foul. Considering, firstly, their weak membership basis, politically and above all financially (Wood, 1999) and, secondly, their very restricted access to mass media, transport and other politically important public resources compared to that enjoyed by the ruling party, it was no wonder that the opposition parties felt betrayed by the donor community. The boycott action in 1998 was very much incited by the lavish donor support in 1994, the absence of this support four years later, and the absence of donor demands for fair distribution of public resources to the parties.

In the general elections of 1999, Renamo was back in ‘business’. This time, the Frelimo government had agreed to include the opposition representatives in CNE and STAE at all levels. In addition, nearly US$ 3 million was to be allocated to the campaign of the political parties, supplied by the Swiss, Swedish, Dutch and US governments. The elections themselves were 80 per cent financed by donors, mainly the European Union and some of its member states.

**Patronagisation of electoral administration**

As mentioned earlier there was a structural (impersonal) distrust between the opposition and the whole government and state apparatus. Structural distrust is distrust based on the actors having roots in different social and cognitive structures (Mazula, 1996: 27).

Frelimo first stated that Renamo’s demands to repeat the 1994 practice would lead to a devastating ‘politicisation’ of the administration. The Frelimo government alleged it would undermine the professional-technical and impartial character of electoral admini-
stratization. For Renamo and a large part of the electorate, the electoral administration was not at all a professional and neutral force, but part of a patronage system: offices were distributed as a reward for political support. The entire administrative staff of STAE was loyal to the ruling Frelimo party on a personal basis. What was demanded was a fair distribution among the political parties of personnel, and watchdogs at all levels, through electoral commissions composed of party representatives on a proportional basis.

Interestingly, this impersonal distrust led to a compromise between the two main parties in 1999, which in turn led to the deinstitutionalisation, depersonalisation and personalisation of the electoral administration. The National Electoral Commission (17 members) set up sub-commissions in all 11 provinces and 148 districts, each with seven members; by contrast, there were no committees at the district level during the 1998 local elections. In addition to the permanent STAE staff, there were 350 nominees from the two main political parties and 30 United Nations Volunteers. Twelve thousand people volunteered for registration brigades (enjoying good daily allowances) and nearly as many for staffing of the polling stations. Instead of abolishing the patronage principles of electoral administration, Renamo helped preserve it on a bipartisan basis.

Post-election politics: ‘power-sharing’ and the governors

Democratisation in neopatrimonial systems means that the opposition threatens to take away, or take a share in, the economic privileges of the incumbents. ‘[F]undamental economic struggles (...) are laid bare in efforts to strip neopatrimonial rulers of their political monopolies’ (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 87–88). If it loses the general elections, the opposition tends to demand ‘power-sharing’. This was the case in Mozambique after 1994.

After the 1998 local elections, Renamo had to swallow a bitter pill. The implicit agreement of power-sharing through the introduction of municípios melted away – even in Renamo-dominated areas of the country – in the heat of the boycott. It seems that, subsequently, Renamo’s strategic orientation changed: they participated in the 1999 national elections. Renamo’s presidential candidate, Afonso Dhlakama, narrowly defeated by the incumbent president, Joaquim Chissano, obtained 47.8 per cent of the vote. This was 14 per cent

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more than in 1994. In the parliamentary elections, the Renamo-led coalition União Eleitoral obtained 38.8 per cent. As in 1994, Dhlakama and Renamo won a clear majority in the centre-north of the country, and in five of the ten provinces (Braathen, 2000). After the elections their main demand, in addition to calling for a recount and re-elections, was to appoint the Governors in the five provinces where they had won a majority of the votes.

*Governors of the provincial resources*

Each of the ten provinces in Mozambique was headed by governors who were, according to the constitution, appointed by the President of the Republic. The governors headed provincial governments that carried out almost all state functions except for the military. Even though their influence might have diminished somewhat in the cities after the municipal reform introduced relatively autonomous urban municipalities, they continued to be immensely powerful figures. They were virtually omnipotent ‘supervisors’; although they had no clear functions apart from ‘heading’ the provincial government, they enjoyed a blanket right to intervene wherever they might find it necessary or suitable. Some governors spent a great deal of time sealing business deals within and outside the country. Generally, governors appeared more and more as ‘ambassadors’ of their provinces. Moreover, a key tendency of the 1990s was that bilateral and multilateral donors tended to channel project money through the provincial governments – sometimes with the stated belief that this would lead to decentralisation and deconcentration of power. The governors held positions from which they could wield and solidify the clientelistic networks upon which the whole patrimonial system rested.

In the provinces where they had a clear electoral majority, the Frelimo leadership was absolutely intransigent on the question of nominating Renamo governors. To maintain territorial control in the Mozambican neopatrimonial state depended on the ability to keep the governors as the integrating local patrons. The eventuality of a Renamo governor in the central or northern provinces would imply that much of the local elite might jump over to the Renamo alternative network of prebendial favours. This would further decrease the possibility of the Maputo-based politico-economic elite having access to the resources in the provinces. Furthermore, it might tip the balance of electoral numbers towards Renamo.

This is why we believe the stakes had been raised so high in the political struggle over the nomination of the governors. The point
was driven home when for the 1998 municipal elections, the previous governor of Sofala province, Francisco Masquil, decided to run as an independent for the mayorship in Beira. There was a huge uproar in the Frelimo party, and although he was allowed to run, Masquil was publicly branded as a ‘traitor’ – a term not normally used in liberal democracies about somebody who defects from a political party.

President Chissano consistently denied the possibility of nominating Renamo governors, stating that since it was the president who nominated the governors, Renamo interference would be unconstitutional. It is clear that Chissano had the constitutional right to ignore the opposition’s demands in this respect. However, it also seems clear that this gave him the right to accept the opposition’s demands if he so chose. Thus, one sign of the repatrimonialisation of the state was the persistent tendency of the Frelimo leadership to utilise legal and constitutional means to further its goal of maintaining an absolute monopoly of politico-administrative power, and consequently over public patrimony.

On the side of Renamo, its party boss Dhlakama was increasingly at pains to provide material results for his political supporters – both at the bottom of society where people might get apathetic, as well as among the elite-pretenders who supported the party and were increasingly impatient. A central party intellectual stated that Frelimo had been successful in buying off central Renamo cadres. The most spectacular example was the Raul Domingos affair. Domingos was a member of parliament, Renamo’s chief negotiator during the peace talks in Rome, and subsequently believed to be Dhlakama’s right-hand man. In late 2000 he was expelled from Renamo, when President Chissano revealed that Domingos had offered to accept the 1999 election results on behalf of Renamo in return for US$ 500,000. Clearly, if Dhlakama could provide his supporters with five or six posts as provincial governors, it would mean a serious boost to party morale.

Politics reduced to struggle over central state office
The later years have demonstrated a clear tendency in Mozambique: the increasing ‘centralisation’ of politics (Orre, 2001). By this we refer to the process by which political discourse was focused on the struggle over state power between the two major contenders.

By late 1997, after the debacle over the local elections had become evident, local issues almost immediately became enmeshed
with ‘party politics’ at the national level. Both parties tried to delegitimise the other. In the process, politics were reduced to a question of government office.

The opposition blamed the government for being corrupt and incompetent, and cultivated popular sentiments that a change of governance at the central level was ‘the only solution’. The government, for its part, branded the opposition as irresponsible and opportunistic, and cultivated sentiments that they were the only party able to govern. Anything else, the rhetoric went, would be a disaster, and whatever Frelimo’s mistakes, the opposition would do much worse. After the local elections in 1998, when the ruling party secured a victory in the municipalities, it turned its attention to the 1999 general elections. This was partly a response to Renamo’s increased verbal assault on the government.

Our research also confirms that Renamo completely lost interest in municipal or local politics – if not the question of local power. Renamo leaders interviewed in mid-1999 about local politics quickly tended to change the subject to what would happen after the 1999 elections, as they expressed absolute certainty that only fraud could deny them electoral victory and the establishment of a Renamo national government. The two main parties both took substantial issues out of politics, and preferred making general propaganda. As the finer points of political discussion were evaded, one of the consequences was the resurgence of appeals to regionalist or ethnic sentiments as an alternative to real debates.

People’s attention was turned away from political campaigning and discussions at local level. Solutions to local problems were deemed to be found at the central level. Thus, the possibility of a dynamic and vibrant local democracy based on popular engagement and participation at the local level retreated, and ordinary people became increasingly reduced to ‘supporters’ of one or the other party.

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This again raised the stakes in the struggle for central state power, entrenched the current stalemate in national politics and increased the likelihood of destabilisation and the politics of confrontation.

Table 2 aims to summarise our argument about repatrimonialisation. This phenomenon increases impersonal distrust. Although ‘structural’ distrust has less negative an effect than ‘radical’ distrust on political relationships and behaviour, the two may easily merge with each other. Our point is that this scenario of distrust is not stable – it creates ‘disorder’. Although that disorder is instrumental for some, it works against against democracy, and even more against the welfare of ordinary people.26 We do not believe that this situation of structural distrust will be a permanent feature in Mozambican democracy in the years to come. In fact, recent developments imply that structural distrust has turned into radical distrust, and hence towards the destabilisation of the state and society, in which conditions democracy is an impossibility.

5. Destabilisation (1998-?)
Destabilisation often means war, as evident in Mozambique’s not too distant past: between 1964 and 1992 the country suffered the anti-colonial liberation war, the destabilisation of the Popular Republic of Mozambique waged by Rhodesia and South Africa, and the civil war. The prologue to renewed civil war was heard by many in 1998. The first act of a violent scenario was seen in November 2000. The assassination on 22 November of the best-known Mozambican journalist and independent political campaigner, Carlos Cardoso, provided a link to the three main elements of the current destabilisation:

▼ **Militarisation of politics.** An hour before his death, Cardoso was set to launch the Movement for Peace and Democracy following the death of at least 80 Renamo prisoners in the rural town of Montepuez.

▼ **Delegitimisation of the political, administrative and legal systems.** It took the police and state attorney nearly three months to come up with the first investigative public actions. Particularly the legal system is ridden by revelations of corruption and other scandals. Cardoso pointed at political links and showed an

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26 This is a reference to Chabal and Daloz, whose book *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (1999) will be addressed later on.
‘unflinching disregard for those politicians who have enriched themselves from their links with organised crime’.

\[\textbf{Criminalisation of the state.}\] In April 2001 the main suspects in a giant US$ 14 million fraud in 1996, involving the parastatal Banco Commercial de Moçambique, were arrested. Cardoso had, in his electronic daily paper *Metical*, repeatedly called for their detention.\(^28\) When finally the three businessmen were arrested, it was under suspicion that they had ordered Cardoso’s murder.\(^29\)

Mozambique’s destabilisation is, according to Mazula (1996: 63), associated with ‘a continuously unstable state, confused by inter- and intra-party struggles, without any benefit to society (…) This is a situation of anarchy and ungovernability. Tendencies of dual administration are strengthened and this might lead to politico-military instability. Distrust is radicalised’. The parties perceive that there is nothing to negotiate about, nothing to share except profound mutual distrust. No trust-building is possible. There is no longer any consultation with the citizens. The state’s political, legal and administrative systems have lost whatever legitimacy they possessed. This is the negative turning-point where militarisation of politics starts. Citizenship is eroded, political action becomes more physical than verbal, and people vote with their feet (stay at home, flee, or join the trenches). Has this ‘peasants’ revolt’ become Mozambique’s new reality?

We now present two examples, from the years 1998 and 2000, of active opposition campaigns to delegitimise the political-administrative system. The first action resulted in ‘militarisation of politics’ only at the verbal-discursive level. The second, however, provoked lethal responses from the state authorities.

\(^{27}\) Bayart *et al.* (1999: 63) write that Mozambique is an advanced example of ‘the criminalisation of the state in Africa’: ‘Mozambique today has effectively become a free trade area for businessmen and smugglers of every description (…) Especially significant are those former South African military intelligence operatives who have influence with Mozambican politicians and officials and who are able to use Mozambique as a centre for offshore transactions involving South Africa itself.’

\(^{28}\) In late 2000, the BCM – Banco Comercial de Moçambique, a recently privatised bank – suddenly announced a loss of a further US$ 110 million in the year 1999, despite significant profits in 1998. The explanation was that non-performing loans had been written off. Many publicly-voiced suspicions had it that these loans had been given to senior figures closely connected with the ruling elite, people who had little intention of repaying them *(Metical*, 18 December 2000).

\(^{29}\) *Mail&Guardian* (South Africa), 22 March 2001, ‘Mozambique’s downward spiral’ by Rehad Desai.
The ‘Renamo + 15’ electoral boycott of 1998

The municipal elections, finally held on 30 June 1998, turned out to be ‘elections without people’. The average turnout was 14.58 per cent, abstention in the major cities was almost 90 per cent, and there was alarming disorganisation.

All the opposition parties decided to boycott the elections. In 27 out of 33 constituencies Frelimo was the only party to field candidates. Known as ‘Renamo +15’, the opposition toured the country with an anti-election campaign, trying to convince the people not to vote. Renamo was mainly opposed to the absence of party representatives at the provincial and local levels of the election secretariat (STAE). They claimed massive irregularities in voter registration and demarcation of rural constituencies.

Did this delegitimisation campaign work? Only indirectly. Our research (based on surveys and qualitative methods) revealed that the boycott campaign had very little direct effect in the sense of persuading people not to vote for positive reasons. On the other hand, there was very little political indifference. There were no signs of ‘voter apathy’. Most people were well informed about the elections, and an overwhelming majority indicated – in surveys carried out six months before the elections – that they wanted to vote. How then do we explain the mass abstention on the election days? We agree with two other Mozambican research teams (Weimer, 1999; Serra, 1999) that the mass abstention was a vote of popular protest:

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31 *AIM Reports*, No. 139. The National Election Commission (CNE) on 17 July 1998 finally released the official results, two days after the legal deadline.

32 *AIM Reports*, No. 138.

33 With two minor exceptions: the ‘Labour Party’ (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) and the coalition RUMO. PT presented candidates in Maputo and Xai-Xai, RUMO in Maputo and Matola.

34 In six constituencies – Cidade de Maputo, Matola, Manhiça, Beira, Nacala and Xai-Xai – independent candidates were stood for election (*Savana*, 24 July 98).

35 *Mozambiquefile*, May 1998. At a meeting on 17 April 1998, the main opposition force, Renamo, and 15 minor parties agreed to undertake a boycott campaign. The boycott was eventually joined by the third party in the National Assembly coalition, the União Democrática (UD).

36 In our survey of 10 cities and towns (2200 respondents), 74.3 per cent said they were going to vote in the 1998 local elections; 24.7 per cent said they even wanted to take part in the electoral campaign.
against the competing political elites and their inability to reach an agreement about the elections;

against the institutions of the state, charged with electoral administration and supervision.

The protest against the political elites struck other, deeper chords. First of all, there was discontent with the politicians and their lack of delivery on earlier promises of a futuro melhor (better future). Second, there was general distrust in political parties. While 80.9 per cent of our sample in seven municipalities wished to vote and 53.2 per cent in late 1997 said they thought the local elections were going to be free and fair, only 32.6 per cent expressed trust in one or more political parties; when asked specifically whom they would turn to in the case of a problem with the government or a public official locally, only 14.9 per cent expressed preferential trust in one or more of the political parties. In our post-election one-city survey, 39 per cent of non-voters expressed distrust in political parties, agreeing with the proposition that ‘politicians are all the same’. Centralism and lack of internal democracy in the parties did not improve the image of the parties.

The Mozambican sociologist Carlos Serra analysed the 1998 voter abstention in a way that has great relevance for our theme of the militarisation of politics. He writes that the most important reason for abstention was the propaganda of the political parties, which reminded people of the civil war. Frelimo called on the population to vote; Renamo and other opposition parties demanded abstention. The catalyst for abstention was the non-participation of Renamo. Even those citizens who did not support Renamo had good reasons not to want a political outcome that excluded one of the two central pillars in the post-1992 arrangements for peace and democracy. In the political battleground of 1998, the two major parties were not afraid to put their ammunition on show. Both demonstrated on the one hand a symbolic violence in their political propaganda, and on the other the threat of physical violence exhibited in their security apparatuses (e.g. the President’s guard, and the opposition leader Dhlakama’s semi-private militia). In this way, the parties created a

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37 In our survey of 10 cities and towns, 55 per cent of respondents were dissatisfied with public services.

38 This should be compared with the preferential trust in family: 29.1 per cent; representatives of civil society (traditional and religious authorities): 25.6 per cent; and social networks (other citizens or people with whom respondents were in daily contact): 20 per cent.
situations that were not conducive to truly representative, ‘legitimate’ elections, despite their official legality. An atmosphere of fear was created: quite simply, since ‘in the recent past [there] had been a civil war, it [could resurge] tomorrow’ (Serra, 1999: 188–192). It was better to stay at home, away from the crossfire.

The November 2000 Renamo demonstrations and Montepuez Cabo Delgado is the Northern province that borders with Tanzania. The events that took place there in late 2000 were the most serious incidents of political violence in Mozambique since the end of the civil war. Earlier the same year, there had been instances of political violence, including what appeared to be a Renamo-organised assault on a police station in Nampula. But on 9 November a defiant Dhlakama called for nationwide demonstrations to protest against the allegedly fraudulent elections of 1999. He told the press that Renamo, which had formerly been the armed ‘National Resistance of Mozambique’, would ‘return to the bush and take up arms’ – backed by ten smaller opposition parties in the opposition alliance – unless it was granted legal authority over the country’s five central and northern provinces.

Everywhere the demonstrators were met by armed police. The official death toll seems to have been 44 people. Hundreds were arrested, including leading Renamo parliamentarians. A Mozambican Human Rights League report blamed the riot police for many of the deaths, alleging that they fired without provocation on demonstrators in Nampula city on the first day of protests. The shooting was believed to have sparked violence in other northern provinces, with elite police and army units still monitoring hot spots, including the traditional Frelimo stronghold of Montepuez (Cabo Delgado), which was overrun by heavily armed Renamo supporters. In Cabo Delgado province, at least two District Administrators were held captive by the demonstrators, among them the administrator in Montepuez, the second largest city in the province. The fact that in many places the district administrations were singled out as the object of the demonstrators’ anger underlined the seriousness of the cleavage between the local state structures and the rurally based Renamo supporters, who clearly viewed the Frelimo administration as illegitimate.

The national crisis took a sharp turn for the worse on 22 November, the same day that Carlos Cardoso was murdered. Eighty-four dead people were found in a small police custody cell in Montepuez – they had all been brought in after the 9 November demonstrations and had been there ever since. The official explanation was that they died of asphyxiatiion.

Subsequently, inter-party relations deteriorated significantly. Renamo refused to recognise the Frelimo government. Its elected MPs continued to attend parliamentary sessions but on several instances resorted to banging on their benches throughout the session. One reason for their protests was that Frelimo kept a tight grip on its parliamentary majority group, so that Renamo’s propositions were consistently overruled. According to Baptista Lundin, Renamo did not see a single one of their propositions go through in parliament during its first five-year term (Lundin, 2000b). nn’

6. Can Democracy Survive in a Country like Mozambique?
Table 3 sums up our presentation of the three tendencies in Mozambican politics during the last decade. Our view is that each tendency promoted a distinct set of institutional characteristics, with various effects on political behaviour. Democratisation began in 1990, the General Peace Accord was agreed in 1992, and multiparty

<table>
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<th>Occurrence in Mozambique</th>
<th>Political system characteristics</th>
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<th>Effects on political behaviour</th>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Democratisation</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Growing</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>Repatri-monialisation</td>
<td>Structural distrust</td>
<td>Declining</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Destabilisation</td>
<td>Radical distrust</td>
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elections held in 1994 were characterised by an impressive turnout. The repatrimonialisation visible in the 1994 electoral campaign gained momentum, so that by 1998, when local elections were held, there was an extremely low electoral turnout. Destabilisation threatened the political system before the 1998 local elections, with the opposition boycott and a language of force. Destabilisation also resurfaced with violent effects in 2000 when the opposition campaigned to reject the legitimacy of the 1999 elections. However, destabilisation is a constant threat to the system rather than a separate feature; it is a parasite on the back of repatrimonialisation.

Thus, the two main tendencies are democratisation and repatrimonialisation. As Mazula (1996: 65) put it, Mozambique faced ‘a mixture of two scenarios (…) a moment of transition when sometimes trust seems to be strengthened, but at other times distrust seems to surge again, with at the same time, a will to guarantee peace’.

In this context there are two crucial questions. First, is there still hope that democracy can be consolidated, or will patrimonialism get the definitive upper hand? The pessimistic view is forcefully offered by Chabal and Daloz who consider patrimonialism ‘a model driven by the realities of what we observe in Africa today’. Second, can democracy and patrimonialism co-exist? Again we shall address the view of Chabal and Daloz (1999: 143), who present a

new paradigm (…) to show how the political, social and economic ‘logics’ of contemporary Africa come together in a process of modernisation which does not fit with the Western experience of development.

In short, this is a paradigm of ‘modernisation without development’: patrimonial forces ensure that ‘Africa works’ within a new global order by ‘instrumentalising’ democracy and other imported political assets. However, we do not find evidence for this type of equilibrium in Mozambique. Our hypothesis is that even if in other parts of Africa such an equilibrium can be observed on the surface, it is probably not sustainable.

A basis for consolidated democracy?
We find reason to be optimistic about democracy in Mozambique when looking at three recent events:
can a patrimonial democracy survive? the case of mozambique

the land law process compared with local government reform

In Mozambique’s post-colonial history, the consultation process around the Land Law in 1996 and 1997 was unprecedented. It testified to the centrality of popular mobilisation in generating democratic pro-poor governance. By contrast, the non-consultative and non-inclusive process that characterised local government reform produced a strong popular reaction in terms of mass abstention in the first local elections. Nonetheless, even in the municipal urban areas we have found hopeful signs of ordinary people’s preparedness to interact with the public authorities, as long as the purpose of these is to serve the people and not to amass wealth and power within political-administrative structures that are highly distrusted by the citizens.

