



Towards a new paradigm of global development? Beyond the limits of international development

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journals.sagepub.com/home/phg**Rory Horner** 

University of Manchester, UK and University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Abstract

An international development framing is increasingly ill-fitting to a 21st century characterized by inter-connected globalized capitalism, the challenge of sustainable development, as well as the blurring of North–South boundaries. While the term global development is increasingly employed, and appears more suited, it is used with different implicit meanings and is often conflated with international development. This article explores the potential of an emerging paradigm of global development as applicable to the whole world. A relational global development approach is advocated here, acknowledging the need for critical attention to the enduring tensions between universalization and geographic variation.

Keywords

global development, Global North, Global South, international development, scope

1 Introduction

Often associated with a North–South binary, the term ‘international development’ seems increasingly inappropriate for encompassing the various actors, processes and major challenges with which our world engages in the early 21st century. The era, if it ever truly existed, is long past where inter-state actions under big ‘D’ development intervention, through aid from Northern countries to the South, could be considered most crucial in shaping development outcomes. Little ‘d’ processes of ongoing economic transformation, often involving civil society and firms, as well as states, have long been argued to be the essence of development/under-development and to shape uneven processes of progress and well-being (e.g. Hart, 2001). Across a number of different dimensions, whether it be in terms of

income (UNDP, 2013), wealth (OECD, 2010), middle classes (Sumner, 2016), poverty (Kanbur and Sumner, 2012), inequality (Bourguignon, 2015; Milanovic, 2016) or development cooperation (Mawdsley, 2017, 2018), various new geographies of development can be identified over the last decade (Horner and Hulme, 2019a). The universality of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (agreed in September 2015) and the Paris Climate Agreement (December 2015), as well as the necessity of confronting ‘planetary boundaries’ for human development (Steffen et al., 2015), highlights the limitations of the North–South divide

Corresponding author:

Rory Horner, University of Manchester, Arthur Lewis Building, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, UK.

Email: rory.horner@manchester.ac.uk

of international development. That the blurring of the boundaries between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries is now formally recognized is evident in the World Bank announcement of April 2016 that it will no longer distinguish between the two groups in its annual World Development Indicators.

While there have been earlier shifts in the approach to (e.g. modernization, dependency, neoliberalism), and understandings of (e.g. economic growth, human development, sustainability), development, a potentially paradigmatic contemporary *geographic shift* is emerging. In preference to the rather outdated idea of international development, the term global development can be increasingly regarded as more fitting for the contemporary map of challenges facing our world (Horner and Hulme, 2019a, 2019b). While some earlier calls were made for such an approach (e.g. Hettne, 1995; Pieterse, 1996), a ‘global development paradigm’ (Gore, 2015) has been given further emphasis more recently (see also Kaul, 2017). Increasingly various English-language research centres/higher education institutes,¹ degree programmes/specializations² and think-tanks/organizations³ incorporate ‘global development’ into their name. Since 2010, the OECD has published a series of reports called *Perspectives on Global Development*. A popular website and blog in the UK is *The Guardian Global Development* series, and #globaldev is a widely used hashtag on Twitter. Yet the term global development is often conflated with international development,⁴ is sometimes used with different implicit understandings, and has not been systematically unpacked. So, what does global development refer to and how might it be distinct from international development? This question is of profound importance for what is prioritized as a key development issue, and also for understanding the causal processes shaping development, and for related strategic action.

This article offers a systematic unpacking of global development and its significance as a

contemporary shift in the geography of development research and practice. Three major reasons for moving beyond North–South framings of international development are identified (Section II): the interconnectedness of globalized capitalism, the challenge of sustainable development (especially as a result of climate change) and the blurring of North–South boundaries. Each factor is argued to have had earlier iterations, but to have been augmented in the 21st century. The question of what is global development is then explored (Section III), with particular attention given to the potential of an understanding focused on its geographic scope in relation to the whole world, rather than ‘just’ the Global South as in international development. Yet while global development offers the prospect of a paradigm shift, the term/framing is open to various interpretations and deployments, some of which may amount to a mere relabelling from international development. Two vignettes (Section IV) illustrate tensions between universalization and geographic variation in framings of global development. It is concluded (Section V) that the formulation of a relational global development fitted to contemporary, 21st-century development issues is both an exciting opportunity and a continuing challenge.

II Beyond North–South international development

‘International development’ is often loosely used as an umbrella term for development research and practice, combining two words which do not necessarily fully reflect all that is associated with their domain. The origins of the term ‘international’ are dated to Jeremy Bentham, who coined the word in the late 18th century in relation to the law governing the relations between states (Suganami, 2009: 231). ‘International’ gained popularity in a 19th-century context of rising nation-states and cross-border transactions. Meanwhile, the term

‘development’ can be variously used to refer to an idea, objective and/or activity, often interrelated, and often with considerable ambiguity or looseness (Kothari and Minogue, 2001; Cornwall, 2007). Nevertheless, an important distinction can be made between big ‘D’ or imminent development as intentional practice or willed action, and little ‘d’ or immanent development as underlying processes of capitalist development (Cowen and Shenton, 1996; Hart, 2001; Bernstein, 2006).

The term international development is often associated with actions designed for, and research relating to, poor countries (Sumner and Tribe, 2008; Mönks et al., 2017), including foreign aid (Currie-Alder, 2016: 7). But it is important to distinguish between the relevant imminent processes of active intervention and those immanent processes of development that are widely noted as particularly significant in shaping outcomes (Hart, 2001; Mohan and Wilson, 2005). Many key development actors, such as those from the United Nations system, major development banks or official development assistance agencies, are linked to the inter-state system. Yet the term international can arguably suggest an over focus on exchanges between country units (Scholte, 2002), and thus imminent or big ‘D’ development. Various elements of immanent development, the non-state networks that cross multiple countries, as well as spaces and communities within countries (Perkins, 2013: 1003), can then be overlooked. Indeed, much of the empirical challenge for 21st-century development, in its research and practice, and especially in relation to immanent or little ‘d’ processes, falls outside the boundaries of a narrowly-conceived international development focus on big ‘D’ development that is designed by the North and oriented around transfers (aid, institutions, policies, technologies) to the South.

