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Introduction

Iris Borowy

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Introduction

IRIS BOROWY

It would not be difficult to make a case that the history of development and world history are one and the same—or almost. Both fields have been centrally concerned with how socioeconomic transformations have shaped the relative positions of nations and empires in the world and the living conditions of their populations. Both have been very sensitive to how these processes have both contributed and responded to technological advancements, ideological, and religious belief system as well as to political power relations. Both fields are interested in how environmental circumstances, including economically relevant resources, have interacted with human belief systems and policies in creating poverty or wealth.

KEYWORDS: world history, history of development.

IN 1987, Gro Harlem Brundtland declared that “the ‘environment’ is where we all live; and ‘development’ is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode.”¹ One might paraphrase that the world is where we live, development is what we do to improve our lives, and history is the time in which this has been happening. From this point of view, world history and the history of development have a lot more in common than is conventionally acknowledged. This special issue aims at bringing together two subdisciplines of history, which are frequently considered separately.

More often than not, this separation seems arbitrary: why is the global circulation of crops and agricultural methods considered part of world history in the context of the Columbian Exchange in the sixteenth century, but part of development history in the context of the Green Revolution in the twentieth century? Why is the study of how religious and ideological belief systems have served to empower some

¹ Gro Harlem Brundtland, “Chairman’s Foreword,” in *World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, reprinted 2009), xi.

and disempower many considered part of development history if it addresses discourses called “development” after 1949 but world history in any other context? Arguably, this division has been to the detriment of both sides. Considering the two perspectives together, that of development and of world history, provides an opportunity to explore how they complement and enrich one another, specifically how developmental dynamics build on long histories that long predate the usage of that expression, and that recent developments form an integral component of long-standing intercultural entanglements.

In some ways, it would not be difficult to make a case that the history of development and world history are one and the same—or almost, though most historians in either field do not usually think of their discipline in this way, and presumably many would disagree with such a wide-ranging relabeling. Admittedly, the fields differ in important ways: world history highlights exchanges between different societies around the globe, entanglements, and “connections within the global human community,” that is, a primarily horizontal perspective.² By contrast, the history of development focuses on (state) policies designed to bring changes to a given area over time, involving “large-scale transformations of economic, political, and social life” often with a view toward perceived improvements of material living conditions, that is primarily a vertical perspective.³ World history tends to have a long-term perspective with many studies addressing events before the nineteenth century, while development history generally only begins with that period and more typically explores events of the twentieth century.

However, a closer look reveals that the similarities are at least as important as the differences: both fields have been centrally concerned with how socioeconomic transformations have shaped the relative positions of nations and empires in the world and the living conditions of their populations. Both have been very sensitive to how these processes have both contributed and responded to technological advancements, ideological, and religious belief system as well as to political power relations. Both fields are interested in how circumstances of geography and power, including with regard to economically relevant resources, have interacted with human activities in creating poverty or wealth. Moreover, their background suggests they are close relatives: both are comparatively recent arrivals in the discipline of history, born from similar impulses. After early beginnings, both came of age as historical subdisciplines in the 1990s, driven in part

² Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 3.

³ Stephen Macekura and Erez Manela, “Introduction,” in *The Development Century. A Global History*, ed. Stephan Macekura and Erez Manela (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 2.

by the end of the Cold War, which prompted a reconsideration of long- and short-term power dynamics that have shaped the world.⁴ Scholars like Kenneth Pomeranz, Patrick Manning, Jerry Bentley, Frederick Cooper, James Ferguson, or Gilbert Rist addressed areas and topics so far neglected by mainstream historiography and/or challenged conventional interpretations of how societies had negotiated knowledge and power. Specifically, the initial focus of their early work was to explore why, how, and since when European powers had come to dominate so much of the world for several centuries. Early work on the history of development often came from a background of development studies and accepted the mainstream, rather Eurocentric criteria of success, seeking to establish reasons for diverse outcomes in different places. But subsequent approaches soon found common ground with the goal to undermine self-serving narratives according to which “twin processes of industrialization and imperialism created a context in which European people came to construe Europe as the site of genuine historical development.”⁵

Within world history, a major output of this sentiment was the 1990s debate on the “Great Divergence” or “Rise of the West,” which discussed the reasons why some countries in Europe and North America came to dominate the world for several centuries and, more specifically, why Northern Europe, rather than China, became the economically most advanced and politically most powerful region during the nineteenth century. Based on an ever-increasing body of data, authors offered reasons ranging from religious and cultural characteristics to specific topography, agriculture-based wage differentials, climate, or the relation between countries situated at the core or periphery of global power structures.⁶ More generally, the question of

⁴ Christopher Colclough and James Manor, eds., *States or Markets? Neo-Liberalism and the Development Policy Debate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

⁵ Jerry H. Bentley, “The Task of World History,” in *The Oxford Handbook of World History*, ed. Jerry Bentley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5, online print.