The main political-structural differences between the two processes lie in the fact that a draft of the Land Law was made known to the public. It resonated with already existing class interests and led to the formation of national advocacy groups, which opted for a result-oriented and constructive dialogue with the state authorities. The municipal reforms, however, struck a chord with more localised interests, and the opposition parties tried to capitalise on the growing public disappointment with the way decentralisation was proceeding. Instead of initiating a mass-based movement to rectify the process of municipal reform, the opposition parties subsumed the popular discontent to their own tactics of confrontation with the ruling party.

The Land Law-related mass campaign succeeded in two ways. First, it obtained radical changes in a law crucial to the poor peasant majority of the country. Second, it managed to institutionalise civil society participation in the implementation process, an essential con-

40 The main achievements of the revised land law were that it provided security of tenure for smallholders and women – neither group having enjoyed any such security before – and that it involved communities in land-conflict mediation. It did not intend to discourage foreign investors, but it did ensure that smallholders were not disadvantaged because of a lack of title deeds to land their family might have been farming for generations. Land grabbing and land hoarding were minimised because oral testimony about land occupancy and use is considered as valid as written evidence (Negrão, 1999).
dition for bringing the institutions closer to the intended beneficiaries. A national campaign group, *Campanha Terra*, was instrumental in the process. Its aim was to disseminate information to rural families. The campaign group will hopefully disseminate this experience to other areas and sectors and at all levels of governance (Braathen and Palermo, 2001).

**Other recent developments**
In 1998, there was a strong re-emphasis on democratic values, norms and rules in the electorate. As mentioned earlier, the mass abstention was a vote of *popular protest*

▼ against the competing political elites and their inability to reach an agreement about the elections; ‘When the big opposition party does not take part, the elections do not make sense’ (Braathen and Viig, 1998). Actually, abstention was the citizens’ defence of political pluralism;

▼ against the institutions of the state charged with electoral administration and supervision – and their lack of neutrality, justice and capacity. At the local level, some STAE members ‘feared that they would lose their jobs in the district government if they insisted on a correct and transparent rectification of the irregularities’. Critical points ‘raised by all media and the public in general include the composition of CNE and STAE, the latter with an alleged bias in favour of Frelimo members’ (Weimer, 1999). Actually, this was a protest against the symptoms of patrimonialism.

By 1999, even the ruling party had started to regard the 1998 local elections as a fiasco, and was determined to change its approach. Hence, before the 1999 general elections, the ruling party was careful to reach a consensus with the opposition as to the legal and institutional set-up for the elections. Opposition representatives were to be massively included at all levels of the electoral administrative machinery, both as officers and as observers. The opposition was assured fair access to all the state-owned mass media, as well as substantial public funding towards their campaign. Hence, both foreign and NGO-based domestic electoral observers agreed that the elections were transparent, free and fair, from the run-up, to voting, to the count in the polling stations. The problems appeared during the weeks after the elections, when the local count reports were to
be computed, reviewed and validated at the provincial level (Braathen, 2000).

Finally, in late 2000 and early 2001 there were attempts to restore relations of peace and dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition. After the violent clashes between Renamo supporters and police in November 2000, President Chissano and party leader Dhlakama decided to start talks. They met on 20 December 2000 and 17 January 2001. They agreed to set up five working groups, committed to reaching a consensus on the reasons for the violent clashes. In addition, policy issues such as reform of public administration and constitution were addressed, with recommendations delivered in March 2001. In this way, personal and operational trust was once more rebuilt, although the main issues – the appointment of provincial governors – remained unresolved. The unsettled issues have nurtured the structural distrust between the parties and produced new calls to break off dialogue.

Patrimonial-democratic coexistence?
The ‘stability’ of the patrimonial-democratic disorder is not assured by domestic rational elites, as Chabal and Daloz (1999: 31-44) indicate. Rather, stability in Mozambique has rested on the following ‘external’ factors:

1. Natural disasters. The heavy floods and cyclones in February–March 2000, like the drought in 1990–91, made ‘fellow countrymen’ close ranks to save the country.
2. The Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank) and foreign donor agencies, who guaranteed – if not ‘development’ – at least macro-economic and hence state stability.
3. Geopolitics. Since 1990 there have been no cold war or regional conflicts that could encourage, as in Congo-Kinshasa, military forces in the neighbouring countries to support local contending factions.

However, we hold that stability is unsustainable unless these external factors are overtaken by certain national institutionalised mechanisms, by means of further democratisation. On the domestic scene, the political elites cannot expect to play the game of destabilisation indefinitely without being punished by a war-weary electorate.

7. General Conclusions

1. The relationship between democracy and patrimonialism tends to be antagonistic and polarised. Democratic institutions, even the holding of elections, expose patrimonial structures and practices to the eyes of the electorate. This enhances delegitimisation of the political system (Cowen and Laakso, 1997), which in turn threatens to destabilise the whole state. Thus, a patrimonial-democratic order is not sustainable.

2. Sustainable political stability depends on further democratisation. We suggest this requires the strengthening of four institutional characteristics: basic trust between competing elites, impersonal popular trust in state institutions (state legitimacy), regular meaningful consultations between state and population, and improved urban–rural relations through increased equality and shared citizenship (e.g. through a local self-government system). Mozambique’s Land Law of 1997 is a valuable example of a democratising measure. In the context of the legacy of the bifurcated state, the administration of the rural areas must be further democratised as a means to achieve better political links between urban and rural areas.

3. There must be a national ownership of democracy, and the national economy must thrive and be taxed to sustain the political institutions of the country. An anecdote from Mozambique illustrates the problem of ownership. In the 1998 municipal elections, foreigners were largely debarred from observing the elections, and were thus required to stay some distance away from the polling stations. Even so, on election day we observed an Austrian senior aid-officer coming out of the polling station. Upon asking him what he was doing there, clearly breaching the law, he answered: ‘We paid for this. I wanted to see what was going on.’

4. Democracy has to be combined with human development. The political processes have to produce outcomes that make people experience improvements in their lives. Pro-poor governance must be enhanced, characterised by empowerment of ordinary people.

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42 In 1994, the elections were 95 per cent financed by donors. In 1999, they were 80 per cent financed by donors, mainly the European Union and some of its member states. Norway was the second biggest single contributor (Braathen, 2000). Between 1987 and 1991, aid represented around 70 per cent of Mozambique’s GDP. The proportion achieved more than 100 per cent for the period 1992–96 according to the World Bank (Braathen and Palermo, 2001).
and a strongly ethos of anti-corruption in the state leadership. A Mozambican scholar suggests calling this ethos ‘the Mondlane paradigm’. In this way, the state must help bring about substantial reduction of endemic poverty.

5. The alleged neopatrimonial paradigm, ‘modernisation without development’, is not likely to be rooted in African institutions as long as ordinary African men and women have a say. At the end of the day, all burning questions are normative – for development researchers too. To what extent do researchers’ own sense of reality influence policy-making? How can we all contribute to make democracy work, even in Africa?

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43 Referring to the founder and first president of FRELIMO, Dr Eduardo Mondlane. He was killed by a letter bomb in 1969. ‘It was Mondlane that better than anyone else pronounced in our country the terms of social justice and real democracy: the population is disposed to participate in political project if the State was a redistributive entity’ (Serra, 1999: 203–204, our translation). Carlos Serra emphasises the following quote from Mondlane: ‘In some areas, the shortcomings [in providing social services to the people] became serious: and where the peasants did not understand the reasons, they withdrew their support to the struggle, and, in some cases, left the struggle definitively’ (Mondlane, 1969/1995, our translation).

44 Officially, 70 per cent of the population lived in absolute poverty in 1998. 54 per cent lacked access to safe water, and 70 per cent lacked access to basic health services. 58 per cent of the population was still illiterate. The UNDP estimated that average calorie consumption was 77 per cent of the recommended daily amount. That was low even compared to the African average at 93 per cent. Mozambique has one of the highest rates of fatal births in the world. The social indicators have improved somewhat compared to the mid-civil war years, but improvements are still uneven and unclear. For instance, comparing statistics from the UNDP’s Human Development Index and official government statistics, it seems that life expectancy decreased from 49 years in 1989, to 43.8 in 1998. (All figures from the Human Development Index statistics of UNDP, 1991–2000.)


E-Mail&Guardian (daily electronic issue of the weekly Mail&Guardian), Johannesburg.


Mail&Guardian, Johannesburg.


Mozambique News Agency Reports, Maputo.


Mozambiquefile, Mozambique News Agency, Maputo.


Savana, Maputo.


I WARMLY RECOMMEND THIS ESSENTIAL AND INSIGHTFUL VOLUME. THE BOOK IS THE FIRST SYSTEMATIC AND COMPREHENSIVE INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD OF POLICY COHERENCE IN DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION. IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING AN ACCESSIBLE DISCUSSION OF DEVELOPMENT AID AND POLICY COHERENCE, IT ALSO HAS A MORE GENERAL VALUE. SEEN AS A WHOLE, THE BOOK GIVES AN INSIGHT INTO THE THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF POLICY INCOHERENCE. AT A GLANCE, ONE MAY SEE THE CONTOURS OF A NEW VERITABLE INDUSTRY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES FOCUSING ON POLICY INCOHERENCES. FINALLY THE VOLUME CERTAINLY HELPS IN ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPT OF POLICY COHERENCE IN THE LITERATURE.

THOMAS DAM The European Journal of Development Research (Vol. 12, No. 2).

Policy Coherence in Development Co-operation

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Edited by Jacques Forster, IUED and Olav Stokke, NUPI

In the 1990s, a widely shared conviction emerged among aid donors that their policies should be more coherent than in the past. The drive towards increased policy coherence came as a response to a state of policy incoherence.

The shifting grounds of policy coherence in development co-operation are outlined in this volume. The policies of some selected donor countries – Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland – are scrutinised and analysed, with particular reference to the 1990s. Spotlights are also directed towards the European Union, with particular reference to the internal coherence of its development co-operation policy and the common foreign and security policy, and the coherence of EU policies and the bilateral policies of its member states.

The volume starts off with a state of the art contribution by its editors. The book represents the first effort to deal with the issue of policy coherence in a systematic and comprehensive way. It will be of considerable interest to researchers, university teachers and students in the field of development studies, and of particular interest also to politicians and administrators at all levels concerned with development co-operation and North-South relations.
A Balanced View of Development as Freedom

Bertil Tungodden

1. Introduction
We all think of development as the movement towards a better and more just society. But what does this really mean? In order to elaborate on such a question, we need to approach fundamental issues within moral and political philosophy. What is good for a person? What is a good society? However, many people think that such a discussion is a mistake, at least if we want to contribute to development in the real world. They believe that all important practical problems of development are related to the choice of means in order to attain well-established aims, and that any further elaboration on the aims of development is futile for practical purposes.

Amartya Sen’s book *Development as Freedom* (Sen 1999a) shows that this view is mistaken. Sen presents an impressive blend of philosophical, economic and practical reasoning that once and for all should demonstrate how further understanding of the aims of development can enrich our practical debate on the appropriate means of development. Sen organises the discussion on how to understand and deal with (among other things) poverty, famines, population growth, unemployment, and gender inequality around a

Note of acknowledgements. Thanks to Andreas Follesdal, Agnar Sandmo, Amartya Sen, Olav Stokke and two anonymous referees for valuable comments and discussion. The author of course remains responsible for all the views expressed in the article.

1 The book is based on five lectures given at the World Bank during the fall of 1996 and spring of 1997. Many of the topics discussed in this book have been extensively studied by Sen in a number of other books and articles, as indicated in the footnotes of the book. For further references, see also Basu, Pattanaik and Suzumura (1995), who provide bibliographical data for Sen’s work up to 1993.
particular philosophical position, which is that the aim of development is to expand human freedom. And he illustrates how this position differs from standard views on development, and why these differences matter in real life.

Even though one might disagree with some aspects of Sen’s perspective, we should all embrace the general lesson of this book: avoid slogans and narrow interpretations in any debate on development issues. Unfortunately, one sometimes gets the feeling that this general lesson is not applied by all when interpreting and discussing Sen’s ideas and suggestions. In particular, many academics and practitioners seem to consider Sen as the economist who saved the world from economics, where it is assumed that economics is in no way concerned with addressing issues of poverty, inequality, justice, and fairness. That is of course wrong. The economic profession has always considered distributive issues of greatest importance, as illustrated by the following quote from one of the grandfathers of economics:

I would add one word for any student beginning economic study who may be discouraged by the severity of the effort which the study...seems to require of him. The complicated analyses which economists endeavour to carry through are not mere gymnastic. They are instruments for the bettering of human life. The misery and squalor that surround us, the injurious luxury of some wealthy families, the terrible uncertainty overshadowing many families of the poor – these are the evils too plain to be ignored. By the knowledge that our science seeks it is possible that they may be restrained. Out of the darkness light! To search for it is the task, to find it perhaps the prize, which the ‘dismal science of Political Economy’ offers those who face its discipline (Pigou, 1928: vii).

This is also underlined by Sen, who argues that ‘economists as a group cannot be accused of neglecting inequality as a subject’ (Sen, 1999a: 107). Certainly, Sen has contributed enormously to this work within economics, by drawing attention to important problems of injustice and by broadening the framework of welfare economics. But we should apply his perspective with care. And in the spirit of Sen’s own work, the aim of this article is to provide a balanced discussion of his perspective on development. What is really the implication of viewing ‘[e]xpansion of freedom both as the primary

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2 In the rest of the article, if the quotation or reference is from Development as Freedom, I will provide page references only.
end and as the principal means of development’ (p. xii)? In section 2, I provide a brief outline of Sen’s freedom approach, and in section 3, I discuss the implications of viewing expansion of freedom as the primary end of development. My main message in the first part of this section is that Sen’s normative theory does not necessarily justify a particular focus on inequality and poverty in the development process. Sen has chosen to apply his framework to these problems, but that is not the same as providing a justification for a poverty- or inequality-orientated perspective. According to Sen’s own view, any such justification has to be based on democratic reasoning, and I provide a discussion of this idea and how it relates to the human development approach of UNDP in the second part of section 3. In section 4, I discuss the relevance of markets within the freedom approach and consider Sen’s claim that the expansion of individual freedom is the principal means of development. Section 5 contains some concluding remarks.

2. The Freedom Approach

Sen’s freedom approach is coined in the language of capabilities and functionings:

The concept of ‘functioning’, which has distinctly Aristotelian roots, reflects the various things a person may value doing or being. The valued functionings may vary from elementary ones, such as being adequately nourished and being free from avoidable disease, to very complex activities or personal states, such as being able to take part in the life of the community and having self-respect.

A person’s ‘capability’ refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are all feasible for her to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (p. 75).

According to Sen, there are three main arguments for adopting this framework when evaluating development processes. First, it attracts attention to the intrinsically important aspects in the life of people, contrary to the conventional income approach (or any other resource-based framework). Second, it captures the multi-dimensional nature of the ends of development, contrary to the utility framework of economists (which Sen considers to be a one-track approach to an

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3 These concepts were first introduced in Sen (1980). See Robeyns (2000) for an extensive overview of Sen’s writing on this topic.
evaluation of the well-being of a person). And third, it provides a reasonable representation of people's substantive freedom, to wit the freedom to achieve alternative combinations of things a person may value doing or being. Let us consider each of these arguments in some more detail.

Income can certainly be very important as a means of achieving intrinsically valuable functionings, but the relation between economic wealth and individual freedom is neither exclusive nor uniform (p. 14). There are significant influences on our lives other than economic wealth, and the impact of economic wealth varies with other influences. Hence, even though income-related variables will be of interest in a practical debate, there is a need to spell out and focus on the reasons for wanting economic wealth.

Sen believes that the framework of functionings and capabilities captures these reasons more accurately than the standard approach within welfare economics. Sen rejects the traditional utilitarian ethics of taking happiness as the point of departure for two reasons. First, he finds it too narrow an interpretation of well-being. Happiness alone does not constitute a person's being, and thus there is a need to take other valuable functionings into account. Moreover, he questions the importance of an aspect of a person's life that is easily swayed by adaptive attitudes.

Our desires and pleasure-taking abilities adjust to circumstances, especially to make life bearable in adverse situations. The utility calculus can be deeply unfair to those who are persistently deprived: for example, the usual underdogs in stratified societies, perennially oppressed minorities in intolerant communities, traditionally precarious share-croppers living in a world of uncertainty, routinely overworked sweatshop employees in exploitative arrangements, hopelessly subdued housewives in severely sexist cultures. The deprived people tend to come to terms with their deprivation because of the sheer necessity of survival, and they may, as a result, lack the courage to demand radical change, and may even adjust their desires and expectations to what they unambitiously see as feasible. The mental metric of pleasures or desire is just too malleable to be a firm guide to deprivation and disadvantage (pp. 62–63).

However, the modern interpretation among economists is that utility is a representation of individual preferences and not a measure of happiness. And we might wonder whether this approach faces the same problems as the hedonistic version of utilitarianism. In one respect, it does. Our preferences are also swayed by adaptive attit-
udu, and hence we might on some occasions wonder whether people’s preferences ought to be a firm guide for evaluative purposes. I guess most people accept that there are certain cases where we should overrule an individual’s preferences, but I will not pursue the hard question about where to draw the line. Instead, I would rather like to point to the fact that the modern interpretation of utility might avoid the criticism of being a one-track approach to well-being. In particular, if we define individual preferences in the functioning space, then the utility framework meets Sen’s demand for a broad approach to our understanding of well-being. The only thing we add to the Senian approach by adopting the utility framework is an understanding of how to evaluate different sets of functionings when making intrapersonal evaluations of well-being.

However, Sen’s idea of substantive freedom is not captured by any combination of functionings actually achieved by a person, but by the alternative combinations of functionings that are all feasible for a person to achieve. This is the basic idea of the capability approach, and the guiding principle for Sen in his practical analysis of the development process. In this discussion, he considers five types of such freedoms.

*Political freedoms*...include the political entitlements associated with democracies in the broadest sense... *Economic facilities* refer to the opportunities that individuals respectively enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, or production, or exchange... *Social opportunities* refer to the arrangements that society makes for education, health care and so on... *Transparency guarantees* deal with the need for openness that people can expect: the freedom to deal with one another under disclosure and lucidity... The domain of *protective security* (my emphasis) includes fixed institutional arrangements such as unemployment benefits and statutory income supplements to the indigent as well as ad hoc arrangements such as famine relief or emergency public employment to generate income for destitutes (38–40).

We will review Sen’s discussion of these freedoms as principal means of development in section 4, but let us first discuss further the implications of viewing individual freedom as the end of development.
3. Individual Freedom as the End of Development
The evaluation of any process of development would have to take place at two levels – the individual and the aggregate.\textsuperscript{4} We have to make clear whether the process has contributed to improvements in the lives of people (\textit{the individual level}), and how to aggregate the claims of different individuals (\textit{the aggregate level}). If there is no conflict between people, we have a trivial problem of evaluation. Economists would endorse such a process with reference to the Pareto principle. But the Pareto principle is defined in the space of preference satisfaction, and hence it is not an appropriate condition to appeal to within the Senian framework.

A structurally equivalent condition, however, can be stated in the language of individual freedom, that is by saying that society A should be considered better than society B if everyone has more freedom in A than B, and such a principle can be used to justify a harmonious process of development.\textsuperscript{5} Most people would probably endorse some version of this principle (though there are exceptions discussed in Tungodden (2001)), but I guess many will question the practical relevance of it. In general, there are gainers and losers as a result of different development policies, and thus there is a need for a justifiable resolution of the distributive conflict.

How might Sen’s capability approach assist us on this fundamental issue? Is it possible to use his theory to justify a particular focus on the problem of poverty or distributive problems more generally, as many people seem to think? It is not immediately obvious how that should be done. Sen’s theory is mainly concerned with the individual level of analysis (that is, with the choice of evaluative space), and thus leaves open the question of how to deal with distributive conflicts. His argument is that individual claims are to be assessed in terms of the freedoms people actually enjoy to choose the lives that they have reason to value (p. 74), which does not say anything about the relative importance of poverty and inequality in an overall evaluation of a distributive conflict. And as stressed by Sen (1981: 369) himself, the capability approach can be used in many different ways, including a way similar to utilitarianism (which would not assign any particular importance to the alleviation of capability poverty and inequality).

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\textsuperscript{4} In this discussion, I do not take into account how to deal with non-human aspects of development.

