

CAN DEVELOPMENT CONTROL THE SOCIAL?

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In writing this paper, I would like to come to terms with my own doubts and questions as an educator who has always kept a hand in what international organizations do to improve the lives of people around the world, especially women. Over the years, I struggled with concepts that kept me and my students on a roller coaster, lifting us to the heights of a nirvana-like state of hope and excitement only to drop us mercilessly to the bottom of skepticism. Since the 1960's when a number of formerly colonized societies gained their independence, there have been shifts in conceptions of development. Policies aimed at reorienting colonial capitalist economies towards a national form of development theoretically suited to local needs gave way in the 1980's to structural adjustment programs designed to adjust national economies to the needs of the "global" market.¹ The end of the Cold War which also signaled the demise of socialism as an alternative path to development brought about two apparently paradoxical trends, one that extolled "integration" in the global market; the other emphasizing the importance of giving development practices a human face as exemplified by human development reports as well as calls for addressing the social side of development. As "globalization" became an ascendant paradigm within which to discuss economic issues, development has been sidelined in favor of single issues selected for their importance to the expansion and stabilization of the "global" market. "Globalization" is perceived by its proponents as a virtually new economic system (instead of another phase of capitalism), universal in its cope and exacting in its consequences on those who resist or are unable to abide by its demands. The question as to whether development is possible in the current context is seldom asked. It has been overshadowed by discussions about why and how social development is necessary and feasible, although economic restructuring makes it increasingly less likely. I propose to look at social development in the current historical conjuncture as the outcome of a conception of economic development in the global era that emphasizes intervention of dominant powers in the social and political spheres of life in countries of the South for the purpose of re-defining local state sovereignty in matters of government, and social welfare in an international climate fraught with security concerns. The need to target the socio-political spheres in countries of the South was facilitated by: a) the translation of sociological concepts into the language of economic development, which normalized a neo-liberal understanding of what constitutes the social as differentiated from the economic; b) the shifting political vocabulary of development organizations that emphasizes concepts such as "governance" or "space" as well as "regional integration" as requisites for incorporation into the world economy; c) a lack of specification of the nature of the political ideology that sustains targeted intervention as well as social development. This is made possible by the presumption that

¹ See Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press/Sage, 2007) fourth edition. See also Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick, (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999).

“globalization” is unquestionable and needs no discussing. It is assumed to be a pre-formed, self-contained, supra system impervious to change from below.² I will address the conceptual language which frames social development, and examine the manner in which it shapes and defines the outer limits of social development practices. Parallel to this, I will make explicit the assumptions on which new ascendant concepts and practices such as rest.

I. Human and Social Development

Interest in social development was preceded by a concern for human development as a measure of the “development” of society. Initiated in 1990 by Mahbub ul Haq under the auspices of the United Nations Development Program, the notion of human development was a reminder that the economy does not operate in a vacuum. Rather, it is embedded in a socio-political environment without which it could not sustain itself. Hence, for economic growth to be socially meaningful, it must result in longer life expectancy, acquisition of knowledge that can only be made possible through literacy, and “command over resources needed for a decent living.”³ Each yearly report saw a refinement of the definition of human development which included security (of people), gender equity, political participation etc. By the same token, characteristics of human development were couched in more abstract terms “productivity, sustainability, equity and empowerment.”⁴ By implication, if “development” does not help individual women and men to satisfy these human needs, it may not be sustainable and even cause harm. That development could cause harm, especially to women, had already been documented by Ester Boserup in her path-breaking book, *Woman’s Role in Economic Development*.⁵

The human development paradigm does not take up the conceptual side of development. Rather, it focuses on the outcomes of inequitable development. By ranking societies on a scale to measure their performance on a number of factors, it creates a quantitative assessment of how far some countries are from providing the basic needs/goals as defined by UNDP. However, yearly reports on human development have become an occasion for UNDP to review the social, political and economic problems of countries of the South against a standard whose political presuppositions are left in abeyance. Since reports are written by people with various levels of expertise for the purpose of revealing the harsh realities of inadequate development, they have also tended to acquire an ideological dimension. Indeed, reports have increasingly espoused a neo-liberal conception of development which was not evident in the initial 1990 Report which launched the notion of human development. In other words, the human dimension of human development lost its impetus as the inability of various countries to

