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## ARTURO ESCOBAR'S *ETHNOGRAPHIC MODEL* AND THE DISCOURSE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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**Abstract:** The thrust of this paper will be to succinctly discuss the ethnographic model propounded by Arturo Escobar, which had been projected towards the understanding of development both in its theoretical and practical approaches among societies of the Global South. This analysis, will first examine the issue of development as seen from the template of market forces, which the Bretton Woods institutions had subjected developing Global South societies to, in the quest for development. They (Bretton Woods institutions) emphasised economism, which is a uni-dimensional idea and approach to development that gives primacy to individualism, market liberalisation, and material aspect of development at the expense of culture of the people. On this, Escobar argues that societies of the Global South should be allowed to pursue their own development as they deem fit without the influence(s) of the Global North. Hence, it is expected that this paper will initiate a new understanding of how development should be understood and practised, from the stand-point of Arturo Escobar, among the societies of the Global South. This is projected towards the acceptance of localised understanding of models, which will solve the problems of the people that want to be 'developed' in accordance with and to their plans and interests.

**Keywords:** Development, Global South, Global North, Ethnographic Model, Economism, Culture.

### **Development in Economic Discourse: A Westernised Capitalist Ideology**

The analyses of Joseph Stiglitz and Jeffrey Sachs, among others, from market forces, are in the realm of economic development, which is

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built on capitalist ideology. Economic form of development is based on self-interest motive in the framework of competitive markets. In such a situation, there is hardly any government interference. The private sector, which takes part in the process of development, is mainly guided by the principle of profit maximisation. Economic progress largely depends on labour productivity and capital endowment. The labour productivity becomes a function of many types of material incentives, which are given by the private sector.

Joseph Stigliz and Andrew Charlton see development from market forces and how trade could promote development. In *Fair Trade for All*, the duo aver that, “trade liberalisation is, in general, welfare-enhancing; stating that the problems of poverty, inequality, incomplete risk and capital markets cause the experience of liberalisation to vary across societies depending on individual characteristics.”<sup>1</sup> While they opine on trade towards achieving development especially among the developing societies, they equally theorise on market forces, which will lead to emancipatory development. It is these market forces that Stigliz says, are shaped by political processes. According to him, markets are shaped by laws, regulations and institutions saying that:

Every law, every regulation, every institutional arrangement has distributive consequences – and the way we have been shaping America’s market economy works to the advantage of those at the top and to the disadvantage of the rest. Indeed, politics, to a large extent, reflects and amplifies societal norms. In many societies, those at the bottom consist disproportionately of groups that suffer, in one way or another, from discrimination. The extent of such discrimination is a matter of societal norms.<sup>2</sup>

Stigliz offers a viable position in the discourse of development examining the issue from inequality, stating that it is on inequality that there seems

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<sup>1</sup> Stigliz, Joseph. and Charlton, Andrew. 2005. *Fair trade for all*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Stigliz, Joseph. 2012. *The price of inequality*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, pp. 52–53.

to be an endangered future, which is anchored on a divided society.

Jeffrey Sachs' intent about development is that there is the need for a new economic paradigm, which includes global, inclusive, co-operative, environmentally aware, and science-based that will salvage the emerging realities of the world today. He argues that, "our global society will flourish or perish according to our ability to find common ground across the world on a set of shared objectives and on the practical means to achieving them. A clash of civilisations could well result from the rising tensions, and it could truly be our last and utterly devastating clash."<sup>3</sup> In this argument, the alternative to the seemingly problematic issues is a series of threats to global well-being, all of which are solvable but potentially disastrous if left unattended. Prosperity must be maintained through new strategies for development that complement market forces, spread technologies, stabilise the global population and enable the billion poorest people to escape from the trap of extreme poverty.

