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# Expressing the Structural Nature of Development Discourse Analytical and Graphically Using a Qualitative Comparative Model of Thinking and Acting

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### **Introduction**

Two of the most well-known clashes of development ideas are the realist-liberalist discourse and the environmental-social justice discourse, which are competing for the opportunity to influence decisions that determine what type of, how, where and when development should take place. The first type of discourse can be considered the old one, where realists want a strong state driven, but closed development model while the liberalists envision a weak state driven, but opened development model. This can be considered, the original or seminal one-dimensional development discourse usually known as the extreme authoritarian centralism and unrestrained liberalism (Camelinau 2002). The second type of discourse is a relatively new one, where some advocate the implementation of ecology-centered development while others advocate the implementation of society centered development. For example, Morito (2003) indicates that environmental strategies such as preservation approaches can become

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discriminatory/cooptation tools if they leave out other values such as social losses/benefits.

Both types of discourses have internal and external differences in terms of where development action and thinking should be located and this underlines their main paradigm structure or their pulling form. And these internal and external differences can be highlighted in simple terms by looking at the general theoretical structure of each paradigm involved and by later contrasting them. A short overview of each of the paradigms involved in each type of development discourse is presented below in order to later point the general paradigm structure of each type of discourse.

### **The realist paradigm vs the liberalist paradigm**

#### *The realist world view*

Among the main characteristics of this view of the world are the following four: it presupposes a strong role for the state; it treats regulations and incentives as in closed systems; it advocates general development goals or the common good in ways that achieving efficiency is not a necessary condition; and it seeks to protect competitiveness, profit sources, and social groups/society. Hence, development advocates encourage protection and discourage state liberalization within this view, which leads to what is usually known as a welfare state model. Here, centralization and strict government control is the norm.

#### *The liberalist world view*

Four of the main characteristics of this point of view are the following: it advocates a very weak role for the state; it treats regulations and incentives as in opened systems; it promotes specific general goals or specific types common good in ways that achieving efficiency is a necessary condition; and it promotes, as deregulated as possible, competitive, profit-making and individualistic behavior. Development practitioners promote liberalization and private control and discourage state protectionism within this camp, which leads to a possible fully liberal model. Here, strategies based on decentralization and loose government controls are advocated/promoted.

#### *The realist-liberalist central discourse*

Hence, this type of discourse takes place at four levels at the same time: At the level of the role of the state (strong/weak); at the level of the nature of the governing system (closed/opened); at the level of the nature of the development goals (general/specific); and at the type of behavior being encouraged (regulated/unregulated). Within the realist-liberalist discourse, realists oppose calls for openness and liberalists oppose calls for protection. For example, Mittleman and Othman (2001) list as the main values of neo-liberal globalization processes or liberal view the culture of efficiency, competition, profitability and individualism.

Notice that realist would like to go from local to global or would support globalization processes as long as the move is under realist/protectionist rules while liberalists envision a free/unregulated local and global world in total opposition; and the clash between these two views of the world make globalization processes positive to some and negative to others. For example, globalization processes are considered positive if they are consistent with the common ties that bind humans together (Ellwood 2001).



In other words, processes that are based on equality/inclusion/ democracy in production and consumption or which are egalitarian (Steger 2002) are appropriate. This protectionist-liberalist discourse appears to be constantly affecting the job of the WTO to monitor and regulate international trade (FAO 2007) as some want no restrictions at all and others want state restrictions. For example, Morrison and Sarris (2007) see that there is a need for special types of protection, in this case import protection, to ensure the success of agricultural led development in developing countries. And finally, notice that within the realist-liberalist discourse, a move from a full realist world to a full liberal world appears to imply a full move from general to specific goals; from minimum to maximum corporate freedom; and from state control to self-control.

### **The environmental paradigm vrs the social justice paradigm**

#### *The environmental justice world view*

Four of the main underlying aspects of this view of the world are the following: it advocates environment first centered development; it tends to reflect the views, priorities, or needs of developed country movements; it sees social poverty as one of the main constraining factors to its goals, which make it easy to accept or get along with economic partners when it can not implement environmental programs alone; and it prefers local action consistent with its global environmental goals. In other words, this is an environmental supremacy view, where only environmental goals matter.