² This taken-for-granted understanding of “globalization” is belied by the financial collapse of the Fall of 2009 in the United States and Western Europe, which draws attention to the dynamics of capitalism as a crisis-prone economic system, and away from “globalization,” a term that is contrived in such a way that it does not connote a specific economic system.

³ Human Development Report (New York: Oxford University Press, and UNDP, 1990), chapter one.

⁴ See Human Development Report 1995.

⁵ Ester Boserup, *Woman’s Role in Economic Development* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1970).

“adjust” their economies to the needs of the global market has taken center stage.⁶ Writing from outside of the United Nations, Amartya Sen broadened the notion of human development to include “freedom” as a logically necessary step of connecting the “market” to the human quest for “capability expansion.” Freedom, Sen argues, is what the “market” requires to function. Therefore, economic freedom, should also result in another kind of freedom such as from want, poverty, disease, and from all the contingencies that prevent an individual from enjoying life.⁷ No matter how attractive, such a conception may very well be a glorification of the liberatory potential of a capitalist economy in the global era. Although Sen makes fine distinctions between various views of “freedom,” his focus on this concept is misleading since it is also central to economists who are opposed to state regulations that would help in the redistribution of income. For example, how does freedom from state intervention in the economy (a thorny issue for economists) can be transformed into freedom from poverty which requires various legal controls of the disposition of the benefits derived from the “freedom” of the market. Beyond its lack of precision, such a definition of human development absorbs the human into the economic. Admittedly, Sen’s conception puts the burden of social problems squarely on the shoulders of economists who fail to understand that development is not an end in itself but a means to a higher, human, end. Nevertheless, if the goal (human freedom) is clear, the means (market freedom and its hyperbolic use) is problematic.

The notion of social development by comparison shifts the emphasis from the “human,” broadly defined, to the social perceived as a set of issues that can be resolved through appropriate “policies.” Mkandawire adequately defines social policy as a method of “intervention” in the economy for achieving a redistribution of income and transforming development.⁸ He also rightly points out that social policy goes beyond the establishment of “safety nets,” or micro-level projects aimed at softening the shocks caused by structural adjustment programs, or providing temporary relief from grinding poverty. The domains of social policy include insurance, pensions as well as “capability-enhancing measures” such as education, labor legislation, social capital, national and social cohesion, political stability inter-personal trust etc.⁹ Social policy in this view includes essentially everything, and even though it is defined as an adjunct to “economic policy,” it “intervenes” into all aspects of life.

It goes without saying that states need to formulate redistributive policies, guarantee their citizens access to universal health care and education, employment etc. However, where social development is defined as the realm of social policy, and social policy as an all-inclusive system of interventions in the social writ large, then states can formulate policies aimed at neutralizing any autonomy for the social. In other words, all problems can be defined as amenable to “social” intervention; social intervention will be a substitute for political control. As Ben Fine and others have pointed out, the social policy framers tend to be economists or policy makers who absorb sociological concepts into economic categories and

⁶ See for example the Arab Human Development Report or Arab Women’s Development Report. (CAWTAR).

⁷ Amartya Sen, “Development as Capability Expansion,” in Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and A.K. Shiva Kumar, eds., *Readings in Human Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), second edition, esp. pp. 8-9. See also his book, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁸ Thandika Mkandawire, ed., *Social Policy in a Development Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

may translate one field into the other without regard for the consequences. The matter is not one of translation only, but also of absorption of one discipline by another through the uncritical adoption of key concepts to which new meanings are imparted.

