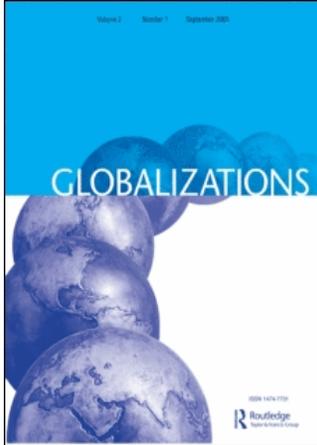


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### The Poverty of the Global Order

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## The Poverty of the Global Order

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**ABSTRACT** *This paper argues that the legitimacy of the global order depends not on economic progress alone, but on the progressive naturalization of its epistemological foundations, through 'new solutions' to old problems by states and development agencies. New solutions become methods of social control through which the dominant visions of what count as viable futures are reproduced. We critique efforts to humanize development (e.g., by the World Bank, Amartya Sen) as evidence of development's epistemological crisis. Deploying Karl Polanyi's distinction between formal and substantive economy, we consider examples of substantive economy, which realize equality through strategic sovereignty and representational power, in collective and individual terms. These represent practical and epistemological 'spaces of hope' for critique of the crisis of the market epistemology that infects development studies and international relations.*

*Este documento sostiene que la legitimidad del orden global no depende solamente del progreso económico, sino de la naturalización progresiva de sus fundamentos epistemológicos, a través de 'nuevas soluciones' a problemas antiguos mediante estados y agencias del desarrollo. Las nuevas soluciones se convierten en métodos de control social, a través de los cuales se reproducen las visiones dominantes de lo que cuenta como futuros viables. Criticamos los esfuerzos de humanizar al desarrollo (p.e. Banco Mundial, Amartya Sen) como evidencia de la crisis del desarrollo epistemológico. Utilizando la distinción de Kart Polanyi entre economía formal y economía sustancial, consideramos ejemplos de una economía sustancial, la cual realiza la igualdad por medio de una soberanía estratégica y un poder representativo, en términos colectivos e individuales. Estas, entre otras iniciativas, representan 'espacios de esperanza' prácticos y epistemológicos para criticar la crisis de la epistemología de mercado que infecta a los estudios de desarrollo y las relaciones internacionales.*

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## Introduction

The ‘poverty of the global order’ refers to the institutional reproduction of a naturalized understanding of poverty, and its legitimation of the development industry. As required by the UN System of National Accounts, states and multilateral development agencies define development as accumulation, in positive measures of output and/or income. Other measures of well-being or the regeneration of social and ecological values remain unregistered and de-legitimized. In eliding or reducing multiple meanings of development to a monetary standard, poverty is naturalized as a measure of material scarcity, simultaneously impoverishing development. This process licenses the development industry to renew its reductionist view of inequality, everywhere, through the appropriation of alternative values and visions of development.

This impoverished vision of the global order also informs responses to post-modern approaches to development. Such approaches contest the legitimacy of development discourse as a misrepresentation of non-European cultures and a discourse of control (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1992; Said, 1978). Saul characterizes this tendency as the ‘discursive world of “development stinks”’, arguing that despite the shortcomings of development in externalizing cultural and environmental relations, ‘this need not dictate the abandonment of any vision of “development”’ (Saul, 2004, p. 229). Similarly, Sutcliffe surmises that ‘criticism of the standard development model seems at times too total,’ and that a nostalgic postdevelopmentalism runs the risk of ‘losing the baby when we throw out the old bath water’ (quoted in *ibid.*). And Schuurman adds:

The very essence of development studies is a normative preoccupation with the poor, marginalized and exploited people in the South. In this sense *inequality* rather than *diversity* or *difference* should be the main focus of development studies: inequality of access to power, to resources, to a human existence – in short, inequality of emancipation. (quoted in Saul, 2004, p. 230)

As we wonder aloud why development studies has such a ‘normative preoccupation’ with the poor, we problematize the distinction between ‘inequality’ and ‘difference.’ Schuurman sees that inequality has diverse forms shaping the ‘inequality of emancipation’ (quoted in Saul, 2004, p. 230), but nevertheless affirms a binary between inequality and difference. We argue, however, that reinforcing this binary affirms the development establishment’s economism as the core value. Alternatively, we propose that inequality and difference are relational, rather than oppositional or mutually exclusive constructs and experiences. Our phrase ‘poverty of the global order’ suggests that capital (and its fetishized representations) impoverishes not just (classes of) people, but the material relations that enable the imagining and realizing of new social futures. The relationship between inequality and difference becomes particularly evident when we consider that development is anchored not just in institutions and structures, but also in the lives of its subjects (Pieterse, 1998). Understanding how subjects of development receive, legitimize, and/or contest institutional and historical constructions of development is indispensable to understanding how development is accomplished (Baviskar, 2005; Gupta, 1998; Klenk, 2004; Li, 1999; Mosse, 2004), as well as to reformulating its possibilities.<sup>1</sup>

