

# The end of development?

## Reflections on the Unsustainability of the Current Development Paradigm and a Quest for an African Alternative

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**Abstract.** The article argues that the currently dominating, Western-originated individualistic and materialistic concept of development as ‘progress’ has created an evident confusion between ‘values and facts,’ ‘ideologies/ideals and practices,’ ‘ends and means’ in the current development thinking and practice. Instead of realizing such humanistic ideas as *human flourishing* and *holistic well-being*, current development agenda focuses on economic growth and producing ‘better business environments.’ Since this model for development has gradually been globalized, any alternative patterns of conceptualizing development and setting alternative *ideals* for it have efficiently been disparaged. However, if we take the unsustainability of this model seriously and care for the survival of human kind, we need to look for new and alternative directions for development. In this we can learn from the developmental *values* of other cultures. This article introduces some exploratory thoughts on what African philosophy could offer to the debate on global development.

**Key words:** individualism, communitarianism, human well-being, development, African philosophy.

Environmental degeneration, the devastating consequences of climate change as well as the deepening worldwide economic crisis altogether call us to reconsider the sustainability of the current concept of development, and to seriously ponder what kind of world we want to live in and to leave for the next generations. If we continue to think of development as incessant economic growth that will provide more goods and commodities to relentlessly growing population of the earth, the survival of the human species – as well as that of our whole planet - may be threatened. Therefore, if we want to secure decent living conditions for the future generations we need to urgently consider alternative approaches to development.

The paper argues that the currently dominating, Western-originated individualistic and materialistic concept of development as ‘progress’ has, through naturalistic fallacy, made us see the means of development as its ultimate goals. The paper shows that there is an evident confusion between ‘values and facts,’ ‘ideologies/ideals and practices,’ ‘ends and means’ in the current development thinking and practice. Instead of realizing such humanistic ideas as *human flourishing* and *holistic well-being*, current development agenda focuses on economic growth and producing ‘better business environments.’ In relation to international development cooperation, however, at least at the policy level, the Western *partners* still refer to the *values and ideals* of equality, human value and rights. This rhetoric is used even though in practice global cooperation is for the most part based on

Machiavellian pragmatist political realism and on the requirements of the invisible hands of the markets.

This duplicitous attitude is partly due to our misunderstanding the deep logical errors built-in the currently dominating neo-liberal model of development. This model presents *facts* as *values* – setting aside any meta-ethical ideals. In practice *development* has resulted in ‘exclusive (rather than inclusive) growth’; in competition and clashes over scarce resources; in social and political tensions leading to instability and conflicts in various parts of the world. It is also contributing to the increasing consumerism, environmentally hazardous practices of industrialization and commercial agriculture, over-production of waste, and irresponsible use of rapidly diminishing natural resources.<sup>1</sup>

Since this model for development has gradually been globalized, any alternative patters of conceptualizing development and setting alternative *ideals* for it have efficiently been disparaged. However, if we take the current challenges to the survival of human kind seriously, we need to look for new directions for development: we need to learn from the developmental *values* of other cultures. In this article I introduce some exploratory thoughts on what African philosophy could offer to the debate.

#### **I. GLOBALIZATION OF THE WESTERN CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT: CONSUMERIST CULTURE, FREE MARKET ECONOMY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION**

The concept of development that we use today (at international forums and development cooperation) has clearly Western origins.<sup>2</sup> Western countries have efficiently, through colonization (often termed as modernization and sometimes camouflaged also as ‘civilization missions’), international trade, economic liberalism and most recently international development cooperation, set their own unsustainable life styles as models and ideals for the rest of the world. The capitalist system, which is combined with European style political processes and institutions, has been set as the ultimate goal for the so-called ‘less developed’ or ‘developing’ countries. This model has become the global ideology that creates continuously new needs, wants, and higher desired standards of living for the West as well as for ‘the rest.’ *As post-development critique* has very aptly exemplified, the Western development paradigm has set a hierarchical agenda for international development cooperation by categorizing countries and nations according to their ‘level

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1] See for example Assadourian 2012, UNDP 2011, 2013; UNDPSP 2012, UNICEF 2013, UNSCHLPS 2012, World Bank 2004, 2011, World Watch Institute 2012, 2013.

