



Democracy and Development – A Disputed Pair¹

Lars Rudebeck*

Abstract

The text moves in the historical context of decolonization, post-colonialism, globalization and ‘developing countries’. In this context, the two terms ‘development’ and ‘democracy’ are used all over, in everyday language as well as in public and theoretical discourse, not least in relation to Africa. What different meanings do these terms convey? The various concepts referred to by them are often seen as linked to each other. How may such linkages be conceived? These are questions raised in this article. Conceivable answers are presented and analyzed. Emphasis is on concepts existing today and their actual use in grasping or even shaping current realities. The level of the analysis is abstract. But its empirical foundations are very concretely close to the ground, shaped since the 1960s through long periods of fieldwork in Tunisia, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. Concrete references, thus, are primarily to links between politics and people’s efforts in post-colonial Africa to achieve ‘development’, while theoretical inferences are global. The overall answer emerging from the text is that development, including sustainable development, meeting legitimate majority needs and aspirations is more likely to take place under conditions of substantial democracy than under other forms of rule. The equalization of political power through democratic self-empowerment is crucial. Democracy and development are indeed related to each other – but not just any democracy and not just any development, nor all of the time.

Résumé

Le texte se situe dans le contexte historique de la décolonisation, du post-colonialisme, de la mondialisation et des « pays en voie de développement ». Dans ce contexte, les deux termes « développement » et « démocratie » sont utilisés partout, aussi bien dans le langage courant que dans le discours public

* Professor emeritus of Political Science, Centre for Sustainable Development, Uppsala University, Sweden. E-mail: Lars.Rudebeck@csduppsala.uu.se

et théorique, pas moins en ce qui concerne l'Afrique. Quelles différences de signification trouvons-nous ? Les différents concepts auxquels ils renvoient sont souvent perçus comme étant liés entre eux. Quelle perception peut-on avoir de cette corrélation? Ce sont autant de questions abordées dans le présent article. Des réponses imaginables y sont présentées et analysées. L'accent est mis sur les concepts existant aujourd'hui et leur utilisation réelle dans la compréhension et même le façonnement des réalités actuelles. L'analyse est effectuée à un niveau abstrait. Cependant, les fondements empiriques sont très terre à terre, établis depuis les années 1960 à travers de longues périodes de travail de terrain en Tunisie, Guinée-Bissau et Mozambique. Les références concrètes sont donc principalement en rapport avec les liens entre les politiques et les efforts des populations dans l'Afrique postcoloniale pour atteindre le « développement », au moment où les inférences théoriques sont d'ordre mondial. La réponse globale issue de cet article est que le développement, y compris le développement durable, répondant aux besoins et aux aspirations légitimes de la majorité est plus vraisemblable dans un contexte de démocratie substantielle que sous d'autres formes de pouvoir. La répartition du pouvoir politique et l'auto-responsabilisation démocratique est essentielle. La démocratie et le développement sont en effet liés l'un à l'autre – mais pas la démocratie quelconque et pas le développement quelconque, ni tout le temps.

Introduction

In the historical context of decolonization, post-colonialism, globalization and 'developing countries', the two terms 'development' and 'democracy' are used all over, in everyday language as well as in public and theoretical discourse, not least in relation to Africa. What are we actually talking about when using those words? What meanings do they convey? What notions or concepts are being referred to? The concepts are often seen as linked to each other. How may the linkages, if any, between 'development' and 'democracy' be conceived? These are questions raised in this article.

Although the tasks of conceptual and historical analysis are intertwined, our emphasis will be on concepts existing today and their actual use in grasping or even shaping current realities, rather than on tracing the inclusion or substitution of new meanings over time. This article is not a comparative review of selected opinions on the concepts, as held by various authors. Rather it is an effort to suggest a theoretical mode of interpreting the two concepts and their interlinkages.

The focus of the analysis is thus purposely theoretical, in a very basic sense, although on the lookout for practical implications. Its concrete and empirical foundations, however, are in this case mostly African, shaped

since the 1960s through my research, including long periods of fieldwork close to the ground in Tunisia, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. Concrete references, thus, are primarily to links between politics and people's efforts in post-colonial Africa to achieve 'development'.² Comparable contexts of other places and historical experiences are held in mind. Theoretical inferences are meant to be global.

My first question is about 'development'. What key meanings can be discerned in present-day theoretical and politico-ideological discourse on that concept? In a straightforward manner, issues of power and politics turn out to be crucial to development for the meeting of societal needs and aspirations. This leads on to issues of representation and participation, and hence to the concepts of 'democracy' and 'democratization'. My second question is therefore about their key meanings. The democracy concept is more specific than the development one, and this is reflected in more specific references in the democracy section of the text. Finally the relationship between 'development' and 'democracy' is investigated more closely.

As a political scientist with an analytical point of departure in politics and power, I put democracy first in the title. As a social scientist in the broader sense, I begin my actual analysis with the issue of development. As regards democracy and development seen together, the answer emerging from the text is that the two are indeed related to each other – but not just any democracy and not just any development, and not all of the time. The equalization of power through democratic self-empowerment turns out to be crucial.

Development

'Development' – like 'democracy' – is a contested concept. It takes on different meanings for different users. Frequently those meanings remain hidden or implicit in public discourse. Still, most of us would agree that development is about some kind of change. Thus, it is assumed in the following that we are referring to a *process* rather than a fixed state or 'level'.³

We are dealing primarily with the 'development' of 'developing countries'. The historical context is that of decolonization and post-colonialism, which proceeded from roughly 1945. It is marked by an increasingly 'globalizing' world of supposedly sovereign states preoccupied with the 'development' of their countries and supported in this effort by the United Nations.⁴

The specific *development discourse* emerged historically through efforts to grasp that context and its complex theoretical, empirical and politico-ideological issues. It is concerned with meeting very basic needs born of mass poverty and oppression as well as further societal aspirations.