The poverty of the global order, then, concerns the production and representation of poverty (and development) in fetishized terms, and how this in turn legitimizes market rule,<sup>2</sup> as institutionalized in the development industry. Recent claims by development agencies to have given development a participatory ‘human face’ reproduce an impoverished global order dedicated to making capital accumulation work for the poor. However, micro-finance schemes make the poor work for capital, reinforcing the legitimacy of the development industry (Weber, 2004) but dispossessing extant cultures (Elyachar, 2005). The participatory reflex is a product of the

very crisis of development, with the World Bank's recent 'poverty reduction' project illustrating the method of appropriation central to the development enterprise (Cammack, 2004; Cook and Kothari, 2001; Weber, 2006).

Current evidence of global economic inequality deepening via corporate globalization is experienced as a development crisis (cf. Sachs, 2005). It is generating questions about global development practices from the World Economic Forum to the development agencies, with World Bank President James Wolfensohn (2000) speaking of rethinking development 'because we have yet to solve old problems – above all that of the yawning gulf between the haves and the have-nots of the world'. While economic polarization is all too real, it is more than a material crisis. The crisis is institutional and epistemological, in the sense that development in its succession of forms across the last half-century has steadily reproduced inequalities and steadily sought to renew its legitimacy via organizational and definitional reformulations. Because this renewal depends fundamentally on appropriating alternatives, the crisis can only deepen as renewal reinforces economic reductionism (cf. Plehwe, 2004).

In our view, the need for new approaches ('poverty reduction') enables the development industry, but not its subjects. As we argue here, new forms of poverty alleviation in the neo-liberal era renew the legitimacy of private forms of accumulation as the engine, and episteme, of development. A market episteme has two distinct but related repercussions for addressing the crisis of development. First, the crisis prompts the development establishment to obscure the roots of its legitimacy crisis by re-formulating poverty-alleviation methods with which to renew its original legitimacy (cf. Escobar, 1995). In addition to naturalizing poverty as a phenomenal, rather than a structural, feature of the global order, the development establishment mandates new institutional devices such as WTO protocols and 'governance initiatives'<sup>3</sup> that embed states and citizens further in the system of market rule. Second, the crisis *appears* to stem from the persistence of inequality, obscuring the deeper epistemological crisis of market rationality.

Distinguishing market rationality (formal economy) from substantive economy (Polanyi, 1968), we critique the poverty of economism and its scarcity paradigm, which fetishizes monetary relations and discounts substantive, socio-ecological conceptions of economy. We illustrate what it would mean to transcend the scarcity paradigm by examining two examples of substantive economy, in which questions of development and alternative values are addressed and realized through the device of representational power at the collective and the individual levels, respectively.

### **Naturalizing a Conceptual Poverty**

To reiterate, the poverty of the global order is that its legitimacy depends not simply on progress in phenomenal terms (one-sided measures), but also on the progressive naturalization of its epistemological foundations. A key to this process is the construction of 'poverty' as an original, rather than a social, condition.<sup>4</sup> While we do not minimize the fact that most of the world's people's material needs are grossly unmet, the conceptual problem is that solutions to end deprivation proceed from an unproblematic empirical, or phenomenal, understanding of scarcity (of material means). There is little investigation of the relationships producing scarcity, and there is scant recognition that representing scarcity in market terms ignores other means of livelihood. Conventional solutions to poverty resort to market rule, and renew the development industry—they do not disturb conditions of inequality, becoming rather methods of controlling and re-producing dominant visions of what count as viable futures (cf. Fraser and Honneth,

2003). New ways of labeling old wine is a critical strategy for naturalizing the epistemological foundations upon which an unequal world is remade.

Shiva articulates one way of naturalizing poverty (and development):

The paradox and crisis of development arises from the mistaken identification of the culturally perceived poverty of earth-centred economies with the real material deprivation that occurs in market-centred economies, and the mistaken identification of the growth of commodity production with providing human sustenance for all. (1991, p. 215)

To represent 'earth-centred economies' as poor, via comparative measures of wealth, identifies them as frontiers for capital accumulation, discounting alternative value systems, which is Shiva's point. Analogously, Kothari (1997) argues that alternatives exist in micro-initiatives by the poor, and that their survival strategies constitute the basis for imagining the future. However, 'earth-centred economies' and informal networks are not necessarily virtuous alternatives, and their diversity may be repackaged as commercial opportunity, and advertised as responsible corporate practice (Da Costa, 2007). Such romanticizations risk repeating development studies' normative preoccupation with the poor. Our point is that we cannot treat alternatives as inherent signs of resistance to the poverty of the global order, for they are frequently viewed as resources ripe for appropriation as new frontiers for capital accumulation—as we have seen, for example, with micro-financing initiatives and fair trade.