2] Traditionally the Western scientific, economic and political discourses on ‘development’ refer to a change or transition from ‘worse to a better state of affairs’ (from poverty to higher living standards; from authoritarianism to democracy; from primitive ways of life to civilized and progressive culture; from bartering, or centralized or to free markets and economic growth). The direction towards more and better is a linear process based on the assumption of everlasting growth and perpetually expanding consumption. See Escobar 1985, 132-145, Esteva Sachs 2001, Shuurman 2000, Subramanian et al. 2002.

of development'<sup>3</sup>. Esteva and Sachs (2001) argue that 'underdevelopment' began on January 20, 1949 when American President Harry S. Truman at the end of the World War II took office and gave a speech in which he promoted "a bold new programme for making benefits of our (the USA) scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of *underdeveloped areas*" of the world.<sup>4</sup> The realization of this new "programme of development" was to help the so called "underdeveloped" (people, areas, nations, cultures) to escape their 'undignified' condition and to reach the model offered by the (already) developed West with the help of its science, technology, economy and ideology.

In many aspects, the current development agenda has not changed that much from the earlier colonial agenda that set out 'civilization missions' to 'primitive countries' forcing these to adopt the models of European political, educational and social institutions and to adapt to the European life styles. This approach has set as the core indicators of development to be the measurements economic growth, GNP, and productive business environment. Generally the wealthier the nation, the higher it is placed in international indices that categorize the nations according to their 'level of development.' Even the more comprehensive statistics on human well-being tend to include indicators that assess industrial progress, production capacity, and purchasing power. All these indicators calculate how close the 'underdeveloped' of the world has reach in its quest to achieve the model set by the Western political, economic, technological, scientific and cultural practices. (Esteva 1992, 2-4, Escobar 1985, 132-45, Nustad 2001, Sachs 1992, 7-19, and Shuurman 2000)

Contemporary development thinking is then founded on instrumental economic values and empirical facts related to the laws of supply and demand. This has led to a pattern of development planning that does not make a clear distinction between its *descriptive* and *normative* elements; for its *ideals* and *practices*. What the Western development partners have promoted as desirable development is actually the historical development their own nations. The Western socio-politico-economic model has been set as an ideal for the rest of the world. However, as we move forward in our history, the goal posts keep on

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3] More in detail on the post-development and post-colonial critique of the Western concept of development see Escobar 1985, Moyo 2011, Nustad 2001, Nyerere 1967, Rodney 2001, Rist 2002, Sachs 1992, Senghor 1964, Schuurman 2000, Subramaniam 2002.

4] In the same speech Truman noted that old imperialism has no place in the programme of development that is based on the concepts of *democratic fair dealing*. According to the post-development critique this speech made two billion people in the world at once become 'underdeveloped.' In a manner of speaking all these people ceased being what they were, in all their diversity. Instead, they were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others' reality: a mirror that belittles them and sends them off to the end of the queue, a mirror that reshapes their identity by homogenizing them and classifying them – economically, scientifically, politically and culturally. (Esteva 2001, 7) At this same instance the concept of 'democratic fair dealing' per se become as a part of the model of development that integrated market capitalism with the individualistic values of liberal democracy. (Esteva 2001, 7)

changing and moving ahead – remaining always just little beyond the reach of the rest: *the less developed nations*.

This approach to development is logically faulty as it is based on G.E. Moore's *naturalistic fallacy* that deduces *ought* from *is*; *values* from *facts*. However, as David Hume already pointed out *from what is* we have no clear moral justification to derive *what ought to be*. There is no moral justification to claim that the Western history provides the best development model for the rest of the world. In fact, as many of the Western countries are themselves at present struggling economically, and starting to feel and see the consequences of climate change and environmental degeneration, they feel lost in their attempts to find the right direction forward. There is a feel that some change is needed, but there are no alternatives at sight to turn to. However, there is a need for the world to look beyond historical contexts and open our minds for different, 'unconventional' ways to think about development.<sup>5</sup> If we fail to do that, the danger is that development turns from 'innovative progress' easily into determinism that lets us believe that whatever (bad) might and will happen in any case as it is all out of our control.