In attempting to map and structure that discourse, my method is to boil it down to two key dimensions (and combinations of these), as brought together in Table 1. Those dimensions and their combinations are the direct subjects of my analysis.

The *first dimension* is about distinguishing between *non-normative* (neutral) conceptualizations of development and *normative* ones. Is development just about any kind of change? Or is it about changes that we prefer and prioritize: ‘good’ changes, as opposed to less ‘good’ or ‘bad’ ones, judged on the basis of interests or treasured values? This emerges as the horizontal dimension of the table.

The *second dimension* is the vertical one. It concerns the theoretical substance of the concept, its validity. What ‘is’ development? What are we actually striving to grasp with the concept? In my interpretation of the discourse, the most crucial distinction on this account is between a *linear* conceptualization of historical development and a *structural* one. Are we looking basically for measurable linear change/growth in the indicators selected? Or are we looking basically for change in the relationships between groups, classes, regions and their access to existing resources and potentials in society when striving to satisfy their needs and aspirations? The latter comes out as a specific type of *structural change*.

While measurability is essential to the empirical operationalization of both types of change/development, the *linear growth* concept tends strongly to emphasize measurability, sometimes to the extent of confusing reliable measurement with theoretical validity. The most common manifestation of the linear concept is a statistical index of growth, most often economic. In the case of *structural change*, on the other hand, the conceptual emphasis is manifestly on relationships, which can in principle also be measured, for instance, in terms of increasing or decreasing gaps in society.

Table 1: Two dimensions of development and their combinations

	Non-normative	Normative
Linear growth	1	2
Structural change	3	4

As far as the horizontal, *non-normative* versus *normative* dimension of the table is concerned, it can be stated, in the context of ‘development’, that its actual manifestations are predominantly normative. Nearly all who enter the modern ‘development’ discourse have some more or less specific types of change in mind. Furthermore, and more significantly, almost all have *desirable* or *desired* change in mind – a movement or transformation from worse to better – in short, *improvement*. Thus the concept of ‘development’ of ‘developing countries’ stands out as overwhelmingly *normative* (*fields 2 and 4*).

The *non-normative* positions of the table (*fields 1 and 3*) represent a philosophically interesting ideal type. Thinkers and practitioners who enter the development discourse while claiming to be analytically neutral or ‘objective’ in regard to values, in practice tend strongly to end up on the normative side. This goes for representatives of mainstream economics, who tend to equate economic growth with development, as well as for such representatives of classical Marxism, who claim objectivity for notions of law-bound societal progress.

For the remainder of this article, therefore, I will largely ignore the ‘non-normative’ fields of Table 1, and concentrate my attention on the normative *fields 2 and 4*.

The vertical *linear* versus *structural* dimension in its normative version captures by far the major part of existing and theoretically applied notions of ‘development’. It groups them according to the crucial distinction between viewing desired development either in terms of measurable linear growth of the selected indicators, or in terms of bridging existing structural gaps or contradictions between needs and aspirations in society and possibilities to meet them. In the latter view, the larger the gap between legitimate societal aspirations (on the one side) and possibilities (on the other), the more ‘under’ or below its potential is the current level of satisfaction of needs and aspirations. The greater, consequently, is the contradiction to be transcended by development in the structural sense.

Looking more closely at *field 2* of Table 1, it should be noted that some statistical indicators of development measured as linear growth are more subtle than others. Equating – more or less explicitly – development with straight GNP (Gross National Product) growth still happens frequently in popularized discourse.⁵ But there are also descriptive measures of growth that are complex and subtle, while still linear. The best known is the aggregate measure of ‘human development’, which, according to the Human Development Index (HDI), comprises not only rising incomes (based on economic growth), but also longer lives, higher levels of literacy

and more education.⁶ Using this measure, 'development' is operationalized as the process whereby a country's HDI value is improved.

Both GNP and HDI are statistically descriptive measures of linear growth. But in regard to broadly viewed human development, the latter has clearly more validity than the former. Both measures appear most often in normative contexts, the former usually less openly than the latter, in the sense that the 'goodness' of high GNP tends to be taken for granted without much further comment in mainstream development economics. 'Human development', on the other hand, is usually offered as an explicit value premise. Regardless of whether development is measured by GNP growth or by rising values along the 'human development' scale, we still apply an operationalization of development in terms of growth in certain selected measurable indicators – a descriptive operationalization of desired linear change (*field 2*). This can be quite useful for some purposes – not least to estimate the size of gap between aspirations and possibilities in structurally defined underdevelopment or development.

Let us move down the normative column of the table, from a linear measurable-growth definition to a structural one. In so doing, we end up with a *normative-structural* concept of development (*field 4*), *linking needs/aspirations to possibilities/existing resources*.