\textsuperscript{5} Broome (1991) introduced a general version of this principle, coined ‘the principle of personal good’, saying that society A should be considered better than society B if everyone is better off in A than B according to the appropriate definition of well-being (which in the Senian context is the capability framework).
The discussion in *Development as Freedom* might on some occasions be confusing in this respect. Sen often chooses to contrast the capability approach with a focus on economic growth (see for example pp. 36–37, p. 150, p. 285, and pp. 290–291), and this might to some readers give the impression that there is a choice to make between the *distributive-insensitive income approach* and the *distributive-sensitive capability approach*. This is of course wrong and certainly not Sen’s message (see p. 39). Sen has made prominent contributions to *income* poverty measurement (Sen, 1976) and *income* inequality measurement (Sen, 1973), and such measures can easily be included in an overall *distributive-sensitive income approach*. Actually, according to Sen (1992: 146), the income approach can be made *too* distributive-sensitive, if we adopt the Rawlsian perspective (within the income space) and only focus on the interests of the worst-off. 6 Hence, the reason for moving beyond the income approach is *not* to develop a more distributive-sensitive concept of development, but to establish a normative framework that deals with the aspects of people’s lives that are of intrinsic value. Sen’s claim is that functionings are *constitutive* of a person’s being (Sen, 1992: 39), and it is on this basis he suggests the move from the income space to the capability space. 7

However, there is a *motivational* link between the capability approach and a particular focus on the problem of poverty (see pp. 91–92). We do not care about the poor because they lack income *per se* but because they are unable to do and be certain basic things of intrinsic value (like being unable to move around, meet nutritional requirements, be sheltered, clothed, educated, and so on). And most people consider the lack of these basic functionings as having particular urgency in an evaluation of the development process. In that sense, by clarifying a framework that captures the aspects of a person’s situation underlying our particular concern for the poor, the capability approach provides a needed motivational basis for a focus on poverty when solving distributive conflicts. But notice that this is *not* the same as providing a justification for a focus on poverty in the development process. This job cannot be done simply by adopt-

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7 This might seem like a reasonable move. However, it has been contested by, among others, Rawls (1993), who argues that any political concept of justice should refer to an idea of rational advantage that is independent of any particular comprehensive account of the good. Rawls does not reject the possibility that betterness should be evaluated in the capability space, but defends a focus on instrumental aspects (like income) if justice is the subject of our problem. For a further discussion of this issue, see Brun and Tungodden (2000).
ing the capability approach, and this should be kept in mind when using Sen’s framework.

Moreover, notice that the capability approach does not provide us with any formula on how to make interpersonal comparisons of well-being. For that purpose, we have to make further statements on how to compare different sets of functionings for different people with different preferences. This is definitely a hard problem, which is not solved simply by adopting the capability approach. Sen stresses that ‘the capability perspective is inescapably pluralist’ (p. 76). It allows for a number of possible interpretations, and therefore makes explicit the valuational exercise needed in order to reach a conclusion in any particular case. And he views this as one of the main merits of the capability approach, which should be contrasted with for example the use of an implicit metric in the income approach.

The implicit metric of the income approach is market prices, and Sen is worried about the seemingly common assumption that this is ‘an “already available” metric that the society can immediately use without further ado’ (p. 80). Sen is rightly pointing out the fact that the use of market prices also needs to be defended, and the appropriateness of this metric will depend on the purpose of the evaluative exercise. If our concern is to attain a measure of a person’s freedom to choose different combinations of commodities available in the market, then market prices are a good guide. But beyond that, we should apply this metric with care.

In conclusion, I think it is correct to say that the main contribution of the capability approach is to establish a reasonable ‘framework of thought, a mode of thinking’ (Robeyns, 2000: 3) about the ends of development. The capability approach does not provide us with any formula on how to establish conclusions on the individual or the aggregate level, but forces us more generally to direct ourselves to the aspects that are constitutive of people’s being when evaluating development processes (p. 286). It turns out that this move can be of great importance. In Development as Freedom, Sen illustrates this by considering (among other things) gender inequality. The simple and clear message provided by the capability approach is to move beyond an evaluation of these phenomena in any narrow term (like income or hedonism) and work with the real reasons for our concerns. We cannot fully express our concern for gender inequality in Asia and North Africa by looking at income statistics, but need to consider demographic, medical and social information as well. One of the most important practical contributions of the capability approach was Sen’s paper ‘Missing Women’ in the British Medical
Journal in 1992, where he used female–male ratios in different countries to point out that more than 100 million women may be seen as ‘missing’ in these countries (that is, ‘missing’ in the sense of being dead as a result of gender bias). This aspect of the development process would not easily be captured by any other mode of thinking, I would say, and shows the essential importance of evaluating and expressing the development process in the language of the capability approach. Similarly, Sen illustrates in Development as Freedom the usefulness of the capability perspective when comparing for example the situation of American blacks with the life of low-income Indians in Kerala (p. 22) and when trying to grasp the nature of deprivation and poverty in India and sub-Saharan Africa (pp. 101–103).

However, notice that Sen is not at all rejecting the practical importance of the income approach. Even though the capability approach has merits compared with income at the fundamental level, Sen certainly acknowledges that income is often the major cause of capability deprivations and hence that, in studying poverty, ‘there is an excellent argument for beginning with whatever information we have on the distribution of income, particularly low real incomes’ (p. 72). Moreover, Sen stresses that ‘[s]ome capabilities are harder to measure than others, and attempts at putting them on a “metric” may sometimes hide more than they reveal’ (p. 81).

Even though all this seems reasonable, we might want to move beyond using the capability approach as a mode of thinking only and seek more precise conclusions within this framework. For this purpose, we need to select weights both at the individual level and aggregate level, and it is of much interest to notice how Sen wants us to proceed in this respect:

However, in arriving at an ‘agreed’ range of social evaluation (for example, in social studies of poverty), there has to be some kind of reasoned ‘consensus’ on weights, or at least on a range of weights. This is a ‘social choice’ exercise, and it requires public discussion and a democratic understanding and acceptance... There is an interesting choice between ‘technocracy’ and ‘democracy’ in the selection of weights, which may be worth discussing a little. A choice procedure that relies on a democratic search for agreement or consensus can be extremely messy, and many technocrats are sufficiently disgusted by its messiness to pine for some wonderful formula that would simply give us ready-made weights that are ‘just right’. However, no such magic formula does, of course, exist, since the issue of weighting is one of valuation and judgment, and not one of some impersonal technology (pp. 78–79).
Sen views democratic reasoning as the constructive vehicle for reaching conclusions within the capability approach, and he makes the methodological case ‘for emphasizing the need to assign explicitly evaluative weights to different components of life (or of well-being) and then to place the chosen weights for open public discussion and critical scrutiny’ (p. 81).

In this respect, it is of some interest to evaluate the construction of human development indices by UNDP (1990–2000), which have been considered ‘one of the best illustrations of the usefulness of the capability approach’ (Robeyns, 2000: 23). These indices are formulas that assign specific weights to different components of life (in the case of the Human Development Index (HDI), it takes into account health, education and income), and thus the Senian methodology demands open public discussion and critical scrutiny of the choice of criteria in order to make such an index useful. To my knowledge, this has not happened. People have suggested that the indices should be broadened to incorporate other aspects of life as well (see for example Dasgupta, 1993), but as far as I know there has been no open public discussion on the reasonableness of the relative weights assigned to the different dimensions of these indices.

It is easy to see why in the case of the HDI, for example. Even though it is certainly possible to calculate the implicit weights in this index, this is far from easy work. It is rather straightforward to find the implicit weights assigned to aggregate partial indices in the HDI, and that is the kind of information presented in the annual reports of UNDP. ‘The HDI is a simple average of the life expectancy index, educational attainment index and adjusted GDP per capita’ (UNDP, 2000: 269). But in general I find it hard to do a meaningful valuational exercise at this level of analysis. In order to say how to make a (possible) trade-off between, say, an increase in life expectancy and economic growth, we have to pose the question at a more fundamental level. Let me explain. By combining life expectancy and GDP in an aggregate index, we assign a particular economic value to a human life, and it is the reasonableness of this value that should be determined by democratic reasoning. However, it is rather demanding to calculate the implicit value assigned to a human life in HDI for any specific country, and as a result the relevant weights have not been made explicit in public debates as demanded by Sen’s methodology.

This is not to say that UNDP’s human development project has not broadened our understanding of development. It has, and maybe the indices have been a necessary political instrument for this purpose.
Sen certainly seems to think so:

These aggregate indices have tended to draw much more public attention than the detailed and diverse empirical pictures emerging from the tables and other empirical presentations. Indeed, getting public attention has clearly been a part of UNDP’s objective, particularly in its attempt to combat the overconcentration on the simple measure of GNP per head, which often serves as the only indicator of which the public takes any notice. To compete with the GNP, there is a need for another – broader – measure with the same level of crudeness as the GNP (p. 318).

Be that as it may. In my view, these indices have not contributed to the process of social evaluation suggested more generally by Sen, where the outcome is a result of an open public discussion and critical scrutiny. And I think it is unfortunate that many people have endorsed the suggested human development indices only because they represent a step away from narrow economic indicators. In order to see whether these indices actually work better than the GNP (or maybe a distributive-sensitive aggregate income measure), we would have to evaluate the reasonableness of the implicit weights. Of course, we can immediately agree that a broader index is better in cases where there is no conflict between the different dimensions (if we accept that all dimensions are valuable), but the interesting cases are when we experience a conflict. It is far from obvious then that we should always endorse the conclusions of the broader index. It all depends on the reasonableness of the weights.

There is another problem with the HDI as well, and that is that it might give the impression of a need for exact conclusions when evaluating development processes. The index provides a precise ranking of all countries, and we may wonder whether such a fine-tuned approach is really necessary when working with the most pressing problems in the world of today. According to Sen, it is not.

It is also important to recognize that agreed social arrangements and adequate public policies do not require that there be a unique ‘social ordering’ that completely ranks all the alternative social possibilities. Partial agreements still separate out acceptable options (and weed out unacceptable ones), and a workable solution can be based on the contingent acceptance of particular provisions, without demanding complete social unanimity.

It can also be argued that judgments of ‘social justice’ do not really call for a tremendous fine-tuning precision: such a claim that a
tax rate of 39.0 per cent is just, whereas 39.6 would not be (or even that the former is ‘more just than’ the latter). Rather, what is needed is a working agreement on some basic matters of identifiably intense injustice or unfairness.

Indeed, the insistence on the completeness of judgments of justice over every possible choice is not only an enemy of practical social action, it may also reflect some misunderstanding of the nature of justice itself. To take an extreme example, in agreeing that the occurrence of a preventable famine is socially unjust, we do not also lay claim to an ability to determine what exact allocation of food among all the citizens will be ‘most just’. The recognition of evident injustice in preventable deprivation, such as widespread hunger, unnecessary morbidity, premature mortality, grinding poverty, neglect of female children, subjugation of women, and phenomena of that kind does not have to await the derivation of some complete ordering over choices that involve finer differences and puny infelicities. Indeed, the overuse of the concept of justice reduces the forces of the idea when applied to terrible deprivations and inequities that characterise the world in which we live. Justice is like a cannon, and it need not be fired (as an old Bengali proverb puts it) to kill a mosquito (pp. 253–254).

Hence, as I see it, the HDI and similar indices are also in this respect in some conflict with Sen’s more general methodology, and thus we might wonder whether it is a good strategy to introduce them in the debate (even though they may help draw public attention to an important broadening of the development perspective).

Let me close this section by some further comments on the link between Sen’s approach and democratic reasoning. It should by now be clear that Sen views democratic reasoning as a prerequisite for any conclusion on valutional exercises. This should not be misunderstood as his saying that there is no need for suggestions by ‘technocrats’ on this issue. The point is simply that the status of any particular view must depend on its acceptability to others (p. 79). But we might still wonder whether Sen attaches too much importance to democracy, in particular in the light of cultural differences. Is Sen imposing a Western way of doing things?

Sen strongly defends democracy as a universal value, and he actually considers the rise of democracy the most important thing that happened in the twentieth century (Sen, 1999b). Moreover he rejects the conventional monolithic interpretation of Asian values as hostile to democracy and political rights. He shows that this is based on too narrow an understanding of Asian values, and in his characteristically illuminating way illustrates the need for a nuanced
interpretation of Confucianism, Islamic, and Indian thinking. Within all these cultures, important authors have expressed the need for political and religious tolerance, freedom, and diversity. In conclusion, he rejects the view that there is a need to abandon democracy as a universal value because there exist authoritarian writings within the Asian tradition.

It is not hard, of course, to find authoritarian writings within the Asian traditions. But neither is it hard to find them in the Western classics: One has only to reflect on the writings of Plato or Aquinas to see that devotion to discipline is not a special Asian taste. To dismiss the plausibility of democracy as a universal value because of the presence of some Asian writings on discipline and order would be similar to rejecting the plausibility of democracy as a natural form of government in Europe and America today on the basis of the writings of Plato or Aquinas (not to mention the substantial medieval literature in support of the Inquisitions) (Sen, 1999b: 15).

Notice that Sen not only values democracy on the basis of the constructive role he thinks it should play when making social evaluations, but also because he sees the political and social participation realised by democratic institutions as valuable in itself for people. Still, I believe that the constructive part is of particular importance in the Senian framework, as can be illustrated by considering somewhat further the way he deals with the possible causal link between democracy and economic growth. Sen does not accept the empirical claim that authoritarian regimes seem to foster more growth, but at the same time he argues that:

[T]his way of posing the question tends to miss the important understanding that these substantive freedoms...are among constituent components of development. Their relevance for development does not have to be freshly established through their indirect contribution to the growth of GNP (p. 5).

It is not hard to agree with that, but we might still wonder whether we should accept a trade-off between the economic dimension and the political dimension if it turns out (contrary to what Sen believes) that authoritarian regimes actually contribute more effectively in the economic dimension. 8 Within Sen’s framework,

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8 This question has been a central issue more broadly within political philosophy, as a response to the framework of Rawls (1971) where political freedom is assigned absolute priority. Rawls (1993) provides a response to this criticism.
however, this would be an ill-posed problem, because the choice of any such trade-off is a valuational exercise that needs to be established by democratic reasoning.

In sum, the main message of the capability approach is that the normative basis of development should deal with what is intrinsically valuable for people – human freedom – and by insisting on this Sen has forced the debate to take into account a much broader spectrum of problems than what has frequently been dealt with in welfare economics and development analysis more generally. Of course, many of the topics raised by Sen have been suggested by others as well on different occasions, but by introducing an organising concept like human freedom Sen has moved considerations on civil and political rights, social exclusion, intrahousehold discrimination, gender inequality, mortality and morbidity rates, and so on to the centre-stage in the development debate. Beyond that, the approach does not offer us evaluative conclusions, which Sen leaves to the democratic debate to establish. However, by recognising the diversity of components constituting human freedom, Sen has also made us aware of the fact that the set of solutions to development problems is much broader than it is frequently conceived to be, and we now turn to a discussion of this issue.

4. Individual Freedom as the Principal Means of Development
Economists consider competitive markets instrumentally valuable, because they often contribute to a Pareto-efficient allocation of goods in society. But no economist would immediately accept that competitive markets guarantee a just or good allocation. An allocation of resources might be Pareto-efficient even if some people do not survive in a world of plenty, because to allow for more survival would require sacrifices from some of those who are fortunate enough to be able to survive anyway (see Coles and Hammond (1995) for a formal discussion of these extreme cases). Hence, it is obvious that the invisible hand of Adam Smith does not deal with the problem of redistribution in a sufficient manner, and thus economists have for a long time studied possible ways of redistributing income. In addition, economists have recognised and extensively studied the presence of both market failures (with respect to efficiency) and government failures (with respect to interventions), and hence I think it is fair to say that the economic profession in general has a rather nuanced picture of many of the
fundamental institutional problems facing societies in the modern world. So what does Sen add to this picture in *Development as Freedom*?

First of all, it is important to notice that Sen does not at all reject the standard economic argument in favour of the market mechanism. Actually, Sen points out that the well-known Arrow–Debreu efficiency result translates from the ‘space’ of utilities to that of individual freedoms:

\[\text{It turns out that for a cogent characterisation of individual freedoms, a competitive market equilibrium guarantees that no one’s freedom can be increased any further while maintaining the freedom of any one else (p. 117).}\]

However, within the freedom perspective of Sen, this efficiency argument is only part of the story. The more immediate argument in favour of the market system is that it represents a basic freedom for people, as was also pointed out a long time ago by Adam Smith.

As Adam Smith noted, freedom of exchange and transaction is itself part and parcel of the basic liberties that people have reason to value. To be *generically against* markets would be almost as odd as being generically against conversations between people (even though some conversations are clearly foul and cause problems for others – or even for the conversationalists themselves). The freedom to exchange words, or goods, or gifts does not need defensive justification in terms of the favourable but distant effects; they are part of the way human beings in society live and interact with each other (unless stopped by regulation or fiat). The contribution of the market mechanism to economic growth is, of course, important, but this comes only after the direct significance of the freedom to interchange – words, goods, gifts – has been acknowledged (p. 6).

In other words, Sen’s reasoning is not at all against the use of the market mechanism. On the contrary, Sen stresses the fact that the freedom to enter markets can itself be an important contribution to development, as when bonded labour exists, for example, or when women are denied the opportunity to seek employment outside the family, and so on.

Of course, Sen underlines the need for critical scrutiny of the role of the market in different circumstances, but this is very much

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9 This is formally established in Sen (1993).
in line with the standard view of modern economics. Where Sen’s views differ from much of conventional economics is that he embraces a broader set of non-market institutions as important for development.

Sen considers five types of freedoms essential for development: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. He argues that there are empirical interconnections between these freedoms that make the expansion of individual freedom the principle means of development (p. 4). In other words, individual freedom in one valuable dimension is not only of constitutive importance, but might also be an engine of further development because it often contributes to more individual freedom in other valuable dimensions. Of course, in some cases we might experience a conflict between the freedoms of different people, and then we need a further valuational exercise in order to make a definite evaluative conclusion. But when exploring the empirical interconnections in Development as Freedom, Sen is not particularly concerned with this issue, either because he assumes that everyone gains from a particular interconnection or because he deals with a conflict where he thinks it is obvious what is the right step forward.

I doubt that many people will disagree with the general claim that there are empirical interconnections between the different dimensions of freedom outlined by Sen. Hence, in order to see the value of his reasoning in this respect and how it has broadened our thinking on development issues, there is a need to look at particular interconnections explored in Sen’s work. In my view, the most important link on which Sen sheds light is that between political freedom and protective security in famine situations. Markets and nature play fundamental roles during famines (as illustrated by the studies of both Sen (1981) and Ravallion (1987)), but Sen has also shown us the need for a much broader understanding of the causes of famine. In particular, he has stressed the empirical observation that ‘no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press’ (p. 152). According to Sen, there are two main reasons for this. First, democracy provides the political incentives to try to

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10 In this respect too, Sen relates his work to the views of Adam Smith, who did not hesitate to propose restrictions in order to regulate the market (p. 124).

11 An extensive account of this work can be found in Sen (1981) and Drèze and Sen (1989).
prevent any threatening famine, and, second, a free press contributes to establishing the information relevant to famine prevention.

The fact that political freedom may enhance economic freedom for the poor is of course not a new notion in political economy, and the key role of the media in informing the electorate has long been recognised within political science. Hence, the most important part of Sen’s contribution in this respect is the precise empirical content of his argument, and the fact that this observation – as an early contribution to modern political economy – made economists and other social scientists again aware of the need to broaden their analyses of famines in particular and distributive issues more generally. This message has been taken into account in much recent work within the field of political economy, even though there is still little attention paid to the exact role of the news media in influencing policy (an exception being the interesting study of government responsiveness in India by Besley and Burgess (2000)).

Another important interconnection explored by Sen is the link between women’s freedom (in different dimensions) and development. We have already mentioned the importance of studying gender inequality from the capability perspective in order to capture the enormous inequalities in well-being between males and females in some countries. But Sen is also concerned with another aspect of women’s situation, namely that of women as ‘dynamic promoters of social transformation that can alter the lives of both women and men’ (p. 189). In order to analyse this, Sen makes the distinction between the well-being aspect and the textit agency aspect of a person, where the agency role aspect is based on a recognition of people as responsible: ‘not only are we well or ill, but also we act or refuse to act, and can choose to act one way rather than another’ (p. 190).\footnote{For an extensive general discussion of the underlying philosophical distinction between these two aspects, see Sen (1985).}

In Development as Freedom, Sen discusses a number of different implications following from adding voice to women’s voice and agency. Let me provide some examples. First, he points to the rather immediate interconnections between different dimensions of a woman’s freedom, as, for example, the way in which being enabled to find employment outside home or ownership rights may enhance a woman’s social standing in both the household and society. Second, he stresses that women’s empowerment tends to reduce mortality rates, gender bias among children, and fertility rates. Third, he argues
that there are interesting statistical findings indicating that women’s participation in social life might reduce the incidence of violent crime in society. In sum, he argues that:

The extensive reach of women’s agency is one of the more neglected areas of development studies, and most urgently in need of correction. Nothing, arguably, is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women. This is indeed a crucial aspect of ‘development as freedom’ (p. 203).

There is no doubt that Sen’s work on the situation of women has been a vital correction to the conventional thinking on development, as the vast literature initiated by his thinking on these issues also proves. But it is also important to recognise that many of the agency aspects analysed by Sen can be fruitfully explored within the framework of modern economic theory. The literature on gender divisions within the family as a ‘bargaining problem’ is a case in point, as is the statistical study of Murthi, Guio and Drèze (1995), discussed extensively by Sen. This is not to say that everything of interest on women’s agency can be captured by economic reasoning. For example, economic theory is not well suited to deal with how women’s agency influences value formation within the family and in society more generally, and hence there is undoubtedly a need for a many-sided approach to this crucial issue. Within this broader framework, though, I believe that economic reasoning will play an essential role in explaining how the empowerment of women can contribute to development.

Sen discusses a number of other interesting empirical interconnections in Development as Freedom. He looks at how social opportunity has enhanced economic development in parts of East Asia, how essential interconnections between literacy, health and land distribution have established protective security in Kerala, how the absence of transparency freedom played an essential role in the emergence of the Asian financial crisis, and so on. It is beyond the scope of this article to consider all the contributions Sen has made, and hence I should like to end this section by considering another main message that Sen sees emerging from his empirical work. Based on an understanding of the broad set of interconnections between different individual freedoms, which are established and shaped by the choice of institutions in society, he argues that there is a great need for an integrated approach to development analysis:
To see development as freedom provides a perspective in which institutional assessment can systematically occur.

Even though different commentators have chosen to focus on particular institutions (such as the market, or the democratic system, or the media, or the public distribution system), we have to view them together, to be able to see what they can or cannot do in combination with other institutions. It is in this integrated perspective that the different institutions can be reasonably assessed and examined (p. 142).