Sachs also argues that in the process of escaping from the trap of extreme and emerging poverty, "a science for development, because many of the core break-throughs in long-term economic developments have been new technologies recognising that the poor are, therefore, likely to be ignored . . . it is critical to identify the priority needs for scientific research in relation to the poor, and then to mobilise the requisite donor assistance to spur the research and development."<sup>4</sup> In these analyses, he postulates fundamental set-backs to the issue of development especially from the developing societies, that is, "how they continue to move backward instead of moving forward. He lists the following ways, namely: lack of saving, absence of trade, technological reversal, natural resource decline, adverse productivity shock, and population growth."<sup>5</sup>

Sachs propounds a theory that will promote development in all human societies, not relying and leaning on market forces alone that, "Sustainable development means prosperity that is globally shared and environmentally sustainable. In practice, sustainable development will

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<sup>3</sup> **Sachs, Jeffrey.** 2008. *Common wealth: economics for a crowded planet*. New York: The Penguin Press, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> **Sachs, Jeffrey.** 2005. *The end of poverty: economic possibilities for our time*. London: Penguin Books, p. 282.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 54–56.

require three fundamental changes in our business-as-usual global trajectory.”<sup>6</sup> For development to be realised, the above are what Sachs has propounded apart from examining it from the market forces. In the analysis of his theory, he avers that there is the need to build from within even though importation from other societies is also a necessity. This is significant when the economy has become an emerging market that development from market forces will affect the society in positive manners. Here, he states thus:

By the time an economy has become a middle-income emerging market, there is an important measure of domestic technological innovation under way. The economy is no longer simply importing technologies from abroad but is also improving them and beginning to export technology-based manufactures and services . . . At all stages of development, the government must also ensure that the basic conditions of a functioning market-based economy are in place. These include a relatively stable monetary unit, a banking system adequately buffered against banking crises, reasonable physical security for persons and property, a rudimentary legal system to enforce contracts and property rights, and a modest level of official corruption that is kept from getting out of hand. Nothing is ever present, even in high-income countries, in these various dimensions of social order and rule of law. Still, outright lawlessness and violence must be eliminated for there to be hope of

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<sup>6</sup> Sachs. *Common wealth: economics for a crowded planet*, pp. 31–32: First, we will have to develop and adopt on a global scale, and in a short period of time, the sustainable (high-S) technologies that can allow to combine high levels of prosperity with lower environmental impacts. Second, we will have to stabilise the global population, and especially the population in the poorest countries, in order to combine economic prosperity with environmental sustainability. And third, we will have to help the poorest countries escape from poverty trap. These three basic goals – environmental sustainability, population stabilisation, and ending extreme poverty – are of course the essence of the millennium promises.

climbing the development ladder.<sup>7</sup>

This, therefore, means that there is the need to bring in the factor of science and technology to the discourse of economic growth in any society for effective development.

In the quest for effective development as mentioned above, Sachs propounds a strong strategy that will move development to its apex as he writes that, “we glimpse the pivotal roles that science and technology play in the development process. And we sense a progression of development that moves subsistence agriculture toward light manufacturing and urbanisation, and on to high-tech services.”<sup>8</sup> In the analysis of this paradigm shift, he opines thus:

At every stage of development, and for every sector of development, the public sector and private sector have mutually supportive roles. Public-sector capital – roads, clinics, schools, ports, nature reserves, utilities, and much more - are essential if private capital in the form of factories, machinery, and skilled labour are to be productive. Economic development is a complex interplay of market forces and public-sector plans and investments.<sup>9</sup>

This argument from market forces emphasised that capitalist ideology made development linear and tailored towards economism. It should be known that development is multi-dimensional in nature as against the uni-dimensional view in economic/scientific manner. And since development is a multi-dimensional concept and process, there is the need to state its objectives as follow: to raise the availability and widen the distribution of life-sustaining goods to all members of the society; to raise the level of living, which includes the provision of more jobs, good education, attending to cultural and human values, other aspects of human endeavours that enhance material well-being and also greater individual and societal self-esteem; and to expand the ranges of economic and social choices to individuals and societies by freeing them from servitude

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pp. 211–212.