In this field of the table, development is conceptualized as a desirable process of structural change. Through that process, the gap is narrowed between generally recognized *needs and aspirations* for betterment, on the one hand, and existing and un- or underutilized *possibilities* of meeting them in non-destructive ways, on the other hand. The possibilities in question consist of material resources, as well as human knowledge and creativity, all of which are 'unfolded' through development.⁷

As seen by now, the structural notion of development is framed here in terms of '*needs and aspirations*' viewed together, conceptually combined, while facing possibilities. Aspirations are expressions of experienced needs and preferences. New needs and consequent aspirations will emerge, once the most basic or elementary ones have been met. Such further needs and aspirations will be bound to vary between classes and groups in society. Political struggle, open or hidden, will determine which ones are to become legitimate for given societies.⁸

In his earlier work, Amartya Sen offers a significant example of what I call the normative-structural view of development, through his *entitlement approach*. Entitlement implies legitimate access, in a given (type of) society, to given resources. In *Poverty and Famines* (1981), Sen focuses specifically on 'the ability of people to command food' in order to overcome starvation

and famine (pp. 45ff.). This can be extended to relate more generally to the entitlements required for people to overcome poverty (see Rudebeck 1998, 2002), including entitlements to participate in decision-making on issues of common concern. This kind of argument opens up an analytical link between development and issues of power, politics and democracy.⁹

At the level of sheer survival, the normative-structural view of development can be grasped as the contradiction between hungry or starving human beings – clearly a basic need – and unused agricultural land or unused supplies of food – a clear possibility to meet that need. An even more elementary example may be rainwater just trickling away without watering the dried-out earth, leaving it barren. ‘Development’, in that case, would mean harnessing the water for sustainable use.

‘Sustainable’ Development

The qualifying adjective ‘sustainable’ in the example of rainwater was not inserted by chance. Just letting the water trickle away without watering the fields would have little to do with development in the normative-structural sense as outlined here. But watering the fields just for any purpose may be just as questionable from a developmental point of view.

This brings us to the issue of *sustainable development*, which in recent decades has considerably deepened and extended the development discourse. The concept was famously popularized and defined by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: ch. 2, para. 1). True, this seemingly simple definition of sustainable development does beg innumerable questions about the character, levels and contents of those needs to be met, and how to agree on them and to avoid compromising them. But given its level of abstraction, the Brundtland definition still has the merit of thought-provoking directness. It has inspired various updated and modified versions, including the following one by Griggs et al. (2013:2): ‘Development that meets the needs of the present while safeguarding Earth’s life-support system on which the welfare of current and future generations depends.’

Shifting the focus to ‘sustainable development’ as a particular and highly desirable form of ‘development’ springs from the insight that some needs and aspirations – including basic and ‘human’ ones – can *in the short term* undoubtedly be met most efficiently by over-using or even depleting available resources. Such development would thus be unsustainable. But should it then be defined as ‘development’ at all? This is a key question in the context of the normative-structural type of definition.

The logical answer would seem to be that using finite resources for short-term gain and, at the same time, undermining future and long-term potentials, contradicts the notion of development as bridging the gap between legitimate needs and aspirations and un- or underutilized possibilities of meeting those needs in non-destructive ways. ‘Development’, according to the normative-structural view as outlined here, would then be sustainable *by definition*.

An alternative perception, however, might be to accept ‘unsustainable development’ as a serious concept, taking into account, first, the fact that unsustainability may sometimes be a prelude to sustainability; and, second, that development as such has to be a learning and even experimental process.

These observations on growth and sustainability serve to underscore yet again the significance of distinguishing between, on the one hand, development operationalized as growth of measurable entities dependent on the use of finite resources, and, on the other hand, development conceptualized as structural change or transformation linking possibilities to legitimate needs and aspirations. The former can hardly escape limits and thus cannot be conceived of as indefinitely sustainable. The latter, by contrast, does not necessarily depend on the utilization of material resources and can, in principle, therefore be potentially sustainable.

It should be added that the sustainability even of structural change is only a theoretical possibility. It depends strongly on what kinds of opportunities or potentials are linked to what kinds of needs and aspirations. Most probably it can be expected to materialize only by varying degrees or to some extent, rather than indefinitely or without limits.

Common Needs and Aspirations

The view of ‘development’, whether sustainable or not, as a process to meet commonly accepted and thereby legitimate needs and aspirations for societal betterment is obviously (as has already been emphasized) a normative view. It rests on a clear value premise. As already indicated, some needs and aspirations are seen by most as self-evidently basic and therefore unquestionably legitimate – air to breathe, water to drink, a daily meal, clothes for our bodies, a roof over our heads, perhaps also a minimum of human dignity and compassion, a future for our children. It is easy to accept the integrated human development measure (HDI) as a valid or meaningful statistical approximation of those most basic needs. Ranking high on the HDI index is easily justified as a legitimate goal for most people, and even for society as a whole. But the more numerous and the more complex the

needs and aspirations we have in mind, and the further beyond the most basic needs, the more difficult it becomes to prioritize between them – and also the more politically momentous.¹⁰ Thus we are faced with an obvious link between ‘development’ (whether sustainable or not) as a process to meet common needs and aspirations, and ‘democracy’ as ‘people’s rule’. Before examining the link as such, a closer look at the concepts of democracy and democratization is required.

The Twofold Meaning of Democracy and Democratization

There is a fundamental and persistent dilemma in democracy theory springing from the tension between, on the one hand, democracy conceptualized as a form of rule characterized by *the constitutional institutionalization of universal suffrage, regular elections, basic civil rights and the rule of law* and, on the other hand, democracy conceptualized as *political equality in actual practice*.