While the conceptual and policy approaches have varied, the geographic focus for international development – in study, research and practice – has continued to be largely centred

on the Global South (or in earlier terminology, the Third World, or geographically Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific). Inequalities between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries have been given prominence (e.g. Brandt, 1980), in accordance with a macro-scale geography of a world divided into two (in relation to which the former Soviet bloc – as the Second World – has always sat awkwardly positioned). The Millennium Development Goals, for example, were a clear manifestation of this, being overwhelmingly designed by ‘developed’ countries who set targets for ‘developing’ countries (Hulme, 2009).

The consistent association of development, both in study and practice, with just the Global South has nonetheless long been questioned. A long tradition of interest in studying development and comparative social change pre-dates and goes well beyond the North–South boundaries of development studies. Many of the foundations of modern social science were centred on social change across space, and thus on development in the sense of the dynamics of accumulation, its institutional conditions and social implications (e.g. the interpretations of Smith, Marx, Weber) (Bernstein, 2006; see also Peet and Hartwick, 2015, for an excellent overview). Various approaches to and models of development were subsequently advocated. Seers (1963), among many others, pointed to distinctive developing country conditions and therefore a need for an associated distinctive body of development economics research. In contrast, Hettne (1995) and Pieterse (1996) challenged such perspectives, arguing for an integrated historical social science that was focused on challenges of transformation and change (rather than just being defined by particular countries), and relevant globally, including in the so-called ‘industrial countries’. Poverty and social exclusion were identified as issues resonating across both the Global North and South (De Haan and Maxwell, 1998; Gaventa, 1998; Maxwell, 1998; Therien, 1999). In a

statement that is even more prescient now, a host of common challenges were outlined:

If ‘development studies’, by induction, is what students of development do, then many current themes are relevant to both North and South: restructuring the state; poverty reduction and livelihood; political development and governance; gender inequality; social capital; agency and participation . . . the list goes on – and of course includes social exclusion. (Maxwell, 1998: 25–6)

Similar sentiments were expressed by Jones (2000), who questioned why it is alright to do development ‘over there’, but not over ‘here’ (in the UK or, more widely, the Global North), and by Potter, who argued that those ‘interested in development must endeavour to encompass issues and policies of development wherever they occur’ (2001: 425). Willis (2005: 16) also critiqued the idea that ‘development’ was something that was only relevant to the Global South:

This distinction fails to recognise the dynamism of all societies and the continued desire by populations for improvements (not necessarily in material goods). It also fails to consider the experiences of social exclusion that are found within supposedly ‘developed’ countries or regions.

Post-colonial and post-development approaches have also long questioned the North–South (or Western/non-Western) binary, examining in detail the geographical constructions of difference involved and their implications (Said, 1979). What became known as post-development thinking famously highlighted the social construction of much of Asia, Africa and Latin America as ‘Third World’, arguing that a new mode of thinking was being created about life in those countries as well as in Western economic practices, and was ultimately becoming a powerful apparatus of control (Escobar, 1995). Representations of a ‘developed’ West and a ‘developing’ rest were invoked to justify

intervening to help others (Kothari, 2005). In addition to deconstructing this binary, such scholarship has also pointed to the contingency of North–South relations, and the need to include the Global North as an important site of development studies research (Radcliffe, 2005; Lawson, 2007). The Eurocentrism in classical social science approaches has been resolutely questioned (Chakrabarty, 2000), confronting various parochialisms, including assumptions of the superiority of the West (Lawson, 2007).

In addition to such long-embedded frustrations, three major factors, which each have earlier lineages that have become amplified in the 21st century, support moving beyond a geography of international development focused solely on the Global South: first, the relational interconnectedness of globalized capitalism; second, the global challenge of sustainable development, especially climate change; and third, the accelerated blurring of the North–South boundary. It is important to acknowledge that these broader issues are not necessarily entirely new nor completely independent of each other. Yet they have been amplified considerably this century – consequently challenging hitherto dominant framings of development and warranting (as outlined in Section III) a relational global development approach.

I Global interconnectedness

The relational interconnectedness of globalized capitalism involves processes through which development outcomes in one place are shaped through linkages with other places, and is too easily overlooked in the North–South, ‘developed’/‘developing’ binary. A problem is thereby posed which has become augmented in light of increased interconnectedness under contemporary globalization. Relational approaches critique those explanations of poverty or underdevelopment that are all too frequently framed as a residual problem or lack

of ‘something’ (e.g. markets, technology, globalization) and so are disconnected from the processes and structures which generate wealth and prosperity. Rather than being viewed as a relational problem in accordance with incorporation into global economic and social relations (Therien, 1999; Kaplinsky, 2005), the causes of underdevelopment are then considered as located in a ghettoized Third World or Global South (Saith, 2006).

Relational perspectives pay attention to processes of adverse incorporation and social exclusion (Hickey and Du Toit, 2007), including historical economic and political relations (Mosse, 2010), and how they cut across conventional geographical divides (Roy and Crane, 2015; Elwood et al., 2017; Lawson et al., 2018). In an empirical sense, development outcomes have long been recognized as influenced by wider systems, most notably processes of capitalism and colonialism (e.g. Ghosh, 2019). The mid-20th century dependency (e.g. Frank, 1969 [1966]) and world systems theorists (e.g. Wallerstein, 1979) firmly conceptually located the (under-)development of particular regions and countries within their incorporation into broader trading relations and the capitalist world-economy. However, despite the recognition of a potentially more dynamic semi-periphery, the North–South binary deployed in the framework of a Northern core and Southern periphery was susceptible to somewhat crude simplification and structural rigidity.