<sup>8</sup> Sachs. *The end of poverty: economic possibilities for our time*. p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Sachs. *Common wealth: economics for a crowded planet*, p. 219.

and dependency not only in relation to other people and societies but also to the forces of ignorance and human history.

### **Escobar's Understanding and Analysis of Development**

While the earlier theories (modernisation, dependency and neoliberalism) and diverse approaches from different institutions like the Bretton Woods, have clearly differed over the means of attaining the object and essence of development, there has been little discussion of development content or its appeal from the insights of the people of the South, as post-development theory scholars in which Escobar belongs, argue that certain characteristic “Western” ways of talking about and representing the non-West should be understood as ideological projections rather than as scientific knowledge about peoples and places elsewhere. To them, the ways of conceiving and representing development that are closely bound to the Global North's development agencies and programmes reveal more about the self-affirming ideologies of the North than insights into the peoples of the rest of the world. In addition, post-development scholars take the position that development has less to do with human improvement and more to do with human control and domination.

Post-development theory offers radical approaches that challenge the paternalistic and imperialistic tendencies rife within the tradition of Western scholars, even though it has been criticised for offering only polemics and no practical solutions to the myriads of problems surrounding the discourse of development among societies of the Global South. Elliot Siemiatycki argues that, “The critical moment of post-development can be traced to the rejection of universal theories and the decision to focus their analysis on discourse can both be traced to post-structural theory. Post-development authors' commitment to grassroots community improvement and local, indigenous knowledge is associated with new social movement. Many analysts find that the contributions of post-development critique are undermined by its inability to propose concrete alternatives to mainstream development.”<sup>10</sup> The notion and understanding of post-development theory in the quest towards social order in Africa has been addressed and examined in another paper.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Siemiatycki, Elliot. 2005. Post-development at a crossroads: towards a ‘real’ development. *Undercurrent: Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, II.3, p. 58

<sup>11</sup> Olatunji, Felix O. and Bature, Anthony I. 2019. The Inadequacy of

Arturo Escobar, with an inter-disciplinary doctoral degree in Development Philosophy, Policy and Planning, is a Colombian-American scholar, whose works are more deeply rooted in the discourse of development among societies of the Global South. Even though he is not a trained scholar in philosophy, his works in the area of development cannot be ignored in academic scholarship. This is in line with Amartya Sen's works, which are being examined and used in philosophy, despite the fact that he is an economist of international repute.

In his analysis, he postulates that development has become a discourse, that is, a particular mode of thinking and a source of practice designed to instil in under-developed world the desire to strive towards industrial and economic growth. This was focused on the epistemology of development, the complicity in the modernisation approach to development and the Western world-view assumptions that pervade the discourse and framework for the development process even among its critics. He encourages experts in development discourse and academics to use ethnographic theory in order to furthering the post-development discourse by advancing the deconstructive creations initiated by contemporary social movements. This is his intention in the quest to unravelling the dichotomy in the analysis of development among societies of the Global South. It is the case because the concepts 'development' and 'Third World' are inventions of the economically viable societies of the Western hemisphere. Ranaweera Banda opines that, "Development has been considered to exist in reality, solid and material. Even though the broad meaning of development is the promotion of the creativity of humans, economic growth is the primary criterion by which development theory is determined. In measuring development in economic terms, it is assumed implicitly in development theory that growth could proceed without limits in terms of time, ecology, availability of resources and socio-political structure."<sup>12</sup> Escobar adds and states clearly that, "The unidimensional and almost exclusively economic basis of the development paradigm' – /said a leading development thinker recently - has 'undermined the prospects for not just development, but for

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Post-Development Theory to the Discourse of Development and Social Order in the Global South. *Social Evolution and History*, September, 18.2 (Accepted for publication).