### The Human Face of Development

The recent effort to humanize development in light of critiques of its top-down projects and singular visions has certain trademark characteristics. The discursive focus on individuals, humanity, and participation takes attention away from the wealth of resources diverted towards realizing the poverty of the global order, institutionally and epistemologically.<sup>5</sup> While the participation of the poor in designing poverty alleviation programs may be important, rarely do these projects allow alternative constructions of what resources, interpretations, and rights are valuable to people concerned.

In this vein, Sen's contributions to humanizing development are exemplary. The journal *Studies in Comparative International Development* (2002) organized a debate concerning Sen's treatise *Development as Freedom*. Sen's reasoning about development pivots on a quality intrinsic to all individuals, prior to accumulation: '[T]he appropriate "space" is neither that of utilities (as claimed by welfarists), nor that of primary goods (as demanded by Rawls), but that of substantive freedoms – the capabilities – to choose a life one has reason to value' (Sen, 2002, p.74).

For Sen, substantive freedoms enable people to participate in the determination of what they should value and/or enable people in effect to construct their opportunities. The problem of development, then, seems to be absence of freedom, absence of adequate participation in democratic processes, and absence of adequate information about available opportunities. Critics argue that this model presumes the very thing that it claims to deliver, as a consequence of democratic participation and choice, namely a measurable equality, valuing individuality instrumentally as 'capital', and implying an ahistorical construction of individual agency (Stewart and Deneulin, 2002, p. 66). Sen's view is analogous to Wolfensohn's effort to give the Bank a human face. In viewing development as 'globalization with a human face. Globalization that is inclusive. Globalization that promotes social equity and works for the poor' (2000), Wolfensohn identifies global market access as the epistemological and practical point of departure.

We introduce Sen and World Bank reasoning to illustrate the impoverished economism common to liberal (and radical) conceptions of the global order. Such reasoning shares a particular view of the world, expressed in Wolfensohn's universalized claim that globalization 'is here to stay'. Our argument is that this homogeneous view of the world fetishizes a contradictory and politically-created process, depicting it as natural devoid of alternatives, even as it appropriates such alternatives. Wolfensohn deliberately seeks to incorporate many of the criticisms of the development project:

This vision is firmly and genuinely country-owned. It rejects top-down development devised behind closed doors in Washington (or even in national capitals in member countries). It is holistic and comprehensive, taking account of the interrelationships among the different elements of development strategies. It is based on inclusion and participation, bringing together civil society, local competition, NGOs, the private sector and the poor themselves. Bringing them together in order to foster trust and sustainability . . . (Wolfensohn, 2000)

The World Bank's appropriation of participation—its opposition's discursive tool—is instructive because participation and the new 'country-owned' vision have been a key strategy in creating one world of shared interests. This vision gives rise to partnerships to produce Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) compiled as 'performances:' '[T]o meet the charge that imposing conditions is undemocratic, the IFIs now insist that other stakeholders, such as NGOs, churches, unions and business, rather than just government, are involved in writing the plans' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 317). The view that the Bank does not and cannot project, for fear of losing its own legitimacy, is that the shared interest between these diverse groups can only be material accumulation—not social equality.

Under neo-liberal reform, participatory methods are presented as a new commitment to hear the voices of the poor (Narayan et al., 2000). Institutions such as the World Bank formally commit to using participatory methods to contain the potential of their critics' ideas to reformulate development. As it happened, the poor expressed dissatisfaction with government corruption while celebrating the Bank. During the 'Voices of the Poor' project, participating researchers conducted participant observation within the terms of the Bank's research project, describing the procedures by which the voices of the poor were sought, transferred into institutional logic, and used to build institutional and state legitimacy (Rademacher and Patel, 2002). Participation can indeed bite back, revealing the source of Bank institutional legitimacy as internally generated, but accomplished through the reduction of the social worlds of its subjects.

### **The State and Market Rule**

Just as we argue that the development establishment bases its legitimacy on monopolizing development knowledge (appropriating alternatives), so governments implement official development knowledge to accumulate power and enrich their cadres. Thus Bose remarked of the post-independence Indian state: 'Instead of the state being used as an instrument of development, development became an instrument of the state's legitimacy' (Bose, 1997, p. 153). In other words, the national accounting system, in emphasizing paid employment, trade, and foreign investment, and discounting subsistence production and unpaid forms of work, structured accumulation at all costs into the public rationale of the development state. In the recent neo-liberal world ordering, accumulation is now filtered through disciplinary technologies mandated by the development establishment (IMF, World Bank, WTO) and instrumentalized through the privatization of states (Cammack, 2004).