The issue of disciplinary boundaries was once lucidly addressed by Albert O. Hirschman, who understood that economists need to learn from the disciplines of sociology and political science, just as these need to understand the importance of economics. In *A Bias for Hope*, Hirschman demonstrated, with concrete examples, how economics cannot dispense with the other social sciences and vice versa. Similarly, political decisions have consequences for the economy and society. In alerting economists as well as social scientists to the dangers of disciplinary boundaries, Albert O. Hirschman argued that economic decisions presuppose and have effects on political and social systems. However, Hirschman also pointed to the importance of translating (not absorbing) concepts belonging to one discipline in order to understand their inter-relatedness with those of another discipline.¹⁰ Hirschman further warned that economic concepts can obscure political and sociological realities, which must be recognized and made explicit. Failing to do so for the sake of protecting one's disciplinary turf may result in inadequately designed development policies or programs. By implication, absorbing a key concept that belongs to one discipline and giving it a new meaning that distorts its original one result in conceptual confusion. It may also aid in obfuscating meaning for ideological purposes.

Economists' interest in adopting an interdisciplinary perspective on the economic troubles that plague the contemporary world is an improvement on the insularity of the field of economics, which Hirschman denounced. However, critics point out that these interdisciplinary claims may be ploys to a return to neo-classical economic analyses emphasizing the preponderant role of the market and money in accounting for problems such as unemployment, job insecurity and increased income inequality. They argue that the emergence of this "new political economy" is neither new nor 'political economy'...The realism of the behavioral assumptions continues to be regarded as being of no analytical consequences ... Far from enriching economic analyses, new political economy simply imposes the assumptions and methods of neo-classical economics. This new economic imperialism needs to be replaced with a genuinely multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to analyzing economic issues."¹¹

A specific translation of sociological concepts by economists reveals the difficulty of adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the economy. Focusing on the concept of social capital, Ben Fine argues that its appropriation by economists and rational choice theorists resulted in a dilution of its sociological meaning, especially as defined by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.¹² From

¹⁰ Albert O. Hirschman, *A Bias for Hope : Essays on Development and Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), esp. , Introduction. See also his *Essays in Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹¹ Jonathan Michie, Christine Oughton, and Frank Wilkinson, "Against the New Economic Imperialism: Some Reflections," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 61, 1(Jan. 2002):364.

¹² For a discussion of social capital, see among others his *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); see also Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Newbury Park: Sage, 1990).

Bourdieu's perspective, the social class position of students, for example, provides them with knowledge, linguistic sophistication, appreciation of literature and the arts prior to their schooling. Such a cultural capital facilitates students' performance in school by giving them a head start over those who originate from a lower social class. Social class position is also a source of other non-economic advantages such as academic and professional credentials which confer social power, access to a network of individuals and groups that help to increase the range of opportunities available to the individual. Thus the social class to which an individual belongs is a source of social capital. Although Bourdieu was not always clear or consistent in his use of social capital, he nevertheless understood it to be related to social class. However, as Fine rightly argues, economists have stretched the concept of social capital to mean "simply everything else after other, more traditional forms of capital have been taken into account, with these understood as in the mainstream as physical, natural, financial or human."¹³ Fine concludes that "the effect is to add the social to an otherwise unchallenged economic, albeit made up of market imperfections."¹⁴ In other words, the focus on the concept of social capital does not make economics any more sensitive to the importance of the social than it makes sociology more aware of the complexity of capital. Economists use the concept outside of its social class context just as they ignore the role of (the ownership of) capital in the structuring of social inequality. When shorn of its embedding in a critical assessment of economic relations, "social capital" fulfills the ideological functions of revalidating the normality and legitimacy of the neo-classical economic principles which remain unquestioned. Social capital does not bridge the analytical gap between economics-as-usual and the behavioral sciences. The World Bank claims that the concept is the "missing link" between the economic and the social without providing a theoretical discussion that would ground its claim.¹⁵ The facile use of the concept, the elasticity of the meanings attributed to it prompt Fine to recommend that social capital be rejected as an entry point into social policy.¹⁶