⁶ David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998); Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Eric Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Duke University Press, 2004); Jack Goldstone, *Why Europe? The Rise of the West in World History 1500–1850* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008); Robert Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Robert C. Allen, “The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices – From the Middle Ages to the First World War,” *Explorations in Economic History* 38, no. 4 (2001): 411–447; see also more recently Matthias Middell and Philipp Robinson Rössner, eds., *The Great Divergence Revisited*. Special issue of *Comparativ* 26, no. 3 (2016).

why nations and empires became relatively more or less powerful at specific points in time lies at the heart of such seminal publications as William McNeill's *Rise of the West* or Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*.⁷ This approach continues to inform current scholarship by juxtaposing empires in different parts of the world, drawing a deeper understanding of global developments by seeking out differences and similarities in places and issues, which are frequently considered separately.⁸ The resulting studies have produced alternative perspectives on global history, which famously called for "provincializing Europe" and for the rejection of a single form of modernization in favor of the acceptance of "multiple modernities."⁹ In the process, they also provided an impressive body of theoretical and empirical studies on techno-economic development.

Thus, the growth of world history owes a lot to debates regarding past manifestations of what could justifiably be termed development (though often it was not). Meanwhile, the development community's version of addressing Eurocentric approaches was to challenge the unreflected acceptance of the Northern and Western concept of development as its only possible form, understood as a combination of industrialization, a culture of individualism and consumerism, a rational outlook on life, and a nuclear family with few children. Indeed, one effect of history of development research has been to reveal the origins of the concept of "modernization" as a construct born in the Cold War.¹⁰ The critique of modernization theory could result in stinging accusations against Western countries for supposedly using a hypocritical idea of development as a pretext for neo-colonial policies.¹¹ Other analyses have been more nuanced seeking to

⁷ William McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. Revised edition, 1991); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).

⁸ Rebecca Robinson, "Spectacular Power in the Early Han and Roman Empires," *Journal of World History* 29, no. 3 (2018): 343–368.

⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of the European Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–30.

¹⁰ Simon Szreter, "The Idea of Demographic Transition and the Study of Fertility Change: A Critical Intellectual History," *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 4 (1993): 659–701.

¹¹ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development*, 3rd ed. (New York: Zed Books, 2010).

historicize an inevitably controversial concept.¹² Authors have reacted to these ambiguities in different ways. Some make this question of what defines development the central element of (part of) their books.¹³ Several authors have insisted that development is not limited to economic growth and note the variety of alternative definitions, but then proceed to focus largely on the economic dimension.¹⁴ Some have historicized the conceptualization of economic growth as development.¹⁵ Some have refrained from explaining the term, keeping some creative ambiguity, suggesting that a precise definition is either unimportant or impossible.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, different approaches lead to different evaluations of recent history. Authors like Santosh Mehrotra and Richard Jolly of the UN Intellectual History program, and also Charles Kenny and Hans Rosling, have defended the record as overwhelmingly beneficial. They describe outcomes that are not without problems, especially with regard to persisting or increasing inequality, but with impressive improvements across all countries in crucial categories, such as life expectancy, infant mortality, or education. Their view of development is, essentially, an optimistic one in which the world has never been as good for as many people as today, and there is reason to believe it will improve further still.¹⁷ By contrast, authors such as Arturo Escobar and Gilbert Rist focus on the distributional aspect of economic development and come to a damning verdict. They portray development as a scam, a belief kept alive for the benefit of its

¹² Alexander Nützenadel and Daniel Speich, eds., *Global Inequality and Development After 1945*, Special Issue *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 1 (2011): 1–2; David Engerman and Corinna Unger, eds., *Towards a Global History of Modernization*, Special Issue of *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (2009); Andreas Eckert, Stephan Malinowski, and Corinna Unger, eds., *Modernization Missions. Approaches to 'Developing' the Non-Western World after 1945*, *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no. 1 (2010).