#### *The social justice world view*

Among the main characteristics of this view point are the following four: it advocates society first centered development; it tends to reflect the views, priorities or needs of developing country movements; it sees economic exclusion as one of the main constraining factors to its goals, which make it easy to accept environmental partners when it can not implement its social programs alone; and it prefers global action consistent with its local social goals. Therefore, this is a social supremacy view, where only social goals matter.

#### *The environmental-social justice central discourse*

Therefore, this type of discourse takes place at four levels at the same time: At the level of development focus (environment/social issues); at the level of control of the development process (developed/ developing country driven process); at the level of the perceived constraining problem (social exclusion/economic exclusion); and at the level of the preference of actions(Local action/global action).

While environmental advocates are seeking the drafting and approval of international regulations that can be effectively enforced by local officials (Sampson and Chambers 2002), social justice movements are working to generate global action through different processes such as the so called globalization from below movement(Wilson and Whitmore 2000) or by clearly pointing out the actual ongoing erosion of public fences(Klein 2002). The environmental-social justice discourse can lead to increasing instability affecting local poverty and environmental issues. Baumann (2002) points out that the interaction of globalization and localization forces is a main source of local livelihood uncertainty. And notice too that the environmental justice movement



appears to be driven mainly by western or western oriented activists while the social justice movement appears to be headed by southern or southern oriented issues. Moreover, ongoing environmental-social justice discourse make it more difficult for development organizations and institutions to implement projects at the local level. One way of minimizing or redirecting discourse to positive ends is by following a development approach a) that includes the feedback of civil organizations and NGOs; and b) that it is holistic. For example, now it is an acceptable practice at the United Nations Environment Programme to follow an approach that includes stakeholder participation when dealing with critical issues affecting all sectors of society (UNEP 2004). And it is accepted that efforts to achieve environmental, economic, and social sustainability must go hand in hand to complement each other, not undermine each other (Frafjord Johnson 2005).

### **The need to present the development implications of discourse in simple terms**

Both the realist-liberalist discourse and the environmental-social justice discourse have relevant development implications in terms of thinking and action, but usually these implications are giving within complex rhetoric. It is accepted that sustainable development patterns must reflect sustainability criteria to become achievable (Lein 2003), one of which is the elimination or minimization of development discourse for the benefit of all stakeholders involved. Hence, there is a need to identify the structural nature of development discourse and present its sustainability implications in simple ways, analytical and graphically. To this end, qualitative comparative tools are introduced and used in this paper.

### **The goals of this paper are five:**

To introduce a development model based the notion of thinking and/or acting globally; to use this framework to identify the four possible development models consistent with it; to pair the two deeply opposite models to highlight analytically and graphically the antagonistic nature of the realist-liberalist development discourse; to pair the two inverse opposite models to point out analytically and graphically the pulling nature of the environmental-social justice development discourse; and to point out graphically that sustainability can not be achieved unless we find ways of balancing development discourse.

### **Terminology**

The qualitative comparative terminology used in this paper is summarized in Table 1.

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Table 1

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D = Development model  
T = Think globally  
t = Think locally  
A = Act globally  
a = Act locally  
S = Sustainability

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### Methodology

First, a development model, whose nature changes according to the location of development thinking and acting is introduced. Second, the four development possibilities consistent with this model are listed and each of them is linked to a known development paradigm. Third, the two deeply opposite views are paired to highlight analytically and graphically the pulling structure of the realist-liberalist development discourse. Fourth, the two inverse opposite views are paired to point out analytically and graphically the pulling structure of the environmental-social justice discourse. Fifth, it is shown graphically that to achieve sustainability we must balance all forms of development discourse. And finally, some relevant conclusions are listed.