Under the neo-liberal project, political elites seek legitimacy and creditworthiness by internalizing the rationality of global currency and capital markets. This transition reveals a complex legitimacy crisis of the state, indicative of the poverty of the global order. In a critique of international relations theory, Rosenberg terms this crisis the ‘paradox of sovereignty’. The active construction and internalization of market rule within the operation of the state system suggests that sovereignty is ‘both more absolute in its “purely political” prerogatives than other historical forms of rule, and yet highly ambiguous as a measure of actual power’ (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 131). The subjection of politics to the market episteme is a fundamental part of the crisis, insofar as modern solutions to modern problems (e.g., ‘planet of slums’) are evaporating (cf. de Sousa Santos, 2002).

Market rule is increasingly implemented through IMF, World Bank, and WTO-ordained procedures, represented euphemistically as new forms of ‘governance’. Under these institutional circumstances, market rule does not eliminate so much as transform states, which incorporate multilateral protocols and recalibrate policies away from public and toward private goals, often repackaged as empowerment. An additional, intensive dimension involves the subjection of producer, consumer, and social relations to the price form—where social protections (access to an environmental commons, public goods, subsidies, minimum wages, price controls on staple consumer items, trade tariffs, etc.) are regarded as (unnatural) frictions that distort market processes. In this sense, states reproduce, and are reproduced by, the market. Ironically, the market episteme is responsible for the demise of the (economistic) social contract at the same time as it intensifies the displacement of non-economic social and cultural forms and meanings—deepening inequalities supposedly resolved by market rule.

Where states do implement the new ‘governance’ requirements of participation, entrepreneurialism, and empowerment, they do so under conditions of (reproducing) inequality. For example, Baviskar’s (2005) study of a watershed project in central India asks how the state, usually an object of harsh critique in this region and notorious for large, ecologically destructive projects, comes to be celebrated as having galvanized a massive people’s movement. She traces the various methods, discursive and epistemological manipulations, exclusions, and corrupt practices through which ‘participation’ was adjusted to mean contained involvement by already endowed and protected individuals within villages in the government-administered watershed project. These powerful individuals were willing participants who collaborated with corrupt state officials while excluding ‘ideal’ participants, who were conveniently labeled unruly subjects—that is, those who had the capacity and knowledge to make the watershed project truly redistributive and socially just.

Baviskar’s work brings the ethnographic eye to monolithic representations of the violence of development (Escobar, 1995). In showing how people participate in, legitimize, and contest development projects, she shows that individual agency and participation is tied to historical relations of unequal access to resources, rights, and power. As our critique of Sen and the Bank claimed, institutionalized participation has no meaning outside the contexts of inequality, hierarchy, and violence into which it is introduced through development projects. Baviskar’s complex view of agency, which is neither outside the realm of, nor endlessly stifled by, structural power, motivates us to ask what exactly it means to argue, as Sen has, that freedom and participation bring equality.

Studying claims about creating equality and participation in ethnographic contexts of the accomplishment of rule is useful to understand how (not whether) success of development projects is produced (Li, 1999). In an analysis of a British-funded project of low-cost inputs to improve the livelihoods of poor farming families, Mosse argues that the formation of the

semblance of policy coherence is accomplished through the enrollment of different interests to participate in a given project (2004, p. 649). Participation accomplishes rule because donor control enrolls diverse local interests ‘effectively turn[ing] participation into a commodity’ (Ibid., p. 650). In practice, participation was accomplished because participation meant jobs or contacts with powerful locals. Participation thus came to have institutional legitimacy because people strenuously fed back to ‘headquarters’ a coherent representation of the success of the participatory model regardless of project effects in transforming ‘social relationships and ecologies’ (Ibid., p. 662). Thus, affirming the success of the development project was not required by the development establishment as much as it was produced in conditions of social inequality within which people found themselves hoping for, establishing, and securing patronage relations with the project as their employer.

As in Baviskar’s study, the people whose participation demanded something the development project could not deliver became inconvenient participants. ‘[S]taff who tried to be too participatory – spending too long investigating needs or women’s perspectives . . . would be seen as underperforming by both project and community’ (Mosse, 2004, p. 655). In the end, the poorest are not the best subjects for participatory projects for they lack ‘time or labour to realize new entitlements to water or forest resources, or employment; or as migrants were non-members of the new organizations through which these entitlements were realized’ (Ibid., p. 652). These processes raise questions about who ‘the poor’ are, and what counts as poverty, considering the poorest are often not the most active and present participants. Ethnographic study of such processes shows that we know ‘the poor’ when we see them because they emerge through these multiple relations in particular contexts. While such complex particularity is routinely evident, ‘the poor’ are rarely recognized as a construction.