¹³ Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugeru, *The Anthropology of Development and Globalization* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

¹⁴ Ian Goldin, *Development. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Macekura and Manela, eds., *The Development Century*.

¹⁵ Iris Borowy and Matthias Schmelzer, eds., *History of the Future of Economic Growth. Historical Roots of Current Debates on Sustainable Degrowth* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2017).

¹⁶ Corinna Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Marc Frey, Sönke Kunkel, and Corinna Unger, eds., *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2014).

¹⁷ Santosh Mehrotra and Richard Jolly, eds., *Development with a Human Face* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Charles Kenny, *Getting Better* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Hans Rosling, *Factfulness* (London: Sceptre, 2018).

beneficiaries while “some ‘develop’; others are left out.”¹⁸ Their view of development is essentially pessimistic, in which an entrenched power structure prevents a suppressed part of the world from gaining similar living standards as that of the oppressors.

These two assessments derive from different ideological perspectives, reflecting different understandings of the term, which are related to the historical origins of the term itself. A google n-grams search of “development” indicates its emergence around the year 1820. Apparently, speakers of English did perfectly well without this word until around that time. New words do not arise serendipitously. Rather, they respond to specific “kinds of activities” that “require particular ways of talking and writing.”¹⁹ If n-gram can be trusted, this means that from about 1820 onward, English-speaking communities were faced with some form of activity for which existing vocabulary was felt to be inadequate. Correlation does not equal causation, but the connection to industrialization in Britain and the beginning of the Great Divergence, seems compelling. Subsequently, the word saw a steady increase of usage until the 1950s, followed by a surge until shortly before 1980 just to decline and rerise somewhat, so that by 2000 its use had reached about the frequency of 1970 (Figure 1). By contrast, an n-gram search for the term “development aid,” produces a picture of nonexistent usage until 1940, followed by an explosive rise from about 1958 onward to a high point around 1990 and subsequent slight decline (Figure 2).

Apparently, the older form of the world refers to how societies have gone through unprecedented economic, social, and environmental changes brought about by industrialization over the last two centuries and to their underlying policies. These are the changes that have been discussed in the Great Divergence debate. The younger meaning, which complements but does not replace the earlier version, refers to a frame for interactions between high- and low-income countries. This term gained importance in the specific context of North-South relations after formal colonialism came to an end, and it proved sufficiently important to shape the use of the term in general. One might say, the first emergence of “development” denotes the process by which techno-economic changes divided the world into relatively clear

¹⁸ Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 3rd ed. (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 256; cf. Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Neil Mercer, *Words and Minds. How We Use Language to Think Together* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 13.

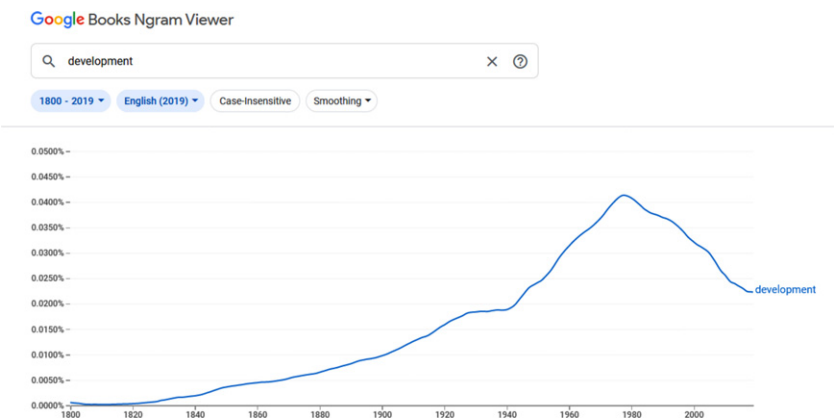


FIGURE 1. n-gram search: “development,” 6 February 2021.