When economic growth is the main goal, rationalist self-interest becomes accepted if not desired feature of human behavior. Already, political and business elites across the world work together to further enrich themselves – but this is 'allowed' if not 'protected' by the hope that there is a 'trigger effect' that produces some grumbles of goods and income also to those others, and maybe in the end also something for the poorest. When other idealistic values are stripped from developmental practice, we have a modern day's version of Adam Smith's and Bernard Mandeville's "greed is good" –thesis. In his classic work *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) Adam Smith argues that individual's rational profit maximization creates more to share between all. Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733) noted in his satirical work *The Fable of Bees or the Private Vices and the Public Benefits* (1724) that the complex relation between individual virtue, egoistic benefit maximization and the promotion of the common good. Mandeville emphasized that it is hypocritical to believe 'that men can be virtuous without any self-denial.' Instead, the common good of the society in fact requires individual consumption and self-indulgence. This classic liberal thinking is very different from the approach that sees virtuous life as a life that realizes human nature, and is thus, the life we should strive for, as elaborated by philosophers of the Ancient Greek, such as Plato and Aristotle.

However, if markets dictate our desired human characteristics and profit seeking mechanisms we need to work with, *equality* can never be the ultimate goal of development – and the alleviation of poverty cannot be realized. When development policies, pragmatic politics, and markets forces are set to work together, the results do not benefit the poor. Instead, those who already have resources and power are in the winning positions. We can pretend that development cooperation will, in the long run, eradicate absolute

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5] On Naturalistic Fallacy and Hume's argument on deriving "ought" from "is" see for example Flew 1969, 64-69.

poverty. However, we should seriously consider how this is possible, when presently it is evident that illicit capital flight from many 'developing countries' is much higher in volume than incoming development aid. Both the North and the South engage in illegal – and at minimum unethical – practices which contribute to persistent global and local inequality: by providing tax havens and opportunities to laundering dirty money, by allowing illegal trafficking and smuggling (arms, drugs, persons, trophies, natural resources, etc.) to go on. (Shaxson 2011, 20-55) Set the rhetoric aside - there are no serious attempts to control these practices. In fact, all this appears to be beyond any government's control despite all the knowledge and information we have on all this. Similarly in many parts of the world, the international community continues to give development assistance to the governments which are not fully legitimate; which engage in bad governance and corruption, and above all, which do not have the well-being of the people as their priority. While this is in general recognized within the development industry, it is still not openly admitted and dealt with. It is still a *taboo* to admit that development cooperation is a part of delicate international business negotiations. The West is willing to 'pay' with its development assistance for working diplomatic relations in order to guarantee its own investments. This is more and more evident in relation to the recent new discoveries of natural resources in Africa and elsewhere.

Ironically, at the same time, the traditional Western donors are losing their political weight as the new players have joined the game. The Western demand for adoption of liberal democracy and the rule of law is hardly convincing in a situation in which many Western governments themselves are losing their control to the global market forces. In the North as well as in the South governments are hijacked and states captured by business interests of global markets which are creating economic elites that work together across the borders. The elites use political offices to support their profit making. In many poor countries, the governments practice state run capitalism for their private benefit rather than provide for the interests of the citizens. The donor money supports directly the business interests of these elites who assign the public works to their own companies. This creates situation that is called "aid curse." The governments of many poor countries maintain pseudo-democratic models of governance – with the help of their Western development partners. (See Djankov et al. 2005, Shaxson 2011) <sup>6</sup>

While the current development model still emphasizes democracy as the most desirable form of governance, it is evident that power is not with the people, but with those who have the economic muscle. The same goes for the so called developing countries which are pressured to use democratic processes for choosing their leadership. The choice is seldom 'free and fair.' In fact, in African elections nowadays the standard has

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<sup>6</sup>I want to clarify that I am not arguing that there were not people and maybe even countries who were not seriously trying to alleviate poverty, narrow the gap between the have' and have not's with all the good intentions. I rather claim that the current system that our concept of development is based on does not allow that despite all the good intentions that we might have had behind the development cooperation and aid. The global system simply leaves humanistic values aside and focuses on neo-liberal practices.

been lowered to free and credible elections. Those elected are usually those who have the means to manipulate the system and the electorate.