The accentuation of late 20th and early 21st-century global interconnectedness has prompted more widespread questioning of understandings of development as an endogenous process within the Global South. Various earlier periods of economic globalization have been cited, especially the late 19th century period of relatively ‘free trade’ (O’Rourke and Williamson, 2002). Yet facilitated by economic liberalization and information and communication technologies, globalization from the late 20th century onwards, through flows of capital,

goods, services, people, ideas and knowledge, has involved much greater functional interconnectedness (Castells, 1996; Dicken, 2015). While globalization was often initially framed in North–South terms, a more multi-polar globalization (The World Bank, 2011) has emerged as part of an East-South turn (Pieterse, 2011) with a substantial growth of South-South trade (Horner, 2016), cooperation (Mawdsley, 2017; Kragelund, 2019) and other relations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Daley, 2018) during the 21st century.

The interconnected nature of global public goods, including in such arenas as health (against infectious diseases), environment, and global financial stability (Alonso, 2012), also raises questions for those approaches which see development as solely shaped by actors in, or as a challenge just for, the Global South. Public goods are those that are ‘fully or partially non-rival and non-excludable’ in terms of their consumption (Kaul, 2017: 143). For global public goods, the public element can also comprise the spatial dimension (across several regions or even reaching to a worldwide span), impact (beyond national jurisdictions) and temporality (long-term effects) (Kaul, 2017: 143). Thus, these are public issues which transcend the capabilities of individual states to effectively address. Global public goods (GPGs) are very significant collective challenges for the whole world (e.g. Sumner and Tiwari, 2010; Sachs, 2012; Kanbur, 2017), not just the Global South or any individual country. Crucial issues across the three domains of the economic, human and environmental aspects of development include financial stability and taxation cooperation (e.g. Zucman, 2015; see also International Centre for Tax and Development, Tax Justice Network), treatments for serious global diseases, and the mitigation of carbon emissions and adaptation to climate change (Alonso, 2012; Leach, 2015; IPCC, 2018). Successfully addressing the issue of global public goods is an important benefit for all countries. Kaul has consequently argued the need for a notion of

global development that comprises attention to ‘the health of the planetary system as a whole’, something which must include ‘development in and of GPGs’ (2017: 143).

Contemporary globalized capitalism thus involves processes and presents challenges which go beyond a North–South international development logic. Two particular dimensions of contemporary globalized capitalism warrant discussion in their own right – first, the environment as a global commons, especially climate change, with wider dimensions of sustainable development; second, the growing share of contemporary global inequalities (across various indicators) that cannot be captured along North–South lines.

2 Sustainable development, especially climate change

Sustainable development is a huge challenge for the whole world, overshadowing and rendering meaningless any association of so-called rich countries having achieved development and of transformation only being required in the Global South. Environmental sustainability has been debated for a considerable time, yet more recently it has grown in prominence both as an empirical challenge and as a focus of scholarly and policy interest. From the Club of Rome’s *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) to the ecological challenges incorporated in the notion of ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992) to the environmental movement and the various Earth Summits, awareness of the environmental and climatic challenge facing global society has been building for decades. Many of the earlier policy approaches were framed around the binary of Global North and South. *Our Common Future* (the Brundtland Report) of 1987 pointed to particular challenges of developing countries and was framed in the binary of the ‘developed’ and the ‘developing’ world (Perkins, 2013: 1005). In relation to climate, the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, following

the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) principle agreed as part of the United Nations Framework of the Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the Rio Summit in 1992, placed responsibilities for reducing carbon emissions on higher-income (Annex I) countries.

The shift towards development having a universal frame of reference is most dramatically expressed in the SDGs, which were agreed in 2015. Their wide range of development goals include but expand well beyond the environmental agenda. In contrast to the earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDG), largely set by ‘developed’ countries and almost exclusively involving targets for ‘developing’ countries, the 17 Global Goals of the SDGs are about what *all* countries can do. Initial attempts to create indexes of progress towards the SDGs show that, although the extent and nature varies, all countries face significant challenges. As well as climate change (SDG 13), ecosystem conservation (SDG 14 and 15) and sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), other issues where OECD countries have been found to fall short include agricultural systems (SDG 2), malnutrition (related to obesity) (SDG 2), development cooperation (SDG 17), jobs and unemployment (SDG 8), and gender equality (SDG 5). Of course, the SDG Index and Dashboards also show huge basic needs challenges for low-income countries – in relation to poverty (SDG 1), hunger (SDG 2), health care (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), water and sanitation (SDG 6), jobs (SDG 8) and infrastructure (SDG 9) (Sachs et al., 2016).

A significant spatial shift is embedded not just in the target but also in the formation of the SDGs. These new global goals evolved out of discussion of what would replace the MDGs and also as part of the process leading up to and following the Rio+20 conference on sustainable development in 2012. The G77 (an

informal collective of the UN's 130 'developing countries'), and Brazil, in particular, were especially active in their formation (Hulme, 2015; Bhattacharya and Ordóñez Llanos, 2016; Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019), at a time of 'rapid blurring of boundaries between the developed and developing contexts in terms of rising inequities and poverty' (Tiwari, 2015: 314). According to a commentary by Death and Gabay, the goals challenge one of the main tenets of much development policy and research, 'that development is something for, and occurs in, the "developing world"' (2015: 598). They suggest that the SDGs 'might do more to challenge the labels of "developed" and "developing" than decades of academic critique' (2015: 600).