### **Reconceptualizing Equality**

Development as an abstract vision of progress only becomes meaningful within particular contexts of rule and inequality when broader visions are realized through multiple rationales and projected desires. As the development industry apprehends these proliferating meanings, repackaging them into ‘marketable’ ideas and institutionally useful tools, it turns a substantive relation into a formal one, where participation in a project is for the sake of participation, whether the project is useful or meaningful or not. The reinterpretation and recycling of these proliferating meanings in universal packages is how the development industry renews its legitimacy.

The poverty of the global order lies in the constant imperative to reformulate people’s multiple desires into a universal propensity to recognize, act on, and reinforce their economic self-interest. Rather than discounting multiple desires, development visions, and alternative equalities, they can be revealed, ethnographically, in subjective expressions of individuals and groups as they resist particular (unequal) relations of production and/or representation. Subjective expressions that seek to realize social visions irreducible to market relations are not so much idiosyncratic as historically situated.

When conceptualizing historically-grounded understandings of equality, the point is not that all subjectivities are equal but rather that subjectivity gives equality itself different meanings grounded in particular historical experiences of, and relations to, production and representation. Equality embodies a unity in diversity, insofar as subjects emerge through the negotiation of relations of production and representation. Accordingly, as implied in the UN Declaration of Rights (1948), the commitment to equalities in the social contract would be realizable if state

legitimacy was grounded not in the formal (monological) concerns of capital, but in the substantive (historically diverse) concerns of citizenship.

A substantive notion of citizenship depends on transcending the reductionism of a market-based episteme. Economic reductionism stems from the market fetishism of formal economic theory, founded in the price form, and expressed through ‘a situation of choice that arises out of an insufficiency of means . . . the so-called scarcity postulate’ (Polanyi, 1968, p. 143). Distinguishing formal and substantive economy, Polanyi claims that the:

two root meanings of economic, the substantive and the formal, have nothing in common. The latter derives from logic, the former from fact. . . . The substantive meaning implies neither choice nor insufficiency or means; man’s livelihood may or may not involve the necessity of choice and, if choice there be, it need not be induced by the limiting effect of a ‘scarcity’ of the means; indeed, some of the most important physical and social conditions of livelihood such as the availability of air and water or a loving mother’s devotion to her infant are not, as a rule, so limiting. . . . The laws of the one are those of the mind; the laws of the other are those of nature. (Idem.)

Notwithstanding that, since Polanyi wrote this, air, water, and love have been progressively commodified as international goods and services (cf. Barlow, 1999; Clarke, 2001; Hochschild, 2003), the point remains that formal market logic is a discursive imposition on the world. It represents the deepening power of capital to reconstruct the world in its image through a state system whose operation and legitimacy depends on the market institution. Polanyi’s alternative, substantive economy, represents an ‘ecological’ view of ‘the interchange with (man’s) natural and social environment, insofar as this results in supplying him with the means of material want-satisfaction’ (1968, p. 139). In our view, this alternative view of economy offers the possibility of a different, enriching global order, informed by a rejection of the fetishism of scarcity economics. We illustrate this through a discussion of ‘food sovereignty’ as a substantive challenge to the formal vision of ‘food security’.

Food security concerns the question of material want satisfaction. Its essential goal is to provide populations with sufficient and predictable food supplies. Historically, it has been central to governing legitimacy, whether in communities, empires, or states (Spitz, 1985). In the latter half of the twentieth century, food security was redefined as ‘best provided through a smooth-functioning world market’ (Ritchie, 1993, fn 25), corresponding to the organization of transnational food flows by agribusinesses. Under the WTO’s Agreement on Agriculture (1995), states no longer have the right to food self-sufficiency as a national strategy, despite the identification of human rights with sovereignty over natural resources in the 1948 UN Declaration. In converting food security to a(n) unequal market relation, thereby displacing peasant agri-culture *en masse*, the WTO regime subjects food, despite its global abundance, to the scarcity paradigm. Having been rendered scarce in market terms for impoverished ex-peasants, food becomes just another market value whose greater commercial production (e.g., Africa’s impending ‘second green revolution’) for those with cash renews the legitimacy of the global developers.

Nonetheless, food sovereignty movements are building a counter-hegemonic, substantive understanding of food security in which material want-satisfaction is not subordinated to the market, but (re-)embedded in ecological principles of community and environmental sustainability. The *Vía Campesina*, which includes 143 farm organizations representing millions of farming families from 56 countries (Desmarais, 2007, p. 21), is an exemplar. The *Vía Campesina* vision is for ‘the right of peoples, communities and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances’ (quoted in Ainger, 2003, p. 11).