<sup>12</sup> **Banda, Ranaweera.** 2004. Development discourse and the third word. *Proceedings of the second academic sessions*, p. 100.

the sheer survival of large strata of the world's peoples'. This 'economism' has been quite striking a feature ever since the beginning of development in the post-war period."<sup>13</sup>

His opinion about development evolves around the discourse and strategy of development that produced its opposite, namely: under-development and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression of the developing societies. He approaches this through a discursive analysis of the components and relationships of what he calls "the three axes that define development – its forms of knowledge; the system of power that regulates its practice; and the forms of subjectivity fostered by this discourse, those through which people come to recognise themselves as developed or under-developed. The ensemble of forms found along these axes constitutes development as a discursive formation, giving rise to an efficient apparatus that systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of power."<sup>14</sup>

From the outset, his goals in the understanding of development came to the fore, essentially from the writing of his award-winning book, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. His intent is to unearth the discursive field of development by attempting to deconstruct the development discourse through a story-telling process and turned into a nightmare because the intention of scholars and authors concerning development discourse has been to its opposite, as he writes, "For instead of the kingdom of abundance promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive under-development and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression. The debt crisis, the Sahelian famine, increasing poverty, malnutrition, and violence are only the most pathetic signs of the failure of the forty years of development. . . Above all, however, it is about how the "Third World" has been produced by the discourses and practices of development since their inception in the early post-World War II period."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> **Escobar, Arturo.** 2005. Economics and the space of modernity: tales of market, production and labour. *Cultural Studies*, 19.2, p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> **Escobar, Arturo.** 1995. *Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4.

He first tackles the “problematization of poverty” which he contends is a result of the formulation and solidification of development discourse from the early post-World War II period to the present, through the tale of three worlds and development, reiterating the fact that, “Poverty on a global scale was a discovery of the post-World War II period.”<sup>16</sup> This, he argues that, “whatever these traditional ways might have been, and without idealising them, it is true that massive poverty in the modern sense appeared only when the spread of the market economy broke down community ties and deprived millions of people from access to land, water, and other resources. With the consolidation of capitalism, systemic pauperisation became inevitable.”<sup>17</sup> In analysing this terrain about nascent poverty found amidst the populace of the the Third World, he posits that, “. . . poverty became an organising concept and the object of a new problematisation. As in the case of any problematisation, that of poverty brought into existence new discourses and practices that shaped the reality to which they referred. That the essential trait of the Third World was its poverty and that the solution was economic growth and development because self-evident, necessary, and universal truth.”<sup>18</sup>

In discussing about the antecedents of development discourse essentially from Latin American experience, he argues that, “the development exemplified by the 1949 World Bank mission to Colombia emerged in the context of a complex historical conjunction. Its invention signaled a significant shift in the historical relations between Europe and the United States, on the one hand, and most countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, on the other. It also brought into existence a new regime of representation of these latter parts of the world in Euramerican culture. But “the birth” of the discourse must be briefly qualified; they were, indeed, important precursors that presaged its appearance in full regalia after World War II.”<sup>19</sup> He makes clear emphasis on this by stating that,

The historical roots of this new strategy (“development”) are to be found in the political rearrangement at the world level that occurred after World War II.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

The notions of concepts in the “underdevelopment” and “Third World” emerged process by which the West (and the East) redefined themselves and the global power structures. We cannot analyze here the historical conditions that made possible the strategy of the old colonial systems, changes as development; these included the breakdown of in the structures of population the advance of communism in certain parts working and production, of the world and the concomitant fear of communism in the capitalist world; it also included the faith in science and technology, reinvigorated by the success of the Marshall Plan, new forms of economic knowledge and the development of area studies (e.g., “Latin American Studies”), as well as an enriched experience social systems.<sup>20</sup>