As our model of development is economy based, in many parts of the world multinational companies are today more powerful than many individual governments and states. The two institutions, the state and the market, usually work together. They are inseparably linked by the development project of modernity and progress. Corporate oligarchs and financial speculators have increasing control on our lives particularly since the public-private partnership promotion has led governments to progressively hand over the production of goods and services to private businesses. Even as "a welfare agency," the state cannot work against the markets. Rather it is a complementary institutional device which protects the extension of the markets. After all it needs markets to maintain itself. (Sachs 1992)

Global capitalism, enterprise and international development cooperation agendas are so closely intertwined with the wider 'development industry' that it is difficult to let go the naïve belief of the possibility that endless economic growth with increasing material commodities will in the end narrow the gap between rich and poor. Indeed, it would be self-destructive to do so as the development industry is big business that uses vast amount of money to maintain itself. The sad but evident truth is that, in reality the poorest of the poor have never been of interest to the markets. The majority of people living in affluence (anywhere in the world) would never be willing to give up their own comfortable standards of living to equalize the (re)distribution of resources. (See for example Moyo 2011, 13-33, Rodney 2011, Sachs 1992.)<sup>7</sup>

Instead, as the goalposts for desirable development are set to the rest of the world according to the neo-liberal profit maximization, the result is increasing competition on gradually diminishing natural resources. In this global setting it is increasing that the West which set the standards in the first place, is now struggling to keep up with the rest. The most recent economic crisis in the West (that started around 2008) is slowly turning the tables around in relation to global markets. Just little earlier the Western 'developers' were praising the Asian Tigers for their economic performance and were happy to have new markets to get into. Even *the UNDP 2013 Development Report* notes that from Brazil to South Africa to India to China, the largest developing countries have become major drivers of the global economy. Today they are not only taking over big parts of the global markets, but also giving loans and assistance not only to the countries in the South (and particularly to those with substantive natural resources) but also to the struggling Western economies. Leaders of the BRICS group, in their recent meeting in Durban (March 2013), already announced that they had agreed to set up a development bank that

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7] For example Peter Singer's classic argument that we should sacrifice our personal comfort to aid the world's poor as long as in exchange we do not lose anything morally as or more significant has been debated and rejected several times as being morally too demanding as people cannot be expected to give up on their personal already achieved well-being/material standard of living to help others – no matter how much in need these people may be. For the original argument see Singer 1972: 229-243.



could ultimately challenge the dominance the Bretton Woods institutions.<sup>8</sup> While still in its infancy, this initiative may well be realized in the near future, as the BRICS already together produce some 20 per cent of global GDP. Many African governments/elites and upper middle-classes are now joining in the global market competition with new vigor and with the help of their newly (re)discovered natural resources.<sup>9</sup> (See for example UNDP 2011, 2013.)

## II. THE ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT AS SOCIAL JUSTICE

In the early development thinking also in the West such humanistic values, as *solidarity*, *equity*, and *freedom* were at the core in justifying liberal political order. Now they, however, have been replaced by libertarian emphasis on economic competition on advancing one's self-interest. The human-centered approach was earlier presented maybe most elaborately by Immanuel Kant. Kant called us to act in a way that we would treat humanity, whether in our own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means but always as an end (see for example Kant 1964). Gradually, nevertheless, as the history moved on, the more instrumental way thinking shifted the emphasis from human moral agency to more procedural justification of political and economic distribution of powers and goods. When the Western pragmatism spread, the humanistic values were gradually replaced with mechanistic and rational self-interest. Nevertheless, as relics from the earlier humanist ideals, many Western states still rhetorically justify their 'development interventions' in the name of enhancing universal human rights and advancing global equality. At least recently there have been some efforts to reintroduce humanistic values to development. One of these theoretical efforts has already influenced the statistical tools for measurement of human well-being. This is the Capability Approach introduced by Amartya Sen, and later taken forward by various other scholars. Sen argues well against such indicators as GNP or BNP as suitable measurements for *the standards of living*. Instead, he emphasizes that we need to focus more on *the quality of life*. Sen asks us to avoid "commodity fetishism" in order not to give intrinsic value to material goods and prosperity. Instead we should see human well-being as the ultimate objective of all

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8] So far, the BRICS have failed to produce any details on the size or structure of such a bank. The BRICS leaders also agreed to establish a \$100bn pool of foreign reserves to "contribute to strengthening the global financial safety net and complement existing international arrangements as an additional line of defense." But again, there were no details on how this would be structured or implemented. The push to create a bank, was the key theme of the BRICS summit in Durban 2013, which brought together leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The move is seen as a test of whether the club of nations, can develop beyond a loose political grouping.