It is undoubtedly important to have in mind the need for an integrated view when studying the organisation of society, but we should also be aware of its limitations as a framework for research. By trying to capture ‘everything’, we might find it hard to establish anything with any real precision. Of course, Sen has for a long time stressed (more generally) that it is better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong (see for example Sen, 1987: 34). True enough, but it is also much better to be (if possible) precisely right than vaguely wrong. And that is why economists often choose to narrow their framework. By considering a part of the overall problem, we might be able to draw some firm conclusions and reject some initial vague thoughts. In doing this, we may easily forget the need for interpreting our results in a broader integrated context, and Sen’s message is important in that respect. But the piecemeal approach to research (which of course Sen has followed on many occasions) also has advantages that should be taken into account when undertaking development analysis.

5. Concluding Remarks
Sen has a vision of how modern science can be used to overcome the many challenges facing the modern world of today, and this vision is beautifully outlined in textit Development as Freedom. Sen believes in reasoned social progress, where our choices are based on reasons that identify and promote better and more acceptable societies. He suggests that the concept of human freedom should be the organising principle of such an approach, and illustrates how this framework can improve the development debate in many important ways.

Economists have much to learn from Sen’s vision. But as an economist I should also like to stress the importance of recognising that economic theory and economic research are essential parts of Sen’s framework. Sen has broadened our understanding of how to
undertake descriptive, positive and normative analysis, and by doing this he has enriched – but not at all abandoned – economics. He has also shown economists the importance of an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to development. I believe, however, it is equally important that non-economists pursue the many contributions within economics underlying the discussion in Development as Freedom. It is only by a broad recognition of the importance of interdisciplinary reasoning that we can really recognise the value of considering development as the expansion of human freedom.

References
The application of a gender perspective in the analysis of different stages of conflict has been limited. One of the main consequences of this is that women’s experiences, knowledge and efforts to a large extent have been left out. The prevailing understanding of conflicts, conflict prevention and transitions from war to peace is therefore mainly based on male premises.

The contributors to this volume come from a variety of academic disciplines: anthropology, sociology, political science, philosophy and education. Represented is ethnographic work on the social consequences of warfare, and analyses that deconstruct concepts such as ‘security’, ‘war’, ‘peace’ and ‘citizenship’ to expose the gendered underpinnings informing theory. The arenas subject to analysis are military institutions, frontlines of war, feminist protest movements and community initiatives, to introduce just a few. A better understanding of the true nature of conflict is necessary in order to identify the potentials for reconstruction of war-torn societies.
On the Meaning of Development: An Exploration of the Capability Approach

1. Introduction

Why do we, time and again, return to the question: ‘what is development?’ I think we need to respond to the ‘why’ before we try once again to address the ‘what’. Put simply, it is the failure of what is generally regarded as ‘the development process’ to change the conditions of large numbers of people for the better that compels us to ponder the meaning of development. Indeed, we are grappling with a question that relates to value, and hidden in the apparently straightforward question of ‘what is development?’ is the question of what development ought to be. Many things going on in the world in general and the condition of being of millions of people in the so-called developing countries in particular make us wonder ‘is this development?’ The term ‘development’ implies improvement or positive qualitative change. In discussions on social change, it is often used to mean greater human freedoms and well-being. But in reality, the development process is uneven and conflict-ridden, with mixed consequences, and hence is not a harbinger of universal progress. On the one hand, there is accumulation of wealth and enhancement of freedoms and well-being, while on the other there is impoverishment, marginalisation, reinforcement of oppressive power structures, violations of human rights, the spread of destructive internal wars – which claim thousands of civilian lives, force millions out of their homes and produce an abominable gun culture which brutalises society – and environmental degradation which in many instances has contributed to dispossession and forced migration.

Indeed, the persistence of human deprivation is a major cause of disillusionment with development. This disillusionment is a result
of failed expectations. In other words, development was assumed to be a process that was directed or positively influenced by certain intentions but the outcomes of that process seemed to negate the assumption to a great degree in many situations.

As Cowen and Shenton (1996: viii) say:

It is the question ‘What is development?’ that makes the existence of intentions to develop obvious. This is so if only because responses to the question of development usually present an image of something created anew, or improved, or renewed, or of the unfolding of potential which has the capacity to exist but which presently does not do so.

But, does the development process have intentions? If it does, what are they and who are directing the process towards a realisation of these intentions? Cowen and Shenton are at pains to distinguish between intentional and immanent development. The latter refers to development as an objective process driven by an inner logic or dynamic. The former implies subjective action through policy to achieve a desired result. Cowen and Shenton point out that development studies ought to deal with both without conflating them and confusing one with the other. They argue that intentional development ‘consists of the means to compensate for the destructive propensities of immanent change’ (ibid.: 438). They remind us that in Europe the harsh social consequences of immanent development compelled individuals and organisations to demand public intervention to provide social security for the marginalised, and that the scope of intentional development came to be defined more broadly as a result. The origins of current views and values of development in terms of poverty alleviation, social provisioning and enhancement of human well-being could be traced to this phase of Europe’s modernisation where the negative social effects of the growth of capital were being felt by large sections of the people. While ‘development of capitalism’ implied the workings of an immanent process, another meaning of development emerged through the demands of the proletarianised and the pauperised for better conditions in nineteenth-century Britain and France.¹ In post-war Western Europe,

¹ Cowen and Shenton (1996) provide an excellent survey of the ideas and movements of this period. See, also, Polanyi (1957) for a historical and political economic interpretation of industrialisation in Britain. Indeed, Polanyi’s work can be read as a treatise on the complex interconnections between immanent and intentional development in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western Europe. He pointed out that laissez-faire, subsidies, protective tariffs and social
social provisioning to promote human well-being came to be more explicitly articulated in public policy.

Thus Dudley Seers (1979) was also echoing the subjective concerns of another era in another part of the world when, appalled by the deprivation he saw in the third world, he questioned the meaning of development in his essay ‘The New Meaning of Development’. The question to ask about development, he wrote, is: what has been happening to poverty, to unemployment, and to inequality? If all three of these had become less severe during a given period, then beyond doubt it had been a period of development, whereas if one or more of these central problems had been growing worse it would be strange to call the result ‘development’ even if per-capita income had doubled. Viewed historically, Seers’s ‘new meaning of development’ amounted to a restatement of an older concern and concept. Seers’s sentiments came to be shared by various groups, especially by the critics of post-war mainstream development theory and by the advocates of development policies and planning premised on distributive values. The debates on development that went on in the post-colonial era led to a widespread consensus that development could be and should be planned and directed to achieve objectives such as growth and distribution. Development planning and dirigist policies enjoyed high status for over two decades after the Second World War in many countries of the ‘third world’. This trend was challenged in the 1970s by the new wave of economic liberalism unleashed on these countries by the Bretton Woods institutions. These countries were advised by the IMF and World Bank that they had failed to achieve development because of excessive state planning were enforced by the state at different times in nineteenth-century Britain (Shanmugaratnam, 1995). He discerned and exposed the processes that led to market regulation and policies of social security. This comes out most effectively in his discussion of the ‘double movement’ that governed the dynamics of modern society. This double movement was personified in the workings of two organising principles. One was economic liberalism seeking to establish a self-regulating market and the other was a countermovement aiming at social protection by checking the adverse human and environmental consequences of free-market forces. This countermovement was driven by collective actions on the part of workers demanding their rights, communities concerned about the environment and women fighting against sexual discrimination. The Western welfare state was an outcome of this process. However, state interventions were called for not only to protect society from the destructive consequences of the immanent forces of the free market but also to safeguard the interests of the capitalists themselves at various times. ‘Paradoxically enough,’ noted Polanyi (1957: 132), ‘not human beings and natural resources only but also the organization of capitalistic production itself had to be sheltered from the devastating effects of a self-regulating market.’
intervention and that the way out lay in freeing the economy from state control and letting free markets play their ‘natural’ role of generating development. The point the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) were making was that development defied planning, and the role of government was to create an environment that enabled it to happen through the immanent power of the self-regulating market. More than two decades have passed since the re-entry of liberal economic policies and we are still grappling with the basic questions raised by Seers. As we approached the end of the last century, the UNDP bemoaned the inequalities of the global order and the dangers of environmental degradation. The Human Development Report of 1998, while highlighting the achievements of the past, drew attention to the gaping inequalities in consumption and the social exclusion of millions of people.

In our times, one author who has consistently and cogently addressed development in relation to human well-being is Amartya Sen, whose contribution to the conceptual framework of UNDP’s annual Report on Human Development is well known. If concerned scholars like Seers brought human well-being back into debates on development theory and policy, Sen has reinforced its centrality by conceptualising it in terms of capability and by suggesting that development could be seen as a process of capability expansion. UNDP has played a major role in mainstreaming human development as a concept and popularising the capability approach. It deserves credit for providing us with updated indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI), Human Poverty Index (HPI) and Gender-related Development Index (GDI), and other valuable information including qualitative accounts of human deprivation and development. The aggregate indicators are helpful in forming an overview of trends in human development. However, they say practically nothing about intra-national differences in quality of health care and education and the substantive political freedoms and personal security enjoyed by diverse groups and individuals. The capability approach is helpful in going beyond these aggregates into the actual states of being of individuals and groups, and grasping the limits to quantifying the quality of life. This article critically explores Sen’s concept of development as a process of capability expansion and its differences with the currently dominant neoliberal approach. An attempt is made to indicate that a capability approach can be incorporated into a broader framework to interpret and evaluate social change and human well-being without fully subscribing to Sen’s Smithian position.
2. Development as Capability Expansion, as Emancipation

Sen has advocated in his various writings that *development is best seen as an expansion of people’s capabilities, as a process of emancipation from necessities that constrain fuller realisation of human freedoms* (Sen, 1984; 1988; 1992; 1993; 1999). This means that capabilities, not utilities as claimed by welfarists or primary goods as claimed by Rawls, are the basis for evaluation of human well-being. Put simply, a person’s capability refers to the freedom to achieve various lifestyles. Sen (1993: 31) defines capability in terms of an individual’s functionings:

*Functionings* represent parts of the state of a person – in particular the various things he or she manages to do or be in leading a life. The *capability* of a person reflects the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve and from which he or she can choose one collection. The approach is based on a view of living as a combination of various ‘doings and beings’, with quality of life to be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings.

Functionings can vary from such elementary matters as being well nourished, disease-free, safely sheltered and free from illiteracy to more complex doings or beings such as having self-respect, preserving human dignity, being free from stress, taking part in community life and political and social movements and so on.2 A person’s functionings depend on his or her personal characteristics (age and physical fitness, for example) and social and economic circumstances, which in turn are dependent on the nature of the larger political economic system as well as the power relations and rules and cultural codes of specific institutions such as family, caste, community and workplace. ‘The capability to achieve valuable functionings’ links the instrumental and constitutive roles of freedom in development. The constitutive role relates to the primary end, i.e. the substantive freedoms experienced (which may range from basic capabilities such as being able to avoid deprivations such as starvation and premature mortality to freedoms that are associated with being literate, political participation and uncensored speech). It signifies the intrinsic importance of human freedom as the preeminent objective of development. The instrumental role relates to the means of development, i.e. the entitlements that enable the

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achievement of valuable functionings. Expansion of freedom is both the primary end and principal means of development, and the informational base for evaluation of well-being consists of capabilities.

Sen (1999) identifies five instrumental freedoms: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. These complement one another and contribute to the positive freedom of the individual to make choices and live more freely. All these instrumental freedoms have to be taken into consideration when the problem of inequality is addressed. For instance, equality in political freedoms, with serious inequalities in economic facilities and social opportunities and without protective security, would lead to inequalities in well-being and to deprivations for many. Further, the distributional problem has to be addressed with reference to the distribution of these means as well as that of capabilities across all social divisions. Individuals belonging to groups that are subject to institutionalised discrimination on grounds of class, race, ethnicity, caste or gender would always be disadvantaged in the choices they have and the functionings they actually enjoy. Differences in personal characteristics make human beings so diverse that equality in particular means, such as income or poverty alleviation entitlement, between two persons may translate into inequality in basic capability if one of them suffers from a disability or has a personal condition that requires more of the same means to achieve a level of well-being comparable to that of the other. Hence the need to insist on the importance of capability as the end, as the freedom actually enjoyed. Moreover, the distributional challenge is not always about equality per se but about real options to choose and live the functionings one has reason to value.

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3 This theme is addressed in great detail in Sen (1992) where utilitarian and libertarian conceptions of equality are critically examined. While giving credit to Rawls for his contribution, Sen argues that by concentrating on the means to freedom (primary goods) rather than on the extent of freedom achieved, Rawls’s theory of a just basic structure of the society has stopped short of paying adequate attention to freedom as such. ‘A person less able or gifted in using primary goods to secure freedoms (e.g. because of physical, mental disability, or varying proneness to illness, or biological or conventional constraints related to gender) is disadvantaged compared with another more favourably placed in that respect even if both have the same bundle of primary goods. A theory of justice…must take adequate notice of that difference’ (Sen, 1992: 148).

4 In the real world, equality in one respect may often mean inequality in some others. ‘Since all equalities,’ notes Cohen (1993: 2159), ‘generate companion inequalities, we have to decide which ones to combat and which to tolerate. Persistence of inequalities that lead to deprivation and capability failure and to denial of opportunities for capability expansion is clearly a sign of an unfair social order. The liberal notion of equality of political liberties cannot help over-
The relationship between freedom and well-being is not free of conflict. Sen (1987; 1992) introduces the important distinction between well-being freedom and agency freedom to show how the latter may adversely affect the former. As an agent a person may have reasons to pursue a goal that serves a larger cause and in that pursuit may sacrifice her own well-being. The larger cause may be national liberation, elimination of discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, caste or gender, or humanitarian service to the poor and needy, for example. The two freedoms, though clearly distinguishable, are interrelated. Individual well-being is generally the primary focus of analysis of social inequality and assessment of policy but the agency aspect remains relevant to a more complete understanding of human values and motivations.

The paradigmatic significance of the capability approach lies greatly in the linkages it establishes between freedoms as both means and ends of development and the emphasis it puts on ethical values and social justice in building an acceptable society. From a capability perspective the answer to a question such as ‘are democratic freedoms conducive to development?’ would be a definitive yes. Expansion of the economy is not accorded a privileged position at the expense of political rights or the entitlements of the poor. The existence of political freedoms can contribute positively to economic growth and the latter does not make sense without the widest possible participation of the people, i.e. without a fair distribution of economic facilities so as to enable people to acquire command over goods. A more equal distribution of social opportunities (health care, education and skill development, for example) without gender, ethnic, caste and urban–rural biases would enable larger sections of society to achieve upward mobility. Transparency guarantees through trust and openness (social capital) in social relations would promote a better social order and facilitate economic and non-economic transactions. Protective security for the poor in the form of social safety nets could help avoid vulnerability and deprivation. The instrumental freedoms are mutually supportive and together they serve the achievement and enhancement of valuable functionings. They are part of the means to promote an intentional development that results in more people achieving valuable functionings.

Sen sees development as freedom from necessity. Indeed, he uses Marx’s words to underline his point: ‘replacing the domination come such inequalities without effective reforms or transformation of the structures that perpetuate them. Such changes are more often than not caused by sustained political struggles.'
of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance’ (Sen 1984: 497) and invokes on more than one occasion Marx’s famous image of development as human freedom which ‘makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter, shepherd or critic’ (ibid.: 497; Sen, 1992: 41). According to the capability approach, an expansion of the economy without an expansion of human capabilities is not development, and we may argue that there is negative development when policies contribute to capability failures for some sections of society. The approach shifts the focus of analysis from means to the relations between means and ends, and to an assessment of the ends in terms of human well-being. More significantly, since the concept of capability encompasses human freedoms, the political and cultural dimensions are internal to the assessment. Consequently, capability failure includes deprivations that are economic, political, cultural and psychological. All this has major implications for evaluation of well-being as its informational base is more inclusive than that of utilitarianism or libertarianism. Indicators such as life expectancy at birth and rates of literacy and infant mortality, which are among the key elements of the informational basis of quantifying human development, capture some important basic capabilities. However, the informational base of the capability approach is wider, given the range of freedoms considered. Further, since not all functionings can easily or fully be expressed in numbers (as for example being free from different types of harassment and discrimination), more comprehensive evaluative judgements may involve combinations of quantitative and qualitative variables. Another important shortcoming of the existing indicators of human development and deprivation is that they do not adequately reflect people’s own perceptions of well-being. If my concern is about functionings that a person has reasons to value, then I must know her own valuation of the living she has. This further reinforces the need to broaden the informational base.

The approach also implies the existence of strong intentions in the development process. In other words, it suggests that the process

5 Of course, this imagery was reserved by Marx to depict the emancipated individual in his classless society of abundance in which the distinction between mental and manual labour had vanished. The point Sen seems to want to make by quoting Marx’s words is that human freedom expands with the continuous expansion of human capability and the individual achieves all-round development.
needs to be democratically governed to promote expansion and avoid failure of capabilities. In this regard, political freedoms make sense as people’s entitlements only where the people are actually able (in the sense that they are free and well enough informed) to participate in political decision-making at different levels and to give expression to their economic and other needs. Such participation is a necessary condition for policy-makers to comprehend and conceptualise people’s needs in a heterogeneous society and not to take preferences as ‘given’.

Sen has been criticised for concentrating mainly on positive freedom and failing to pay adequate attention to negative freedom and for not being specific enough beyond basic capabilities about the other functionings that constitute the ‘good life’ he speaks of (Qizilbash, 1996; Nussbaum, 1995). It has been suggested that Sen’s concern to accommodate pluralism in people’s views of valuable functionings or good life has led him to ‘a version of the capability approach which leaves the nature of the good life largely undetermined’ (Qizilbash, 1996:144). Sen dealt with negative freedom in his earlier writings (1970; 1984; 1992) and returned to the whole question of freedoms in Development as Freedom (1999), where he reiterates and argues most explicitly about freedoms as both means and ends (as discussed above) while also relating them to controversies over cultural values. However, the capability approach is about positive freedom, about the power to choose valuable functionings. Negative freedom is about not being interfered with when a person chooses to do something. This is important, indeed, but by itself it may not enable a person to avoid capability failure or to choose and achieve a valuable functioning. Further, as observed by Nussbaum, ‘some policies of non-interference may actually extinguish human freedom to choose what is valuable’ (cited in Crocker, 1995: 183).

I think Sen has chosen to stick to his commitment to pluralism while elaborating his liberal perspective of freedom as an alternative to utilitarian and libertarian approaches. One may be justified in criticising Sen for not going beyond this and projecting a vision of an alternative social order to capitalism, given his explicit allegiance to Marx’s idea of human development. However, Sen has chosen

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6 Positive freedom may be defined as the capability to achieve various alternative combinations of functionings. A person is negatively free when she or he is not being interfered with by others – whether persons, governments or institutions (Crocker, 1995).
to show how freedoms can be increased in a capitalist system and how markets and public action could promote them. He cites Smith and Marx in support of his vision, while drawing more specifically on the writings of the former to show that a liberal economic approach is compatible with public action to provide protective security to the poor and free or cheaper education to all. Over time, Sen’s development thinking has gained a strong Smithian character as admitted by Sen himself in *Development as Freedom*, in which his liberal perspective finds its most holistic expression. Marx regarded the capitalist mode of production (CMP) to be a universally progressive Promethean force that served to unleash the human productive potential by freeing individuals from pre-capitalist forms of bondage, drawing them into capitalist relations of production and linking them to an international economic order. However, such a teleological vision of the CMP did not prevent him from showing moral indignation at the miseries suffered by workers and broader masses of people as capital expanded, or from forming workers’ political organisations for collective action. Moreover, in Marx’s view, this development of human productive capacity (human capital, in current parlance) takes place within a realm of necessity where the propertyless worker is dependent on selling his labour power to owners of capital, a relationship that is accompanied by alienation and fragmentation of the human personality.7 Given Marx’s theoretical scheme, any intentional development that takes place in the political economic order of the CMP is subordinated to immanent development, i.e. to the inherent (internal) dynamic that drives the expansion of capital through class conflict and competitive profit-seeking. He believed that the development of capitalism would create the preconditions for the all-round development of the individual but the realisation of the latter presupposed the end of class conflict and alienation.

The writings of Sen clearly show that he believes that more freedom from necessity could be achieved within the existing order through appropriate policies and reforms that enable the expansion

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7 Regarding necessity, Marx recognised the absolute dependence of humans on nature and believed that ‘the true realm of freedom…can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis’. His idea of freedom in relation to nature is that of ‘associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature and bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by the blind forces of nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to and worthy of their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity’ (Marx, Vol. III, 1959: 820).
of human capabilities. I think it would be fair to assert that Sen’s view of capitalism is based neither on an abstract notion of immanent laws that drive the mode of production nor on the widely-held belief among ‘normal’ economists that overall economic and social progress is an ‘unintended’ outcome of the pursuit of self-interest by rational individuals, i.e. immanent development again. ‘Indeed, to see capitalism as nothing other than a system based on conglomeration of greedy behaviour,’ writes Sen, ‘is to underestimate vastly the ethics of capitalism, which has richly contributed to its redoubtable achievements’ (1999: 262). He deals with the ethical, institutional and behavioural aspects of capitalism with reference to his central idea of ‘reasoned social progress’. He launches an attack on the interpretations of ‘unintended consequences’ by Menger and Hayek and makes the point that unintended consequences need not be unpredictable. His critique of Menger and Hayek was also intended as another way of understanding Smith’s view of self-interested behaviour. Sen goes on to defend ‘reasoned attempts to bring about social changes’ and ‘intentional advancement’ (ibid.: 254–255). The instrumental role of freedoms in ‘using reason to identify and promote better and more acceptable societies’ becomes more explicit in his discussion on social choice and individual behaviour. A key point that emerges from this discussion is that preference formation can be socialised to a great extent with broader informational bases, appropriate ethical values and social norms and public discussion. In other words, in a freer, better-informed and ethically grounded society, public policy can be shaped in ways that enable capability expansion for all. Here we have a vision of development that calls for a rethinking of the roles of and the relations between the state, markets and civil society. The position chosen by Sen on this complex question is one of pragmatism based on historical experience and a broader perspective of public action to include not only what the state does for the public but also what the public does for itself through actions such as demanding remedial measures and accountability from government. With such a broader perspective, Sen brings collective action by civil society bodies into the realm of public action. Further, he argues that the lessons of empirical experiences call for a focus on the complementarity rather than the ideological confrontation between the state and the market. Thus public action can also be seen as playing a role of cementing this complementarity.

