POST-DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF TRADITION IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. A post-development theorist claimed that development has failed because of its overbearing tendencies, because the whole concept of development and its practice has become ideological, reflecting Western hegemony over the rest of the world, and because it has wrestled development attempts away from the people in local contexts. This paper is an attempt to examine post-development critique of development and to argue against those who are of the opinion that post development is misguided or that there is no sense in it. It argues that the sense in post-development has to do with its bottom-up approach to development which pays attention to the tradition of the local societies. The problem, however, is that within the post-development discourse, much attention has not been paid to the specific roles that tradition and cultural values play in the transference of this power to the extent that the society develops in its own terms. This paper attempts to fill this gap by focusing on two elements of tradition, namely, cultural identity and indigenous knowledge and how they can foster the process of development to the extent that local cultural autonomy is not minimised.

1. Introduction

Post-development is a theory of development which takes a critical look at the theory and practice of development. There is a contention on whether it is just a theory or a perspective (Ziai 2004). However, no such contention exists about whether it is a critique of development. It interrogates, examines, attempts to transcend and tries to make scholars and policy makers actively think about and contest popularly held beliefs regarding development and who is to speak on the direction it should take. Post-development theorists have claimed that development has failed because of its overbearing tendencies and because the whole

concept of development and its practice has become ideological, reflecting Western hegemony over the rest of the world. Therefore as Johnson (2014) remarks, at the core of post-development is the focus on an examination and/or challenge of power dynamics. It is believed that development should not be approached through a top-down, trusteeship model, but through a bottom-up way that takes into consideration the local needs of the people. It is always argued that if development discourse and practice continues this way, it may lead to an eventual cultural homogenisation of the world – a tendency that favours only the developed nations of the West. It is therefore argued that development is a cultural process and should involve the people that are the object of development. To do this, the tradition and the lived experiences of the people have to be taken into consideration in the development process. The aims of the post-development theory is to effect a transfer of power, the power to define the problems and goals of a society; from the hands of outside 'experts' to the members of the society itself. The problem, however, is that within the post-development discourse, much attention has not been paid to the specific roles that tradition and cultural values play in the transference of this power to the extent that the society develops in its own terms. This paper attempts to fill this gap by focusing on two elements of tradition, namely, cultural identity and indigenous knowledge and how they can foster the process of development to the extent that local cultural autonomy is not minimised. In the first section of the paper, we shall look at the post-development rejection of development. It is argued that it is not the case that post-development theorists think that development is not a useful concept or an unachievable goal, but that they only reject development as conceived in certain quarters. In the second section, we look at one of the elements of tradition that can help developing nations to own and drive their own development, namely, cultural identity. In the third section, we shall look at the role of indigenous knowledge in the development process.

2. The post-development critique of development

In a speech made in Japan in 2000, Mats Karlsson the Vice President at the World Bank, external and United Nations affairs, admitted that progress in development had been painfully slow since "in too many places the basic needs for a decent and productive life still have not been met" (Karlsson 2000). For him, the traditional conception of development and its attendant efforts have made only limited difference. He also noted that the prospect of convergences between the poor nations and the rich is in danger of becoming a forlorn hope. It is very significant to see this kind of comment come from the World Bank who has been a perpetuator of mainstream development thinking. Karlsson singles out two reasons for the failure of development. The first one is the way in which the development process has historically been conceived and supported by external agencies, including the World Bank. The second is the capacity of developing countries to

own, frame, and implement development strategies and get appropriate support from external partner (Karlsson, 2000).

The major attack on development has been the way it has been conceived during post-World War II, especially by the modernisation theorists who constitute the mainstream in development thinking. This conception has prevented developing countries from owning, framing and implementing development as it suits them. In the 1990s, a wave of ideas put forward by certain Third World thinkers such as Escobar, Estava and so on, began to surface. This wave of ideas is called the post-development theory. It critiques modernisation theory and post-World War II development theorists for their reductionism, universalism and ethnocentricity.