9] In fact some of the still poorest and most unequal countries like Mozambique or Angola have the highest economic growth (over 7%), compared to China's approximately 9%. Simultaneously the USA and the EU countries varies in average 1.5-4% And alarmingly the inequality in the Western and Northern highly industrialized countries appears to be increasing. On increasing inequalities in Europe see for example UNICEF 2013.

development and economic policies. (Sen 1994, 1999; see also Alkire and Santos 2010, Crocker 1992, Nussbaum 1987).

Sen's views on *development as freedom* and realization of *human functionings and capabilities* have added an important dimension to the theory and policy discussion on development. They have also introduced thinking that has been uncharacteristic to the Western concept of development, by arguing that 'bigger is not always better.'<sup>10</sup> Sen's approach suggests that it is possible to find limits to feasible economic growth while diminishing inequality and alleviating poverty. Thus, for Sen economic growth is still part of the idea of development, though not a goal in itself. Despite its criticism of overly individualized markets, Sen is still highly optimistic that humanistic values and the quest for economic growth and market competition can find a peaceful way to work together. Thus, Sen is not nearly as critical of the Western neo-liberal development paradigms, as for example, the 'De-growth' movement. (Sen 1984, 1999)<sup>11</sup> Sen also recognizes the need to bring in humanistic elements to development thinking. Development should be seen as social justice and human flourishing in a teleological sense. We want development because we want the human beings to be able to use and further develop their human capacities, such as their moral agency. Focusing on growth and material commodities alienates humans from their true nature as moral agents, and makes us adopt a linear approach to development which focuses on individuals' personal benefits and profit maximization.

However, as Gilbert Rist, in *The History of Development: from Western Origins to Global Faith* noted, in early days development was seen as cyclical process in Aristotelian sense. This was long before the new-liberal paradigm introduced the logically inconsistent linear understanding of progress and growth as a new paradigm in development thinking. Aristotle's cyclic view was descriptive in a sense that it followed natural change. The cycles meant that which is born and grows up will also face away and die, in the perpetual serious of new beginnings. This was Aristotle's solution to the basic question concerning persistence in change and the ceaseless return of the same. (Rist 2002, 31)

### III. AFRICAN CONTRIBUTION TO A PARADIGM CHANGE IN DEVELOPMENT THINKING

Amartya Sen's capability approach is working on providing more room for cultural interpretations on the value of development. I suggest that for we should take this opportunity and start exploring further, what, for example, African philosophy can offer to this debate. Someone may now ask, why particularly an African approach would be

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10] Sen has also emphasized that poverty is multidimensional, and in general it is not due of lack of resources, but rather due to lack of access to needed resources. Capabilities approach has been highly influential and capabilities approach has been utilized by the UNDP and by various NGOs. In fact, the capabilities account influenced the creation of HDI in the first place (as an alternative to GNP-type output measurements). The new Multidimensional Poverty Index, based on Sen's ideas and trying to capture deprivations not captured by income measurements, has been used in HDI calculations since 2010.

11] On Degrowth movement see Assadourian 2012.



interesting, after all, also the Eastern philosophies rely on holistic approaches which see harmony as their ultimate goal. Thus, let me explain my choice: Africa has been in the center of development discussions and practices for decades, if not centuries. After formal decolonization, Africa has continued to be a battle ground for competition of the Northern ideologies and economic needs. It has also been a testing ground for different development theories from needs-based theories to socialist experiments to the final takeover by neo-liberal economic practices. With this mixed bag of social and political models Africa is still divided between the traditional communitarian values and communal practices and the newly adopted profit-making individualism. This mixture with traditional and imported ideals as well as practices - what I have labelled elsewhere as libertarian communitarianism – has resulted in aggressive competition on power, violent conflicts, corruption, political manipulation of ethnicity and sub-national communal loyalties, nepotism and favoritism, as well as continuing poverty and inequality – all this despite the decades of development aid and collaboration; maybe even because of it.<sup>12</sup>

The self-interested and extremely wealthy political and economic elites of many Africa countries have learnt how to play with the rules of the markets. They have set aside the traditional values of African communalism, that is, the shared, 'rock-bottom' interests of the people, i.e., the common good.<sup>13</sup> Even more they have learnt to maintain impunity by appealing to the individualistic concept of that call for the respect for 'state sovereignty,' autonomy and individual rights, equal partnership and the principles of ownership.