And due to the problematisation of poverty, according to him, the post-war economy and the re-formulation of capitalistic strategies among societies of the Global North made pauperisation inevitable among the developing societies. But, he argues that people of the South were excluded from the equation and the reason for more poverty among them, saying that, “Development was – and continues to be for the most part – a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of “progress.” Development was conceived not as a cultural process (culture was a residual variable, to disappear with the advance of modernisation) but instead as a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some “badly needed” goods to a “target” population. It comes as no surprise that development became a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people’s interests.”<sup>21</sup>

In addressing the problem of development among the developing

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<sup>20</sup> **Escobar, Arturo.** 1988. Power and visibility: development and the invention and management of the Third World. *Cultural Anthropology*, 3.4, pp. 429–430.

<sup>21</sup> **Escobar, Arturo.** 1995. *Encountering development*. p. 44.

societies, as envisaged by the Western theorists and scholars, he opines the fact of great misplacement of priorities and a form of categorical mistake on the part of Western scholars in devising model and theory, which will fit a pre-existing approach. Clearly, he posits that, “Development fostered a way of conceiving of social life as a technical problem, as a matter of rational decision and management to be entrusted to that group of people – the development professionals – whose specialised knowledge allegedly qualified them for the task. Instead of seeing change as a process rooted in the interpretation of each society’s history and cultural tradition – as a number of intellectuals in various parts of the Third World had attempted to do in the 1920s and 1930s – these professionals sought to devise mechanisms and procedures to make societies fit a preexisting model that embodied the structures and functions of modernity. Like sorcerers’ apprentices, the development professionals awakened once again the dream of reason that, in their hands, as in earlier instances, produced a troubling reality.”<sup>22</sup> He had already argued against this form of thinking and rationality that, “But even this crude summary of the axioms of development economics in its early years reveals one basic fact: From the very beginning, development was not a process which involved only the material conditions of living, the upgrading of living standards and the modernization of the productive apparatus. More than that, development was, inevitably and perhaps more significantly, a mechanism through which a whole rationality was to be learned. For development to occur, the rationality of ‘Economic Man’ – orientation towards profit and the market, individual behaviour and forms of production, rational economic choice in the sense of maximizing one’s goals given scarce resources, etc. – had to be brought to the peoples of the Third World.”<sup>23</sup>

In arguing against the domination and exploitation of the developing economies, and subjugation of their cultures with the interplay of power, Escobar avers that those who try to understand societies of the Global South have lost the radar from the outset. This, he argues that, “To be sure, there is a situation of economic exploitation that must be recognised and dealt with. Power is too cynical at the level of exploitation and should be resisted on its own terms. . . . But those seeking to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> **Escobar, Arturo.** 2005. Economics and the space of modernity. p. 140.

understand the Third World through development have long lost sight of this materiality by building upon it a reality that like a castle in the air has haunted us for decades. Understanding the history of the investment of the Third World by Western forms of knowledge and power is a way to shift the ground somewhat so that we can start to look at that materiality with different eyes and in different categories.”<sup>24</sup>

The homogenisation process taken by development scholars has made it successive through representation of facts concerning poverty and under-development among societies of the developing world as he points out that, “The coherence of effects that the development discourse achieved is the key to its success as a hegemonic form of representation: the construction of the poor and underdeveloped as universal, preconstituted subjects, based on the privilege of the representers; the exercise of power over the Third World made possible by this discursive homogenisation (which entails the erasure of the complexity and diversity of Third World peoples, so that a squatter in Mexico City, a Nepalese peasant, and a Tuareg nomad become equivalent to each other as poor and underdeveloped); and the colonisation and domination of the natural and human ecologies and economies of the Third World.”<sup>25</sup>