Post-development is a radical reaction to the dilemmas of development. This perspective is characterised by perplexity and extreme dissatisfaction with business as usual and standard development rhetoric and practice and disillusionment with alternative development (Pieterse 2000:175). It rejects development because it sees it as the new religion of the West and an attempt to homogenise and Westernise the globe and disrupt the cultural identity of the varying cultures interspersed on the globe. Post-development theorists see the reigning notion of development as not only upholding colonial ways of thinking but also as privileging those in power (Janzen 2008:10). Post-development sees development as a discourse which perpetuates the majority of the world as homogenous 'other' and creates a sense that the superior minority (First World) can save them by transmitting to them their knowledge and technology. From this perspective, the discourse of development leads to a construction of the First /Third World and its power-play, the construction of poverty, and of helping others that has attained a status of unquestionable truth in the West. These constructions, as Escobar remarks, have "created an extremely efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over the Third World" (Escobar 1995a:9).

Post-development rejects development not on account of its result but because of its intentions, worldview and mindset. The economic mindset of mainstream development theories implies a reductionist view of existence. Thus, for Sachs, "it is not the failure of development that has to be feared but its success (cited in Pieterse 2000:175).

Post-development is not alone in looking at the bad side of development. It seems as if all critical approaches to development deal with its dark side. For instance, the dependency theory raises question about global inequality engendered by development strategies that originate in the West. What actually sets post-development theory apart from other critiques is that it rejects the idea of development rather than make an attempt to reconstruct it.

According to Escobar, the problem with development is that it is external and based on the models of industrialised world, and what is thus needed is more endogenous discourse. The reference to, and interest in endogenous development resembles the dependency theory and the 'foreign bad, local good' position which is a critique of the 'local bad, foreign good' modernisation assumption. For post-

development, development as practiced in the North-South relationship denies local agencies of the Third World, that is, it denies the extent to which the South owns development and can initiate development locally.

The post-development theorists treat the idea of development as a discourse; a hegemonic discourse which has become an ideological weapon for dealing with the developing countries of the world. This discourse, according to Escobar, like orientalism, has been "a mechanism for the production and management of the Third-World…organizing the production of truth about the Third-World" (Escobar 1995b:212). The discourse turns the idea of development into a meta-narrative which constituted a Western project of intervention in which the interests of the 'project directors' are reflected. So, treating development as discourse makes development theorist employ the method of discourse analysis in dealing with the issue of development. Discourse analysis, for Pieterse, forms part of the linguistic turn in the social science and involves the careful scrutiny of language and text as a framework of presuppositions and structures of thought, penetrating further than the critique of ideology. This forms the methodological basis of post-development and has, as Pieterse rightly argues, been turned into an ideological platform (2000:180).

It is important to bear in mind that the post-development critique of development is that development has failed in the sense that, as a Western project, it has failed to deliver its promises. And as Rist (1997) remarks, development has become something similar to religious faith to which exponents and practitioners clung, regardless of the evidence. Consequently, it is opined that the entire paradigm of development should be rejected and an alternative to development be sought. The question we would have to ask is whether this is a fruitful position to take. To my mind, post-development rejection of development appears to emerge from a feeling that the negative consequences which have been observed to result from development are intrinsic to development rather than being the unintended side-effects of it. The truth, however, is that such rejection of development can be said to be occasioned by the inability of the post-development theorists to conceptualise development other than the way it is conceptualised and practiced by mainstream development theorists.

There are two major critiques levelled against post-development. The first is that it essentialises development and fails to see that development can be conceptualised in different ways. In doing this, post-development is accused of homogenising development and concealing divergences within development. It should be acknowledged that the ideas, theories and practices that have been associated with the term 'development' since the 1950s are diverse and several theories about development are set up in opposition to other theories of development. The post-World War II era has seen development theories rooted in capitalist ideology, and others rooted in Marxist ideology, there have also been approaches promoting state-led development and others promoting market-led development, there have been ideas of mainstream economists (sometimes housed at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) and there have been the ideas of those who respond critically to them. All the above can be summed up in the

term post-World War II development. This term is meant to refer to the various ideas and practices which have been premised on the belief that some areas the world are 'developed', and others are not, and that those which are not can and should set about achieving the development which has thus far eluded them. This whole body of knowledge and discourse is rejected by post-development.