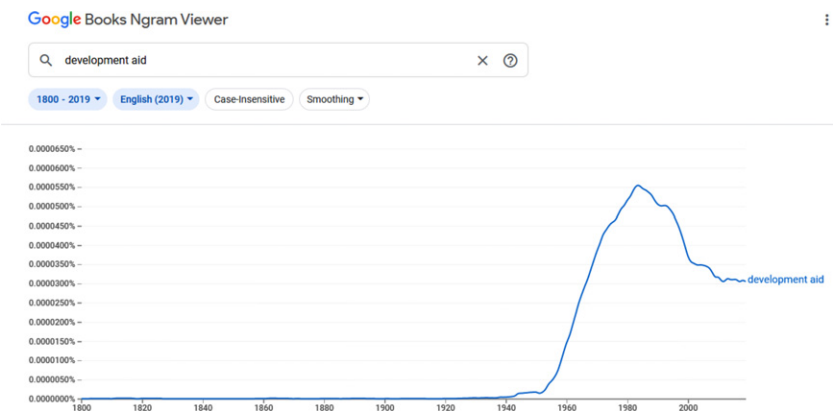


FIGURE 2. n-gram search: “development aid,” 6 February 2021.

groups of high- and low-income countries with concomitant power asymmetries, while the second expresses how these power asymmetries influenced persisting socioeconomic differentials between different parts of the world. In other words, while one reflects a framework related to long-term socioeconomic changes over time, the other speaks to a framework firmly situated in precisely the North-South paradigm, whose origins have been the object of much debate among world historians under the title of the Great Divergence. Thus, combining world and development history may serve not only to

provincialize Europe but also to historicize the division between the global North and South, between “developed” and “developing” countries, which has nurtured so much of the history of development literature. Challenging this perspective promises fruitful new insights. There seems little reason, for example, to talk about “reconstruction” in the context of post-1945 Europe but about “development” in the context of the “Global South” after decolonization.²⁰ Instead, the crucial questions of development, of how efforts for socioeconomic improvements have interacted with interregional contacts and power relations, appear as part of the larger questions driving human history.

In reality, the divide between those two approaches seems misleading since in many ways these two dimensions have been closely interlinked. The concepts of how countries in the global south should develop cannot easily be separated from those embraced in the respective actors in the north. When systems from the global north, be it capitalism or socialism, have been transferred, recommended, or imposed to or on countries of the global south, it was because these systems came with beliefs, theories, and power structures that had first been embraced in their countries of origin. By the same token, north-south relations have fed back into belief systems and socioeconomic evolutions in Europe and North America, and developmental influences have been more complex than either purely domestic changes or simple north-south dichotomies.²¹

In this context, both world and development history have been shaped by a conviction of many of its proponents that historical knowledge does and should inform present-day debates. Jerry Bentley, one of the formative figures of world history and the founding father of this journal, is credited with being “especially attentive to the role of historians in public discourse, concerned with how historians could best use the tools of our trade to further public debate.”²² This attitude is even stronger on the development side. Large part of scholarship related to “development” has been written by scholars of various disciplines, engaged intellectually or practically in the activity of developing. One example for intellectual ties is Andre Gunder Frank, whose writings contributed both to dependency theory (with a direct bearing on developmental negotiations during NIEO discussion at

²⁰ I would like to thank Corinna Unger for suggesting this point to me.

²¹ Phil Muehlenbeck and Natasha Telepneva, eds., *Warsaw Pact Intervention in the Third World* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018); Marc Fry and Sönke Kunkel, “Writing the History of Development: A Review of the Recent Literature,” *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 215–232, 217.

²² Karras and Mitchell, “Writing World Histories,” 2.

UNCTAD in 1970s, as noted by Nickolas Fern's paper in this issue), and to its historical contextualization in world system analysis.²³ The use of historical arguments for political discussions should not be surprising. After all, the two most important socioeconomic ideologies of the last century sought justification from interpretations of historical dynamics: both Karl Marx and, one-hundred year later and in direct rejection to Marx's theses, historian Walt Rostow claimed that history revealed distinct stages of development, which were sufficiently clear to allow predictions into the future.²⁴ In both cases, the belief that history revealed a supposedly universal pattern of development legitimized far-reaching policy decisions.