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This pragmatism may be contrasted with the reductionist market fundamentalism of the neoliberal Washington Consensus that emerged in the early 1980s. Moreover, the process through which the Washington Consensus was created had little in common with Sen’s call for wider participation in policy-making. The ‘Consensus’ was not an outcome of public discussions on the economic, political and moral issues and priorities of development. According to John Williamson, who coined the term, the Washington Consensus represented ‘the common core of wisdom embraced by all serious economists’ (Williamson, 1993: 1334). However, in practice, elements of Sen’s pragmatism may be used by technocrats to give a more acceptable form to a neoliberal policy. The search for a ‘post-Washington Consensus’ paradigm (after cracks became apparent in the ‘wisdom embraced by all serious economists’) has led to a new interest in ‘equitable, sustainable and democratic development’, and this tendency may find common ground with the capability concept’s emphasis on freedom of choice (Gore, 2000). Sen’s Smithian restatement of individual well-being and freedom can be adapted by neoliberals to interpret public action to enhance human well-being in terms of a limited role for the state and a larger role for civil society in decentralised and ‘participatory’ development without significantly altering the relations of inequality in the distribution of productive assets. While Sen may regard land reform as an essential element of the non-market facilities that enable wider and more gainful participation of farmers in the market economy, the neoliberals would prefer land reform to be market-led. Further, many NGOs (including social movements) in developing countries have been co-opted as civil society partners of the state and the business sector in local development with financial aid from the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral agencies. Such co-optation, while subserving the fabrication of a ‘neoliberal populism’, has always entailed compromises and even total abandonment of the values of autonomy and alternative development that originally inspired some of these organisations. It would seem that the purpose of such ‘mainstreaming’ of local ‘community-based’ development is to reconstitute the local in ideological and political–economic terms to enable its integration into the global order.

However, it appeared that the World Bank was paying special attention to the views of Sen in the 1990s. This became more evident when he was invited to give lectures on development as a Presi-

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9 The term ‘neoliberal populism’ is from Gore (2000).
On the Meaning of Development: An Exploration of the Capability Approach

Differential Fellow of the Bank in the fall of 1996. Development as Freedom is based on these lectures. It also appeared that the work on the World Development Report 2000–2001 (WDR 2000–2001) on ‘Attacking Poverty’ drew inspiration from Sen’s concept of development. The preparation of the Report involved many commissioned studies and a large number of consultations with civil society groups and individuals in different parts of the world. It looked as though an exercise was underway to formulate a broad strategy with due consideration for the views of the poor and organisations that worked with or among them. However, the controversies within the World Bank over WDR 2000–2001 and the compromises made in the final Report revealed the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism and the power wielded by the US Treasury over the affairs of the Bank (Wade, 2001). The sudden departure in November 1999 of Stiglitz, who was openly critical of the IMF’s handling of the 1997–98 East Asian crisis, from the Bank where he was Chief Economist and Vice-President, and the resignation of Kanbur in May 2000 as Director of the WDR 2000–2001 team exposed the internal contradictions in the Bank and the role of the US Treasury.10 Wade (ibid.: 131) points out that the draft Report for which Kanbur was responsible ‘contained much that was anathema to Treasury thinking’ and that the section on ‘empowering the impoverished’ was highly controversial and drew strong criticism from some leading economists within and outside the Bank. Apparently, Kanbur and his team had stressed empowerment, security and opportunity in that order as the key ingredients of the strategy to attack poverty and also argued that effective safety nets should be in place before free-market reforms were implemented, so that the losers created by the reforms had something to fall back on. This ordering (or precondition) was not to the liking of the critics who believed that social safety nets should be established simultaneously with market reforms (Wade, 2001). In a recent intervention, Kanbur himself has set out the disagreements and explained them as products of different perspectives and frameworks with reference to aggregation, time-horizon and market structure (Kanbur, 2001). He divides those who had disagreements on these three aspects into two groups: ‘Finance Ministry’ (Group A), which included economic analysts and managers in finance ministries and IFIs, and mainstream academic economists; and ‘Civil Society’ (Group B), which included analysts from and members of advocacy groups and NGOs, and some from UN agen-

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10 See Wade (2001) for details of the intriguing politics behind these resignations.
cies and aid ministries in the North and social-sector ministries in the South. It emerges from Kanbur’s discussion that the dominant view on poverty reduction within the World Bank was that of Group A, which had a strong allegiance to the conventional economic approach to growth and distribution, and that there was a need for institutions such as the Bank to become more receptive to alternative views on economic policy and to shift the intellectual frontier beyond conventional analysis. According to Wade, these economists (Kanbur’s Group A) were of the view that ‘the Bank should not be in the business of empowerment’ and the WDR 2000–2001 should not ‘pander to noisy and nosy NGOs’ (ibid.: 132). While belittling the possible role of civil society, this group is also paradigmatically committed to a minimal role for the state in human development. I think this amounts to a double attack on the broad and pragmatic idea of public action that Sen has been putting forward.

‘When the institution whose self-stated mission it is to eradicate poverty,’ concludes Kanbur, ‘can only hold its Annual Meetings under siege from those who believe its mission is to further the cause of the rich and the powerful, there is clearly a gap to be bridged’ (Kanbur, 2001: 1093). How bridgeable is the gap? This is a question worth debating. Be that as it may, it would seem that Sen’s intellectual intervention through lectures and consultations did open up some space in the World Bank for reflection on development policy beyond the Washington Consensus but did not succeed in opening up the minds of key officials to his holistic and liberal idea of development as freedom. More importantly, no serious analyst can ignore the hegemony to which the Bank is subject. Wade, a former employee of the Bank, puts it well: ‘The Bank has been an especially useful instrument for projecting American influence in developing countries, and one over which the US maintains discreet but firm institutional control’ (Wade, 2001: 127). Thus the controversy over ‘Attacking Poverty’ was more than an episode about disagreements between groups holding different views. It was yet another instance of the US’s power over important multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. It adds to the existing evidence that contradicts the World Bank’s claim to autonomy.11

11 See Wade (1996) for another study that documents ‘the determining importance of American values and interests in the functioning of the Bank’ and ‘how the Bank forms part of the external infrastructural power of the US state, even though it by no means bows to every demand of the US governments (pp. 35–36).
The case of the World Bank has been highlighted because of Sen’s association with it at policy-level discussions. Irrespective of Sen’s own views of this IFI, we have learnt that it is not in a position to be a bearer and practitioner of his message of ‘intentional advancement’ of human capabilities. Indeed, in the current global context all IFIs are practitioners of top-down policies that enable maximum possible freedom for capital at the expense of labour and the environment. For nearly two decades, they have been busy imposing reforms on national states in the South to create an environment that is friendly to the free market. A widespread tendency today is the informalisation (which in effect is atomisation) and feminisation of labour, which has given a free hand to capital to violate minimum-wage regulations and practise discrimination against women workers. A question that may be posed from a capability perspective is how friendly these market reforms are to the human freedoms that Sen advocates.

3. Market and Human Freedom

On the role of markets in promoting freedom, Sen’s concern seems to be to reclaim the forgotten heritage of the market mechanism as a means of freeing people from the pre-capitalist bondage that condemned them to a subhuman life of unfreedom as, for example, in the case of bonded labour in India. ‘One of the biggest changes in the process of development,’ Sen writes, ‘involves the replacement of bonded labor and forced work, which characterize parts of many traditional agricultures, with a system of free labor contract and unrestrained physical movement’ (Sen, 1999: 28). Neoclassical economists are so preoccupied with the utility and efficiency argument in favour of free markets that they fail to remember that the classical liberal principles espoused by Smith and Ricardo were not economic principles in the first place but ‘an application to economics of principles that were thought to apply to a much wider field’ (Hicks, 1981, cited in Sen, 1999: 28). Sen also draws support from Marx’s favourable views on the anti-feudal role of capitalism and its liberative potential. However, the market is a part of the means of development and whether it should be free, regulated or avoided has to be seen with reference to how best it can serve along with other means the goal of promoting human capabilities. Freedom of exchange is a basic freedom indeed, but so is the freedom from the harsh consequences of market uncertainties.

Freedom from coercion in the workplace is achievable in a
market economy but it is not necessarily an automatic outcome of production becoming market-oriented or bondage being legally abolished. In many parts of the developing world, proletarianisation in the Marxist sense of achieving freedom from extra-economic coercion is long drawn-out and often blocked. Historically, capitalism had a long association with repressive forms of labour relations and the experiences of the industrialised countries have clearly shown that organised collective action by workers played a major role in achieving more democratic employment conditions, social security and political freedoms. That is, the struggles of the workers were not only for freedom from coercive controls but also for social security and other rights. Market does not seem to have any innate power to transform entrenched repressive structures of economic relations. On the other hand, it may well serve to adapt older structures to new needs of capital accumulation without altering the repressive elements in them. In fact, the repressive elements provide the means to over-exploit labour. Studies on bonded labour (debt slavery) in different parts of India have shown how this oppressive form of production relations is being used to raise profit and accumulate capital (Kapadia, 1995; Lerche, 1995; Patnaik and Dingwaney, eds, 1985).

Bonded labour was legally abolished in India in 1973 but it continues to be used in various market-oriented productive activities from farming to brick production and gem-cutting. In a study of bonded labour in the gem-cutting industry in Tamil Nadu, Kapadia argued that this form of labour was not ‘pre-capitalist’ but a part of a dynamic capitalist small-scale industry that was rapidly expanding into global markets. The workers in this industry were debt slaves. The workshop owners gave loans to them in order to control and to cheapen labour. Debt bondage is a system in which the workers worked to pay back their loans to the workshop owner rather than to earn a wage (Kapadia, 1995). Market integration and the law against bonded labour notwithstanding, the production relations remained unfree. Of course, the legal abolition of bondage was a positive step but more action seems to be needed to eliminate debt slavery as a practice. There are no convincing signs that the ongoing neoliberal market reforms would liberate those who are trapped in debt bondage or in other forms of unfree labour relations. In fact, the gem-cutting workshop owners did have the option of using free wage labour but they chose the cheaper, more profitable alternative of bonded labour. This and other situations of capital–labour relations (see below) suggest that macro-level market reforms do not neces-
sarily promote freer labour relations at the production level. Something more is needed and that something has to be more than mere legal reform.

Numerous other contemporary examples of repressive production relations can be cited from the ‘liberalising economies’ of the developing world. The sweatshops in ‘free-trade zones (FTZs) (and export-processing zones)’ producing textiles and other items for export in various parts of the South are living examples of capital–labour relations in which millions of people, mostly women, are employed under repressive conditions. The workers are denied the right to be unionised and are subjected to methods of supervision and control that are illegal in the industrial countries and outside the FTZs in many developing countries. The denial of trade union rights reduces the workers’ legal bargaining power to zero. The employers invoke the ‘free market’ argument to justify the wages they offer. Defenders of current neoliberal economic policies may argue that these women were not coerced to accept the terms of employment and that outside this choice they would be unemployed and poorer. Such reasoning, which can endlessly be extended to justify any form of unfree labour including slavery, is not compatible with the capability approach. For the critical point here is that these workers did not, in practice, have the freedom to choose a freer wage labour contract.

I remember hearing a leading defender of the neoliberal economic paradigm say on TV that the women employed in FTZs became empowered because they had their own income. It does not take much imagination to see that this view is a vulgarisation of the very idea of empowerment. True, the women have a source of income, but the more glaring truth is that they have been inserted into a repressive form of labour relations that denies them any right to demand a fairer contract. It can be argued that outside their wage relationship they are free persons. Aren’t they more fortunate than their unemployed sisters and brothers? From a capability perspective, this type of argument amounts to justifying forms of unfree employment relations. It actually is a defence of the ‘growth and accumulation first’ thesis which denies any space for expanding human freedoms through democratisation of capital–labour relations. Moreover, countries where such repressive labour relations exist have a poor record of human rights in general. Now the question arises again whether the market is the realm where initiatives for such

12 Around 27 million people are employed in these zones (Klein, 2000).
democratisation are taken in a developing capitalist society. Experience shows that, without collective political action by affected workers and their support groups, repressive labour relations may go on indefinitely. More often than not protests in FTZs are suppressed by the state on behalf of the employers.

Experiences of the European social democratic systems show that expansion of human capabilities was invariably accompanied by restrictions on the market realm by direct state intervention (Polanyi, 1957; Hirsch, 1977; Wolfe, 1989). Capability expansion in these societies was largely a direct and indirect outcome of political campaigns and struggles, which led to state interventions to regulate the market economy, institutionalise democratic rights and to ensure social security by extending public entitlements. In other words, the mobilisation and action of people as a collective agency contributed in a major way to enhancement of human well-being. In the decades after the Second World War, individual freedoms flourished more in non-economic fields such as politics, art, literature and other intellectual activities and in sexual standards than in the economy in Western Europe. Sen has not paid much attention to the historical and contemporary importance of political struggles for social security and other rights, although he advocates public action to provide protective security and social opportunities and is uncompromising on democratic freedoms. His discussions on the importance of political freedoms leave the role of struggles implicit. But his concept of capability should compel one to recognise more explicitly the role of political actions aimed at expanding rights and security.

Indeed, most of the instrumental freedoms advocated by Sen do not exist in many countries and they have to be fought for by the people. Sen does not delve into how these instrumental freedoms can be achieved where they do not exist. His lectures and advice to policy-makers were no doubt motivated by noble intentions. However, the freedoms he advocates as means and the human emancipation he envisions as end have to be rooted in the social and political processes in which people play their role as agents of change to institutionalise the means to expand their capabilities. Sen’s silence on this important dimension has been characterised as ‘intriguing’ by Patnaik who, while paying a glowing tribute to Sen for his original contributions to economics as a social science, notes that in his writings the ‘chain of causation underlying the phenomena he is talking about stops often at the immediately preceding link’ (Patnaik, 1998: 2859). The reason for this, Patnaik thinks, is epistemological since Sen works in the realm of moral philosophy, to which
social processes are external. Patnaik also speculates that Sen’s silence may be a tactical move ‘designed to garner support for the programme he is advocating’ (ibid.: 2859). Be that as it may, I think that the capability approach can be linked to social and political processes with the aid of a political economic framework and independent of Sen’s own views about the virtues of free markets. I shall return to this shortly.

4. Environment

Until recently, another significant omission from the writings on development by Sen and his co-workers has been the environment. However, other researchers have modified and extended Sen’s concept of entitlement to include command over environmental goods and services (Leach et al., 1999; Ruitenbeek, 1996). In Development as Freedom, Sen also refers to environmental issues and the usefulness of environmental values. More recently, Anand and Sen (2000) have made an attempt to apply the capability approach to sustainability. They critically adopt Solow’s capital-theoretic approach, which regards sustainability as a moral obligation of the present generation to future generations and argues that preserving the current economic opportunities for the future is the appropriate way to meet that obligation. According to this approach, the present generation ought to maintain a constant aggregate stock of capital (physical, human and natural) to be bequeathed to future generations. Since substitutability is assumed, the constancy of the aggregate stock of capital can be maintained as long as any loss of exhaustible natural resources is compensated by expanding the stock of reproducible forms of capital such as human-made capital (physical assets), human capital or renewable natural capital. This substitution principle applies to renewable resources as well, i.e. a particular type of renewable resource may be depleted to the point of extinction as long as the aggregate stock of capital is maintained constant.

Solow’s concept of sustainability has been labelled ‘very weak sustainability’ by critics who have drawn attention to complemen-

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13 Sen came under severe criticism from Anil Agarwal, who attacked him for being ‘insensitive’ to the ecological dimension of poverty and well-being. Choosing to launch his attack in the wake of Sen being awarded the Nobel Prize in 1998, Agarwal wrote that Sen became famous by exploring ‘economic poverty’ but, like other ‘poverty economists’, failed to understand ‘ecological poverty’ (Agarwal, 1998). Sen devotes a page to ‘Environment, Regulations and Values’ and touches upon the subject in several places in Development as Freedom.
tarity of resources and the non-substitutability of essential ecological processes and of the environmental services provided by nature (Turner, 1993). The environment, therefore, is not simply another form of capital that lends itself to perfect substitution by human-made capital or human capital. ‘Solow sustainability’ ignores thermodynamics and ecological theory. Anand and Sen (2000) seem to have chosen to ignore the political and ecological views of the critics and the improvements and alternatives put forward by other advocates of sustainability. However, they go further than Solow and focus on the importance of linking intergenerational justice to the intragenerational and sustainability to human development. This is to be expected given the value premise of the capability approach. They argue that human development should be seen as a major contribution to the achievement of sustainability. The human development approach is offered as a superior alternative to the World Bank’s approach of environmental protection through poverty alleviation. Human development ‘directly enhances the capability of people to lead worthwhile lives, so there are immediate gains in what is ultimately important, while safeguarding similar opportunities in the future’ (ibid.: 2038). They go on to assert that ‘any instrumental justification for human development is not gripped by some impersonal objective such as conserving the environment but relates concretely to people’s ability to generate for themselves the real opportunities of good living’ (ibid.: 2038–39).

Deep ecologists would dismiss the views of Anand and Sen as too shallow even by anthropocentric standards. Other environmentalists are likely to criticise them for ignoring ecological considerations and for their inability to go beyond a narrow economistic view of the environment. Anand and Sen are uncritical of the environmental damages caused by industrialisation, rich countries, rich consumers, and policies and practices that encourage resource extraction without concern for the environmental consequences. I think the capability approach should be and can be extended further to include environmental values. Human development should include not only the enhancement of environmental entitlements but also the internalisation of environmental values for people ‘to generate for themselves the real opportunities of good living’. Since interchange with nature is a necessity from which humans cannot ever be free, capability expansion towards greater human freedom can take place ‘only with

14 Space does not permit a detailed discussion of sustainability here. For a concise and critical review, see Turner (1993), Chapter 1.
this realm of necessity as its basis', to borrow a phrase from Marx. The significance of environmental quality as a public good and a universal condition for human well-being derives from this absolute dependence of life on nature.

5. Notes Toward a Political Economic Framework
The foregoing critical exploration of the capability approach shows that it can be adopted and adapted as a conceptual tool to interpret social change and to critique development policies. It is also evident that the approach should deal more explicitly with relations of power, conflicts and struggles at different levels from the local to the global. The concept of capability can be used to map, interpret and evaluate social change if it can be incorporated into a broad political economic framework that captures the dynamic institutional environments that determine or condition the endowment and entitlement statuses of individuals and thereby the functionings they actually achieve. It is beyond the scope of the present article to develop such a comprehensive framework. An attempt is made, however, to identify some of the main elements of it. The reader is referred to Figure 1 in the Appendix for a diagrammatic presentation of a framework.

- Global–national interaction and the internal peculiarities of the national political economy: The national is reciprocally linked to the global and reproduced through this interaction. However, the national embodies historically evolved power structures and political economic and cultural characteristics that distinguish its location in the global. The openness or otherwise of the political system and of development policies and practices is a primary

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16 Entitlements in a broader sense than originally defined by Sen (1981) in rather narrow legalistic terms of command over commodities. In formal terms, the entitlement set of a person consists of all the possible combinations of goods (commodities and non-commodities) that a person can acquire in legitimate ways by using the resources of the endowment set (which consists of tangible assets, labour power including knowledge and skills, and accessible social capital) and, wherever applicable, the public assistance received, and the civil rights guaranteed by the state. Sen’s concept of entitlement has been criticised for its narrow legalistic premise by Gore, who argues for a broader view of the rules of entitlement by incorporating non-governmental sites of rule-making and rule-enforcing. This broadening of the scope of the concept internalises the interplay between state-enforced legal rules and socially enforced moral rules and shows how it constrains and enables command over commodities (Gore, 1993).
focus in order to identify and assess the instrumental freedoms that exist. In this regard, the openness and performance of the economy has to be seen in conjunction with the positive and negative social and environmental consequences of the freedom granted to capital by economic reforms. This is also connected to regulations concerning minimum wages, occupational safety, non-discrimination, and environmental quality. Another critical question is that of the causes and consequences of internal wars, where they exist. Here, there is a need in many situations to understand how distributional conflicts often acquire ethnic, religious and regional characteristics, and real and imagined discrimination based on these divisions, and finally turn into armed conflicts, which through their cumulative destructive effects cause deprivations and capability failures for many (Shanmugaratnam, 2001).

Institutional environments at meso and local levels: These levels need to be carefully mapped with reference to power structures, ethnicity, instrumental freedoms, state-markets–civil society relations, and bio-physical resources, in order to capture the social and environmental heterogeneities, distributional conflicts and political struggles on different sites within the national political economy. Such mapping would also capture the specifics of civil society as an arena of conflicting interests. A detailed mapping of the local context with reference to the availability, quality and distribution of productive assets, educational and health facilities, employment opportunities, gender relations, social capital, peace and personal security is necessary to obtain a broad informational base to interpret and evaluate social change and social well-being.