What we are saying is that we can make a distinction, as Sally Mathews does, between post-World War II development and development *per se*. (Mathews 2004). The latter is defined as "a process involving the unfolding of changes in the direction of reaching a higher or more matured state of being" (Mathews 2004:376). So while post-World War II development idea is rejected by the post-development theory, it does not reject that it is possible for a society to undergo some or other process of transformation, which result in a better life politically socially economically and mentally for its inhabitants. Thus, the call for alternatives to development, that is, post-World War II development project is the call for a new way of changing, of developing, of improving, to be constructed in the place of the ruin of post -World War II development project. This call should not be read as a call for the rejection of development *per se,* that is, it is not a call to reject the possibility or desirably of change in the direction of improving societies, nor is it a callous disregard of the desire of the many who suffer in poverty and misery to see improvement in their situation.

The problem with most post-development theorists is that they do not make the distinction clear in their theorisation, thus allowing for ambiguity in their call for the rejection of the paradigm of development in search for another alternative.

The second main critique is that post-development offers critique without construction. Pieterse summarises the critique this way:

> *Post-development parallels post-modernism both in its acute intuitions and in being directionless in the end, as inconsequence of its refusal to, or lack of interest in, translating critique into construction…The overall programme is one of resistance rather than transformation or emancipation* (Pieterse 2000:187).

This, for Pieterse, has the possibility of leading to political impasse and quietism. I think that this critique is misplaced. Pieterse should have limited himself to the claim that post-development articulates meaningful sensibilities about development, but to claim that it does not offer a future programme is unacceptable (Pieterse 1998:345). Pieterse himself agrees that post-development does make positive claims which are associated with the affirmative counterpoints such as indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity as important elements in the development process (2000:184). Pieterse's comment that post-development opts for Ghandian frugality, not consumerism, for conviviality, for grass root movements and local struggles, but that all these do not necessarily add up to a rejection of development shows that the so-called post-development rejection of development needs some qualifications.

To my mind, post-development offers a new direction even though this has not been clearly articulated. This direction has to do with the need for development to

come from below rather than from above; a development that does not marginalise local people and cultures; a development that allows the developing world autonomy and responsibility for their own economic and social development in accordance with their own priorities and plans, reflected by their political and cultural diversities. In other words, there is the need to develop an alternative to post-World War II development thinking which allows no place to tradition in the development process. There is the need for an alternative to development which is inspired from the subaltern. The local, the subaltern should turn inward, as opposed to being dependent on external agencies, to devise more effective and meaningful programme and policies for improvement.

The direction in which post-development is leading us is where an attempt to improve the quality of life of the people, their historicity and tradition will have to be taken into consideration. However, such path cannot be taken without an adequate conceptualisation of tradition, that is, a conception of tradition which rather than hinder development, enhances it. In what follows we look at two components of tradition and the roles they can play in, and how they can facilitate, the development process of any society.

3. Tradition in the development process: the role of local/cultural identity

Let me begin this section by saying that tradition has not enjoyed worldwide acceptance as it is taken in some quarters as a concept that signifies backwardness. It is often claimed that tradition is a hindrance to the development of societies (Grabum 2001). That is why, according to Grabum, "one began to hear about the weight of tradition or people bound by tradition" (2001:7). This is supposed to imply that tradition is something to be thrown away or destroyed if any society wants to develop.