The first type of conceptualization – the one most often applied by modern political scientists – is often called *minimalist*, because it delimits democracy to its most essential institutional – constitutional, procedural – manifestations. The second type, however, is at least two-dimensional. My suggestion is that it be called *substantialist*.¹¹

Both conceptualizations of democracy are found in the literature, although the minimalist type is predominant in modern political science. Herbert Tingsten (1945) and Samuel Huntington (1991) are highly representative. David Held (1995) and Amartya Sen (most explicitly 1981) offer prominent examples of the more inclusive, substantialist type. Robert Dahl (1982, 1989) shows a creative relationship with both types of conceptualization.

Over time, my own striving has been to make the two-dimensional view of democracy and democratization historically and sociologically tangible (see Rudebeck 2002).¹² The task may be accomplished by combining *democratic constitutionalism* (according to the minimalist political science definition of democracy) with a sociological notion of somewhat equally distributed *citizen autonomy*. The combination reaches into civil society.¹³ Thereby, democratic constitutionalism and generalized citizen autonomy are seen as distinct but linked dimensions of existing democracy and ongoing processes of democratization. The more of both in conjunction, the more *substantial* the democracy in question.

Autonomy, as used here, is a sociological ideal-type concept for self-governing capacity – individual or collective power of one’s own – either individually over matters of individual concern, or together over matters

of common concern. Without autonomy, no power of one's own. Nor has power delegated downwards in a hierarchy much to do with autonomy.¹⁴

Just like the minimalist, the substantialist definition holds democracy to be about the institutionalization of political equality and basic freedoms. But it does not stop there. According to it, democracy can be meaningfully grasped and conceptualized only *in the context of its own realization in actual practice*. Questions such as the following are raised about practice and power:

- Does the political system work according to its own prescribed norms?
- Who is represented in what ways by the leadership?
- Do citizens have autonomy in the system?
- How is political power—including power over the use of developmental resources – distributed and exercised in actual practice?
- Are actual decision-makers held efficiently accountable by the citizens?

The kinds of qualities targeted with such questions are *integral* and *not external* to the substantialist type of conceptualization.

As far as actually existing democracy is concerned, historical and present experience all over the world indicates convincingly that both *democratic constitutionalism* and a measure of *citizen autonomy* in society as a whole, even beyond the constitutional political system narrowly defined, are required for democracy as a functioning form of rule to become legitimate and enduring. Table 2 sums up the argument.

Table 2: Two dimensions of democracy and their combinations

	Citizen autonomy	
	yes	no
yes	1	2
Democractic constitutionalism		
no	3	4

In *field 4*, both democratic constitutionalism and citizen autonomy are absent. The full extent of this combination is the 'ideal type' of zero democracy – in other words, strongly authoritarian or dictatorial rule. Historically, such rule has sometimes been quite durable. It has never been

interminable, though, and sometimes suddenly surprisingly vulnerable – as, for instance, in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, or more recently in Tunisia and Egypt in 2010–11.

As for *field 2*, combining democratic constitutionalism with little or no citizen autonomy, this is precisely what is found today in so many so-called ‘developing’ (or previously ‘third world’) countries. Here democratic institutions have been introduced or enforced partly from outside or above, or with popular support that has later been eroded by authoritarian leaders. Thus democratic constitutionalism has not been combined with any meaningful citizen entitlement to the fulfilment of basic needs, aspirations and rights. Countries in this category are usually, in actual practice, very far from being substantially democratic. Such ‘democracies’ are therefore likely to be or to become illegitimate. Several examples are found in Africa. Their democratic features will be non-sustainable unless strengthened.¹⁵

The opposite combination is found in *field 3*. This represents situations where popular influence and control may be strong at the moment, but where the institutions required to handle common concerns are not in place and the rule of law is not respected. In such situations popular rule is often quickly undermined and followed by authoritarian or dictatorial rule. This happened historically in many former African colonies, where decolonization and juridical independence had been brought about through the struggles of popular movements, with or without the use of military means.

If significant elements of both dimensions of democracy are present (*field 1*), we are faced with more or less deep, broad, ‘substantial’ democracy. Ideally, this can be expected to be sustainable, durable and legitimate, not least by making it possible for citizens to assume responsibility for their own country’s development. This point on ‘substantial democracy’ was concisely made in an early formulation by Yusuf Bangura (1992).¹⁶ While democracy, he emphasized, is ‘an ideal to be cherished’, it also:

must make sense to the interests of the contending social groups. These interests do not have to be narrowly defined as economic; they can also be social and political. Linking democracy to the restructuring of the economy allows individuals and organizations to pose the question of democratic governance of public resources much more sharply (Bangura 1992:99–100).

It is important to acknowledge that forms of power and its exercise may well be legitimate in the eyes of citizens and subjects without necessarily being democratic. Kings, emperors and various charismatic leaders have, throughout history, managed to achieve at least temporary legitimacy by non-democratic means, not infrequently aided by religious appeals.¹⁷ But specifically democratic power in the substantialist sense can, by definition,

be fully justified only through democratic authority, ideally conceptualized as freely conceded by free citizens acting together in respect of each other's equal rights. That requirement is unique to the ideal-type notion of substantial democracy.¹⁸

The Relationship Between Democracy and Development

The normative-structural approach to development raises a series of crucial questions, all about *power* to influence the course of change in society. These questions range from purely empirical ones to theoretical, normative and political questions. Who *has*, in fact, in various given contexts – locally, nationally, globally – the power and the right to define and determine the legitimacy of developmental needs and aspirations beyond the most obvious? How does this distribution of political power and ideological influence *affect* the process of development? Who, in a politically normative or philosophical perspective, *ought to have* the power and the right we are talking about?

Let us return to our initial question of how the two concepts of democracy and development, and the realities they refer to, may be related to each other, and more specifically the possible role of democracy in development, including sustainable development.