We note that such a formulation demands that such rights be guaranteed, while the substantive content of rights remains open and to be determined by the communities and countries themselves (cf. Patel and McMichael, 2004, p. 249). From our perspective, the elaboration of this principle of self-organization subverts the reduction of agriculture, food, and development to market relations, and government complicity in such reductionism. Desmarais reports that this 'peasant' model

does not entail a rejection of modernity, technology and trade accompanied by a romanticized return to an archaic past steeped in rustic traditions [but is based on] ethics and values [where] culture and social justice count for something and concrete mechanisms are put in place to ensure a future without hunger. (2007, pp. 56–57)

In asserting substantive ecology over formal economy, food sovereignty recombines production and representation (see, e.g., McMichael, 2006; Patel, 2006) in such a way as to restore democratic initiative to producers. How they choose to realize this initiative is neither pre-ordained nor prescribed by one-dimensional notions of equality that would suppress cultural practices in the name of poverty-alleviating development.

### **Substantive Economies**

Demonstrating that food security and food sovereignty can be organized to reinforce each other mutually, *Vía Campesina* shifts the focus on scarcity as the only relevant inequality to the asymmetries of representation that reproduce inequality.<sup>6</sup> *Vía Campesina* changes the historically institutionalized subject of development by embodying and recognizing constructions of economy attentive to historical particularities and ecological limits. We believe that the formation of substantive economy must be understood as a struggle to make particular meanings and lived experiences of inequality and equality count institutionally, and members of *Vía Campesina* (whatever its limitations) are engaged in just such an endeavor (cf. Desmarais, 2007).

Holland and Lave (2001) understand history as a social practice that is made in person, because people make particular choices within contexts of enduring struggles. Some social actions in these struggles, more than others, come to be historically institutionalized (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp. 5–7). As such, studying the formation of 'history in person' captures how people come to make institutionally recognized struggles (such as development) mean something in their lives.

We animate such struggles via this conception of history in person. When people negotiate enduring institutional interventions in their lives, they shape social formations relevant to their life-historical contexts. From the perspective of examining history in person, the World Bank's claim to produce developed societies and subjects generates an enduring institutionalized struggle to bring equality. In practice, however, people make the Bank's institutional struggle count in their lives in their own, particular terms. Studying how people make World Bank intervention meaningful in their normative context and daily lives gives us insight into the making of history, the making of particular people, and what it means to a particular people to be in pursuit of equality in a given historically grounded context.

We view this relation between 'micro' contexts of people's lives and 'macro' historical/institutional relations as mutually conditioning, through process and struggle. Such a view is basic to our reformulation of inequality and substantive economies. In our understanding of substantive economies, the organization and distribution of scarce resources according to prioritized needs is inseparable from access to and control over means of representation. As we have noted already, inequality and difference are inter-twined.

Inadequacy, indifference, and asymmetry of representation are formative of the poverty of the global order—apparent in the words and actions of landless men in India.<sup>7</sup> After years of commitment against the central Indian government's pursuit of privatization and profit, the Communist government, the CPI (M), explicitly began to invite foreign investment and liberal reform for the agri-business sector in the late 1990s. Despite historical governmental efforts towards equality, today, agricultural and wage laborers continue to face high levels of seasonal unemployment, landlessness, and poor wages. In this climate, any available work produces huge competition in unskilled labor markets and consequent divisiveness within communities. This competition for work can be understood as an inequality produced out of scarcity (of jobs).

CPI (M) efforts to encourage the food processing industry are aimed at creating jobs and rejuvenating the 'sick' industrial sector. While the CPI (M) conceives of its legitimacy in terms of encouraging investment-creating jobs, agricultural laborers migrating to work in the food processing industry experience dilemmas beyond competing for scarce jobs. Ordinarily, and even in the face of appalling conditions of work, people represent their choices as not simply governed by cash and employment needs, but in terms of what kind of person to be and how much work, what kind of work, and what location of work matches their sense of being. For migrant laborers, the commercialization of rural life introduces a complicated set of dilemmas which are simultaneously economic, familial, physiological, political, and emotional. When asked how many days in a year he would be unemployed if he were to remain in Tarinipur, Ranjan Maity responded:

I spend one month on agricultural labor elsewhere. I spend about 25 days out of three months at the potato store. A total of three months in a year is spent outside the village. Work in the potato store is so tiring that sometimes I feel even if someone offers me 500 rupees and says 'Here do this!' I would want to say 'Forget it.' It is so tiring that I can hardly sleep. I feel that I should do a lot of work in a short time and just go home. When I come home I can't concentrate on work here because I am so happy to be back home. And yet, even as I have come back home sometimes I think of the money to be made there. (6 June, 2001)

The fine balance of his calculations is swayed by migrant labor from a neighboring village pushing down local wages. For people like Ranjan, migrating enables him to keep his rural home viable, and his family life stable and happy. However, seeking employment in potato stores also means weighing an horrific work-load against money. While Ranjan longs to be at home when he is working outside Tarinipur, he needs the lucrative potato store work that could make life in Tarinipur easier, and perhaps even enable him to spend more time at home.