He employs an analysis of the emergence of under-development as a notion of post-World War II economic development theories; providing an overview of classical, neoclassical, Keynesian and growth economic theories. He composes a picture of how the development discourse grew due to the emergence of Western hegemonic structures, which “was due to the fact that a certain historical conjuncture transformed the mode of existence of economic discourse, thus making possible the elaboration of new objects, concepts, and methodologies. Economics was called upon to reform societies perceived as under-developed.”<sup>26</sup> He is of the opinion that for the less-developed societies to develop, they must from the outset and scratch move beyond modernity, which essentially, is encapsulated in neoliberalism today as such models of the Western hegemony deepen the problem among societies in the Global South. This means that there is the need to deconstruct all forms of Western models of development in

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<sup>24</sup> Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering development*. p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 84.

order to seek for the alternatives to development from within. Here, he proposes two levels on the deconstruction of Western economic structure that:

There are then two levels, two vectors, that must be considered in rethinking development from the perspective of the economy. The first refers to the need to make explicit the existence of a plurality of models of the economy. This entails placing oneself in the space of local constructions. But this by itself will not make it. Even if all communities of modelers are brought into existence as part of the process of designing development, the process of inscription will not stop. A second level of concern must be added. One must have a theory of the forces that drive this inscription and that keep the inscribing systems in place. What needs to be studied at these levels is the mechanisms by which local cultural knowledge and economic structures are appropriated by larger forces (mechanisms such as unequal exchange and surplus extraction between centre and periphery, country and city, classes, genders, and ethnic groups) and, conversely, the ways in which local innovations and gains can be preserved as part of local economic and cultural power.<sup>27</sup>

This will put to end the continual struggle for development in the realms of Western societies, which in any way have not been to the interest of the people in non-Western societies. In his argument, he projects that, “Development was not merely the result of the combination, study, or gradual elaboration of these elements (technology, population and resources, monetary and fiscal policies, industrialisation and agricultural development, commerce and trade); nor the product of the introduction of new ideas; nor the effect of the new international organisations or financial institutions. It was rather the result of the establishment of a set of relations among these elements, institutions, and practices and of the systemitisation of these relations to form a whole. . . And to under-

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 98.

stand development as a discourse, one must look not at the elements themselves but at the system of relations established among them. It is this system that allows the systematic creation of objects, concepts, and strategies; it determines what can be thought and said.”<sup>28</sup> In essence, development ought to be about the people saying that, “The most important exclusion, however, was and continues to be, what development was supposed to be all about people.”<sup>29</sup>

In talking about the involvement of the people as the best answer to the discourse of development among the developing societies, he says that, “The suggestion that we take into account people’s own models is not only a politically correct position. On the contrary, it constitutes a sound philosophical and political alternative. Philosophically, it follows the mandate of interpretive social science that we take subjects as agents of self-definition whose practice is shaped by their self-understanding. . . It means that the interpretive social scientist has to take into account people’s own descriptions as the starting point of theory, that is, of what has to be explained.”<sup>30</sup> In a clear picture, the significance and importance attached to history and culture, in the quest for authentic development, cannot be under-valued and ignored as displayed by Escobar. This is because it (development) should be seen as a process that is rooted in people’s history and cultural tradition.

### **Escobar’s Philosophy of Ethnographic Model for Societies of the Global South**

In his quest to unravelling diverse and many traps towards development among the developing societies, he makes recourse to the use of institutional ethnography as a means of understanding the massive development programmes established by the Bretton Woods institutions to solve the challenges of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and diseases, among

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<sup>28</sup> **Escobar, Arturo.** 1997. The making and unmaking of the third world through development. Rahnema, Majid and Bawtree, Victoria. eds. *The post-development reader*. Bangladesh: The University Press, pp. 86–87. Cf. also Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> **Escobar, Arturo.** 1995. *Encountering development*. pp. 100–101.

others. This approach is geared towards the organisation and re-organisation of diverse mechanisms, through the systematic production of knowledge and power in specific areas like rural and sustainable development, among other forms of mechanisms, which should not exclude gender discourse. He posits on the significance of this approach that:

What is important is to describe the actual practices organising people's everyday's experience, 'to disclose the non-local determinations of locally historic or lived orderliness'. In the case of institutions, it is necessary to investigate how professional training provides the categories and concepts that dictate the practices of the institution's members and how local courses of action are articulated by institutional functions; in other words, how a textually mediated discourse substitutes for the actual relations and practices of the "beneficiaries," burying the latter's experience in the matrix that organises the institution's representation. Going back to my example, what must be analysed is how the peasant's world is organised by a set of institutional processes. One must also investigate how the institutional practices and professional discourses coordinate and interpenetrate different levels of social relations; that is, how the relations between different actors are rendered accountable only through a set of categories that originated in professional discourse; and, finally, how the latter implicate other types of relations, such as class and gender.<sup>31</sup>

It is within the purview of the above, as suggested by Escobar, that societies of the developing world would be able to project and anchor their development patterns of what is known to them, and the ability to carry all that matters along is a necessity. In the process of having adequate knowledge concerning the practices of development institutions for the betterment and survival of the locals, Escobar sees to the inevitability,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 109

that the local level should be able to reproduce the world, even though most of the practices of the development institutions are forms of abstractions. He states clearly that, “We must analyse how peasants are constituted by the work practices of development professionals; . . . This work of abstraction is a necessary condition for development to work in the process of describing, inquiring into, interpreting, and designing treatment for their clients or beneficiaries. Although most times this process of abstraction and structuring – which goes on in large part unconsciously – takes place at the top (international or national levels), it inevitably works its way down to the local situation, where most of the work is done. The local level must reproduce the world as the top sees it, so to speak.”<sup>32</sup>

At the turn of making impressive impacts on the development of societies of the Global South, Escobar extends the analysis by focusing on the regimes of representation, that trigger the impetus and reconstruction of three fundamental social actors: women, peasants and the environment towards the attainment of sustainable development. These social factors were examined in the quest for diverse possibilities inherent in the processes of integrated rural development for power and visibility that, “Only those farmers who accomplished successfully their “graduation into small entrepreneurs,” would survive . . . in the overall objective – to increase production and income in the traditional subsector by rationalising its insertion into the market economy”<sup>33</sup>; thereby creating “a reorganisation of visibilities, linking state support, international institutions, class conflict, existing food politics, and the like into a new strategy: integrated rural development.”<sup>34</sup>

He posits the significance of women to development, as against some polemics and theories, that have refused to recognise their productive role, as “women, have been the “invisible farmers.” Or, to be more precise, women’s visibility has been organised by techniques that consider only their role as reproducers.”<sup>35</sup>At this invisible level that women have been based, Escobar bares his mind on the importance of women in

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 111.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 157.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 172.

development that, “the participation of women in social productions is necessary but not sufficient to overcome women’s subordination. Even if the new policies provided spaces for this to happen – to the extent that they might generate changes in the social and political relations between women and men and by strengthening women’s organisations at all levels – only the development of gender-based forms of consciousness and organisation can provide a firm basis for a lasting improvement of women’s condition.”<sup>36</sup>

Towards the social re-engineering and the struggle against women’s subjugation in societies of the Global South, is the discourse of liberation, where he argues that, “One final aspect to be discussed in terms of the relation of women to the development apparatus is whether WID (women in development) does not entail a certain idea of “liberation” for Third World women. This is another aspect of the relationship between First World feminists and Third World women that is being discussed in hopeful ways, as a way of bringing together, rather than dividing, women across cultures.”<sup>37</sup>

In the rise of environment to the quest for sustainable development, Escobar avers the significance of man’s intellectuality to decide on the kind of earth he wants and how to manage the use of nature to the advantage of human society through effective and appropriate management strategies. He argues that, “The rise of the ideology of sustainable development is related to modification in various practices, new social situations, and identifiable international economic and technological factors. What needs to be explained, however, is precisely why the response to this set of conditions has taken the form that it has, “sustainable development,” and what important problems might be associated with it.”<sup>38</sup> In addressing the above, he outlines four possible aspects:

First, the emergence of the concept of sustainable development is part of a broader process of the problematisation of global survival that has resulted in a reworking of the relationship between nature and society. . . A second aspect regulating the sustainable

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 188.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 188.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 194.

development discourse is the economy of visibility it fosters. . . Third, the ecodevelopmentalist vision expressed in mainstream sustainable development reproduces the central aspects of economism and developmentalism. . . Fourth, this reconciliation is facilitated by the new concept of “the environment,” the importance of which in ecological discourse has grown steadily in the post-World War II period. The development of ecological consciousness that accompanied the rapid growth of industrial civilisation also effected the transformation of “nature” into “environment.” No longer does nature denote an entity with its own agency, a source of life and discourse; for those committed to the world as resource, the environment becomes an indispensable construct. As the term is used today, environment includes a view of nature according to the urban-industrial system. Everything that is relevant to the functioning of this system becomes part of the environment.<sup>39</sup>

An analysis of these three social factors, as examined by Escobar, has shown the transformation of development, which will take place among societies of the Global South, if made functional and implemented. This is evident in his writing that, “Development continues to reverberate in the social imaginary of states, institutions, and communities, perhaps more so after the inclusion of women, peasants, and nature into its repertoire and imaginative geographies.”<sup>40</sup>

In his project for the making and unmaking of development for the societies in the Global South, he points out “fundamental importance and roles of grassroots movements, local knowledge, and popular power in transforming development.”<sup>41</sup> That is, “an interest in local culture and knowledge; a critical stance with respect to established scientific discourses; and the defence and promotion of localised, pluralised grass-

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. pp. 194–196.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 210.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 215.

roots movements.”<sup>42</sup> By this, ethnographic model means the systematic study of people in relation to their cultures, which is designed to explore cultural phenomena as affecting them without external forces.

Escobar foresees the many problems inherent in these alternatives, which is in the complicit of cultures in the Third World in the quest for development re-engineering. He says that, “At the bottom of the investigation of alternatives lies the sheer fact of cultural difference. Cultural differences embody – for better or worse, – possibilities for transforming the politics of representation, that is, for transforming social life itself. . . Because cultural difference is also at the root of postdevelopment, this makes the reconceptualisation of what is happening in and to the Third World a key task at present. The unmaking of the Third World – as a challenge to the Western historical mode to which the entire globe seems to be captive – is in the balance.”<sup>43</sup>

Seeing this great challenge from popular groups from the Third World, Escobar proffers solutions to this tragic task and problem that, “in two forms and principles: the defence of cultural difference, not as a static but as a transformed and transformative force; and the valourisation of economic needs and opportunities in terms that are not strictly those of profit and market. The defence of the local as a prerequisite to engaging with the global; the critique of the group’s own situation, values, and practices as a way of clarifying and strenghtening identity; the opposition to modernising development; and the formulation of visions and concrete proposals in the context of existing constraints, these seem to be the principal elements for the collective construction of alternatives that these groups seem to be pursuing.”<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

Development means making a better life for, which is diverse from one society to another. And because of the diversity of human societies and the interests therein, approaches towards the understanding and application of what development is all about will also be different. And because of this fact, therefore, the thesis of this paper has been to exam-

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. pp. 215–216.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 225.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 226.

ine Arturo Escobar's theory, which is a step ahead in identifying diverse approach in the discourse of development among societies of the Global South. It should be pointed out clearly here that many philosophers from Africa like Julius Nyerere, Amilcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, Kwasi Wiredu, Olusegun Oladipo, among others, have been raising issues, as examined by Escobar, essentially in the areas of identity, self-definition, and rationality, among others, towards the development and social re-engineering of and for Africa. This is to bring to fore the essentiality of people's culture to the development in which they crave for.