### The development model

There can be several types of development (D) depending on whether or not development thinking (T), development action(A) or both at the same time have a global orientation, which can be represented as follows:

$$D = T + A$$

### The variability of development paradigms

Four different development models can be identified based on formula above, which are listed below:

#### *The think and act locally view (D1 = ta)*

The first possibility is think and act locally (D1), and this world view is usually associated with the realist point of view where the local focus of thought and action by a strong state is advocated. Here, thinking and acting must be locally oriented and for this protection mechanisms need to be designed and implemented creating a conditions of closeness. Protection practices lead to charges of inefficiencies made by those in favor of less government controls; and benefiting the masses/society is claimed to be the underlying goal of protection; and efficiency concerns are not relevant issues within this view. For presentation purposes, this can be considered the initial development paradigm.



***The think and act globally view (D2 = TA)***

The second possibility is think and act globally (D2) and this line of thought is usually associated with the liberalist worldview where the global aspects of thought and action by a weak state is promoted. In this case, thinking and acting has to be globally oriented and to achieve this, liberal mechanism are developed and implemented creating a state of openness. Liberal practices lead to calls for protection made by those preferring more government controls; benefiting specific groups/segments of society is claimed to be the underlying goal of liberalization; and efficiency concerns are very relevant factors within this model. This can be considered as an attempt to full paradigm shift, from fully local to fully global.

***The think globally, act locally view (D3 = Ta)***

The third possibility is think globally, act locally (D3) and this angle of thought is held by the international environmental movement originated in developed countries and usually associated with ecological economic thoughts. It requires the openness of development thinking towards global thinking while advocating local action, and the rational for this view appears to be that it is easier for developed country environmental movements to influence the thinking of development abroad than to influence local thinking. This can be considered a partial paradigm shift, a move from local to global thinking. Notice that the structure of model D3 can make it rational for environmental justice movements to promote a strategy that is a mix protection at home and liberalization abroad to achieve its goals.

***The think locally, act globally view (D4 = tA)***

The fourth possibility is think locally, act globally (D4) and this line of thoughts is now held by the international social movement originated in developing countries and usually associated with social justice thoughts. It requires the openness of development actions towards global actions while promoting local thinking, and the rational for this view appears to be that it is easier for developing country social movements to influence global actions than to influence local actions. This entitles a partial paradigm shift, a move from local to global action. Notice that the structure of model D4 can make it rational for social justice movements to promote liberalization at home and protection abroad as it best suits its goals.

*Expressing the structural nature of the realist-liberalist development discourse*

As indicated above, the structural nature of the realist paradigm is consistent with the view of thinking and acting locally (D1) while the structural form of the liberalist paradigm goes in the lines of thinking and acting globally (D2). Hence, we can represent the structural nature of the realist-liberalist development discourse analytically by pairing these models as follows:

$$D1 * D2 = (ta) (TA)$$

It can be seen from the formula above that the realist word view (D1) and the liberalist world view (D2) are simply what the author calls deeply opposite development paradigms since the realist view (D1) is fully local, closed based while the liberalist view (D2) is fully global, opened based.



Figure 1 below shows how the structural nature of the realist-liberalist development discourse can be represented graphically and it highlights forces pulling development (D) to the left and to the right.

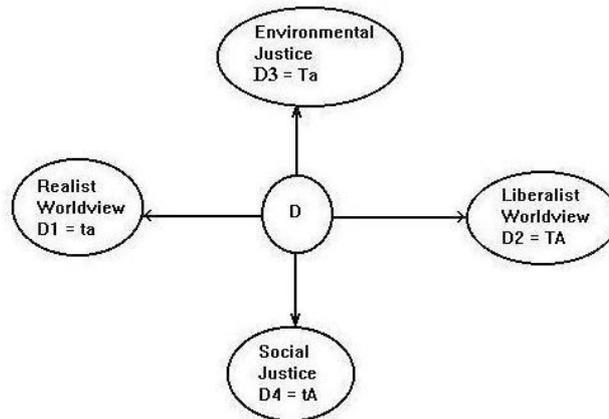


Figure 1 The pulling structure of development discourse  
 Development processes(D) can be seen as being pulled left by realists(D1), pulled right by liberalists(D2), pulled up by environmentalists(D3), and pulled down by social justice movements(D4).