The first point to be noted is that if statistically descriptive definitions in terms of measurable linear growth (as discussed above) are applied, then there is no necessary connection between democracy and development. Both past and present provide ample evidence that democracy and socio-economic development according to such indicators do not necessarily go hand in hand. One is possible without the other. Most empirical relationships found are historically and contextually specific. Some draw our attention to the role of economic development in facilitating democratization, as does the firmly recurring relationship indicating that democracy flourishes much more easily under conditions of economic prosperity than under conditions of poverty.¹⁹

It is relevant to point out that capitalist development had advanced far in Great Britain, Scandinavia, the United States and other Western countries before democracy was introduced. Nor did the kind of industrialization and modernization that took place in the Soviet Union and its allied countries before the fall of the Berlin Wall result in democracy, so long as the regimes in question persisted. It is also true that in the 1930s, social and economic development took place under fascist and Nazi rule in Italy and Germany, respectively. Colonial exploitation on many occasions also involved economic development, however unequal.

Thus, various kinds of development that have occurred historically, including under colonial regimes, are not systematically related to the degree of democracy variously estimated. Measurable levels of economic development are doubtless influenced also by many other factors, not least historically specific factors.²⁰

If, on the other hand, development is seen as a process of structural change, whereby needs and aspirations are linked to possibilities, the significance of politics and the possibility of democracy in the substantialist sense stand out clearly. The normative-structural concept of development cannot be put into effect until the needs and aspirations to be satisfied have first been articulated. Is this done with or without the participation and consent of those concerned and affected? Do those concerned and affected have access to decisions about the use of available resources needed for development purposes? Can decision-makers be held accountable by those concerned and affected? If the answer is ‘yes’, then the chances are greater that their needs and aspirations will be considered.

Therefore, if development at the societal level is supposed to be about needs and aspirations shared by the majority of a people, or even by entire countries or peoples – then the chances that development actually takes place will be greater if those needs and aspirations are democratically articulated, and if decision-makers can be held accountable by those concerned and affected. Indisputably, democratic rule offers citizens greater opportunities than non-democratic rule.²¹

Another four-field table (Table 3) may be helpful in clarifying these relationships and issues.

Table 3: Democracy and development

		Democracy	
		minimalist	substantial
Development	linear growth	no	no
	structural change	no	yes

Note: no = no necessary relationship; yes = firm relationship.

The idea is to pinpoint schematically four possible ways of combining two types of democracy with two kinds of development. In three of the combinations, democracy and development may or may not be related to each other, depending on historical circumstances. Minimalist democracy

may or may not correlate with development, defined either as linear growth or structurally, as discussed earlier. Substantial democracy may or may not correlate with development, defined as measurable linear growth. Empirical, context-specific examples pointing in either direction are easily found.

One of the combinations, however – found in the lower right-hand field of the table – stands out from the other three. It offers an ideal-type theoretical construct, representing a firm relationship between two specific concepts: namely, between on the one hand *substantial democracy* and on the other hand *development as normative-structural change or transformation linking majority needs and aspirations to possibilities*.

Substantial democracy opens up for concrete political recognition and legitimization of development as structural change. Its very definition includes citizen access both to the formulation of developmental needs, to decision-making on the use of available possibilities to meet those needs, and to the actual implementation of decisions made. It also includes efficient accountability of actual decision-makers.²²

How about Sustainable Development?

Does this way of reasoning hold also for the notion of *sustainable development*? How is *it* linked to democracy? What about substantial democracy? Can credibly representative and accountable democracy be expected to respect the limits to development set by nature herself? How can citizens of democracies (*demos*) be expected to collectively balance the satisfaction of short- and long-term needs and aspirations, their own and those of others, or local/national and global ones, including the requirement to safeguard ‘Earth’s life-support system’ (Griggs 2013:2)? Does this require imposed ‘expertise’, as argued by some, rather than democracy in order to deal effectively and justly with the greenhouse effect?

The sustainability dimension brings out the crucial question of what kinds of needs, aspirations and goals the ‘people’/citizens/*demos* are striving to satisfy through development. Even under substantial democracy, needs and aspirations may be articulated which, in order to be met, require *unsustainable* use of resources. Such an unsustainable development process will continue until halted either by political means or, in the extreme case, by ecological breakdown which undermines the life-supporting processes of nature.

Assuming, however, that accountable rather than non-accountable power is more likely to result in well-informed politics and policies, it may also be assumed that the chances of stopping unsustainable resource use will be greater under substantial democracy than under more authoritarian forms.

Moreover, if majority-aspirations-based development takes place due to democratization, the legitimacy and survival capacity of democracy is likely to be strengthened. If, on the other hand, the democratic form of rule turns out not to be substantial and does not even result in the satisfaction of basic needs and aspirations, then it will run a great risk of being undermined. For such weak forms of democracy I have proposed the designation ‘democracy without development’ (Rudebeck 2011).

The Globalization Perspective

The functioning of democracy, furthermore, is affected by the structure of the international system of states and the capitalist world market. Since the mid-1970s, this has been characterized by accelerating *globalization*, in turn affecting the preconditions for substantial democracy in concrete ways, from the most local to supra-state levels and scales.

In practice, under such conditions, many juridically sovereign states currently lack significant aspects of autonomy within the international system. Even if the internal structures of their societies were perfectly democratic, their leaders and citizens would still lack the power to decisively influence matters of decisive importance for the development of their countries. This happens because key decisions are made and key functions performed beyond their reach, in the ‘international community’.