While we can recognize that 'climate change has always been inherently "global"' as a process and in terms of its implications (Büscher, 2019), greenhouse gas emissions have reached unprecedented levels (IPCC, 2018) and climate-specific policy targets have shifted geographically. Mitigation and adaptation efforts are required within most countries if dangerous climate change is to be avoided (Anderson and Bows, 2011). As planetary boundaries are recognized to provide the only feasible biophysical limits for 'a "safe operating space" for global societal development' (Steffen et al., 2015), the need for a general, global-scope response is also being emphasized. Although retaining the CBDR principle, the Paris Agreement on climate change (agreed in December 2015) has removed the binary of Annex I and non-Annex countries, and requires some commitments by all countries. Nevertheless, meeting the 2°C temperature increase mitigation target has substantial equity considerations as it is largely unfeasible without considerable change towards low-carbon infrastructure in big emitting nations, including those such as China, India and others in the Global South, as well as major emitters in the Global North (Larkin et al., 2018).

3. The 'blurring' North–South divide and shared challenges

Another argument in favour of a universal consideration of development relates to shifting patterns of global inequalities under contemporary globalized capitalism, including some 'blurring' of the North–South divide. Again, earlier iterations have been made of this point, with particular attention to the transformation of East Asian economies. In light of the growth of the four Asian Tigers – Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea – Harris (1986) and others have argued that the idea of the Third World has ceased to be a useful analytical category. Also in response to patterns of East Asian development, Frank (1998) argued that the world was experiencing a pivot back towards Asia, and that the rise of the West was a blip in the long sweep of an Asia-centred history. During this century, yet further geographic shifts have led to an increasing questioning of the contemporary relevance of the North–South boundary.

Following two centuries when the income gap between those in the Global North and in the Global South was widening (Pritchett, 1997), the last two decades have produced some fall in income inequalities between countries (Bourguignon, 2015; Milanovic, 2016). Such a trend is driven by the rising powers, especially China, but also India and a number of other countries whose policy frames have differed from the Washington Consensus-type market-oriented approaches which had been so dominant during the 1990s and early 2000s. Although relative poverty remains persistent and has increased in recent decades according to some measures (Chen and Ravallion, 2013), the absolute numbers living in extreme poverty (albeit a very low threshold) have fallen while many countries previously classified by the World Bank as low-income have 'graduated' to middle-income status (Sumner, 2016). Moreover, gaps in average mortality rates, life

expectancy, educational enrolment and carbon emissions between the Global North and South have fallen. Yet during the same time, *within* many (but not all) countries in both the Global North and South, many measures of economic, human and environmental inequality have increased. Such patterns of ‘converging divergence’ (Horner and Hulme, 2019a) – involving some convergence *between* countries (especially between North and South) alongside divergence *within* countries – now more clearly than ever raise issues about a division of the world into a rich North and a poor South. Economic benefits in an era of globalization have been shared very unevenly, with underdevelopment in some parts of the Global North found to bear a strong resemblance to parts of the Global South (e.g. OHCHR, 2017). Rising middle classes have emerged in the Global South while simultaneously others in the Global North have gained little (Milanovic, 2016). Although inequalities between countries are still vast across many indicators, and substantial ‘citizenship premiums’ remain (Milanovic, 2016), these trends give further reason to question an exclusive focus of development on the Global South (Horner and Hulme, 2019a).

Across a whole variety of different dimensions of development, places and people in both the Global North and South have been observed as facing many *shared (sustainable), although clearly not homogenous, development challenges*. In addition to those issues of relative poverty and inequality that have been recognized for a considerable time as relevant to both Global North and South (De Haan and Maxwell, 1998; Chen and Ravallion, 2013), other challenges are represented by urban issues (Robinson, 2011; Parnell, 2016), precarious work (Siegmann and Schiphorst, 2016), local and regional development, and socio-spatial inequality (Pike et al., 2014). A host of common challenges facing the third sector (i.e. non-profits/non-governmental organizations) in North and South have also been identified, for

example, accountability, resource mobilization, legitimacy, effectiveness, etc. (Lewis, 2015). Northern approaches to social justice that have learnt from the Global South include the examples of participatory approaches to grassroots action, microfinance, and social protection through conditional cash transfers (Lewis, 2017). In short, concepts for the study of, and practices addressing, social change apply to both ‘poorer countries’ and other countries (Sumner and Tribe, 2008: 1). Across various sub-fields, these observations resonate with calls to move beyond those North–South boundaries which cut off certain forms of learning or foci of study, to move towards thinking about comparisons, convergences, connections (Maxwell, 1998), and translation (McFarlane, 2006).

Appeals to move beyond macro-scale, North–South spatial categorizations of development are no longer just the domain of critical development scholars who may point to ‘Souths’ in the ‘North’ and vice versa (Sheppard and Nagar, 2004) and argue that the old North–South vision of an ‘international curtain of poverty’ is outdated (Therien, 1999). Such calls are now echoed by many others with very different backgrounds. Justin Lin, when World Bank Chief Economist, observed that: ‘Development is no longer about the old paradigm of aid dependency or charity, or about the North teaching the South. It is about an investment in a stable and inclusive future’ (World Bank, 2008), whilst Robert Zoellick, when president of the World Bank, argued that the term Third World was no longer relevant in the context of a more multipolar world economy (World Bank, 2010). The World Bank’s announcement in April 2016 of its removal of the classification of ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries in the World Development Indicators is a further response to this blurring boundary. Widespread agreement appears to exist that new ‘maps of development’ are emerging, raising questions about the demarcation of whole world regions on the basis of their levels of development and

requiring more ‘nuanced maps’ (Sidaway, 2012).