Broadened informational base to evaluate individual well-being: As already noted, the development indicators we have at present do not capture several aspects of quality of life. More information is needed on the quality of the health care, education and environment and on the freedoms actually enjoyed by individuals to express their views, move around without fear of harassment and to choose and practice the lifestyles they have reasons to value. The information should also include a person’s self-evaluation of well-being. Such broadening of the informational base demands more resources including professional skills. These constraints are serious indeed, especially in the South. However that is the direction in which an enquiry into human well-being should move in the future.
6. Concluding Remarks

Human well-being remains a recurrent theme in debates on the meaning of development and the purpose of development policy. Sen has reinforced the importance of human well-being by conceptualising it in terms of capability and by suggesting that development may best be seen as a process of expansion of capabilities. This article has explored critically Sen’s capability approach, paying special attention to the paradigmatic significance that lies in the links it establishes between freedoms as the means and end of development. This idea of development implies that the process needs to be appropriately governed to promote expansion and avoid failure of capability. The article has highlighted the limitations of the currently dominant neoliberal paradigm in enabling capability expansion. At the policy level, a strong ideological commitment to the market mechanism may lead to weakening or denial of democratic rights to workers: for instance, the right to form trade unions or to take collective action to defend their interests and to achieve valuable functionings. It may also restrict the role of public action in promoting capability expansion. Further, there is no reason to assume that the neoliberal approach by itself could create adequate spaces in civil society for the poor and disadvantaged groups to achieve the freedoms they desire. It may reinforce existing inequalities and contribute to new inequalities in access to resources and power. It tends to promote disparities in the quality of entitlements such as health care and education. In arguing for a capability approach, Sen has generally targeted national and international policy-makers and donors and paid less attention to the importance of people’s political struggles for social security and freedom. The concept of capability has value as a tool in mapping and interpreting social change if it can be incorporated into a broader political economic framework and if the informational base can be expanded to include more aspects of people’s livings and perceptions of their own well-being. Towards this, the present study has identified some key elements.

References


Appendix

Figure 1. Endowment–Entitlement–Capability Relations
(Shanmugaratnam, 1999)

Global Political Economy

Macro Political Economy
Political system: state, power structures & political freedoms; economy & distribution of resources; economic & social policies (instrumental freedoms)

Meso and local contexts: power structures (class, gender, ethnicity, caste – property rights) state-market-community

Endowments
- Material means of production
- Labour power: knowledge & employable skills
- Accessible social capital: formal & informal associations; networks

Entitlements
- Production
- Exchange
- Public
- Civil
  - Health care
  - Education
  - Environmental
  - Human rights incl. gender equality & personal security

Functionings
- Command over goods and services
- Freedoms

Political, legal & security environment
Infrastructure
Markets
Information
Intrahousehold rules/norms
Environmental values & ecological factors

NGOs, CBOs
Social networks

Capabilities

Figure 1. Endowment–Entitlement–Capability Relations
(Shanmugaratnam, 1999)
The State We’re In: Recent Contributions to the Debate on State-Society Relations in Africa

Stein Sundstøl Eriksen

1. Introduction

In the early 1990s, there was an optimism about Africa not seen since the early years of independence. The end of the Cold War, economic liberalisation, the introduction of democracy in a number of countries and the fall of apartheid in South Africa generated widespread talk of an African renaissance. In the last few years, however, the hopes of an African renaissance seem again to have faded.

In this article I will discuss three different perspectives on political development in Africa in academic literature from the 1990s. The dominant perspective of the 1990s, underlying talk of the African renaissance, can be termed the civil society approach. I will therefore start the discussion by describing the main features of this approach. In addition, I will discuss two dissenting perspectives, which can be termed culturalist and political economy, respectively. Advocates of both these perspectives criticise the civil society approach and the analysis underlying the belief in an African renaissance. The discussion focuses on two representatives of each perspective. As representatives of the civil society approach, I discuss Larry Diamond and Naomi Chazan. From what I call – in the absence of a better term – the culturalist school, I have chosen, first, Jean-Francois Bayart and, second, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz. Finally, the political economy approach is represented by Catherine Boone and Mahmood Mamdani.

Any such classification of schools of thought and selection of representatives will to some extent be arbitrary. Without doubt, I could have chosen other schools of thought, or other representatives of each school. Moreover, comparison of different theories and
approaches can be difficult, since different writers do not always address the same issues. To some extent therefore, their comparability is an analytical construct. However, I think that the contributions I have chosen have been among the most important and widely discussed from the last decade.

Following the above classification, the article has four parts, in addition to this introduction. In the first three parts, I review the selected contributions from each of the three broad perspectives. In the last, concluding section, I sum up the discussion, and point to some key issues which are left largely unanalysed by all the reviewed approaches.

2. The Civil Society Perspective

In an article in the *Journal of Modern African Studies* in 1990, which reviewed different perspectives on the African state, Martin Doornbos concluded by pointing out what he saw as a new trend, which had just started emerging (Doornbos, 1990). In contrast to other approaches, such as the modernisation school and dependency theory, this new trend drew attention to the non-state sphere in African countries.

It is interesting how yesterday’s innovations become today’s orthodoxies. Ten years after the publication of Doornbos’ article, it seems strange indeed that the focus on civil society and on non-state actors could appear as a novelty. If there has been a single dominant theme in the debate of the 1990s, it has been the role of civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Some of the representatives of the civil society perspective include Naomi Chazan, Larry Diamond, Michael Bratton, Goran Hyden, Donald Rotchild, Victor Azarya and John Harbeson. In this discussion, I will mainly use key contributions by Larry Diamond and Naomi Chazan (Diamond, 1988; Chazan, 1994). Both these authors are central contributors to this school of thought. Chazan has published several books and articles on the political development of Ghana as well as more general contributions on African political development. Diamond has been the leader of a series of research projects on democracy in the third world, with separate volumes published on Africa, Asia and Latin America. While he is not an ‘Africanist’ his contributions have been influential in African studies and in development studies more broadly.

Larry Diamond’s main aim is to explain the weakness of democratic regimes in Africa. The main obstacles to democratisation, he
argues, are the wide-ranging state regulations of and control over the economy. Due to its control over the main sources of wealth, the state has been able to prevent the emergence of a strong and autonomous bourgeoisie, separate from the state. The bourgeoisie is seen as the natural agent of democracy, both because the establishment of democracy is perceived to be in its interest, and because the values and liberal ideology associated with this class promote democracy. This, incidentally, is also the explanation favoured by both modernisation-theorists (such as Lipset), and by Barrington Moore in his book *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship* (Moore, 1966). It is summed up in Moore’s famous slogan, ‘No bourgeoisie, no democracy’.

A strong middle class, the argument goes, forms the basis of a strong civil society, and this is crucial for the functioning of liberal democracy. In the absence of such a class in Africa, the pressure for the expansion of democratic rights and the limitation of state power has been weak. This explains the weakness of democracy in Africa up until the 1990s.¹

The state, in short, is seen as the source of the problem, and it must be reformed in order to ‘liberate’ civil society from the stranglehold of regulation and inefficiency. It follows from this analysis that the solution to the problems experienced in Africa is liberal reforms of the type advocated by the World Bank. This would reduce the economic role of the state and remove the link between class formation and access to state resources. When such reforms are institutionalised, a strong and autonomous middle class will emerge, and this in turn will lead to pressure for democratisation.

Chazan, although her approach is similar to Diamond’s in many ways, does not focus on the relationship between the state and dominant classes. Instead, she focuses on the emergence of popular organisations. Like Diamond, Chazan believes that the prospects of democracy in Africa are quite bright. Unlike him, however, she does not mainly base her optimism on economic liberalisation, but on the emergence of a large number of voluntary associations. These associations, she hopes, will form the basis of an emerging civil society.

Chazan notes that not all voluntary associations are part of civil society. Civil society, she argues, is characterised by formal organisations, which are both independent from and directly related to the

¹ This is a point made by a number of scholars within the civil society perspective. See Bratton (1994) for a particularly clear statement.
state. Some of the associations found in Africa, however, do not confront – or even relate to – the state at all, and some are too parochial and particularistic to be considered part of civil society. What we see in Africa, therefore, is a nascent civil society, or a civil society in the making.

The emergence of voluntary organisations is partly seen as resulting from the rolling back of the state associated with neoliberalism, which has led to a kind of withdrawal of the state from many parts of society. The flourishing of associations, Chazan argues, is a reflection of the state’s curtailment of services, or what she calls its ‘dissociation from society’. The vacuum created by this disengagement has enabled private organisations to grow stronger. As the state has become unable or unwilling to provide services for its citizens, people have found other, private solutions. And once established, Chazan argues, these organisations will constitute an alternative site of power, independent from the state. They can then balance and limit the power of the state, and act as pressure groups for democratisation.

Both Diamond and Chazan focus on internal causes of political developments. In so far as they consider external factors, the focus is on how external support for political and economic reform can strengthen civil society and democracy. They view the character of the state as the main cause of economic decline and the prevalence of patrimonialism. The latter, they argue, is the result of excessive state regulation of the economy. Such regulation has meant that access to positions in the state has become the main means of economic accumulation. Those in control of the state have therefore used public resources for personal accumulation, thereby undermining both state capacity and economic development.

There are many objections that could be raised against this perspective. First, it relies on an oppositional model of state–society relations, similar to that of the old modernisation school of the 1960s. This interpretation does not address the fact that democratisation, as it has taken place in Africa, has rarely been the result of internal pressure from society. Instead, democracy has largely been introduced from ‘above’, through an alliance of state officials and international donors, perhaps influenced by ideologues such as Diamond.

At a more theoretical level, the unquestioned assumption concerning the role of the middle class in the promotion of democracy is far more complex than indicated here. As shown by Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) the working class is the class that most consistently favours democratisation, while the
attitude of the middle class towards democracy varies considerably.

Furthermore, those countries that have succeeded in late industrialisation have never been liberal and non-interventionist. Thus, in the only examples of late industrialisation since the Second World War, the so-called newly industrialised countries (NICs) in East Asia, the state has been far more activist and interventionist than the neoliberal model prescribes.²

The role of voluntary associations (NGOs) in democratisation is also much more ambiguous than this perspective allows for. NGOs are not always very democratic. Both their internal organisation and the means they adopt to acquire funding or solicit government support may in fact be quite undemocratic. Nor are they necessarily independent from the state. Indeed, the African experience shows that many of the organisations constituting Chazan’s flourishing civil society are not much more than consultancy firms, set up by people associated with – sometimes even employed by – the state, in order to gain access to donor funds earmarked for civil society and so-called grassroot organisations. In other words, they are neither as grassroot nor as non-governmental as they appear. Indeed, even the World Bank refers to many of them as GONGOs (government-organised NGOs) and even BONGOs (bank-organised NGOs). Since these new voluntary organisations are not always autonomous, they will not necessarily serve as a counterforce to the state and as a guarantee for democracy.

One example from my own research in Kigoma, Tanzania, may illustrate that actually existing voluntary organisations may not be quite the civil society idealised by Diamond and Chazan (Eriksen, 2000). As a result of the decline of police capacity to maintain law and order, local militias or defence teams, called sungusungu, were established in many parts of Tanzania. The stated aim of the sungusungu was to prevent crime. This was done by patrolling, investigating crimes, arresting criminals and punishing the culprits if and when they were caught.

The sungusungu in Kigoma shared offices with the ward administration, and cooperated with them in collecting bribes and using threats to force people to pay for their protection. Rather than challenging or confronting the state politically, the sungusungu competed with the corrupt police force for bribes, sometimes in collaboration with other government officials. In other words, the sungusungu are

² This latter point has now been acknowledged by liberals as well, even within the World Bank. See, for instance, World Development Report (1997).
neither independent of the government nor substantially different from it in their mode of operation.

Finally, at a normative level, Diamond’s and Chazan’s perspective represents a kind of teleological liberalism, in which a market economy and political democracy appear as the goals towards which all countries move. Any obstacles to this natural movement are understood as ‘blockages’, which hinder what would otherwise be the ‘natural’ course of development. Thus, it is presupposed that once state regulations have been removed, a new autonomous middle class and organisations independent of existing social structures will emerge spontaneously. In this sense, their perspective is a true heir to modernisation theory. What differs is merely the location of blockages. Whereas modernisation theorists saw ‘tradition’ and the primordial character of local institutions as the main block to ‘development’, civil society theorists see the state as the principal obstacle.

Curiously, however, the values ascribed to state and society respectively have been reversed. While modernisation theorists saw the state as a rational instrument of modernisation, and society as inherently ‘backward’ and ‘irrational’, the new civil society theorists advocate the mobilisation of civil society against the irrational and ineffective state. In both cases, however, state and society are seen as fundamentally opposed.

Whatever view one may take of the state, however, civil society is not a sphere of pure freedom, where power struggles and exploitation are absent. Suffice it here to mention the authoritarian power of chiefs, elders or clan leaders, and the exploitative relations found within the market economy that liberals seek to promote. The identification of the state with oppression, and of civil society with freedom and democracy, therefore obscures more than it reveals.

3. The Culturalist Perspective

Two recent contributions, which are in self-conscious opposition to the civil society paradigm, are those of Jean-Francois Bayart, and Patrick Chabal and Jean Pascal Daloz. Bayart’s book, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (1993), is one of the most influential books on African politics in recent years. Reacting against modernisation theory (‘a disastrous notion’) and dependency theory (‘a fairy tale’), as well as against the fashionable ideology of civil society, he sets out to analyse African politics in what he calls, following Braudel, the *longue durée* of political development.

Bayart’s argument is highly complex, and at times almost impene-
trable. Not surprisingly, it is also impossible to summarise briefly. Nevertheless, some key issues can be identified. Most fundamentally, Bayart’s programme is to interpret African politics in its own terms, rather than through an application of concepts and theories from Western philosophy. The latter strategy, he argues, has been characteristic of modernisation theory, Marxism and neoliberalism alike, and in Bayart’s opinion, it results in African politics being seen merely in terms of what it lacks in comparison with Western countries, rather than in terms of what is actually happening in Africa.

His own alternative is to focus on the internal dynamics of African politics, and on the continuity across the dividing lines of colonisation and decolonisation. Bayart seeks to develop an approach that interprets politics from below – from the perspective of Africans themselves. African politics, he argues, must be seen as reflecting the distinct characteristics of African society. Thus, the key to understanding the state is to understand the African *governmentality* (to use a term from Foucault), or the attitude of Africans towards power and politics.

The African state, Bayart argues, has become ‘domesticated’, or appropriated by society. By this he means that despite the existence of formal institutions that are more or less copies of state institutions found in the West, the state’s actual operation is determined by the character of African society. Political actors regularly break the state’s formal rules by following a logic emerging from society.

African politics, he argues, are characterised by what he calls ‘the reciprocal assimilation of elites’. By this he means the integration of potentially competing elites into a single dominant class, defined by its access to and control over state resources. This assimilation has made the state an integrative force in society. Ethnic leaders, civil servants, state and private sector elites collaborate with each other in order to profit as best they can from their control over the state and its resources.

To uphold the patronage networks on which the process of elite assimilation is based, the state must acquire resources. One of the most important ways to acquire resources has been through dealings with the external world. This is what Bayart calls *extraversion*. African politicians have become experts at manipulating international organisations, foreign governments and aid agencies. Resources acquired in these dealings and through such devices as trade policies, export taxes and the manipulation of exchange rates, have funded the reciprocal assimilation of elites through the use of patronage.

According to Bayart, boundaries between the private and the
public, and between state and society, are rarely recognised in African politics. The regular neglect of such boundaries Bayart calls *straddling*. The informal, it should be noted, should not be equated with the traditional. In line with his emphasis on historicity, Bayart sees African society as continually changing, adapting itself in creative ways to new conditions. Also, he makes clear that the sphere of the informal is far from idyllic. Greed, exploitation, corruption and violence are at least as prevalent as community and solidarity. \(^3\)

Another important contribution, which shares many points with Bayart, is Patrick Chabal and Jean Pascal Daloz’ book from 1999, *Africa Works*. Like Bayart, they emphasise the importance of the informal. The African state, they argue, has never been emancipated from society. Since independence, the state has gone through a process of de-institutionalisation, which has now reached a stage where the formal institutions are little more than an empty shell, within which informal activities take place.

This process, which they call ‘the instrumentalisation of disorder’, is beneficial, they argue, both for those who control the state and for ordinary people. In such a system, everyone has access to some state resources, since everyone is someone’s client. People’s expectations of the state, they argue, are not based on a wish for formalisation and differentiation. Instead, they want those in control of the state to distribute its resources to their clients. Thus, citizens seek to hold leaders accountable not by formal institutions such as democracy, but by ensuring that the state distributes resources in what is seen as a fair way. However, (like Bayart) Chabal and Daloz realise that economic development is incompatible with such a state, and they make it quite clear that they do not think development of this kind is likely to take place.

The implication of this analysis, spelt out more clearly by Chabal and Daloz than by Bayart, is that the African state depends on patronage and the distribution of spoils to maintain its legitimacy. ‘The legitimacy of the African elite, such as it is, derives from their ability to nourish the clientele on which their power rests… It is therefore imperative for them to exploit government resources for patrimonial purposes’ (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:15). And if political survival depends on distribution of spoils, policies that reduce the access to resources to be used for such purposes are not likely to be supported.

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\(^3\) Thus, those looking for a rosy picture of the informal, based on authentic community and solidarity, are likely to be disappointed by Bayart’s analysis.
Although Bayart and Chabal and Daloz make a number of important points, there are some major problems with their approach. First and foremost, they actually say very little about the state. They give a vivid picture of informal networks, of elite assimilation and of how elites use state institutions for private purposes. At the same time, the precise characteristics of state institutions, and their relationship to society, remain unclear.

Second, and related to this, little is said of the precise relationship between the formal and the informal. As a result, the account tends towards a kind of reductionism, in which the state is ultimately reduced to an arena of informal political struggle. While it is true that such formal institutions operate in different ways in Africa than in Europe, it cannot simply be assumed that the ‘real’ character of African states is found in the ‘informal’ or ‘traditional’, and that the formal and modern aspects of the state are of no importance.

For example, despite the incomplete institutionalisation of citizenship, it is striking to what extent state institutions at all levels – rural as well as urban – invoke the language of citizenship, even if their practice does not correspond to it. Appeals are invariably made to ‘rights’, ‘popular participation’ and ‘the nation’ when state action is legitimised. In doing this, state officials seek to affirm the state’s institutions as the legitimate domain of political and legal authority.

This means that the existence of formal institutions does make a difference, because even if their rules are not followed by everybody all the time, or even most of the time, some people actually follow them, and even those who do not follow formal rules are likely to take them into account when making their choices and decisions.

Third, although the informal aspects of African politics, and the blurring of boundaries between the private and the public are important, it is equally striking to note the ways in which state and society in Africa are entirely separate from each other, compared to the situation in Western states. An adequate account of the African state must include both the nature of links between state and society and the forms of separation between them. The fact that the modern state is incompletely institutionalised in Africa means that it is both more closely linked to and more separated from society. One example of weak links between the two is the limited inability of African states to tax their population, and more generally, their weak administrative capacity. The result of this weakness is that much of social life in Africa, especially in the rural areas, is in practice largely outside the reach of state administration.

Fourth, the emphasis on continuity from pre-colonial times to the
present makes it difficult to account for variation across time and space. Political practice is not the same now as in the 1960s or under colonialism. Nor for that matter is it obvious that events in Liberia and in Botswana have that much in common. Within the context of the *longue durée*, the changes that have taken place both during colonialism and after independence are lost from view, and both colonisation and independence appear as insignificant historical parentheses. Although Bayart’s and Chabal and Daloz’ emphasis on continuity is important, it needs to be complemented with an understanding of historical change.

Finally, at a normative level, both Bayart and Chabal and Daloz come across as almost celebrating the ability of Africans to subvert formal institutions. Thus, even the most outrageous greed and plundering appear almost as acts of resistance to the imposition of Western institutions, rather than as crude exploitation. In this respect, they are clearly – Bayart in particular – inspired by postmodernist theory, with its celebration of resistance and subversion. Both books therefore come close to asserting that the African state works well, on its own terms, and that the inability of most scholars to see this is simply a result of applying standards that are alien to Africans themselves. Such an implicit cultural relativism is clearly problematic.

4. The Political Economy Approach

The third approach I want to discuss can be termed ‘institutionalist’ or ‘political economy’. It should be noted here that the term political economy is used in a non-reductionist way, and does not refer either to neo-classical political economy or to that implied in most versions of Marxism. Its key feature is the focus on structural aspects of state–society relations, and on the historical origin of the African state. As representatives of this approach, I have chosen Mahmood Mamdani and Catherine Boone. Both these writers seek to explain political development in Africa by focusing on the state’s relationship with rural society. In his book *Citizen and Subject* (1996) Mamdani seeks to establish an approach that avoids both the evolutionary ethnocentrism of civil society theories and Bayart/Chabal/Daloz’s emphasis on historical continuity.

In order to understand political development in Africa, he argues, it is necessary to analyse the specific forms of power established by the state during colonialism. The key feature of the colonial state, Mamdani argues, was what he calls its ‘bifurcation’. In order to impose its control in Africa, the colonial state was forced to establish
a dual system of government. In this system, the form of state power in urban areas was fundamentally different from that in rural areas. In urban areas, modern institutions and something similar to Western civil society were established, and power was legitimised in the universal language of rights. Here, the public domain of the state was separated from the private domain of society. The private domain consisted of citizens, whose rights were upheld and guaranteed by the state. In other words, the state was clearly separated from society. Crucially, although it was far from democratic, state authority was exercised directly, without intermediaries.