Besides rhetorical use of individualistic framework, many contemporary African leaders have also learnt to use the imported Western institutions of democracy to maintain their personal powers, structural injustices and poor forms of governance. They have also learnt that any human rights and good governance conditionalities for development aid can and will be sacrificed for the demands of global markets and economic interests. The Western hypocrisy on *preaching* human rights but *practicing* self-interest was heavily attacked by the African liberation movements. Now, however, some of the same African leaders who were there to liberate their nations, are themselves preaching traditional African solidarity values while they have no intention realizing these themselves.

However, while the political practice in many places in Africa today appears to be based on self-interest and personal profit making, the original values for liberation from colonization are still worth looking into as maybe they could guide us an alternative thinking on development. We only need once again distinguish between negative practices and positive values and take a look at their philosophical foundations. As we struggle to de-colonize our minds from the historical indoctrination on what is the best form of political and economic governance, we can learn from the African holistic and communalist world view. This view gave the original foundations to the post-

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12] On libertarian communitarianism see more in detail Hellsten 2008.

13] On African communalist and consensus democracy, as the definition of "rock bottom" interest of the citizens see Wiredu 1997.

colonial African socialism which was based on such community-centered values as egalitarianism, solidarity and social responsibility. African socialism was introduced as an alternative for individualistic capitalism in many newly independent countries. As an ideology for development, African socialist approach was drawn from communalist values, rather than directly from socialist political theories. Its original goal was to activate the people to work for their communities, rather than care merely for their individual self-interest. African socialism criticized individualistic emphasis on self-interest that can easily lead society into endless competition and greed. Particularly for the fragile, newly independent African states, the individualistic focus on individuals' rights rather than on social duties was seen to easily lead into social fragmentation and disharmony based on competing interests. Such African philosophers and statesmen as Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah predicted well what would happen to the African society if it leaned too much on individualism. They saw the danger of ethnic conflict, the negligence of the participation of the large rural population, as well as in the lack of interest to improve the well-being of the poorest of the poor. Thus, they wanted to base the development of these newly independent nations on traditional solidarity values. (Nkrumah 1970, Nyerere 1967, 1973, Senghor 1962)<sup>14</sup>

The original value basis of African communalist socialism never stood the chance of survival. The international community pressured post-colonial states to discontinue their attempts to put these values in practice and adapt to the hegemonic market economy instead. After all the structural adjustments programmes by the Bretton Woods institution and other imported development agents, policies and conditions, that pressured for privatization and open markets made sure there is no room for experimenting with alternative ideologies. We might have diverse views on the success of the practical application of African socialism in the post-colonial states. Nevertheless, we can still maybe agree that its original values still have moral significance and they are very much in line with the original humanistic values of early Europe. The goals of self-reliance, building non-exploitive 'moral' economies with mutual trust, participation and equal membership in communities are good building blocks for any nation at any given time. Similarly, the emphasis on moral responsibility that takes seriously our obligations not only towards our neighbors but also to the humanity *per se* can better lead towards harmonious co-existence and the protection of future. (See for example Nyerere 1967, 1968)

The ideals of African communalist socialism underline hard work by the people. Economic transactions are necessary, but capitalism should not be let to take over the essentials of human and community centered developmental goals of egalitarian social

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14] As many African countries gained independence during the 1960s, some of these newly formed governments rejected the ideas of capitalism in favor of a more afro-centric economic model. Advocates of African socialism claimed that it was not State centered economy of the European socialism, neither was it totally the opposite of capitalism. Instead it was recreation of the solidarity values of socialism in the context of African traditional communalism. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Léopold Senghor of Senegal, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Sékou Touré of Guinea, were maybe the main architects of African Socialism.

life. Modernity's view that there is not real development without capitalist economy and heavy industrialization were questioned already by the first leaders of the post-colonial African nations. African communalism criticized world trade for its exploitive and neo-imperialistic nature that created dependency. They also emphasized the role of the citizens in production of the common good, and solidarity in sharing this good. (Nyerere 1967, 1968, 1973).