One provocative argument has suggested that many Northern countries may actually be evolving southward, thereby upending the developmentalist trajectory of countries in the South playing catch-up to those in the North. Comaroff and Comaroff have argued that ‘contemporary world historical processes are visibly altering received geographies of core-and-periphery, relocating southward not only some of the most innovative and energetic modes of producing value, but [operating as] the driving impulse of contemporary capitalism as both a material and cultural formation’ (2012: 7). They have suggested that Africa, as imagined in Euro-America, is becoming a global condition. While such a proposition may be somewhat overstated, based on a relational understanding of North/South it is difficult to argue with their claim that ‘there is much South in the North, much North in the South, and . . . more of both to come in the future’ (2012: 46).

Within the sphere of development cooperation, Mawdsley (2017: 108) has observed ‘an unprecedented rupture in the North–South axis that has dominated post-1945 international development norms and structures’. Such a change has been further driven by the growth of South-South development cooperation, as well as by the response of the traditional donors to a changing global context (Mawdsley, 2018). The shift is evident in the 2011 Busan proposals for ‘partnership for effective development co-operation’ which seek to replace donor-recipient relationships with an approach emphasizing multi-stakeholder global partnership (Eyben and Savage, 2013). With greater wealth in parts of the Global South, the number of countries who are highly dependent on aid has fallen significantly. A new prospect of multi-directional cooperation now beckons (Janus et al., 2015), and is being fuelled further by major new initiatives, such as China’s unveiling in April 2018 of a new International

Development Cooperation Agency, which followed quickly on the heels of the launches of both the BRICs New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The idea of development cooperation as overwhelmingly a Western, postcolonial project, characterized by a moral geography of charity, clearly does not fit. Moreover, the North–South imaginaries which have dominated research on volunteering and international development, often characterized by the idea of the South as a place that hosts volunteers from the North, have been challenged. Instead, more flattened topographies of rhythms, routines and biographies that cross North and South have been demonstrated, making visible some of those previously obscured, including Southern international NGOs and South-South volunteering (e.g. Hossain and Sengupta, 2009; Laurie and Baillie Smith, 2018; Baillie Smith et al., 2018).

In sum, building on various long-standing misgivings with the North–South development binary, the augmented 21st-century challenges of interconnected globalized capitalism, climate change and sustainable development, and a blurring North–South boundary warrant going beyond the dominant geographical imaginaries that have formerly characterized international development. A reframing around global development seems more apposite, yet what this term encompasses and how this will reshape thinking and action has yet to be explicitly articulated. This article thus next interrogates recent interpretations of global development, outlining critical challenges to be addressed within that agenda, and arguing for the potential of relational global development.

III What is global development?

The term global development seemingly has substantial merit behind it. As outlined above, there are good reasons for moving beyond the outdated North–South international development framing to consider development issues

facing all parts of the world. Moreover, such a position is supported by various empirical observations and positionalities, including more recently by major international organizations. Crucially, a wide range of often critical theoretical persuasions also lend their backing to such a stance, ranging from some of the foundational work in modern social sciences to research on the environment and approaches to critical development, including post-colonial theory and world-systems theory. A global development framework and terminology can better reflect and respond to major challenges our world faces in the 21st century and can help move beyond an association of ‘development’ with international aid and can focus on underlying processes shaping outcomes.

Taking ‘global development’ in this sense as scope may be viewed as an overarching focus that considers development in relation to the whole world and as part of a ‘global development paradigm’ (Gore, 2015; Scholte and Söderbaum, 2017). Most notably it includes a departure from the dominant orientation of 20th-century international development towards ‘poor countries’ and ‘poor people’. As noted above, we live in a world where many of the causes of development cannot be segmented along North–South or national boundaries. A ‘one-world’ approach has long been advocated (Wallerstein, 1979; Singer, 2002; Mehta et al., 2006; Sumner, 2011), but with little in-depth elaboration in relation to development studies (cf. Hettne, 1995, in an earlier era) – an issue which this article now addresses by substantially elaborating on brief initial sketches (Horner and Hulme, 2019a, 2019b).

Taking global development as scope fits with long-standing calls for a new geographic framing for development. Relational approaches to development offer considerable prospects for addressing the limitations of international development outlined above and are well suited to global development. Lawson, for example, has argued that ‘a critical, relational approach

can build an accountably positioned development geography that breaks down North–South dualisms, focuses on relations between places and includes Western sites and people as subjects of development studies’ (2007: 27). As briefly noted above, relational approaches seek to move beyond residual explanations of the causes of (under-)development that are confined within countries in the Global South. These residual approaches often emphasize failure to engage with the global economy or focus on individual characteristics of poor people or poor countries. Relational approaches focus on wider economic and social relations, intertwined with cultural processes, and situate wealth and privilege in relation to poverty and vulnerability as part of normal processes of fundamentally uneven capitalist development (Kaplinsky, 2005; Massey, 2005; Lawson, 2007; Mosse, 2010). Such relational work, adopting both material and discursive approaches, reimagines relations and establishes interconnections between places via wider systems. It has flourished in a number of sub-fields, informing research on poverty (e.g. Roy and Crane, 2015; Elwood et al., 2017; Lawson et al., 2018), cities (e.g. Robinson, 2002), and economic development within global production networks (e.g. Yeung, 2005; Coe and Yeung, 2015).

Research on relational global development can also extend to a wider range of issues. A global development paradigm may encompass *collective* challenges of global public goods, and *shared* (sustainable) development challenges that countries and regions anywhere in the world face. For both the global public goods and shared challenges noted above, similar processes related to the uneven development of capitalism may be at play in different parts of the world. This approach can be more inclusive of research on the Global North and its role, as well as involving greater comparative research across Global North and South.