In rural areas, by contrast, state power was exercised through traditional leaders acting as intermediaries in a system of indirect rule. This system involved the co-optation of traditional authorities into the state, making them the key element of state power at the local level. The colonial state codified ‘tradition’, and made it the basis of its rule. By using a selective interpretation of tradition as the basis of state policies, tradition became objectified. The concrete institutionalisation of this form of power was customary law, according to which chiefs were required to rule in accordance with the established traditions of the tribe. Claiming that each tribe had its own customs, colonial powers created a different set of customary laws for each tribe, and a separate authority to enforce each set of laws. In this system, no civil society with autonomy from the state was created, and inhabitants of rural areas became subject to state rule without being able to participate in the institutions of government. In Mamdani’s terms, they became ‘subjects’ rather than ‘citizens’.

Since independence, Mamdani argues, African states have deracialised urban civil society, by abolishing laws that discriminated between urban residents on the basis of colour. In rural areas, states have followed one of the following two main strategies. Some have more or less retained the system of customary law and indirect rule established during colonialism, thus reproducing what Mamdani calls decentralised despotism. Others have sought to dismantle the colonial system, but the result has been to replace the decentralised despotism of colonialism with the centralised despotism of the central state. In both systems, the rural population has remained subjects rather than citizens. By implication, reforming a power that institutionally enforces tension between town and country, and between ethnicities, is the key issue for democratic reform in Africa.

In contrast to Bayart’s book, I think that the main value of Mamdani’s contribution lies in its overall perspective. The focus on the ways in which state–society relations were structured during
colonialism and on the implications of this for the postcolonial state seems fundamentally correct. By highlighting the specificity of the African experience, it avoids both denying the impact of modern institutions and the simple projection of an idealised Western notion of the state onto Africa.

But although his overall approach is fruitful, the content of some of his claims is nevertheless problematic. First, although it is important to recognise the importance of colonialism for subsequent political development, there is in Mamdani’s account a tendency to overestimate the strength and impact of state institutions, both during colonialism and after. As both Bruce Berman (1998) and Jeffrey Herbst (2000) have recently argued, the ability of the colonial state actually to regulate people’s behaviour was extremely limited. Indeed, the system of indirect rule can be seen as an expression of such state weakness. Much of social life remained outside the range of state regulations during colonialism, and the same remains the case today. Using Michael Mann’s term, we can say that African society has not been ‘caged in’ by the state (Mann, 1993). This illustrates the point mentioned above in the discussion of Chabal and Daloz’s book: Although it is important to analyse the ways in which state and society have been intertwined, it is equally important to recognise the ways in which they have remained separated.

Second, it is not obvious that civil society in urban areas was or is as developed as Mamdani’s account indicates. Colonial civil society, of course, was extremely narrow, as it was confined to the settler community, excluding native urban residents. Since independence, the prevalence of patronage and the use of informal networks indicate that the boundaries between state and society and between the public and the private have never been clearly established. Moreover, the associations found in urban civil society are often quite closely tied up with the state.

Third, Mamdani also makes a point of contrasting the European experience of state formation with that in Africa. African state formation, he argues, was the result of conquest, while European states emerged from society in a more organic way. What seems to underlie Mamdani’s analysis on this point is the idea that European state formation was somehow more natural, while the African process was artificial. His account ignores the extent to which European state formation, too, was largely a result of conquest and violence. This has been convincingly shown by authors such as Michael Mann (1993) and Charles Tilly (1985).

In her book *Merchant Capital and the Roots of State Power*
in Senegal and a series of articles, Catherine Boone seeks to explain political development by focusing on the rural basis of African states, and on how the state’s links to rural society have conditioned its policies (Boone, 1992, 1994, 1998). Her main idea is that, in Africa, there has been a contradiction between the economic and the political imperatives faced by the state. In this situation, concern for economic development has continuously been subordinated to political imperatives and the need to maintain political control. After all, preservation of regime power – and ultimately state power itself – is likely to be given the highest priority. Under such conditions, she argues, development, in political as well as economic terms, is unlikely to take place.

Like Mamdani’s, Boone’s starting-point is the system of indirect rule established during colonialism. As the most important clients of the colonial state, chiefs were the most powerful patrons in rural society. They therefore became the focus of local patronage networks. This system made the state and local leaders dependent on each other. The most important political relationship in this system was the alliance between the European district administrator and the local chief.

At independence, African states were faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, the economic interests of society as a whole were best served by pushing accumulation and establishment of capitalist relations of production. On the other hand, this would entail large-scale disruption of African societies, something that could undermine the maintenance of law and order, and state control over its territory. In this situation, most states chose not to attempt full-scale transformation of agriculture through complete privatisation of ownership.

Instead, they sought to maintain control by expanding existing patronage networks. The resources required to sustain such networks were appropriated partly through control over external trade and donor funds, and partly through indirect taxation of peasants by means of marketing boards or similar arrangements. In the latter, peasants were forced to sell their crops at prices fixed by the state at levels lower than market prices, so that the state could earn a profit when crops were resold. But when peasants started avoiding selling their crops to the state, this source of income dried up, and the state had to resort increasingly to external aid and borrowing from abroad. Boone sums up her argument in the following way:

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4 Here, I mainly draw on Boone (1994 and 1998).
The private appropriation of state resources and the use of state funds to strengthen personalistic power networks … lay at the very heart of the processes through which postcolonial regimes were consolidated and by which they sought to govern… Over time, however, the same process has weakened the state as an instrument for organising, exercising and reproducing state power (Boone, 1994:131–132).

Clearly in its emphasis on rural state–society relations, this analysis has certain elements in common with Mamdani. Both point to the inheritance of indirect rule and to the resulting fragility of state power in the countryside. However, in Boone’s analysis, the focus is more on rural relations of production than on the reproduction and reconstruction of customary law. Since these countries are overwhelmingly rural, the state is economically dependent on peasants. But by squeezing the peasantry economically in order to sustain patronage networks, the economic foundations of the state were undermined.

Thus, Boone agrees with Bayart and Chabal/Daloz that patronage networks are the main means through which African states have been able to maintain a degree of stability and control. Moreover, it is a key point in her analysis that in this process, the state has undermined its own economic base for the sake of political survival.

This seems to me a very convincing analysis, as far as it goes. At the same time, like Mamdani’s account, it leaves some issues unexplained. For one thing, not all states have been economically dependent on the peasantry. In mineral-exporting states, such as Angola or Nigeria, the state has not been dependent on taxation of peasants. Moreover, as shown by Bayart and others, relations with the outside world have been crucial for the funding of many African states. This is not emphasised by Boone. Also, Boone does not account for the modern, or universalistic aspects of African states, such as the role of bureaucracy, the continued appeal to modern notions of citizenship and the official commitment to the ideology of development. Finally, the point highlighted by Mamdani – the manipulation and codification of custom during colonialism – is not analysed.

5. Concluding Remarks
To conclude this discussion: First, I think that the civil society perspective has little value in terms of improving our understanding of political developments in Africa. This does not mean that it is unimportant, however. Far from it. In addition to being predominant
in academic writings, this perspective has in fact significantly influenced real events in Africa. Thus, donors, governments and other actors have to a large extent accepted this analysis, and designed their policies on the basis of it.

The combination of analytical weakness and practical impact, I suggest, makes it reasonable to treat this perspective mainly as data rather than as a tool of analysis – as a category of practice rather than as a category of analysis. As such, it constitutes an interesting example of the interrelationship between theories on the one hand and the objects to which they refer on the other. On the one hand, it shows that the development of theories is affected by events in the real world. The widespread acceptance of neoliberalism in the social-scientific community no doubt reflected the general dominance of neoliberal ideology after the end of the Cold War.

On the other hand, by shaping the world views and the self-understanding of actors, social-scientific theories in turn contribute to changing social reality. This is so even if theories are wrong, in the sense of not corresponding to how the world really is. Theories can alter people’s perceptions and action, sometimes even creating the phenomena they are about. By acting on the basis of theories (true or false), the state and other actors change the existing state of affairs, perhaps also altering the distribution of resources between groups. If policies are developed on the basis of false assumptions, they may in turn shape the perceptions and actions of those affected by them. In this sense, the effects of false theories may be as important as the effects of true ones.5

Second, I think the contributions of Bayart’s and Chabal and Daloz include a number of valuable points. They highlight the ways in which the domains of the public and the private are blurred; that civil society, in the sense of a separate sphere, independent of the state, does not exist, and that the use of patronage is the main way in which the state has been able to maintain some sort of control. Still, their approach is ultimately problematic, most notably in its excessive emphasis on the informal, and its neglect of how formal state institutions also contribute to shaping the character of the state and of political practice.

Thus, in my opinion, a political economy framework, understood in a non-reductionist way, represents the best overall approach to the study of state–society relations in Africa. Such an approach,

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5 See, for instance, Ranger (1983) on how the colonial state’s ethnic classifications came to help constitute ethnic identities in Zimbabwe.
which Michael Mann has called a ‘marxified weberianism’ (Mann, 1993), makes it possible to grasp the specific character of relations between state and society, and to analyse them in their historical context. Moreover, it is compatible and can be combined with some of the insights from what I have called the culturalist tradition, such as the importance of the informal, of continuities across the divide of independence and of the fluidity of boundaries between state and society.

By way of a conclusion, I would like to point out a couple of issues that have been inadequately dealt with by all three perspectives. The first point is a methodological one.

I think studies of African politics could benefit from joining the recent attempts at combining approaches from anthropology and political science. Following Joel Migdal (1994), I would argue that the study of the state would benefit from adopting an approach that examines what he calls the ‘anthropology of the state’. The traditional macro-oriented analysis of political science can only be enriched by impulses from anthropology, with its emphasis on micro-level data collected in ‘the field’. Although ‘the state’ cannot be ‘observed’ directly when doing fieldwork, it has an institutional presence at multiple levels in society, and these concrete institutions should be studied through the use of fieldwork. But the state is also a translocal phenomenon, and analyses of the state based on fieldwork would therefore need to combine the use of data collected in ‘the field’ with theories and concepts from traditional macro-level approaches. Thus, one should move beyond the analyses of formal rules and structures, in order to get ‘inside the whale’, and grasp the processes of everyday state making. At the same time, the conceptual apparatus and the macro-focus of the political science tradition must be retained.

This implies a rejection of the dominant epistemological orientations in both anthropology and political science. On the one hand, the emphasis on figures, numbers and formal structures found in much political science literature is rejected, because it fails to pay attention to the concrete mechanisms through which state power is produced and exercised. Since such mechanisms do not lend themselves to representation in the form of numbers and figures, they tend to be considered as somehow not ‘real data’, and are simply neglected. On the other hand, anthropologists’ ‘metaphysics of pre-

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6 Mamdani could be considered a ‘marxified weberian’ in Mann’s sense, while Boone might perhaps be better described as a ‘weberified marxist’.
ence’, in which face-to-face relations are given epistemological privilege, is also rejected. As stated by Akhil Gupta (an anthropologist), one must question ‘the assumption regarding the natural superiority – the assertion of authenticity – implicit in the knowledge claims generated by “being there”’ (Gupta, 1995: 376).

The second point concerns the role of external factors. To be sure, it is true that international pressure has affected or even driven processes of economic and political liberalisation (as pointed out by the neoliberals), that developments in the world market have been unfavourable to African countries and that economic links with the outside world have been important for sustaining the patronage networks on which ruling regimes depend.

At the same time, as pointed out by Jackson and Rosberg (1983), it is also important that international recognition and participation in the system of states has enabled African states to survive, in spite of limited real control and at times extreme weakness. This points to the close interrelationship between a particular state and the system of states of which it is a part. A given state is not an object, constituted prior to its relations with other states. It does not first exist and then interact with other states. As Giddens says: ‘International relations are not connections set up between pre-established states, which could maintain their sovereign power without them, they are the basis upon which the nation state exists at all’ (Giddens, 1985: 263–264). And by representing ‘its’ society in relationship with other states, a given state gains autonomy and strength in relation to its society.

At a more concrete level, as pointed out by Boone, Bayart and others, states defined as poor, or in need of help, gain access to substantial economic resources from outside. This flow of resources is nevertheless ambiguous for the process of state-building. In the short run, the availability of aid may strengthen the state in relation to society and improve its chances of political survival. In the long run, however, it may also prevent the state from developing its administrative capacity and ability to raise revenue. Moreover, since access to external funds is tied to specific conditions, it makes the state accountable to external donors rather than to its own population. Such a shift in lines of accountability clearly undermines democracy.

Moreover, the role of warfare in state-building is not mentioned in any of the theories discussed. As shown by Thomas Ertman (1997), Michael Mann (1993), Charles Tilly (1985) and others, state-building has been intimately linked to warfare. Inter-state war (or threats of it) forces governments to increase revenue collection. At
the same time it also increases the population’s willingness to comply. This is not to suggest that what Africa needs is more wars, or that what is needed is inter-state wars, rather than civil wars. However, it illustrates the extraordinary difficulties of state-building, and the extremity of the conditions that have made it possible elsewhere.

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Conference Proceedings

Turkey in a Global-Local Perspective

Edited by
Martin Sæter
Sefa Martin Yürükel

Turkey, with its more than 60 million people, is a candidate for EU membership and is in this capacity heading for a place as one of the great powers within the union. Turkish EU membership will change not only the place and role of Turkey but also the profile of the EU itself in the wider European and global context. Turkey will like the other applicant countries have to adapt itself to the EU acquis in every respect, which is a huge task indeed. The enlarged EU, on its part, will also change through enlarging to include a new member of Turkey’s geopolitical significance.

In addition to European and geopolitical aspects, a special emphasis is laid on human rights and minority issues in this book. Other topics are Turkish energy policy, police co-operation across borders, the fight against international crime, illegal drug trafficking and human trade.

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Aid and Academia: An Uneasy Relationship

Gunnar M. Sørbo

1. Introduction
In the Nordic countries as elsewhere, foreign aid programmes have become increasingly politicised and part of demanding agendas. Development agencies currently operate in environments of high uncertainty, often trying out novel approaches and new conditionalities, within local contexts where precise information is rare. There is need for better analysis at all levels, for systematic testing and monitoring of interventions, for rethinking old issues and coming to grips with new ones, and for innovation.

While considerable amounts of money are spent annually on consultants who specialise in translating the knowledge available into workable solutions and programmes for development agencies and governments, the need for additional research grows commensurably with the scope of ambitions and the complexity of issues. In recent years, Denmark, Norway and Sweden have all increased their support for development-related research in their own countries. In 2000, Sida provided research funding of SEK 83 million for Swedish development research through the Sida Development Research Council. In the same year, Danida’s support to Danish development research amounted to more than DKK 140 million. This includes support to a separate council for development research (RUF), four research centres and several Danish research net-

Note of acknowledgements. This article is a revised and elaborated version of a keynote speech given to a conference on ‘Aid and Academia – Reassessing the Relationship’ at the University of Uppsala on 8 October 2001. It draws heavily on a report I wrote jointly with Johan Helland on Danish development research (Sørbo and Helland, 2001). I am grateful to Helland and a number of others who commented on my keynote speech.
works. In Norway, there has also been a steady increase in research support although (apart from NUFU, a bilateral programme to enhance research capacity in developing countries, involving Norwegian university staff) such support is considerably less than in Denmark and Sweden. Thus in 2000, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocated NOK 42 million to such research, including NOK 9 million as core funding for the Chr. Michelsen Institute (Helland, 2001).

A recent review of Danish development research (Sørbø and Helland, 2001) revealed that there are many examples in Denmark of productive and mutually beneficial relationships between Danida and individual researchers and research groups. However, links were generally found to be weak between the Danish research community and Danida. This is manifested in different ways:

- Some two-thirds of the funds provided explicitly for research by Danida are used for purposes over which the agency in fact exercises little direct or active influence.
- Most of the Danida-funded research is supply-driven. Projects and programmes are primarily based on the individual interests of scholars and their institutions, and their perceptions of needs rather than those of policy-makers.
- There is an evident lack of cohesion between Danida’s priorities and the ways in which research funds are being used. Effectively, when approving a research proposal Danida staff indicate that the agency has ‘no objection’ to it rather than giving a positive endorsement (particularly in the case of RUF applications).
- There is insufficient integration of research into the design and implementation of Danida-supported development programmes. There is concern in Danida that much of the development research that it funds is either not relevant to Danish development co-operation, or is presented in a format that makes it largely inaccessible to policy-makers. There is also a lack of clarity as to the role that development research can play in support of development policy and programmes.

While it may not be altogether wrong that Danida has chosen to exercise little influence over the ways in which funds are allocated (see below), both Danida staff and researchers are dissatisfied with the present situation. In Danida, there is widespread feeling that large parts of the research community are unwilling to accommodate Danida priorities and policies; that support for research
is planned and implemented in isolation from such priorities and policies; and that the value of Danida investments in Danish development research is, at best, questionable. However, many Danida staff put the main blame for the present state of affairs on their own organisation.

Within the research community, there is an equally widespread feeling that Danida is not really interested in utilising research for its own purposes; that the frequent turn-over of Danida staff discourages the kind of long-term thinking that is essential for the productive use of research; and that ‘they don’t read anyway’ because of busy work schedules and other priorities. There is also the issue of independence: Development research, particularly in the social sciences, should be explicitly critical of aid effectiveness and the vested interests institutionalised in development co-operation. Furthermore, some researchers fear that their passions are no longer ‘fashionable’ – one can certainly sympathise with a person who has dedicated her/his life to working on India being told that India is no longer a priority country for Danida.

Such mutual feelings and frustrations are probably not particular to Denmark, but common tensions in the relationship between the academic community and aid agencies, and, more generally, between research and policy-making. In this article, I will try to identify some of the main causes behind such tensions and discuss how relationships may be improved and tensions be made more productive.

There are obviously different areas or levels that are relevant for the discussion. One concerns the connection between research and policy-making, in contexts where researchers are involved in commissioned research or as consultants. Another concerns the drawing rights of those who fund research. Thus, in two of the review reports commissioned as part of the Danish study, it is argued that funding for development research from Danida should be directed to supporting development processes; and that efforts should be made by Danida to ensure that a significant portion of the research funded by aid budgets is focused on helping Danida make its overall effort more efficient, with greater impact on poor people (Salih and Thomas, 2001, Blackie et al., 2001). However, while this may sound reasonable, it is complicated by the extreme dependency of Nordic development research on aid budgets – at a time when the need for such research and the challenges it confronts go far beyond the concerns of development co-operation. I shall begin, therefore, by briefly sketching some developments that are particularly important in this respect.
2. Development Research: Needs and Challenges

Development research emerged as a field of study during the 1950s and 1960s. From its beginnings, it has addressed a number of familiar problems—poverty, inequality and weak institutions—that have always been at the core of why some countries prosper while others do not. Understanding these problems has called for a variety of skills derived from many different disciplines, and required insights into complex local, national, regional and international dynamics. Insights drawn from this research, as well as practical experience, have contributed considerably to what we know about developing countries. Past investments in research have also, along with other measures, contributed to dramatic advances in developing countries in areas such as agricultural production, health, education and life expectancy, and provided important inputs into national economic and social policy management (Grindle and Hilderbrand, 1999).

Knowledge acquired in the past continues to be important in understanding the problems facing peoples and countries of the South as well as countries in transition. But simultaneously, the world is changing rapidly and many persistent problems of underdevelopment have become global issues, with causes and consequences beyond the specific context of developing countries.

Globalisation is often used as a blanket term to describe the rapid changes we have experienced in recent years—the extensive and worldwide flow of goods, services, capital and information. But globalisation is a two-edged sword in terms of the changes it generates.

On the one hand, globalisation contributes to improved living standards for large numbers of the world’s people and has everywhere increased pressures to improve conditions as well as institutions of governance. Thus ‘human rights’, ‘democracy’ and ‘good governance’ have become key terms with powerful echoes, from Guatemala and Poland to Russia and China. But along with such positive trends, globalisation threatens to marginalise further those who cannot gain access to, or benefit from, increased flows of goods, services, capital and information. Globalisation also brings financial vulnerability, because markets, worldwide, are increasingly interdependent, and rapid financial flows can suddenly alter domestic economies. Governments are now less able to protect their citizens from such external financial threats.

In the wake of the détente between East and West and the wave of democratisation in a number of Central and Eastern European countries and elsewhere, new conflicts have emerged, some of them
‘unleashed’ because the great powers no longer intervene on the basis of Cold War thinking. Over the last decade or so, we have experienced a number of ‘complex humanitarian emergencies’ and in the Nordic countries, development assistance has become a much more integral part of foreign policy (the Balkans, the West Bank and Gaza, South Africa). Themes and topics have emerged which have either not been regarded before as relevant to aid agencies (religion and politics, terrorism, multiculturalism, and others) or have so far received insufficient attention (such as drug-trafficking, conflict management, and human security).

The increasing complexity and interrelatedness of development issues require scholars and practitioners to understand them in terms of global context, but also to understand the broader issues that surround them. For example, poverty and inequality increasingly reflect national and global economic dynamics, as more local people are involved in national and international market exchanges. Similarly, they are complex and multi-causal issues, and students of development must draw on many different areas of knowledge to disentangle webs of causality that create and sustain poverty. Furthermore, with globalisation, such interrelated issues emerge and require solutions faster, putting new pressure on those who seek to understand and respond to them.

While changes in the global landscape must impact on the development research agenda, there remain a number of other, interrelated challenges of enormous importance to our common future. Thus, by the middle of the this century, it is estimated that there will be about one-third less arable land available per capita, and probably an equivalent reduction in the availability of water for agricultural purposes. With less of both these key natural resources available food supply needs to be doubled. At the moment, much of the technology portfolio is either unavailable or unsuitable. Water is increasingly becoming a contentious issue both within and between countries in many different parts of the world.

In the field of health, HIV/AIDS has developed into a real pandemic, with dire effects in many developing countries. Apart from its enormous morbidity and mortality effects, it puts a big burden on the health services and on the educational, economic and administrative systems. At the same time, preventable child mortality remains the main health problem in the poorest countries.