Tradition constitutes the network of beliefs, knowledge, practices and values that people in particular societies inherit and which influence the way they act and the way they understand and interpret their world. I think that it constitutes a resource for societies to draw from, a source of historically defined identity. To ignore this aspect of the people in development attempts is almost to ensure failure in development. Let us begin this analysis from the issue of cultural identity

Traditional cultural materials, knowledge and values have become tools in the hands of many societies for the creation of identity as a counter-culture against the dominant culture and against the hegemonic process of globalisation which attempts to submerge local politics and cultural differences. Brynjulf remarks that "giving tradition a new life became a natural pursuit…everywhere in local societies today there is a strong need to state one's identity" (citied in Nugraha 2005:1–2). The major aim of the post-World War II development theorists, especially those who championed modernisation theory is to make developing countries ape North-Western industrialised nations. The resultant effect of this kind of objective is that no developing country will be seen as developing which

has not followed the path of the industrialised countries followed in their process of development. And when this path is followed, it seems to me, that the developing African and Latin American countries will become Westernised.

What modernization theorists do is to label traditional values and indigenous knowledge models as static, unworkable and therefore something to be thrown away. This would mean the loss of the individuality of various developing local societies. It will also prevent the contributions each of these societies could make to the unstoppable process of globalisation. The reason is that tradition helps in asserting any society's identity, individuality and also helps in allowing each developing community to pay attention to the local needs of the people.

We ought to consider the issue of identity along with a deep analysis of tradition when looking at the process of development. For instance, the more the human being is subjected to the alienating mechanisms of the modern world, the greater the danger of being lost in one-sidedness and the greater the tendency to abandon the law and roots of his being. From an ontological point of view, the psychic life of the human being is characterised by a fear of novelty and by fixing on tradition. If some people are forced into a way of life which may destroy their cultural and national context, that is, the natural roots of their life, they may resist the alienating forces. This kind of resistance is a defence mechanism, and expresses the hidden, vital and substantial forces of human being.

As a social culture product, traditional/local identity has been regarded as a very significant factor in development because it has become a mouldering element for territorial structure, and in general, it can, according to Pollice, determine structural, relational and sense transformation in local development and geographic space (2003:107). Local or indigenous identity develops within a lived space. This lived space is both geographical and cultural. This is because the connotation of local identity cannot make any reference to mere spatial dimension of identity alone; rather, it should embody those belonging ties that create the territory. The cultural dimension is important because "the territory is precisely a relational space that grows in time as the product of cultural sedimentation: the engine of this process is the identity relationship between a community and the space occupied by the community" (Pollice 2003:107). It is the cultural sedimentation and identity relationship that foster cultural development within local space. When this is destroyed people become disoriented.

As regards the relationship between local identity and development, it is important to recognize that local identity has a restructuring and organisational character (Pollice 2003:109). This identity represents tradition's power to produce a certain sense of consciousness, orientate collective actions, and social processes that allow people to participate fully and consciously in their own development. This feature alone is capable of driving the discussion in the role of identity in local development processes. Local identity which has developed through series of intergenerational transfers and communication can be interpreted as a sense of belonging, social identification and shared representation of a collective self. Any development plan, if it is to enhance development process should aim at pre-

serving identity as described above. It should, however, be noted that the preservation should not be in an essentialist but in a dialectical manner. In other words, we need to pay attention not only to the identity expression of local cultures, but also to the (identity) values that such expressions have moulded.

Mention is made of essentialism and dialectics in the above passage because it ought to be fully realized that local identity is not a static but a dynamic phenomenon, as it is the result of the continuous interaction between a given community and its relational space. This does not, however, deny the range of identity values that are rooted in time and space, rather, it highlights the risk of crystallising historical identity, especially when these are suggested as regulatory criteria for the present and planning references for the future.

Apart from the fact that identity is dynamic and dialectical contrary to its conception as a static conceptual entity, it is also reflexive, compound and oriented (Cerutti, cited in Pollice 2003:109). Identity's reflexive nature derives from identification processes that originate from the local community. It is expressed in the recognition of the difference from surrounding geography to which the local community attributes its lived space. It is compound in the sense that identity constructions are necessarily complex and contradictory due to the contrasts that lay at the heart of such constructions. Local identity is also oriented because it produces certain cultural awareness and it leads to a localizing system in its unceasing evolutionary process. The orienting function is one of the most interesting features of local identity. The reason is that through this orienting function, it is possible to explain the role local identity plays in local endogenous development processes. And there is no doubt about the fact that the focus on endogenous development is germane in the era of development politics that have consistently undermined local dynamics. A strong local identity is not only a great contribution to local and self-centred and self-powered development, but it can also determine development objectives and strategies.