Any move towards relational global development faces several critical challenges. Rather than a group of experts from one place telling a subordinate group from another what to do, a charge often raised within and against international development, a global development perspective augments the need for greater mutual learning, and associated collaborative action, across and within the Global North and South (McFarlane, 2006; Mehta et al., 2006; Sumner, 2011; Leach, 2015). Mehta et al. (2006) have argued that development research should focus on both rich and poor countries, forging new relationships, including between Northern and Southern researchers. More recently, Leach points to the potential of mutual learning in relation to sustainability ‘across and between low-income countries, emerging economies and richer, declining economies on a world stage – about how such transformational alliances can be forged and operate’ (2015: 830). Of course, the challenge for mutual learning across North and South, and thus for a programme of ‘planetary development studies’, is clearly in the enactment (McFarlane, 2006; Halvorsen, 2018).

Although the Sustainable Development Goals involved significant Southern participation (Bhattacharya and Ordóñez Llanos, 2016), the emerging research institutes and centres, as well as those degree programmes with global development in their name (in the English language) which were noted in the introduction to this article, are almost exclusively based in the Global North. In some respects, a move to global development for research organizations represents a reframing within the Global North – a response of development institutes and organizations in the North to a changing world, including in relation to its relate to domestic as well as far-away populations. Yet inequalities and trajectories within the North can have serious repercussions elsewhere, as recent developments in relation to trade policy, immigration, and climate change have all indicated (Horner and Hulme, 2019b: 2), meaning that there can

be benefits of a global scope approach to the Global South. Again, long-called for (e.g. Hettne, 1995) genuinely global understandings of development are warranted.

Relational global development framings, which connect development issues across Global North and South, can also be invoked for various (including, at times, spurious) reasons which go beyond those advocated here. For example, linkages of development with various security or anti-terrorism agendas (Duffield, 2014) could continue. In some political discourses, zero-sum relational geographies of global development can strategically create particular trade-offs of domestic inequalities versus between-country inequalities. For example, despite evidence to the contrary, immigration from lower-income countries is invoked in some media as a reason why there is not enough social support domestically in some countries in the North (UNDP, 2009). Other relational geographies of global development are invoked when aid to places in the Global South is justified on the basis that it will reduce migration to the Global North. Clearly the various issues and causes which can be strategically invoked in accordance with different framings of global development must be critically interrogated.

Considerable ambiguity exists in relation to the meaning of global development. The term may be used simply as a fashionable relabelling, yet with little substantive difference from international development (e.g. Crawford et al., 2017). Indeed, some of the degree programmes and research centres noted in the introduction only have brief statements about ‘global’ – referring, for example, to ‘all parts of the world’ (e.g. Tufts Global Development and Environment Institute⁵) – while some have no explanation at all and few elaborate. Path dependency creates challenges for adaptation towards global development, whether in the research of development, related to how people’s expertise and networks may adapt, or in development practice. Some degree of institutional retrenchment

from North–South lines is needed in international organizations (e.g. Kanbur, 2017), non-governmental organizations (e.g. Lewis, 2015) and in university and development research institutes.

A key concern relates to an understanding of global development as scale,⁶ rather than as scope as advocated above, and consequent suggestions that the ‘international’, ‘national’ and other scales are implicitly downplayed. For example, Bangura interprets global development as a ‘single world’ global approach replacing lower-scale categories (Bangura, 2019: 12). He associates global development with issues such as global public goods, and ‘what the world will look like and can do if there is a global government’ or if countries reduce national-self interest in global development policy-making, yet rightly says this has not happened and is unlikely to. Polanyi-Levitt has also objected to the terminology of global development, arguing that ‘when you have global, what disappears is the nation’ (in interview with Fischer, 2019: 22). Such scale-based perspectives resonate with Scholte’s (2002) notion of ‘global as supraterritorial’.

With an interpretation of global as scale, and as outlined by Currie-Alder (2016), global development can thus be viewed as one strand within development studies, operating in parallel with other streams of international development (foreign hotspots) and national development (sovereign decisions over improving the human condition at home). In that elaboration ‘global development’ relates closely to what is covered by the field of global studies, which is most readily associated with globalization and understanding the global (Scholte, 2014; Pieterse, 2013). In contrast with the scope understanding, such a framing of global development can involve a focus only on actors, such as major organizations and on processes, which are associated with the ‘global’ scale.

For some, the issue may be less with the ‘international’ or ‘global’ than with the whole idea and terminology of ‘development’. Rist has suggested that if ‘development is at the root of the problems besetting the world, then we should give it up – and certainly not replace it with a new development programme claiming universal validity’ (2008: 58; see also Ziai, 2019), whilst Moore (2015) has proposed moving away from development as an organizing framework towards ‘global prosperity’. Another growing movement and body of work advocates ‘degrowth’ (e.g. D’Alisa et al., 2015). Sumner and Tribe (2008) observe that a possible response to framing ‘development’ as global, i.e. in relation to the entire planet, has been to regard it as another way to impose the values of industrialized countries on developing countries. However, they argue that would be a very narrow view (2008: 20), associating ‘development’ largely with the imminent form, and overlooking many aspects of transformation that continue to take place. This perspective serves as a valuable warning that global development cannot automatically be taken to be inclusive, and that there may be various interpretations.

Consequently, although there are important reasons for moving beyond an international development understanding towards a paradigm of global development as scope in relation to the whole world, for which a relational approach offers substantial potential, critical attention is needed regarding how global development is operationalized, in both research and practice. The following section now elaborates on one particularly important challenge for global development.

IV A key tension in global development: Universalization vs. geographic variation

For understanding both the nature of global development challenges and their underlying causal processes, a key dialectic is present

between tendencies towards universalization and understanding geographic variation. Two vignettes are now offered to illustrate some of the varying implications from thinking of global development. These focus on the empirical claim that ‘we’re all developing countries now’, and on the more theoretical domain of universal development processes.

‘We’re all developing countries now?’