It is increasingly argued that at the core of the global divide is the vast inequality in innovation and diffusion of technology, and that we have barely scratched the surface of this central problem. There
is a knowledge explosion, it is changing institutions, societies and the global economy, and it is contributing to an increasing (and increasingly dangerous) knowledge divide. In this perspective, only those societies that become ‘knowledge societies’ are seen as having prospects for future success. At the moment, a distinguishing feature of the international order is that scientific and technological capabilities are distributed more unevenly than economic power. Thus the OECD countries account for roughly 85 per cent of total world expenditure in science and technology. India, China and the NICs (newly industrialised countries) of East Asia account for a further 10 per cent, which means that the rest of the world accounts for less than 5 per cent.

This brief sketch does not provide anything close to an exhaustive picture of trends and challenges. However, it may be adequate for drawing some important inferences for the ways in which we assess the role of development-related research. There are at least five important points:

- It is necessary to take a broad view of the concept of development research and what may justifiably be seen to belong to it.
- The legitimacy and importance of development-related research – and the educational activities that accompany such research – do not simply derive from their role in development assistance.
- Developments are not easily predictable and there is a need for preparedness in terms of building and maintaining a rather broad research capacity.
- Those engaged in development research should devote more time and effort to understanding issues not only across national boundaries, but also across different scientific disciplines.
- If only ‘knowledge societies’ are seen as having prospects for future success, there would seem to be a larger role for research to play as an important aid intervention area in its own right.

It is somewhat paradoxical that the research community’s dependence on aid budgets seems to be growing at a time when it becomes increasingly difficult to draw clear boundaries between, on the one hand, development research and training required to solve problems in the South, and, on the other hand, the many different kinds of research that are needed to confront a host of global and other issues that involve and affect countries in both the North and the South. Thus in the Nordic countries, while foreign aid budgets are not the exclusive source of funding for such research, development
research is nonetheless perceived (by both researchers and research policy-makers) as being primarily in the domain of development co-operation rather than within the domain of overall research policy. In 1998, investigations revealed that Sida/SAREC funded almost 100 per cent of development-related research projects in Swedish institutions of higher learning (Olsson, 2000). In Denmark, while universities certainly make significant contributions (particularly in terms of salaries), the funding of development research is primarily regarded as Danida’s responsibility. As competition for public research funds has increased, it seems that funding for development-related research has increasingly been squeezed out of the regular research councils (in Norway, out of other areas of the Research Council than Environment and Development) and responsibility for funding left to the foreign aid budgets. Some of the ambiguities and uncertainties we observed regarding the institutional arrangements set up for development research in Denmark may at least partly be traced to such developments.

3. Drawing Rights
In Denmark, the present structure has largely grown in an ad hoc manner as new needs have arisen or been perceived rather than as a result of any strategy or deliberate choice of direction. Furthermore, the concept of development research has come to refer to a number of quite different activities:

- research on developing countries
- research on the development process
- research on development assistance
- research as aid
- research co-operation
- research as an international public good.

More than anything else, the lack of a coherent policy or strategy has led to a number of ambiguities and unclear expectations. One crucial issue has been Danida’s drawing rights upon the various research efforts funded by the agency. The Council for Development Research (RUF) and the Centre for Development Research (CDR) can be used as examples to illustrate this point.

The Council for Development Research (Rådet for u-landsforskning) has a mandate which allows it to support research that must be related to developing countries, that should illuminate certain
aspects of the development process, but that need not necessarily be of direct relevance to the way Danida has organised its development co-operation programmes.

RUF operates very much as an ordinary research council with much emphasis on supporting high-quality research. It has introduced criteria of relevance in terms of the overarching goals of Danida, but its understanding of those criteria is a contentious issue. RUF insists that quality is a primary concern and that relevance to the development process does not necessarily coincide with relevance to Danish development co-operation.

Such ambiguities arise from the ambiguous position of RUF itself. In principle, RUF is a ministerial Advisory Board, set up to advise the ministry (Danida) on matters relating to the research needs of Danida and how Danida should spend research funds in support of its primary mission of development co-operation and poverty reduction. On the other hand, RUF has also become a regular research council, with a responsibility to foster and support Danish research within a field which may be slightly exotic (at least to the extent that the other research councils do not feel any great need to support it), but for which there is public demand and interest.

RUF does not see itself as Danida’s department for research in the above terms. However, RUF is obviously important to Danida, in developing and maintaining research competence and human resources across a broad band of disciplines of direct relevance to Danida operations, in contributing to the Danish knowledge base, in enlightening the public and in maintaining a high level of public sympathy and understanding of the situation in developing countries. These are all public needs that should somehow be met. The most contentious question seems to be whether or not Danida is best placed to meet these needs.

The position of the Centre for Development Research (CDR) in Copenhagen is also contentious. Again, we suggest that this is mainly because of its ambiguous position rather than the quality of its publications and services. CDR is an autonomous institution under the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs but has been given a mandate that resembles the more academically oriented mandates of specialised research institutes under the Ministry of Research. This means that there are only vague and limited obligations for CDR to feed its research into aid-supported policies, strategies and programmes. In other words, while there are expectations from Danida that CDR should be much more of an ordinary sector research institute of the kind that other Danish ministries both own and fund, i.e. primarily
as an applied research institute set up to serve the needs of the ministry in the exercise of its mandate, CDR does have a different mandate, and is more geared towards basic, long-term research. Its rather generous funding allows it to pursue this mandate without too much involvement in consultancies or short-term commissioned research and without too much interference from Danida.

Development research may be seen as having one pole clearly within the domain of development policy and another within the domain of national research policy. How far the responsibilities of Danida extend, as well as what the agency might justifiably expect to receive in return, are important issues in Denmark. In the other Nordic countries, the agencies have also gone a long way in supporting research that goes beyond their immediate or declared needs. In view of the fact that such research is weakly positioned in the regular research councils, this is admirable. However, there may be a need to clarify the drawing rights of those who fund the research. As indicated above, one view being articulated in two of the review reports commissioned as part of the Danish study is that a significant portion of the research funded by aid budgets should be focused on helping Danida make its overall effort more efficient, with a greater impact on poor people.

However, while this may sound reasonable, it must somehow be balanced with the wider concerns raised above: that there are many other sectors of public life in need of extensive knowledge of non-European cultures and societies, such as the social sector (including immigration), the media, the educational system, the foreign service more generally, and a private sector increasingly involved in commercial activities on other continents. Furthermore, we need innovative and critical research to ask questions that policymakers have not yet been able or willing to identify.

4. Two Fallacies
In trying to connect research and policy, two mistakes are often made.

The first consists in trying to improve policies by sharply defining research needs and applying the results. However, much applied problem-solving would be impossible without the long-term investment in research focused on underlying dynamics and causes, rather than just the specific problems at hand. It follows that development research should not be judged exclusively for its direct, or instant, contribution to development; that is, solely according to whether it
provides managerial ‘tools’ or not. If it does not, the message is often that it is useless. Such a purely instrumental view of research is unfruitful and indeed a recipe for stagnation. Research may be useful without having immediate relevance and applicability. It can help challenge conventional wisdom and established notions, identify new problems not thought of by policy-makers, provide new answers or offer explanations that are important for understanding even when they cannot easily be translated into action. Sometimes alternative explanations are provided – and they may be useful even when they are contradictory, as they highlight real uncertainty. Therefore, an important part of the ‘tools’ that researchers give to decision-makers will be to expose the difficulties, the contradictions, the conflicts of interest in a situation, so that false hopes of easy solutions are avoided. The *instrumentalist fallacy* (Hernes, 2001) consists in thinking that solutions can always be obtained by making very specific demands on research.

Much of the social science research requested by a development agency will be of a broad, policy-relevant and probing kind, which may not always provide easy answers to policy-makers, yet may contribute to improving the basis for their decisions. I believe this is recognised in most agencies. However, they also need instrumental, often short-term research designed to address immediate problems. Such research may include baseline studies, monitoring and evaluation, but also research of a more technical nature, e.g. what seeds are best adapted to a particular environment, what diagnostic test is most appropriate for particular diseases, or what materials are best suited for road construction. Much of the important research in the field of development is of this kind. It goes beyond what is often referred to as ‘inquiry’ or ‘examination’ (in Norwegian: ‘utredninger’) and can be of direct practical use for policy-makers, even when it takes some time to arrive at the results. Moreover, practical problems often provide science with opportunities to break new ground.

The *irrelevantist fallacy* (Hernes, 2001) consists in not recognising that the practical payoffs from research can be both immediate and substantial. It is not the case that the more difficult a project is to comprehend, the greater its value. Scientists can also lose their way and become extremely good at things that have no immediate value and little long-term interest, that provide few insights and no usefulness.

The implication is that the political community must ‘work with two horses’ (Hernes, 2001). One is harnessed and put to work in
order to solve problems posed by policy-makers and inform their decisions. Such research may be short term (including purely instrumental research) or longer term (including ‘strategic’ research) and may help to redefine problems by challenging preconceptions. The other horse is let loose to roam freely, in the expectation that it will make new discoveries, provide new answers and identify problems not yet thought of by policy-makers.

The issue of drawing rights must be seen in this perspective. It does not mean that funding agencies should refrain from exercising influence on research allocations. In addition to drawing upon research to address immediate problems, there is also a case to be made for more extensive use of ‘strategic research’. Such research lies somewhere in between basic and applied research, being basic in structure (i.e. aiming at expansion of basic knowledge and understanding), but deriving its motivation and perspective from the potential use of its findings. Thus, going back to the Danish review, Danida could have a more active engagement towards RUF, particularly with regard to marshalling support for strategic research programmes where Danida sees a long-term need to build Danish capacity. Research centre funding could also better be used to strengthen research in areas of direct significance to Danida’s strategy and priorities. However, whoever pays for it in the end, it remains important that there are sufficient funds for ‘other horses to roam’ freely, so that innovative, critical research has the chance to emerge.

5. Research and Consultancy

When researchers work as consultants, other issues often arise. While roles often merge and there may be nothing wrong about that, it is important to recognise that research and policy-making are different activities, requiring different skills. When a researcher is asked why farmers cultivate one particular crop rather than another which may be seen by experts as more advantageous from a specific point of view (soil, economy, nutrition), his or her task is to imagine possible explanations, then to figure out ways of testing the validity of alternative explanations. The next task is to eliminate explanations that are not supported by facts or to establish the relative importance of suggested explanations.

A policy-maker will find such a study interesting, but her or his first task is to imagine possible interventions, then to carry out an evaluation: which of the possible interventions is likely to have the
greatest impact? The appraisal can be made on the basis of beliefs derived from previous experience elsewhere and it is also possible to imagine an experiment. The next task of the policy-maker is to make a broader assessment. Which of the possible interventions is economically and politically feasible?

This is a stylised view. However, the point is that although research and policy-making have many points of contact, and roles may merge, the activities are analytically distinct. Researchers are in principle responsive to, responsible to and rewarded by the community of scholars—for telling the truth, for originality of thought and for methodological skill. The policy-maker is responsive to, responsible to and rewarded by the political system—for inventive-ness and for the pertinence of their suggested interventions, for skill in assessing impact, for talent in building coalitions. The discretion often required when policies are devised, discussed and discarded is also contrary to the open discussion that takes place in the community of scholars (Hernes, 2001).

Interaction between researchers and policy-makers is likely to lead to frustrations if the divergent concerns of the two distinct groups are not appreciated. Problems often arise. For example, many anthropologists seem to share the belief that if our discipline has yet to make its mark on the conduct of public affairs, the failure can not be in the substance or quality of our own work (despite the theoretical and methodological challenges we face when undertaking, for example, policy-oriented micro-macro analysis). When we think about applied research, we have a tendency to consider only the concerns of anthropology, not of policy. We look to our discipline for guidance, concepts and ideas—allowing policy no voice, or one that is heard only after research has been done, but not while it is being formulated. There are many other issues as well that give weight to the argument that if researchers think they are marginal, their marginality may often be self-imposed (Sørbø, 1991).

This is not to say that there are no problems on the other side. Often, there are significant constraints in terms of capacity and competence in utilising research in creative and productive ways. Decision-makers tend to be impatient with researchers who spend a long time collecting data and who are seen to be vocal with their criticism but weak on advice. Too often, researchers submit their reports without subsequent participation in deliberations where the arguments pursued in the report can be confronted with other arguments, deriving from political or financial considerations. Too often, defensive attitudes towards research prevent organisational learning.
Also, there tends to be a lack of receptivity to research that does not conform to the ‘policy language’ or ‘aid speak’ that dominates the development discourse. In recent years, although this will normally be denied, there has also been less concern with the fate of local populations (and therefore less receptivity to the knowledge commonly produced by anthropologists) as projects are ‘out’, and sectoral programmes with more emphasis on macro concerns are prioritised by most donors – often backed by arguments about ‘ownership’.

It must be added, however, that consultancy is often not research. This is in fact one important reason why many colleagues, particularly in the social sciences, have a detached view or, at most, only an ambiguous engagement in relation to applying their skills to social affairs including development cooperation. As Apthorpe has argued, consultancy and research must have their own specificities and standards if they are to be credible. While researchers may be expected to know the specificities and standards pertaining to doing research, they are often less conscious about what is expected of them when they do short-term consultancies (Apthorpe, 1998). Aid bureaucrats and other decision-makers are often equally unconscious about such differences.

Some of the tensions between aid bureaucrats and researchers derive from a lack of communication about roles and standards. Researchers feel that the limited time set aside for most consultancies pushes them into simplification and generality, which distort the complexities that confront us. They are often unable to see themselves within a policy context where interpreting and agreeing on terms of reference may be one of the most significant acts of the consultancy, and where problems may often be ‘wicked’ in that they either cannot be defined until the solution has been found, or in that there are no definitive and objective answers (Apthorpe, 1998). On their part, policy-makers are seldom keen on discourse analysis, problematising key words and labels before accepting them, which may yield new insights and provide new directions; and they are often not skilled themselves in the area of evaluation, but happen to be in charge of it at a particular stage in their careers. On a general level, it must be appreciated that for consultancy to make a difference critical connoisseurship (a ‘trained eye’) is often required rather than scientific excellence. Connoisseurship, however, is likely to be enhanced by research experience.
6. The Fate of an Institutional Consultant
In Sweden, it was recently decided by Sida, based on a review made by two Danish researchers (Nyberg Sørensen and Gibbon, 1999), that the Development Studies Unit (DSU) at the Department of Social Anthropology (SAI), University of Stockholm, no longer qualified for Institutional Consultancy (IC) status. Its funding was consequently withdrawn.

The evaluation report by Nyberg Sørensen and Gibbon makes for very interesting reading. It is basically a story about how, since the late 1980s, SAI-DSU failed to adopt a strategic perspective aimed at optimising its comparative advantage as an IC in the area of anthropology, particularly within what the authors call ‘macro-anthropological’ studies. Instead, generalist work, which could have been carried out just as well by other professionals, private consultants or even by Sida’s own in-house staff, came increasingly to dominate DSU’s output. DSU’s drift away from anthropology confirmed already held judgements within some influential sections of SAI about the low academic merit of ‘applied’ anthropology and its practitioners. While DSU’s work was generally well received by Sida, the agency must, according to the evaluators, share part of the blame for this process. Sida increasingly resorted to DSU as an institutional consultant, not because of the unit’s access to specific professional competences deriving from the discipline it was supposed to represent, but because it was flexible, service-minded and ‘on call’.

There are important lessons to be learned from the SAI-DSU story. As Nyberg Sørensen and Gibbon indicate, the distinction between basic and applied research is not terribly interesting, as much ‘basic’ research is both very applicable and policy-oriented and some ‘applied’ research really very basic. Rather, and in line with my own argument above, there is a distinction to be made between applied research (defined as the application of research-based knowledge) and the application of discipline-based skills (in the SAI-DSU case defined as the application of anthropology’s conceptual and methodological apparatus). While trained anthropologists may provide the latter without being actively involved in research, the quality of the work performed is likely to be enhanced if there is a close relationship between the two.

SAI must take its share of the blame for what happened. If we argue, as do the evaluators, that innovations in anthropology of potential interest to development practitioners cannot arise or be sustained without work in the discipline, then it makes little sense to divorce
research from consultancy as was done in the case of SAI-DSU. Established as a special working unit detached from the Department, DSU was in fact separated from research activity in its parent department and became its stigmatised child, some would say orphan. As a result, DSU became an unsuitable candidate for a prolonged IC agreement with Sida.

7. Capacity to Utilise Research
Development research needs demanding clients for it to thrive and develop further. In the evaluation report just referred to above it is argued that the extent to which Sida was able to internalise knowledge provided to them by social science-based institutional consultants was fairly limited. Discussion with Sida staff indicated several types of problems, such as receptivity and use as well as accumulation and retention. More generally, there were problems with organisational learning.

Going back to our Danish review, we found that Danida had only poorly articulated policies on how the agency should meet internal ‘R&D’ needs, and its Research Department which was both understaffed and isolated from the mainstream of Danida’s work. In the Technical Assistance Department, there were also serious capacity problems, within an environment otherwise characterised by interesting and challenging ideas about how to make better use of research. Questionable commitment at the highest level of Danida management was also an issue.

While problems remain, there is nonetheless a development towards more demanding clients, concerned with quality and a more discerning attitude to the use of research in the different organisations. The extent to which agencies such as NORAD, Sida and Danida have succeeded in institutionalising learning processes is another question. Nyberg Sørensen and Gibbon claim that Sida’s achievement in this respect appears to be rather limited, despite the agency describing itself as a ‘learning organisation’ (Nyberg Sørensen and Gibbon, 1999: 39). According to the authors, these problems relate mainly to Sida’s organisational structure.

Despite progress, it is my impression that research may not yet have found its proper place in the organisational structure of the Nordic development agencies. While more money is spent on research, there is a tendency to isolate it from the mainstream of work in the organisations, or put most of the funding away for others (mainly research councils) to handle. This may secure independence
for researchers. However, the result may easily be that, instead of being an integral part of the work being done in the agencies, research remains something special, perhaps even distant, for specialists to discuss and debate, and only with a few contact persons in the agencies.

8. Research as Aid

‘Research as aid’ currently includes various forms of co-operation to increase the resource base, to strengthen national research capacity and the ability of developing country institutions to undertake research.

It was not unusual some years ago to hear it argued that, given the great expense of contributing to the ‘international body of knowledge’, developing countries should mostly be content with whatever knowledge is available and not waste too many scarce resources on research. In other words, knowledge is a marketable commodity that can be bought by developing countries for far less than it would cost to produce it at home. Technology transfer was seen as an important answer.

However, even if this market conception of knowledge were true, there are still some minimum requirements that must be met for developing countries to sort, identify and evaluate the available knowledge and apply it to the problems at hand. This in itself requires a certain resource base in terms of trained manpower, research-based teaching and functioning institutions. Furthermore, much knowledge cannot be imported, and a number of functions, beyond those of adapting available solutions to local conditions, must be carried out by a national establishment for research and higher education within the country itself.

The Nordic countries have a clear policy with regard to the importance of supporting a viable research sector in its partner countries. However, while current programmes, such as ENRECA in Denmark and NUFU in Norway, are successful in their own right, their contribution to the building of research capacity in developing countries remains limited. The best they can normally hope for is the establishment of ‘islands of excellence’ that may not be sustainable in the long run and may not even be within the most important fields in terms of national research challenges in the host country.

If we believe that major investments in research and higher education are necessary for development (‘knowledge societies’), then the comparatively ‘hands-off’, project-based funding policies
so far pursued by many donors in the area of research for development should be replaced by closer engagement with the R&D system as a whole in developing countries, in the private sector as well as in public institutions (Arnold and Bell, 2001). There is much to be done in this area. Donors could begin by putting the research efforts they support in different countries into a coherent framework, with clear reference to national research strategies (where these are available) and national development plans. Sida/SAREC has moved in this direction over the last years. In many countries, though, there is clearly a need to review current policies and priorities as a basis for support to the sector, and a need for a more integrated perspective on research and higher education. Like Arnold and Bell, I believe such analysis may change our views on where investments should be made and support offered. The new literature on this subject contains provocative ideas: for example, that the business system should be an important target for national R&D effort, that investments in research infrastructure for basic science may not always be particularly wise, and that over-investment in research that is poorly linked to the business system can promote an ‘overflow brain drain’.

However, the general point I want to make is that the piecemeal approach whereby different donors have targeted different aspects of science and technology in the developing world has often led to a total system that is not connected and in which available skills are also, in this perspective, fragmented and out of balance. A more systematic and integrated approach is required and the academic community needs to be involved in such efforts.

9. Concluding Remarks
As argued above, the need for research grows commensurately with the scope of ambitions and the complexity of issues faced by development agencies and other decision-makers. Based on such considerations, and while progress has been made in the Nordic countries during the last years, there is still a need to create structures and arrangements that can bring about closer and more productive relationships between the research communities and the aid agencies. In the development agencies, commitment on the part of those providing the overall leadership and direction is an essential prerequisite to positive change, as is commitment on the research community’s part to placing their assets and their work more within a policy and development context than is often the case today.
This does not mean that researchers should be regarded or regard themselves simply as handmaidens to further the goals of decision-makers. In fact, there is too little research that is truly critical of past and ongoing development efforts, and of the (often rhetoric) language used to justify interventions and decisions. Except for short-term evaluations, there is also, somewhat surprisingly, also little research on the long-term impact of foreign aid. An important priority, therefore, is to increase such research for the benefit of ongoing aid efforts. Development agencies also need to tap into more of the research that is being done within research environments where staff do not see themselves as being involved in ‘development research’, nor are seen as such by their colleagues, but where much valuable and relevant work is produced.

On a more general level, the challenge is not to remove present tensions between aid and academia. Rather, it is to make them more transparent and productive in terms of what is after all a common goal: to improve conditions for poor people in different parts of the world.

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