The apparent contradiction in terminology between the concept of identity and that of development which results from improper conceptualisation has been responsible for the inability to properly conceptualise the role of traditional identity in development. Because identity has been conceptualized as a static phenomenon both in synchronic and diachronic terms, and development has been seen as dynamic by definition, the question has always been, as Pollice frames it: "how can identity become a source for change" (2003:109). But as we have shown, identity is dynamic; it changes in time and so do all other territorial components and the local community itself. Identity is highly variable both in time and space. Such variability tends to be higher in temporal dimension than in the spatial one. When this characteristic nature of identity is critically taken into consideration, it would be apparent how it could be a source of change.

The essence of the above analysis is that identity is not a monolithic phenomenon. For instance, when we talk of human identity, no one can be said to remain what he is from childhood to adulthood with respect to age, exposure, experience and so on, even though he still remains the same person. The implication of the

dynamic conception of identity is that the development and construction of identity is a life-long process. No society can assert its identity once and for all except it essentialises it and locates it in the past. To locate identities in the past is to refuse to accommodate the historicity and the lived realities of the people in the construction of the identity. Such an attitude hinders rather than fosters development.

The analysis up to the point would simply be a theoretical contribution on the issue of identity in development if it would not try to identify the interactions that actually occur between the two. The following represents an analysis of this dynamic.

Local identity has a way of strengthening the governing power of locally shared ethical and behavioural values. Sometimes, identity itself is founded on sharing these values that are perceived by the local community as a tangible expression of its own cultural specificity. On an economic scale, such values allow the improvement on some levels of production and commercial relationships, favouring the manifestation of those forms of competitive collaboration that represent the core of distinct economies.

Another way in which identity contributes to the development process is that it contributes to improving intergenerational communication and transfer of knowledge, and in particular of tacit, non-codified knowledge. As a matter of fact, there is a sentimental attachment to locally determined knowledge and a stronger tendency to the exploitation of the cognitive heritage. That is why any move by development actors to undermine the local identities of particular societies is a move to undermine the society's creative and innovative capabilities and hence to disrupt their development process.

Identity's driving force in terms of local development comes from the significance of identity values within the organisation of space and social life. The synergy between identity and development will occur only where there is a strong identity matrix and where identity values are rooted and shared among the people of the community. Otherwise, any promotion strategy for alleged local cultural identity will not have any driving force and will become a mystification process of local realities with negative consequences in development dynamics and on local identity itself. The competitive orientation of production system is determined by local identities, and the promotion of change processes. The promotion of non-existent identities or of identities that have lost their influencing power means disorienting local forces and addressing them towards development models that are as unsuitable as exogenous ones.

4. Tradition in development: the role of indigenous knowledge

One other aspect of tradition of particular societies that can help us to sharpen our focus on the role tradition can play in the development process is indigenous knowledge. This term shares a similar meaning with traditional knowledge, local knowledge, traditional environmental knowledge, rural knowledge and so on (Mwaura 2008).

According to Roselimo indigenous knowledge is "the knowledge that the people in a given community has developed overtime and continues to be developed. It is based on experience, it is adopted to local culture and environment" (cited in Mosothwane 2007:725). Gough sees it as knowledge that is unique to a culture or society which is passed from generation to generation by word of mouth and cultural rituals and has been the basic for agriculture, food preparation, healthcare education, conservation and the wide ranges of other activities that sustain a society and its environments in many parts of the world (cited in Mosothwane 2007: 725). It can be regarded as the complex bodies of knowledge, know-how, practices, and representations developed by people with long histories of close interaction with the natural environment. Indigenous knowledge is local knowledge in the sense that it remains the systematic information that remains in the informal sector of particular societies. A more comprehensive definition of indigenous knowledge is given by Nyumba. The definition seems to synthesise the elements of other definitions. According to him:

> *Indigenous knowledge (IK) is the knowledge that people in a given community have developed overtime, and continues to develop. It is based on experience, often tested over centuries of use, adapted to local culture and environment and dynamic and changing. IK pertains to experimental locality-specific knowledge and practices of medicine, and environmental conservation developed by indigenous people over the years* (2006:2).