Given this situation, what kinds of institutional arrangements can be imagined to promote democratic control and accountability at global levels? Can global democracy be at all realistically formulated? Would it be more realistic to envision global democratization as a possible (side-) effect of deepened democracy at state and regional levels? Although classical, such questions are today attracting renewed attention in scholarly discourses.²³

The brief point to be made in the present context about the globalization perspective is that it underscores the linkage now brought out with the help of Table 3. Consideration of the unequal interdependence imposed by globalization makes the significance for development of democratized power and democratic politics stand out even more strongly. This thought was forcefully formulated in *Human Development Report 2002*, entitled ‘Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World’:

Sustained poverty reduction requires equitable growth – *but it also requires that poor people have political power*. And the best way to achieve that in a manner consistent with human development objectives is by building strong and deep forms of democratic governance at all levels of society. (*Human Development Report 2002:v*; my emphasis)

Conclusion

Reduced to its barest essence and modestly formulated, the argument of this article is that development that meets legitimate majority needs and aspirations is more likely to take place under conditions of substantial democracy than under other forms of rule. In order to influence the development of their lives and societies, citizens need to have at least a measure of political power. This, I argue, holds in principle also when sustainable development and globalization are brought into the analysis.

Research experiences have led me to wonder what might cause persons – for instance West African village farmers – to make use of their civic rights in struggling against poverty and customary deference to authority under newly introduced constitutional democracy, beyond just putting a ballot in the box on election day. Abstractly formulated, this is the question of moving the political system from minimalist democracy in the direction of substantial democracy. Historically concrete answers will be manifold.

If citizens driven by sheer necessity dare to get together with each other in civil and political society – for instance in horizontally organized and functioning credit associations, in movements to fight female circumcision, or just opening a village school where the state is failing – thus beginning to loosen their dependence on various political and economic patrons, then deep or substantial democratization will also by definition begin to take place. Power over the use of developmental resources can begin to shift towards those who need it most. Development that meets some legitimate needs and aspirations may become possible. If national policies are affected, governments may gradually gain more strength and democratic credibility, extending even to their participation in the ‘international community’. What kinds of dynamics might cause people to act and institutions to function in such ways?²⁴

There is no way of knowing in advance if people aspiring to ‘development’, in various situations and historical contexts, will be able to empower themselves enough to influence its course by democratic means, greatly or a little – and if so, when, how and where. But it is a reasonable thought that such self-empowerment is a crucial condition for development to meet common needs and aspirations – and quite possibly, in many situations, even a necessary condition.

Notes

1. The present article is a thoroughly tightened and revised version of a paper (Rudebeck 2012, 2014) presented on 31 May 2012, as background text for an international symposium organized by DevNet (Development Research Network) at CSD (Centre for Sustainable Development), Uppsala University. Special thanks to Kjell Havnevik formerly at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, and to Yusuf Bangura, formerly at United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Geneva, now at the University of Sierra Leone, for contributing to my work of revisiting the text. Earlier versions had been used long before in teaching and seminars in various contexts. Numerous colleagues and friends have contributed over the years. Some are mentioned in these endnotes. My gratitude to all is acknowledged. Responsibility for the outcome remains my own.
2. Examples of my work on Tunisia, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique underlying the present article are found among the titles listed in *References* under my name.
3. It is true, though, that not even this seemingly self-evident view remains uncontested. Sometimes the term is also used illogically to refer to the *outcome* of the process, rather than to the process itself. Such usages can be regarded as shorthand for ‘that which results from development’. Development in this static sense is usually defined statistically, as a *level* of GNP per capita, as a certain *position* along the UNDP index of ‘human development’ (HDI), or by some other similar measure. The only way of linking such measures to development as a *process*, however, is by referring to GNP *growth* or *movement* along the HDI scale, as will be analysed below.
4. See United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (1986).
5. GNP = the total market value of all goods produced and services provided in a given country within a given period, usually one year. Combined analogous measures can be calculated also for groups of countries (e.g. Gross World Product for all countries).
6. The HDI was first presented in 1990. It has since been refined, but still comprises the same basic indicators of wealth, health and education. See *Human Development Report 2013* and preceding reports. For further recent critical discussion of the concept of growth, see, in particular, Jackson (2009).
7. *Unfolding*, furthermore, is probably etymologically the most literal and thus original meaning of the word *development*: the unfolding of inherent potential. While not over-interpreting this observation, it is nevertheless true that the original meaning of a word or a term continues most often to carry a relevant message.
8. I am grateful to Yusuf Bangura for remarking, in personal communication on an earlier draft, that ‘needs’ alone is too limited for designating that which, in the presence of possibilities, triggers structural ‘development’. Responsibility for the consistent use of the formula ‘needs and aspirations’ in this article is however mine alone.