In milder form, this belief lives on. Reconstructing the diverse roots of development thinking, prominent readers and edited volumes of development studies routinely include historical material.²⁵ However, this inclusion does not typically lead to a deeper critical analysis. Instead, a recent analysis by Albert Sanghoon Park of numerous monographs and articles dedicated to development suggests that today's development community follows much in Marx's and Rostow's footsteps by seeking to distill guidelines for future activities from an analysis and interpretation of historical precedents, albeit in a limited, mostly unreflected manner. Park concluded: "For better or worse, development is now part of twentieth-century history. If it is to be effective and sustainable in the twenty-first, then it will need to reflect upon this past in order to envision its better future."²⁶ By the same token, if development studies could benefit from a deeper historical awareness, arguably world historians benefit from an awareness of the degree to which the dynamics they study form part of ongoing and future challenges. In fairness, this is an issue of degree rather than principle, and some authors have pointedly declared that world history

²³ Andre Gunder Frank, *On Capitalist Underdevelopment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Andre Gunder Frank, *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* with Barry K. Gills (London: Routledge, 1996).

²⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," 1948; cited in: Roberts, Bellone Hite, and Chorev, eds., *The Globalizations and Development Reader*, 29–37; Walt Rostow, *The Five Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

²⁵ Katie Willis, *Theories and Practices of Development*, 2nd ed. (London/New York: Routledge, 2011); Roberts, Bellone Hite and Chorev, eds., *The Globalizations and Development Reader*; Bruce Currie-Alder, Ravi Kanbur, David Malone, and Rohinton Medhora, eds., *International Development. Ideas, Experiences and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²⁶ Albert Sanghoon Park, "Does the Development Discourse Learn from History?" *World Development* 96 (2017): 52–64, 201, 61.

should have “something to say about the patterns of globalization that became increasingly evident in the years after the Cold War.”²⁷

In this vein, this special issue presents five studies on postwar topics of development history that purport to speak to a world history audience. Contributions are about Australia, China, Guyana, India, Italy, and the international arena, with a focus on the 1970s, though some articles stretch from the 1940s to today. The collection juxtaposes the local specificities with common themes in play around the world in multiple connections.

A common theme that runs through many papers is the connection between the two common frameworks of development: that of advances within one country and that of North-South relations. As Jared Ward shows, the Chinese aid program in Guyana, reflected the conviction that its own economy based on small, light industry would also be most appropriate for the Caribbean island. Thus, the Great Leap Forward in China provided a model for the emerging brick industry in Guyana, much like the Soviet government expected India to adopt its form of socialism, relying heavily on large-scale industrial projects. In these cases, experience within one country determined its relations with another country, as the commitment to a specific economic structure. But the connection could work in opposite ways, too. As Andreas Hilger’s paper shows, the—partial—adoption of the Soviet model in India was closely tied to expectations of development aid. Not surprisingly, the different attitudes created tension. The Soviet expectation that development cooperation would lead to the wholesale transfer of a socioeconomic system collided with Indian interests in a far more limited acceptance of technical aid, financial support, and selected practical ideas. Similarly, Nicholas Ferns demonstrates how discussions regarding North-South relations prompted considerations in Australia about how to position the country in order to best serve its domestic economic agenda. However, the articles also demonstrate that the diffusions of ideas and material were more complicated than simple North-South transfers. The cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and Guyana, described by Jared Ward, was emphatically South-South, while cooperation between the Soviet Union and India was a Second—rather than First—world engagement with the global South, with both explicitly framing their activities in antiimperialist or anticolonial terms. Meanwhile, Iris Borowy’s paper

²⁷ Alan Karras and Laura Mitchell, “Writing World Histories for our Times,” in *Encounters Old and New in World History*, ed. Alan Karras and Laura Mitchell (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2017), 6.

on debates about what to do with human waste betrays an evolving ambivalence in the international discourse whether its reuse as fertilizer is to be considered a sign of backwardness, a temporary necessary evil or, on the contrary, of exemplary sustainability of the future.

Such ambiguities helped blur the separation between “developed” and “developing” countries. Almost all papers involve cases of unclear or changing labeling. Indeed, in Nicholas Ferns’ paper on the efforts by Australia in the 1970s to claim a “Middle Zone” in between developed and developing countries this question of categorization forms the core of his discussion. Seeking the “Middle Zone” was a strategy with which Australian government sought to optimize both its political interests, which favored an identification as a developed country, and its economic interest, which favored a categorization as a developing country. Similarly, China claimed a dual identity as both a socialist and a developing country, seeking at the same time to extend development aid to lower income countries according to its own developmental trajectory while rejecting the label of “developed.” Meanwhile in Europe, Italy also shifted perceived identities between the country groups, unwillingly and only after increasing attention to African countries made their position as a development country increasingly untenable. These examples reveal that categorizations according to developmental status as only mildly connected to objectively observable status but, rather, a fluid label that was integrated into a broader field of policy choices. One, somewhat unexpected finding of this collection was the popularity of the label of “developing country.” In various ways, it came with tangible benefits: development aid for industrial projects, favorable trade condition, donations of food and medicine, help in building a health sector, or perceived political credibility among countries in the global South. They led countries like Italy, China, Guyana, or Australia to claim being entitled to the identity—at least for part of their policies.