Perhaps it is the very nature of what sociologists consider to be "the social" that partially explains the difficulty encountered by economists in integrating this concept in their analyses. It is true that for sociologists the "social" refers to the values, norms, beliefs, and practices that frame interaction between individuals as members of given societies. The social structures and is in turn structured by institutions such as the economy and the political system. Nevertheless, aspects of the social are valued by members of society for the relative freedom they afford them from political or economic controls. The sociological perspective thus guards against the reification of the social and its instrumental use as a tool of "policy" as in "social policy." It sensitizes us to the complexity of the social as well as its relative

¹³ Ben Fine, "social Policy and Development: Social Capital as Point of Departure," in Thandika Mkandawire, ed., *Social Policy in a Development Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, UNRISD, 2004), p. 86.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See <http://web.worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTTSOCIAL/O//Content> It must also be noted that the scope of "social development" or social policy has been a thorny issue for The World Bank training manual for social assessment, which displays a high degree of conceptual fragmentation, and the introduction of bewildering distinctions in doing social analysis. See *Tools for Institutional, Political, and Social Analysis of Policy Reform. A Sourcebook for Development Practitioners* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2007).

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

autonomy in a world in which increasingly the social is brought under control of the political as well as global economic logic. Consequently, the appropriation of sociological (as well as political) concepts by proponents of “globalization” acquires an added dimension. It is not merely a problem of managing interdisciplinarity, but also a strategic choice. It is remarkable that advocates of social development have not systematically addressed the manner in which their methods, propositions and guidelines perpetuate rather than change the nature of the global economic system which they seek to remedy.¹⁷ The focus on “social development” obscures two factors: a) the call for restructuring the political systems of developing societies under the banner of “reforms” required by the global market, such as for example “governance” reform; b) the rearranging of countries into economic regions as befits the geopolitical needs of the United States and Western Europe’s economic interest rather than the “development” of countries of the South.

II. The Geopolitics of Development

1. Governance

This term has spread as fast as social capital or the concept of gender did a few decades ago. If structural adjustment is a means to limit the scope of government in both the economy and society (or the social sphere), “governance” would logically cover what is left after the social and economic role of the state has been shrunk. The question is how does the state (in countries of the South) once defined as developmentalist gets transformed, with the same actors, into an institution that no longer governs but does “governance?” In fact, governance is defined by the World Bank “(as opposed to ‘good’ governance) as the rule of the rulers, typically within a given set of rules. One might conclude that governance is the **process** by which the authority is conferred on the rulers, by which they make rules, and by which rules are enforced and modified. Thus understanding governance requires an identification of both the rulers and the rules, as well as the various processes by which they are selected, defined, and linked together and with the society generally ...The obvious question is what is good governance? Again, the debate on the quality of governance has been clouded by a slew of slightly differing definitions of what is actually meant by the term. Typically it is defined in terms of the *mechanisms* thought to be needed to promote it. For example, good governance has been associated [emphasis added] with democracy and good civil rights, with transparency, with the rule of law, and with efficient public services.”¹⁸ This entity that resists clear definition, this rule of the rulers, is given different meanings depending on the organization within which it is used. Thus, the World Bank proceeds to quote itself, as well as UNDP and OECD. The latter defines governance as that which “encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the relationship between

¹⁷ The Introduction in Mkandawire’s *Social Policy in a Development Context* is revealing in this respect. It fails to ask whether “development” social or economic is possible and if so, under what conditions?

¹⁸ World Bank, “What is Governance?”