However, even if African communalist liberation ideologies may have been pushed aside, we can revive their values and see how they can bring our current development thinking closer to the humanistic set of values. And to understand the meaning of these values we also try to adapt to a holistic world view that calls for deeper re-reflection on the meaning of 'good life' in the wider context of human existence. I do not suggest that we should replace individualism with collectivism *per se*, but I want to argue that since humanism is getting buried under neo-liberal pragmatism, we may have to find its core message by looking at the values presented by other cultures. If humanist values were as universal as they are claimed to be, we can find their traces also in other histories. This time African history can show us how there also, in much shorter time the humanistic values were suppressed by neo-liberal economic rationalism, and little room is left for realizing development in a manner that sets individuals, communities and the humanity in the center of all these changes that affect us globally.

Thus, if we set to 'de-colonialize' our minds from the dominant mechanistic development paradigm, following is what the original African philosophical worldview can offer:

1) Metaphysically African thought can provide a more holistic view of the world and its inhabitants; on the interconnectedness of past, current and future generations; of nature and human beings, of the whole universe we are all part of. African thought is also inherently more idealistic whilst in the West currency is given to material entities. That gives us better acknowledge our mutual dependence on each other – and our communal nature as human beings. Unlike the atomistic, rationalistic, and individualistic view, it gives us metaphysical foundations also for intergenerational justice. It can be used to logically justify our moral obligations towards generations to come by respecting the nature – and the continuous cycle of life - around us.<sup>15</sup>

2) Epistemologically, in African thought, also knowledge is a product of evolutions and expansion of human wisdom. Scientific knowledge needs to be complemented with ethical wisdom and sagacity which refers also to understanding the context. Thus, if we could admit that truth itself changes in time; and in many sense remains more like an opinion (depending on its presenter and context) than something that can be scientifically proven as a fact, we would be more open look at alternatives that better fit the prevalent circumstances. At the same time we need to respect the wisdom of those who have more

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15] More on African thought as the basis of our moral responsibility and obligations towards future generations in African thought see Behrens 2012, 179-91.

experience, and those who lived before us. We should learn from the history rather than think that looking back in history is merely reflecting the 'lower stages' of development.

Sagacity is not only about the wise men living in villages, but learning to turn information into knowledge and seriously engaging in understanding the problems in order to find appropriate solutions. Wisdom is more about learning moral sense and judgment – in that sense, moral agency – than collecting knowledge. All in all, wise people are not set to follow one tradition or another blindly, but to judge the negative and positive elements of different values, traditions, and practices in a manner that better guides us towards the preservation of human beings and humanistic thinking. (See for example Oruka 1981, 1983, Wiredu 1996, 1997, 1998, van der Walt 1997.)

African philosophers state that in relation to knowledge and knowing, the Africans tend to see themselves as close to (or as part of) concrete reality, while the Westerners tend to discuss reality in abstract terms as if they were not part of it. This Western position is particularly problematic when Western science tends to present its results as 'the supreme truths' which disregard local knowledge, experience and wisdom that might offer solutions better suited to the circumstances. The abstraction from reality is a problem also in political debates on the issues of human security, climate change and environmental destruction. If we adopted African recognition that we all are parts of the nature: what happens to our environment affects our lives directly everywhere; not just a number of the most vulnerable somewhere living in the harshest conditions. If we saw ourselves better in the center of reality, rather than as external observers, we also could perceive future as a continuance of presence, and we would acknowledge better also how each of us; our choices, values, life styles and our patterns of thinking are always influenced by our history and circumstance. (See van der Walt 1997, 81-82.) The threats to our planet do not happen to someone else, or sometime in the future, but they are happening right now to all of us – due to our actions and inactions. The threat to humanity is wider than concrete environmental consequences; it also diminishes our moral judgment when we are unable or unwilling to make difficult decision and stand by these decisions.