A key aspect of recognizing global development as scope is to consider all countries as sites of development challenges, yet critical attention is required to the varying ways such a claim or insinuation is invoked and to the purposes it serves. A different geography must be involved from that of international development; otherwise shortcomings such as those outlined in Section II are likely to be ill-fitting to the 21st century. Key issues such as the transformation that needs to take place in the Global North and by elites, for example reduced carbon emissions, may be all too easily overlooked. The argument that ‘we are all developing countries now’ has been explicitly advocated by Raworth (e.g. 2018), proponent of doughnut economics, to highlight that no country both 1) meets its people’s essential needs, and 2) falls within the earth’s biophysical boundaries. Degrowth proponents also highlight countries in the Global North as ‘developing countries’ or under-developed, vis-à-vis biophysical boundaries.

In recognition of the blurring of North–South boundaries, it has become increasingly common to advocate eschewing the terms ‘developed’/‘developing’, etc. (Mönks et al., 2017). This is evident in the re-labelling in the World Bank World Development Indicators (Fantom and Khokhar, 2016), and in the writings of popular development scholars such as Hans Rosling and colleagues (2018) and philanthropists such as Bill Gates (Brueck, 2018). The Overseas Development Institute, a London-based think-tank,

has stated that it ‘will transition from using terms such as “developing” and “developed” that create false distinctions between countries, communities and the universal challenges we all face’ (2018: 8).

Yet, paying attention to geographical variation in development challenges is a must in order to challenge both flat-world claims and one-size-fits-all, universal solutions. Claims along the lines of ‘we’re all developing (countries) now, so we’ll look after ourselves’ (see Angus Deaton’s (2018) op-ed in *The New York Times* for an argument in this vein) could be used to justify a withdrawal from development assistance, and, perhaps even more crucially, from climate commitments or preferential trade access. Focusing on global development should not be an argument for ending development cooperation. It must be recognized that in donor countries government assistance to poor people domestically dwarfs that to foreign poor (Kenny and Sandefur, 2018).

Attention must also be given to a much wider range of global development challenges and practices that go beyond those typically considered as subject to aid financing (see also Hulme, 2016; Janus et al., 2015). Although varying degrees of scepticism exist as to their influence (Bangura, 2019; Horn and Grugel, 2018; Liverman, 2018; Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) may serve as a trigger mechanism in this regard.

Even if they are somewhat blurring, North–South inequalities are vast for the most part, especially at the per capita level, and require continued attention in research and practice. A potential danger lies in swinging from one extreme to the other, with the obscuring of severe and still-widespread deprivations such as acute absolute poverty, or other issues which may be more distinct to countries in the Global South. Recognition of the sizeable geographic variation in the nature and degree of development challenges is vital. As Bjorn Hettne

eloquently noted in his argument for global development:

To others the notion of interdependence suggests a common predicament for the peoples of the world ('we are all in the same boat'). This interpretation conveniently disregards the fact that the passengers of the boat (if we may continue the maritime metaphor) do not travel in the same class, nor do they have the same access to life-boats. (1995: 105)

Inequalities between countries remain substantial and there are considerable citizenship premiums for those in the North (Milanovic, 2016). The Global South still warrants a key focus. What Collier (2007) called the planet's bottom billion – or less than 750 million by 2015, if measured according to extreme income poverty (World Bank, 2019) – exclusively live in the Global South in the most severe deprivation. In terms of assessing the severity of challenges, somewhat arbitrary lines of division in classifications can produce situations where people who have escaped from income/consumption poverty can be overlooked, despite still being seriously vulnerable. A more graduated classificatory approach calibrated to degrees of severity is necessary. Moreover, taking seriously the challenge of climate change and environment puts considerable onus on the Global North and on elite populations. If the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change is to get close to meeting its targets, it will need significant commitment by those who might be considered relatively developed in a North–South international development context, but who nevertheless remain considerably underdeveloped in a global *sustainable* development context. Caution is needed both about moving too little towards global development, thereby losing sight of some of the most pressing contemporary challenges, and moving too far, obscuring and even deepening embedded inequalities.

2 Universal global development processes?

Rather than necessarily producing 'universal laws', a key task for research on global development is to question claims to any universality or global generalization which may be made on the basis of unduly narrow theorization and evidence bases, such as a restriction to certain parts of the world. Global perspectives have long been accused of acting as a camouflage for Western visions characterized by historical and geopolitical amnesia (Slater, 1995: 367). A global scope in development research also runs 'the risk of recentring the West, which is not the goal' (Lawson, 2007: 205). Deepak Lal (1983) (in)famously argued for a turn away from development economics, back toward mono-economics, understood as the Northern paradigm of neoclassical economics, with its neoliberal emphasis. Neoliberalism's prescription of a particular market logic everywhere has been criticized for its universal set of prescriptions for 'developed' and 'developing' countries alike (Cammack, 2001). At the same time, some critics of neoliberalism have been critiqued for their hegemonic focus on it at the expense of alternative ideas and processes (Parnell and Robinson, 2012). Countering, and in an earlier argument for global development, Hettne argued instead for 'an authentic universalism in contradistinction to the false universalism that characterized the Eurocentric phase of development thinking' (1995: 15): He advocated development theorists pursuing a more genuine universalization process which 'reflects the specificity of development' (Hettne, 1995: 260). Such intent arguably resonates with Chakrabarty's (2000) questioning of the assumed universalism of Western scholarship, and Robinson's (2003) call to move beyond the 'production of parochial universalisms'. This aspect of a global perspective has been crucial for postcolonialism in its response to dominant forces and offers potential for the

current and future global development era (Sidaway et al., 2014).