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENA/EXTMNAR> downloaded 11/6/09.

the ruler and the ruled.”¹⁹ This definition has the merit of not hiding the intentions of its authors: governance essentially means that the state, now reduced to public authorities, is the enabler of economic “operators.” Indicators of “governance” are “voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; control of corruption.” As it can be seen, the indicators go well beyond any one definition of governance cited, and manage to include “government” as one of the dimensions of governance. Indeed, there are some presumably key people that implement “governance,” however, the indicators do not include a concept of the people as citizens, or women (in an age sensitized to gender issues), or society. There are rules, rulers, operators and the like. Governance is reduced to a set of rules, and disembodied voices. What is revealed is a form of abstracted empiricism²⁰ whereby some real/empirical issues such as systemic violence and equally systemic corruption are detached from their specific national and international frameworks and pulled together as a collection of anti-norms that “good” governance would eschew. Violence for example has emerged in a number of developing countries *as a result* of the application of structural adjustment policies as exemplified by food riots in the 1980s in the Middle East and North Africa, among other regions.

Frequently, the qualifier “good” governance is counterposed to governance in such a way that it becomes difficult to determine whether bad governance is not unwittingly held up as an ideal—an absurd proposition. An example from the World Bank website, under the rubric, Dimensions of Governance is illustrative of this apparent confusion: “Fundamental aspects of ‘governance’ are: graft, rule of law, and government effectiveness.”²¹ This is misleading as graft- an instance of “bad” governance -is lumped together with rule of law, an instance of good governance. Given the conceptual looseness and confusion surrounding “governance”, it is not surprising that governments continue to operate as usual, but proclaim their commitment to “governance,” knowing full well that its fuzziness makes it an empty slogan.²² States in countries of the South are implicitly asked to clean up their “governance” act while at the same time being relied upon to carry out global security tasks, which may require repressive measures locally that make good governance an elusive goal. There is no doubt that “good governance” is a laudable goal when clearly expressed as meaning, for example, the expansion of political rights and the protection of civil rights. However, when it is presented as a technical solution to systemic problems and without making explicit who benefits from it first (the people of a given country or global actors), “governance” cannot conceal its ideological or geopolitical assumptions. Still it is worth asking whether development would ensue once the proper techniques of

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ C. Wright Mills provides a good analysis of this tendency in his critique of Talcott Parsons’ grand theory of the social system. See Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 1959).

²¹ World Bank, *ibid.*

²² It should be noted that the application of “governance” within international organizations is also met with uncertainty and confusion. A veteran of one such organization confided that the concept is frequently understood to mean “coordination.”

governance have been applied.²³ The relationship between governance and human or social development is not made explicit, although the two domain overlap given the expansiveness of the definition of “governance” Nevertheless, governance appears as an end in itself, rather than a means to a more specific and tangible goal for those who suffer from a lack of “development.”

2. The Paradox of Regional Integration

Theoretically, (good) governance would help in diminishing regional disparities within nations through socio-economic development programs. Benefits from such programs would include a decrease in social strife as ethnic groups, for example, are brought into the mainstream of the economic and political life of their countries. There is, however, an international dimension to regional development through integration which has emerged as a new orientation to “development.”

Countries are urged to think of themselves as regions, rather than nations, and understand that economic salvation lies in cooperation with one another. This laudable proposition however is not the promotion of a genuine common market within regions as for example has been the case with the European Union. Rather, it is a mechanism that ensures global economic management and by the same token re-inscribes developing societies in the international division of labor. The focus is no longer on “development” in one country, but on how to work out ways in which a region gets integrated more effectively into the world economy. This overarching objective obscures the real obstacles that stand in the way of “integration.” These happen to be linked precisely to socio-political factors that social policy is meant to overcome or remedy. A good example of the contradiction that exists between the world systemic need for regional “integration” and the social reality of regional divisions is provided by North Africa (the Maghreb). This is a region that includes a monarchy and two republics, all of which (but especially Algeria) have experienced social strife with various degrees of intensity. Algeria is barely coming out of a war that pitted the government against the banned Front of Islamic Salvation Party, and which left an estimated 200,000 people dead or disappeared. Morocco as well as Tunisia have been engaged in a battle against their own political opposition, which has resulted in curbs on the civil rights of both men and women. Intermittently, political disagreements flare up between Morocco and Algeria causing them to close their borders. By the same token, trafficking in gasoline, among other commodities, across borders from Algeria to Morocco, continues to thrive.