As shown in Figure 1, the realist view (D1) is placed to the left with arrow oriented to the left to give a sense that it pulls development to the left; and the liberalist view(D2) is shown to the right with an arrow moving toward the right, again to give the sense that it pulls development towards the right. Figure 1 then gives us a visual picture of development (D) at the centre being pulled by competing paradigms towards opposite extremes, left and right.

**Expressing the structural nature of the environmentalist-social justice development discourse**

Again as indicated above, the structural nature of the environmental justice view is consistent with the views of thinking globally, acting locally (D3) while the structural form of social justice movement goes in the lines of thinking locally, acting globally (D4). Therefore, it is possible to represent the structural nature of the environmentalist-social justice discourse analytically by pairing these models as follows:

$$D3 * D4 = (Ta)(tA)$$

It can be seen from the formula above that the environmental justice view (D3) and the social justice view (D4) are simply what the author calls inverse opposite development paradigms as the development thinking of the environmental justice movement (D3) is opened/global while the development thinking of the social justice movement (D4) is closed/local. On the other hand, it can be appreciated that for the environmental movement (D3), development action is local/closed while for the social justice movement (D4) action is global/opened.

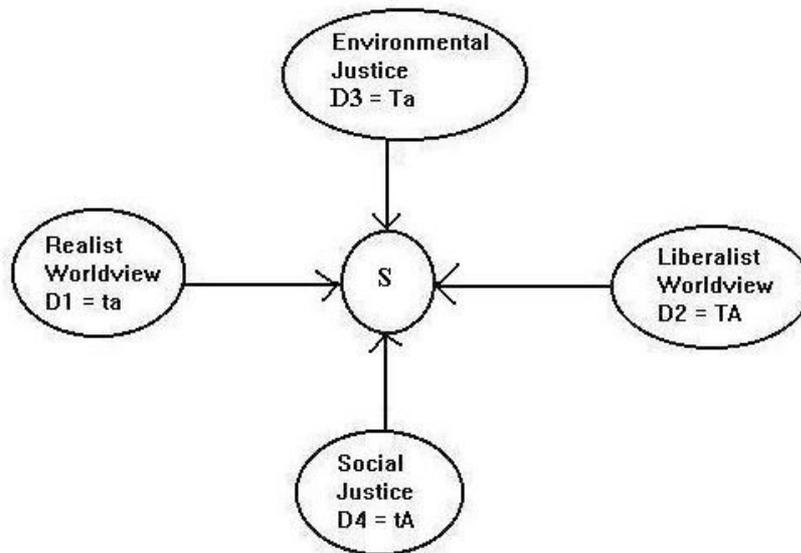


Figure 1 above also shows how the structural nature of the environmental-social justice discourse can be represented graphically and it points out forces pulling development (D) going up and down.

As shown in Figure 1, the environmental justice movement (D3) is placed above development (D) with arrow oriented upwards to give a sense that it pulls development upwards; and the social justice movement (D4) is shown below development (D) with an arrow moving downwards, again to give the sense that it pulls development downwards. Figure 1 then gives us also a visual picture of development (D) at the centre being pulled by competing paradigms going in opposite directions, upwards and downwards.

### The road toward sustainability

Figure 1 above also gives us a clear sense that as long as development processes (D) are subjected to competing models of thinking and acting, they will have an unsustainable nature. Hence, the road toward sustainability requires the elimination of such pulling and pushing to opposite ends, which can only be achieved through balancing or eliminating all sources of development discourse as shown in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2** The road toward sustainability(S) requires the elimination of development discourse

Notice that in Figure 2 the arrows of all competing paradigms are oriented toward the centre indicating the need to search for common ground or for balanced solutions as required by sustainability (S). In other words, Figure 2 indicates that under sustainability (S) there is no room for the dominance of extreme views, cooperation must replace antagonism.



## Conclusions

First, it was shown that a qualitative comparative model of thinking and acting can be used to highlight competing models of development. Second, the information generated was used to express analytically and graphically the structure of the realist-liberalist development discourse and of the environmental-social justice discourse. Third, it was shown in Figure 1 visually that development (D) under the influence of antagonistic paradigms is an unsustainable process. And finally, it was shown visually in Figure 2 that sustainability (S) requires the end of development discourse in order to succeed.

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