9. In later writings, Sen sees 'development' more widely as the expansion of 'substantive freedom(s)' (Sen 1999). As far as my own argument on the normative-structural concept of development is concerned, the straightforward entitlement approach found in Sen's 1981 work remains, however, a key point of reference.
10. Cf. the following observation by Tim Jackson (2009:147, his italics): 'If we take for granted the implications of material commodities for social functioning, *there is never any point at which we will be able to claim that enough is enough.*'
11. Cf. Törnquist (2002:29): "'Substantial democracy' 'only' means that the conventional democratic rules of the game ... are both fair *and* applied in vital sectors of society..." In current democracy discourse, the term 'substantive' is more frequent than 'substantial'. Törnquist himself (2013:2–4) now comes out in favour of using both terms: 'substantial' in referring to the inclusiveness of democracy, and 'substantive' as opposed to procedural definitions. For my own purposes, I have decided (until persuaded otherwise) to stay with 'substantial'.
12. In this I was theoretically moved by the aforementioned works by Held and Sen. Exchange over the decades with Olle Törnquist has been a continuous key challenge. See his most recent work in a long series (2013) for an analytical and methodological summary of how to grasp the dynamics of substantial/substantive democratization, based on research in Indonesia, India and the Philippines. Mahmood Mamdani's (1996) historical and sociological analysis of the complexity of democratization in post-colonial Africa helped me conceptualize democracy as a form of power (Rudebeck 2010:88–91).
13. Cf. Chandhoke (2009) on the need for 'conjuncture' of 'participation, representation and democratic projects of civil society agents'.
14. See, in particular, Held's notion of *equal autonomy* and his 'principle of autonomy' for citizens (1995:71 and 145), linked by Held himself to Amartya Sen's notion of *entitlements* (cf. above).
15. Cf. Beckman and Ya'u (2012) for recent analyses of attempts to achieve such strengthening by way of popular organization in Nigeria and comparable cases in Northern Africa. Karlsson (2011) offers a vivid ethnographic study of evidently illegitimate democracy in the 'unruly hills' of India's northeast. Törnquist's most recent work on Indonesia, including the 2014 presidential election, highlights a potential for deepened democracy (2014).
16. See also UNRISD (2010), of which Bangura was the lead author, and Bangura (2011).
17. Cf. Max Weber's classical outline of three types of authority – traditional, charismatic, and legal – assumed to justify/legitimize domination/power (Weber 1991:77–128); originally presented in a famous speech by him at Munich University in 1918, 'Politics as a Vocation' (*Politik als Beruf*).
18. In an essay on the role of Weber in development thinking, I investigate the significance of the legitimacy concept to the democracy/development issue (Rudebeck 1994).

19. The most comprehensive investigation available on such correlations and relationships is Przeworski et al. (2000), done on data from 135 countries during the second half of the twentieth century. This, as summed up by Przeworski himself in a concise paper (2004), shows that minimalistically defined ('electoralist') democracy is not necessarily brought about by economic development. However, once established, 'for whatever reasons' in more developed or wealthy countries, it survives much more easily there than under less prosperous circumstances (2004, internet version, p. 12). Cf. the observation by Thomas Carothers (2010:24) in a recent overview of the discourse on democracy and development aid, that 'few [development economists] share the faith common among democracy promoters that democracy advances development'.
20. Something similar appears to be true also of the relationship between ('good') 'governance' and various measures of development. The notion of 'governance' – and more specifically 'good governance' – is promoted by the World Bank and the so-called international community as a whole. Basically, it refers to levels of efficiency, rule of law, transparency and accountability in the rule of countries. Viewed strictly, even 'good governance' does not necessarily include democracy, although political accountability to *all* adult citizens would seem to bring the two close. The following prudent conclusion is arrived at by Holmberg, Rothstein and Nasiritousi (2009:157) after carefully examining a number of empirical findings on how governance/quality of government (QoG) relates to various measures of development (and to democracy): '*We lack a solid understanding of the causality and essential elements of QoG in different political, economic and cultural settings.*'
21. If development were thought to be primarily about the needs and aspirations of powerful minorities or about technocratically formulated expert goals, it would more probably be linked to non-democratic forms of politics or just management (including governance, 'good' or 'bad').
22. The firm relationship of *field 4* may even cause some to confuse or confound the two concepts. To avoid this, we need to remind ourselves that development is a *process*, while democracy is seen here as a *form of rule* and a *structure of power*. Democratization, on the other hand, is obviously a process. Even democracy as such can be conceptualized as process(es) in the sense of democratic deliberation and decision-making. Cf. Arora-Jonsson (2012) for using that perspective in theorizing connections between gender, (environmental) development and (democratic) governance.
23. Scholte (2011) offers a clarifying review of current thinking on global democracy, structured according to the following questions (p. 2): 'How can democracy be realised in a world, of the kind that is currently emerging, where social relations have more pronounced global aspects? Moreover, how might democracy operate in that more global world when, as now unfolds, power and resources become less concentrated in Europe and North America? And what would global democracy mean when, as already transpires, "the people" involved inhabit highly diverse cultural contexts?' In a noted work, Rodrik (2011) certainly recognizes the reality of globalization, while turning global governance down as a serious option.

24. In 1989, in the wake of structural adjustment imposed by globalized power, the state-run school of the village of Kandjadja in northern Guinea-Bissau was closed down. Only the Koranic school remained. In 2006, the parents' deepening frustration with this had grown to a point where they started their own school. By collecting 500 West African CFA francs (about 0.75 euro) per family and month (in 2015), the villagers were able to hire a teacher whom they also provide with food and a simple dwelling. Classes are offered in two classrooms, to nearly two hundred students divided between the first three grades of elementary school. In 2016 the school is still there. The future of such a project cannot be known. Its limits are evident. But in concrete microcosm it offers an actual example of horizontal self-organization from below by people with shared needs and aspirations, resulting in a measure of development – across vertical lines of ethnicity, gender and age (see Rudebeck 2010:87 ff, 2011:18).