Where it is taken seriously, regional integration results in a new form of marginalization, and the establishment of standards of comparison that may be comforting at some level, but in reality act as brakes on progress. For example, when discussing the promotion of women’s rights in the Maghreb “region”, it has become customary in the past few years to hail the 2004 Moroccan revised family code as being innovative and liberal in comparison with the Algerian Family Code.²⁴ Such a characterization

²³ It must be noted in passing that in countries, such as the United States, where “the rule of law” is ostensibly in place, corruption has been thriving as revealed by the trials of Enron executives or the investigation into the practices of Galleon hedge funds specialists.

²⁴ The Algerian Family Code was revised in 2005. But, discussions at conferences continue to hail the Moroccan Family Code as being more liberal.

of a long-overdue change in Moroccan family law implies that Morocco, as a monarchy, is doing much better than Algeria, a republic. More important, it obscures an examination of the fine print of the code, which is all but liberal, or innovative. By the same token, the assumed novelty of this law serves to elide the violations of the rights of women and men who call for fundamental socioeconomic change in Morocco.

Regional integration, as a new framework within which to incorporate clusters of countries into the world economy has the effect of holding up one country in the cluster as a model for its regional sisters to emulate according to what the country has already achieved, and not what it *could* achieve. Within this framework, culturally similar people must compare themselves to one another, instead of raising their sights higher. Regional integration has relevance for social development since the formulation of social policy is country-specific not region-specific. Furthermore, where regional integration can only countenance a minimal conception of change (since it is assumed that countries in regional clusters gauge their progress against one another) social policy may become a tool of political control. Ultimately, the requirement of regional integration paradoxically assumes that economic cooperation can be secured, divergent interests have already been or are easily ironed out, and questions of political and cultural identity have already been resolved. Yet, these are issues that have been intensified by the world economy. In this sense, regional integration conjures up the factors that undermine its own implementation

It is worth noting that “regional integration” is accompanied by a loss of geographic identity for individual countries as is revealed by the new vocabulary of “space” which the World Bank along with other organizations favors in their conceptions of their global tasks. Not only countries, but also targeted interventions are also identified as “space.” Websites for the World Bank display various references to “knowledge space” (in Ghana), or “open space initiative” (in Singapore) to mean bringing various stakeholders together. Perceiving countries as “space” presumes that intervention can take place anywhere, at will. It also presumes that resistance to intervention (be it cultural, social or political) is neutralizable.

III. Limits of Social Policy: Wither the Social?

1. If governance is a set of loosely connected rules and anti-norms and “good governance” a formal ideal that may not be achieved under existing conditions of “rulers and rule” unless existing governments are replaced by new ones, social development appears synonymous with stabilization of the status quo, depending on the national context. This is a perversion of the social that lurks as a real danger.
2. Social policy runs the risk of becoming a mechanism by which the sphere of the social becomes invested with normative techniques (-or techniques of normalization-) aimed at ensuring supra-national interests instead of those of the local population. Jürgen Habermas called this process whereby the state invests the socio-cultural sphere as it impinges on the citizen’s freedom from political control and

subjugation of business interests (either local or international) the “colonization of the lifeworld.”²⁵ This usually occurs when a given state has suffered a legitimation deficit because it promoted business interests at the expense of the public good. Under pressure from aid organizations, some developing societies have limited or discontinued their social policies regarding access to basic foodstuffs, education, health and transportation. In this context, social policy as a tool of redistribution is vitiated from within. It becomes subsumed under the package of “reforms” required by global restructuring. In the case of Algeria, for example, “health” just like “education” reforms is driven not by principles of universal access or affordability but by efficiency and performance (as is the case in the United States). In fact, a number of universities are proposing that universal access to higher education be restricted in the name of greater “efficiency.” A Dean explained to me in June 2009 that only an elite should be allowed to pursue higher education. “look, he said, a number of terrorists have benefitted from universal access to higher education!” No attention was given to addressing the institutional shortcomings of primary and secondary education, which have dragged the educational system down and for which those who were able to make it to college were blamed.