3) African world view calls for culturally and ethically different, more community oriented social ethics and patterns of life. These ethics are based on values of solidarity and egalitarianism.<sup>16</sup> Particularly here we can see the fundamental difference between spiritual and materialistic views of development. As we have discussed, the world as it is constituted today is largely led and guided by western world view according to which materialism is the measure of good life. However, if individuals see themselves as separate from reality, from the objects, they become easily users, whose main agenda is to utilize things (objects) and even other people, for their own personal, short term enjoyment;

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[16] For those interested in an extended discourse on that, see, for example Leopold Senghor (1964), Julius Nyerere (1968), Placide Tempels (1969), Bennie van der Walt (1997), Polycarp Ikuenobe (2006).

even if this may neglect the social needs of their communities, or be environmentally detrimental in a longer run.<sup>17</sup>

Nature is the source that provides us our lives and all we need for living. It also hosts our ancestors as well as our off-spring. Thus, it needs to be respected.<sup>18</sup> In short, community gives meaning to individual human beings, as we all are members of various communities; the earth being the community of all these overlapping communities. The mainstay of communalism in traditional African culture, revived by various African liberation philosophers, is the idea that the identity of an individual is never separable from the sociocultural environment, neither from the wider environment and nature – not even from the continuity of generations. The individual is ontologically, cosmologically, spiritually, and normatively connected to the community, not an atomistic agent who needs to care merely for his or her individual well-being, advantage, wealth and profit.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

My aim in this paper has been to take seriously Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu's warning of not mixing values and facts, ideals and practices together – as has been happening in development thinking and practice across the world. The practices and values of both traditions: individualistic and communitarian, are mismatched in the current politics in many parts of Africa and the rest of the world, not only by the African leaders but also by the Western 'development partners.' However, if we detach the humanistic moral agenda from political and economic practical ambitions, we can redirect development to have more 'human face' and we can find the shared universal values across the cultural boundaries.

One way towards accepting our global responsibility is to revive African post-colonial philosophers' request to de-colonize our minds. This means deconstructing and reconstructing contemporary political theory and practice; open it to new interpretations.

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17] Leopold Senghor is renowned to have expressed the subject-object dichotomy in the Western culture as follows: "He [the European] first distinguishes the object from himself. He keeps it at a distance. He freezes it out of time and, in a way, out of space. He fixes it, he kills it. With his precision instruments he dissects it in a pitiless factual analysis. As a scientist, yet at the same time prompted by practical considerations, the European makes use of the *Other* that he has killed in this way for his practical ends. He makes a *means* of it. With a centripetal movement he assimilates it." Senghor 1964.

18] Literature and studies that focus on African communities, whether within the disciplines of philosophy, anthropology, ethnology or religion, all bring that African societies are communalistic and it is this aspect that punctuates these societies from other so-called modern societies; it is this aspect that underlie their ethics, epistemology, logic, metaphysics, ontology, psychology, notions of punishments, and even language. See for example Ikuenobe 2006, Oruka 1981, 1983, Tempels 1969, van der Walt 1997, Wiredu 1996, 1997.

19] The community in African culture and worldview is not a mere conglomeration of individuals but a tight composite of individuals. "We" rather than "I" in African cultures is a transcendental or organic "we" and cannot be reduced to its component parts. It is in this regard the self is indeed the community. The individual self is, by various organic processes, constituted by the community and the community is an organically fused collectivity of the individual selves. (Ikuenobe 2006, 56)

The interpretation presented in this paper draws from the traditional African holism that sees that development is a journey towards more harmonic co-existence and (global and local) social justice. Metaphysical and epistemological framework of African worldview asks us not to conceive development as a mono-tract linear activity, but as a process in which we are trying to learn to 'be more human' by being more ethically sensitive to our social circumstances. Its goal can be set in finding harmony, realizing more egalitarian justice, and fulfilling our obligations to future generations by balancing our rights with duties. This process is cyclic rather than linear. However, it does not have to be based directly on the Aristotelian view that would descriptively see development as a cycle of flourishing, demise and rebirth. If we commit ourselves to set 'being human' as the goal of development, we can expand this cycle by using knowledge and moral wisdom of the last generation to deepen the ethical enlightenment of the next generation.

All in all, to secure decent living conditions to the future generations, we need to find a way to bring humanistic values back to the development agenda. We need to abolish finally the division between developing and 'developed,' 'model' countries. Instead, we ought to acknowledge that we are all developing communities and states that need to look for new direction together if we want to manage the transition from unsustainability to sustainability. In other words, we have to look at the values for development from altogether different perspectives. By separating values from practices, we can see that the goal of development practices should be in finding better ways of 'being human' rather than trying to endlessly increase the material well-being and standards of living. Whatever we do, internationally or locally, in the name of development, it should lead to lead to securing (political, economic, cultural, environmental) environment in which ethical considerations can make a difference and we can fulfill our common Kantian obligations as autonomous moral agents.

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