References

- Arora-Jonsson, S., 2013, *Gender, Development and Environmental Governance. Theorizing Connections*, Routledge, New York and Oxford: Taylor & Francis.
- Bangura, Y., 1992, 'Authoritarian Rule and Democracy in Africa: a Theoretical Discourse', in Lars Rudebeck (ed.), *When Democracy Makes Sense. Studies in the Democratic Potential of Third World Popular Movements*, AKUT, Uppsala: Uppsala University, pp. 69-104.
- Bangura, Y., 2011, 'Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution', *European Journal of Development Research*, no. 4, Vol. 23, pp. 531-536. www.palgrave-journals.com/ejdr/
- Beckman, B. & Ya'u, Y. Z. (eds.), 2012, *Organising for Democracy. Nigerian and Comparative Experiences*, Stockholm and Kano: PODSU, AKCDRAT and CRDD.
- Carothers, T., 2010, 'Democracy and Development Aid. The Elusive Synthesis', *Journal of Democracy*, no. 4, Vol. 21, pp. 12-26.
- Chandhoke, N., 2009, 'What is the Relationship between Participation and Representation?' in Olle Törnquist, Neil Webster and Kristian Stokke, *Rethinking Popular Representation*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 25-37.
- Dahl, R., 1982, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dahl, R., 1989, *Democracy and its Critics*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Griggs, D. et al., 2013, *Nature*, Vol. 495, 21 March 2013, <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v495/n7441/full/495305a.html>
- Held, D., 1995, *Democracy and the Global Order. From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Holmberg, S., B. Rothstein, and N. Nasiritousi, 2009, 'Quality of Government: What You Get', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12, pp. 135-161. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1445066
- Human Development Report 2002*, 2002, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York and Oxford.
- Human Development Report 2013*, 2013, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>

- Huntington, S., 1991, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Jackson, T., 2009, *Prosperity Without Growth. Economics for a Finite Planet*, London and Washington: Earthscan.
- Karlsson, B.G., 2011, *Unruly Hills. Nature and Nation in India's Northeast*, New Delhi: Esha Béteille and Orient Blackswan.
- Mamdani, M., 1996, *Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Melber, H., 2011, 'Preface', *Development Dialogue*, no. 56, Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, pp. 5-10.
- Przeworski, A., M.E. Alvarez, J.A. Cheibub, and F. Limongi, 2000, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-being in the World, 1950-1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, A., 2004, 'Democracy and Economic Development', in E.D. Mansfield and R. Sisson (eds.), *The Evolution of Political Knowledge*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press. <http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/faculty/przeworski/papers/sisson.pdf>
- Rodrik, D., 2011, *The Globalization Paradox. Why Global Markets, States, and Democracy Can't Coexist*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rudebeck, L., 1994, 'Traditional/Modern in Modernised Modernisation Thinking. The Development of a Weberian Dichotomy', in John Martinussen (ed.), *The Theoretical Heritage from Marx and Weber in Development Studies*, Occasional Paper no. 10, International Development Studies, Roskilde, Denmark, pp. 131-165.
- Rudebeck, L., 2002, 'Beyond Democratic Constitutionalism: on the Twofold Meaning of Democracy and Democratization', *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 6, no. 1, Grahamstown. South Africa, pp. 173-180.
- Rudebeck, L., 2010, 'They Have Left Us in a Hole.' Democratization and Political Power in a West-African Village', in *APAD-Bulletin* (journal of the Euro-African Association for the Anthropology of Social Change and Development/ Association Euro-Africaine pour l'Anthropologie du Changement Social et du Développement), nos 31-32, December, 2009, Leiden, pp. 65-104 <http://apad.revues.org/4067>
- Rudebeck, L., 2011, *Electoral Democratization in Post-Civil War Guinea-Bissau 1999-2008*, Discussion Paper 66, Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute. <http://nai.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:464291>
- Rudebeck, L., 2012, 2014, *Democracy, Development, Globalisation, Power – on concepts, meanings, realities, and their linkages*. <http://www.csduppsala.uu.se/assets/DDGP-February-2014.pdf>
- Scholte, J.A., 2011, *Reinventing Global Democracy*, paper presented at Global Week Conference, University of Gothenburg, 22-23 November 2011. http://www.pol.gu.se/digitalAssets/1349/1349829_conf-2011-scholte.pdf
- Sen, A., 1981, *Poverty and Famines. An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sen, A., 1999, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tingsten, H., 1945, *Demokratiens problem*, Stockholm: Norstedts.

- Törnquist, O., 2002, *Popular Development and Democracy. Case Studies with Rural Dimensions in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Kerala*. Oslo, Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM), University of Oslo, in cooperation with UNRISD, Geneva.
- Törnquist, O., 2013, *Assessing Dynamics of Democratisation: Transformation Politics, New Institutions, and the Case of Indonesia*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Törnquist, O., 2014, *Indonesian Democracy: From Stagnation to Transformation?* http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/indonesian_democracy_from_stagnation_to_transformation
- United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development*, 1986, General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/41/128, 4 December 1986, 97th plenary meeting. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/41/a41r128.htm> UNRISD (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development), 2010. *Combating Poverty and Inequality. Structural Change, Social Policy and Politics*, UNRISD, Geneva. <http://commdev.org/content/document/detail/2640/>
- Weber, M., 1991 (German original 1918), 'Politics as a Vocation' (Politik als Beruf), English translation in Gerth, H. H. & Mills, C. Wright (eds.), 1991. *From Max Weber. Essays in Sociology, with a new preface by Bryan S. Turner*, London: Routledge, pp. 77-128.
- World Commission on Environment and Development, WCED (Brundtland Commission), 1987, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, Transmitted to the General Assembly as an Annex to Document A/42/427 - *Development and International Co-operation: Environment*. <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>