Under some circumstances, intervention in the social sphere ostensibly to strengthen “civil society” is intended to weaken or prevent scrutiny of governments’ policies. The decision made by Rwanda in 2008 to mandate that local associations should transform themselves into cooperatives or face dismantlement is a case in point. The decision was officially meant to rationalize a sector of civil society that had grown rapidly. However, the decision makes it difficult for associations dealing with human rights, for example, to act in an autonomous fashion since they must find groups with which to coalesce instead of building up their capacity to serve vulnerable people such as AIDS orphans who lose their right to inherit the property left by their parents in their original villages.²⁶

3. Social policy may elicit a ritualistic formalism in its implementation as a result of the vastness of its scope. An example of this attitude is provided by the Kenya HIV and AIDS Reduction Policy. Although it is implemented according to the rules in the sense that appropriate structures for delivery of services were created and drugs were made available. Yet the implementation of the policy produced stigmatizing and discriminatory effects that undermined its success. It is worth noting that 25% of the City of Nairobi’s administration employees suffering from the disease are subjected to stigmatization and discrimination by the very staff responsible for the implementation of the anti-AIDS policy. The formalistic ritualism with which the policy has been greeted is a response to the perception that even if the policy is laudable, the state cannot be allowed to enter the implementer’s space and determine how she should react when she feels threatened in her life, for right or wrong. Perhaps this is an extreme

²⁵ Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), especially chapters 1 and 6.

²⁶ Interview carried out with a small human rights association in Kigali in August 2008 in the framework of a mission sponsored by UNESCO.

example. However, the literature on the effects of global restructuring on women and other vulnerable groups is fraught with instances of resistance to the secondary effects of social policies.²⁷

4. Some social issues which are linked to the economy and global restructuring have been left untouched presumably because they belong to the religious domain. In spite of the vastness of its scope, social development eschews religion. For example, the intersection between codified (Islamic) family law and gender as exemplified by the (re)veiling movement has been avoided in discussions of social development or social policy. Although in Europe the issue of the veil is framed as an issue of religious rights, social diversity, or violation of secularity,²⁸ in the Muslim world veiling is either mandated or prohibited by the state for religious reasons that have yet to be ascertained with accuracy. State intervention in matters of veiling is an infringement on the citizenship rights of women, which “governance” is presumed to address.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to draw attention to the various ways in which social development when conceived of as a series of interventions in the sphere of the social with the tool of social policy becomes subverted. The limits of social development do not lie in the purposes that it seeks to achieve, which are important, but in the *conditions of its possibility*. These include the logic and dynamics of the international economic context which drive the need for intervention not only in local economies but also in the social sphere. Unless, it is understood that currently what is conceived as social development in developing societies means a redefinition of the social as a field of application of techniques of governmentality rather than the expression of freedom from a number of contingencies that the notion of human development initially sought to address, we will continue to engage in interesting but idle debates about the relationship between social and economic development. The question ought to be “how do we build social development the language in which it is couched is not its own, and when it is constantly under the threat of subversion by the very international economic system that undergirds it? More important can social development be reduced to techniques that neutralize power relationships? A search for alternatives would require “a new turn of mind” that demystifies the inevitability of the present economic paradigm and embraces instead “possibilism,” an attitude that turns obstacles into opportunities.²⁹

²⁷ See, for example, Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan, eds., *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites and Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Nandini Gunewardena and Ann Kingsolver, eds., *The Gender of Globalization* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2009).

²⁸ The French government’s shifting grounds for banning veiling in public schools and institutions such as hospitals range from representing veiling as a violation of the separation of state and religion as indicated in the 2004 law on laïcité, to a symbol of women’s lack of “freedom and dignity” as asserted by the Parliament in January 2010.

²⁹ Albert O. Hirschman, *A Bias for Hope*, p.29.