Urban studies is one field where vibrant and, at times, acrimonious debates have emerged related to the tension between universalization and geographic variation. Considerable efforts have been made to move beyond theoretical claims to global applicability which inadequately address the realities of Southern cities (McFarlane, 2008; Roy, 2009; Parnell and Robinson, 2012; Gillespie, 2016; Robinson, 2016). Such efforts have sought to re-orientate theory production in relation to cities away from a Euro-American centre and towards a more global and situated appreciation of urbanization, offering both specificity and generalizability. For example, telling work in this regard has provincialized Euro-American notions of urban transformation (Ghertner, 2015). Moreover, arguments which point to ‘planetary urbanism’ as a worldwide condition (Brenner and Schmid, 2015), have been critiqued for their potential occlusion of difference (Schindler, 2017; Ruddick et al. 2018). The value of these debates is in fostering a conversation and drawing lessons about urban processes across Global North and South.

Relational accounts can help situate the experience of particular places within wider economic, social and political systems, yet they must also go beyond structural inevitability to explore geographic contingency. Development theory has been characterized by excessive endogenism, especially in modernization approaches, as well as excessive exogenism of the ‘classical or “vulgar” dependencia approach’ (Hettne, 1995: 130). Relations with other places and interconnected processes of global development must be considered (Lawson, 2007: 144), but they are not always inevitable and must be open to geographic variation.

As well as highlighting geographical and historical specificities, relational comparison provides insights into interconnections and mutually constitutive processes. Such an

approach facilitates case comparison and offers ways to see how places are integrated in globalized processes (Hart, 2002, 2018). Root causes are thereby identified. For example, Katz (2004) demonstrated connections between social reproduction, disinvestments and economic restructuring in a village in rural Sudan and New York City. Interconnected trajectories have been explored in the domains of urban studies (Ward, 2010) and middle-class poverty politics (Lawson, 2012), whilst Roy and Crane’s (2015) global historical approach to poverty across the uneven Global North and South has sought to move beyond personal failure or structural inevitability. The opportunity afforded by global development as scope is to draw comparative lessons across both Global North and South, addressing either, or both, within-country and between-country inequalities within various domains.

In sum, while a global development (as scope) approach may be most fitting for the 21st century and the contemporary geography of development, significant challenges must be addressed to deliver on its potential. The two vignettes outlined are reminders of the enduring tensions between universalization and geographic specificity.

V Conclusion: Constructing and critiquing global development

Compared to the second half of the 20th century, development studies, research and practice in the 21st century are now positioned in a very different context. A series of intensifying issues, most notably the interconnectedness of contemporary global capitalism, the universal challenge of sustainability (especially in consequence of climate change) and the contemporary blurring of the North–South boundary now significantly compromise the hitherto dominant geographical orientation of international development. While the term global development appears to be more fitting and

growing in prominence, considerable ambiguity remains as to its interpretation.

A global development as scope framing has intuitive attractiveness in terms of offering opportunities for exploring and addressing both collective issues (e.g. climate change, finance, health, etc.) and the shared challenges in both Global North and South in the 21st century. It is more fitting to the wide range of actors and practices which shape contemporary global development outcomes, which go far beyond those narrowly conceived through an association with big 'D' development intervention. A relational approach, incorporating an agenda of construction, has been advocated here to help interpret the nature of contemporary global development. In breaking through some of the boundaries of international development, a transition to global development also requires critical attention as to what may unfold, especially regarding the tensions between universalization versus geographic variation. Even if many of the key 'development' issues we face in the world today are truly global in scope, the realities of the meanings, framings and relational geographies of global development will very likely range widely across research and practice.

A substantial agenda thus awaits, requiring constructive and critical research engagement with global development. Opportunities for new lessons emerge across a whole variety of empirical sub-fields, including those focusing on inequality, jobs, relative poverty, social protection, the urban arena and, of course, climate change. This is an agenda where various theoretical approaches, including but not limited to, critical modernization, neo-Marxian, or postcolonial, can each shape debate surrounding relational global development. As much depends on how global development is interpreted and enacted, merely switching from international to global development is not inevitably an advance. Yet the argument for a global development paradigm appears increasingly

persuasive, both for research and practice with greater potential to successfully understand and address substantive 21st-century problems that our world faces.

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ORCID iD

Rory Horner  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8730-2014>

Notes

1. E.g. Aberdeen, Brandeis, Boston, Cork, Leeds, Manchester, Notre Dame, Reading, Tufts, York.

2. E.g. Aberystwyth, Australian National, Bath Spa, Bergen, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Carleton, Copenhagen, Derby, East London, Fraser Valley, Georgia Tech, Griffith, Palm Beach Atlantic, Queen's University at Kingston, Queen Mary University of London, Saint John's, Sheffield, Sussex.
 3. E.g. Center for Global Development, Global Development Network, Initiative for Global Development.
 4. In a limited, but perhaps illustrative example, the Wikipedia definition conflates the two: 'International development or global development is a wide concept concerning level of development on an international scale' (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_development, accessed 19 January 2019).
 5. Its website states: 'We use the word "Global" to indicate that we are concerned with the linkages between Development and Environment in all parts of the world. There are important differences – as well as some important similarities – between the meaning and the consequences of those linkages in the North and in the South' (<http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae/>, accessed 24 May 2018).
 6. This is a wider issue noted in the literature on scale, which has often been associated with verticality (Marston et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2007), and used in terms of a hierarchical ladder, from local to global or vice-versa (Herod, 2008: 226). Howitt has observed that 'in many social science settings, careless use of notions of scale as level, often leaves the spatial extent of an issue invisible' (2002: 305). Building on Howitt's observation, Marston et al. (2005: 420) also noted confusion between the meaning of scale as a vertical, hierarchical ordering, and a meaning of horizontal 'scope' or 'extensiveness'.
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Author biography

Rory Horner is a Senior Lecturer at the Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, UK and a Research Associate at the Department of Geography, Environmental Management and Energy Studies, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. His research focuses on the changing geographies of global development, globalisation, trade and industry.