Amulya Kaniara's experience also describes the dilemma of work in potato stores.<sup>8</sup> This is the kind of work likely to become generalized as a result of CPI (M) propositions for agribusiness schemes and export processing units. Amulya explained later that this was one of the most dehumanizing experiences of his life, one which he has sworn never to return to even if it means that he and his family would have to starve. Amulya is a landless, low-caste, wage laborer. His experience of and resolve to never return to that kind of work embodies Lukacs' insight about the soul of a worker: '[W]hile the process by which the worker is reified and becomes a commodity dehumanizes him and cripples and atrophies his "soul" . . . it remains true that precisely his humanity and his soul are not changed into commodities' (Lukacs, 1968, p. 172). Amulya does not allow his desperate need for jobs to determine what a man on the lowest rung of society can be expected to put up with. He refuses the logic that scarcity determines action.

While the institutionalized struggle towards equality views people as units with (or without) access to jobs, we examine how people's sense of self and life constitutes and is constituted by their lived experience of particular jobs. Amulya's decision not to work in such conditions may

have negative economic consequences for his household, but it is nonetheless a rational decision which powerfully counters the ‘poverty reduction’ presumption that the lowest on the rungs have few options, nothing much to lose, and are therefore compelled to put up with the worst conditions, the lowest wages, and the deepest humiliations. Indeed, they are expected to be grateful because ‘at least it is a job’.

Ranjan and Amulya’s words are not idiosyncratic expressions of soul and subjectivity. Their words enable us to situate difference and alienation in its historically constructed connection with inequality. Ranjan and Amulya live in a context where the government has made enduring efforts towards economic redistribution through land reform, political decentralization, and other pro-poor policies. Despite this, Ranjan and Amulya must weigh life against jobs. We are not romanticizing Amulya’s decisions as difference, higher on the hierarchy of human values compared to Ranjan’s decision to keep working in potato storage units. Their words and actions lie ‘between transgression and reproduction’ and show the multiple ways in which people negotiate their historical context in person (Willis, 2001, p. 171).

Jan Breman’s study of laborers in India offers another example of people’s negotiation of institutional meaning-making. A father responding to institutional accusations that ‘these citizens’ care too little about education responds:

We force them [children] to work and live on their earnings, they say. It is a cruel joke they are heaping on us. We also have fatherly sentiments and we also know the value of education. But when I am refused work in the field and my old mother comes back saying she too has no work on that day, we momentarily cease to be fathers and against our wish ask our children to go out to work. (Punalekar, quoted in Breman, 1996, p. 113)

This father transgresses institutional mandates and his own aspirations to school his child because he cannot compete for a job as well as his child can—yet he finds himself institutionally judged to be reproducing his own inequality.

His dilemma points to alienation from institutional mandates. It exemplifies the poverty of the global order and its inability to represent justice for citizens whose choices amplify deep contradictions between poverty alleviation and market logics. Like feminist international relations theory, we recognize that cheap labor is a ‘necessary’ reification of the unequal state system and the poverty of the global order. There is no such thing as cheap labor unless it is labor made cheap (Enloe, 2004) through the political construction of comparative social inequalities in particular places. However, the market can inflict disciplinary force on this father’s life precisely because transactions loom much larger in his life and because what he values has no representation in institutional visions.

While post-development critics might recognize Amulya’s actions as difference and this father’s actions as inequality, we recognize both as relational expressions of representational inequality and alienation from institutional notions of economy. Amulya and Ranjan’s words do not easily lend themselves to incorporation into World Bank logic, because in their decision to choose work (Ranjan) or not (Amulya) they weigh affection against money. Competition between these values cannot become visible within the World Bank’s model of rationality, since its foundational legitimacy relies on projecting money as preordained winner. Thus, despite the current organized commodification of love, Amulya and Ranjan’s words are likely to be alienated rather than incorporated for they reveal too much of the soul in this competition. Along with material inequality, then, Amulya and Ranjan are simultaneously marginalized from the means of representation. What we mean by this is that they have no audience that listens to and acts on what (kind of work or relation to home) matters to them.

We maintain that it is important to take account not only of the many cultural registers through which people understand and experience 'development', 'scarcity', or 'need', but also the representational inequality which disciplines people into legitimizing their low value in the economic order (cf. Mohan, 2004). This is why we propose additionally viewing inequality as people's (in)ability to realize meanings and motivations that matter to them. Our argument is that inability to realize meanings in institutional form is a materially-grounded expression of a historical lack of access to and control over means of representation. Struggles to speak and to be heard must be conceptually recognized as kernels of the 'social dramas of development and citizenship', revealing people's constructions of legitimate state–society relations (Caron and Da Costa, forthcoming). Amulya's expression of an inequality that transcends a phenomenal form of poverty is historical in that it is both product and critique of his times. Indeed, our difficulty in seeing Amulya's evaluation of the state of the world as more than idiosyncratic expression is a product of the very historical relations that marginalize Amulya in the first place.