To a remarkable degree, the papers speak about the explicit or underlying values involved in development conceptualizations. Values differed, not only in themselves but also with regard to the dimensions in which their goals were rooted. The Chinese brick-building project in Guyana was a political statement, based on a principle of “Third World solidarity.” Others were more subtle or sought to combine several dimensions. For instance, UNICEF insisted that fighting undernourishment, disease, illiteracy, and lack of welfare services for mothers and children served the purpose of fostering wealth and growth and that cow milk and vaccination were ways of achieving the goal. Its

activities in Europe provided a testing ground for projects in Latin America, and vice versa. All faced questions regarding the extent to which the underlying values were universal in nature or belonged to one area and were foreign to the place to which they were applied.

This question inevitably formed a standard feature of the work of international organizations, which figure prominently in many of the papers and whose work, by definition, involves mixing global concerns with local exigencies. The analysis of activities of organizations such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNICEF, the World Bank, and the World Health Organizations (WHO), reveal how their top-down approach met with realities in the field, as actors on the ground made selective use of programs offered and fed experiences and local ideas back to the central organization. This duality showed in the work of UNICEF regarding child health in Europe and the sanitation efforts of WHO around the world, described by Angela Villani and Iris Borowy, respectively.

The focus on international organizations seems justified, given the large role they have played—and continue to play—in developmental conceptualizations and practices. However, it comes at the price of favoring a rather top-down approach, based on primary and secondary sources collected in the archives of those institutions. Doubtlessly, the articles in this issue underscore the point that more research on the bottom-up dimension would be welcome. But they also make very clear that development has never been unidirectional but a process of constant negotiation in which people and institutions at all levels have agency. Thus, the children and their parents who accepted services initiated by UNICEF, the people using—or refusing to use—various forms of toilets all formed an active component of development processes. Similarly, the governments of Guyana and India, rather than being victims of superior powers, had the deciding voices on what was built on their soil and with whose help. All these examples underscore that development processes involve the agency of many actors on many levels.

Finally, the explicit or implicit values revealed in developmental decisions can also be regarded as manifestations of the multiple modernities discussed above. This aspect may be strongest in Iris Borowy's paper regarding debates about the possible re-use of human waste. But a plurality of approaches was also invoked in discussion of the New International Economic Order (in the paper by Nicholas Fern), or decisions on cooperation partners (as in the paper by Ward). Meanwhile, India was struggling to find a balance between market-based economic growth and the social benefits expected from socialism.

It was also torn between entrenched connections with the Anglo-Saxon world, dating from colonial times and new ties to Socialist Soviet Union. However, as Andreas Hilger points out, India never fully embraced Soviet style socialism, and Soviet aid and trade always remained a fraction of that of Western countries. Eventually, these considerations formed part of the large question of what development should be and where it should lead. All articles speak to the degree to which economic development was tied to complex, often deep-seated and far-reaching, social, political, and cultural repercussions.

The reader may be tempted to conclude that something involving objects as different as brick factories, toilets, religion, technological novelties, and breast milk cannot have any easy one-size-fits-all template. Nevertheless, by encompassing all these things and by involving communities around the globe, development with all its ambiguities and contradictions, clearly constituted one of the driving forces of recent world history.

Iris Borowy is distinguished professor at the University of Shanghai and director of the Center for the History of Global Development. She has taught and done research at various universities in Germany, France, Brazil, Norway, and the United Kingdom. Borowy's research interests include the history of international organizations, of global health, and of global development. Iris Borowy has published about sixty academic papers and articles, five (co-)edited volumes, and three monographs including Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation (2009) and Defining Sustainable Development for Our Common Future: A History of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) (2014), and a History of the Future of Economic Growth (2017, co-edited with Matthias Schmelzer). At present, she is working on a project on the policies of international organizations regarding waste. <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7621-1195>