The poverty of the global order lies in inability to see beyond the scarcity principle, and recognize the diversity of values that could inform different conceptions of development and equality, based on a combination of economic and representational justice. Until the means of representation are actively redistributed to result in substantive reform of institutional and disciplinary orders, poverty and inequality cannot be addressed adequately.

### Conclusion

This paper has three related themes designed to identify and transcend the poverty of the global order. The first theme highlights the binarism expressed in the distinction between material inequality and difference/diversity that animates the current debate between modernist and post-modernist approaches to the development paradigm. This sets up artificial distinctions between development as economic justice and development as an undefined political emancipation. We argue that binarism falsely divides the two ways in which inequality is expressed via relations of production and representation, respectively. Indeed, our argument is that inequality and difference are mutually conditioning, because difference is materially grounded, and because material inequality, being relational, brings different meanings to those material relations. An enriching conception of development would value such meanings instead of abstracting them into a formalistic equation of equality with access to money.

The second theme is that to the extent that the binary remains, development critics are doomed to reproduce the naturalizing reflex of the development industry itself, in reducing development questions and choices to the scarcity postulate. Viewing development as being about economic justice alone discounts alternative conceptions of equality that value other choices concerning the organization of material life, not just the attempt to transcend material constraints.

Our third theme addresses the ways in which the development industry, and states, co-opt resistance and renew the legitimacy of development by reducing alternatives to the common denominator of economic gains in the marketplace. This trend, represented and implemented via the discourse of governance, merges the international relations and development paradigms, requiring states to author their own internalization of market rule. These neo-liberal procedures, in holding states accountable for poverty reduction, embed public priorities in private relationships. Arguably, the structure and episteme of the World Trade Organization, as flawed as it is, represents the highest stage of mutual infection of developmentalism and the state system. Governance, on behalf of globalization, reduces all inequalities to questions of market rationality. Governance is prosecuted by states through the surveillance and protocols

of the WTO on behalf of development visions that ultimately reduce the social world to a de-politicized checkerboard of competitive and expendable units of efficiency.

We view this formalistic appropriation of alternatives as servicing the legitimacy of the development establishment's market episteme and its ontological representation in the machinations of the WTO. It is this reductionism that compounds the barriers to a critical reformulation of development—to rethinking equality as a complex combination of access to means of production, reproduction, and representation rather than access to economic opportunity across a homogeneous world. In confirmation of our argument, the poverty of this reductionism is calling forth substantive economies via counter-movements across the world, premised on principles of strategic diversity rather than standardized materialism.

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### Notes

- 1 Thus in the crisis in Argentina (2001), the coordinator of a worker-run factory claimed, 'We're demonstrating that success is not profit but the creation of work and social inclusion. . . . We are not just workers taking back our jobs. What we want is an entirely different model for our country' (quoted in Garrigues, 2004, p. 8).
- 2 'Market rule' comes from Arrighi (1982).
- 3 An example is President Bush's proposal to establish the Millennium Challenge Account, via which his administration would substitute grants for existing loans to Southern states complying with neo-liberal forms of governance (Soederberg, 2004).
- 4 Jeffrey Sachs, for example, claims: 'Two hundred years ago the idea that we could potentially achieve the end of extreme poverty would have been unimaginable. Just about everybody was poor, with the exception of a very small minority of rulers and large landowners' (2005, p. 26; see also Escobar, 1995).
- 5 For systematic analyses of the World Bank's project of development knowledge monopolization, see Cammack (2004) and Goldman (2005).
- 6 The idea of asymmetry of representation and meaning derives from Reddy's conceptualization of the disciplinary force in the asymmetry of monetary exchange between rich and poor, where an 'equal' transaction generally has more consequence for the poor than the rich (Reddy, 1987, p. 65).
- 7 Some of the ethnographic detail here is based on research in West Bengal, India (August 2000–August 2001).
- 8 Asked how many bags a worker had to carry to earn Rs. 120 (\$ 1 = Rs. 43 in 2000 at time of interview), Amulya replied:

There is no fixed rate. The rule with the potato cold storage is that you have to fill up one store in 10–15 days. So one has to work from eight in the morning till 10 at night. So you have to carry these potato bags, each weighing about 60 kg. And climb up these makeshift ladders up to 50 feet high. If any one person falls or slips, all the others also fall. Sometimes while falling, if a leg gets stuck in the ladder, it can even break. I have seen it happen. What happened to me is that I hurt my knee very badly. Even then I continued to work for about four to five days. After that I just could not work. So I stayed back. But there was no-one to look after me, not even to ask me how I am, no-one to help me walk. They all went off to work. I just lay there in pain, crying. Then I decided to come back home. No, they didn't pay me because I had not completed my quota. They gave me my bus fare.

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