From the above we can infer the following feature of indigenous knowledge. It is local, and context-dependent, in the sense that it is rooted in particular communities and situated with broader cultural traditions. It is a set of experiences generated by people living in those communities. Separating the technical from the non-technical, the rational from the non-rational aspects of indigenous knowledge could be problematic. Hence, it carries the potential ride of dislocation when transferred to other places (World Bank 1998:2). Another feature is that it is transmitted orally or through imitation and demonstration. Codifying it may lead to the loss of some of its properties. This is because it carries some tacit dimensions that are not easily formalised. The other feature is that it is experiential rather than theoretical. Experience and trial and error and the fact that it is tested in the rigorous laboratory of survival of local communities constantly reinforce indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is also learned through repetition. This is a defining characteristic of any aspect of tradition. Repetition allows the retention and reinforcement of traditional knowledge and allows it to be transferred to upcoming generations. The last but not the least is that indigenous knowledge is constantly changing, hence dynamic. It is being produced and reproduced, discovered as well as lost. Though it is often perceived by external observers as static, it is nonetheless dynamic and adaptive. When we look at the dynamics of indigenous knowledge, we would see that the idea that it is static and unchanging is difficult to maintain.

The features described above suggest that knowledge is an integral part of the development process of local communities. According to the 1998/99 World

Development Report, knowledge, not capital, is the key to sustainable social and economic development. And I think is is right to suppose that building on indigenous knowledge, the basic component of any country's knowledge system, is the first step to mobilize such capital. Moreover, there is a growing consensus that knowledge exchange must be a two-way street. It must be a dialogue between both indigenous and Western knowledge systems. A vision of knowledge transfer as a sort of conveyor belt moving in one direction from the rich, industrialized countries to the poor, indigenous people and developing countries is likely to lead to failure and resentment. Governments and international institutions can certainty help countries with the daunting task of sifting through international, non-context sensitive experiences, extracting relevant knowledge and experimenting with it. But they will have more success if they help the developing countries adapt knowledge to local conditions. What I am saying is that development activities, especially those that aim to benefit the poor and the informal sector, in which the majority of the population of developing countries thrive, need to consider indigenous knowledge and local traditions in the design and implementation stages of the process.

The argument we are pursuing is a build-up on the arguments of post-development theorists such as Escobar. In his perspective,

> *The remaking of development must start by examining local constructions, to the extent that they are the life and history of the people, that is, the condition for and of change* (Escobar, 1995a:98).

The change Escobar refers to here is the one that comes from within the communities themselves as a development arena, having confidence in and deploying indigenous traditions which comprise indigenous knowledge and cultural values, among other thing to bring about progress. This produces an atmosphere and a sense in which the rural communities and the countries involved in the development process have a voice about the progress which affects them, and outsiders listening seriously to what the local communities have to say, learning from them and respecting their abilities and priorities. It is probably for this reason that Khamaganova thinks that the issue of the preservation, maintenance and development of traditional knowledge and values are issues of human rights, especially rights to the land and rights to self-determination (2005:2). And, if the argument of Maiava is granted, that is, that development involves:

> *indigenous people determining their own future, confident, not intimidated but free people determining what they want to do and in doing it for themselves, exercising agency, actively moving forward to create better lives and improve their well-being according to their own priorities and criteria and they have done for millennia* (2002)

then we cannot avoid the conclusion that the issue relates to the right of the developing communities.

Looking at the issue from the above perspective, Howard and Widdowson (1996) argue that the issue of developing through tradition is an invention which is

politically motivated. For them, traditional knowledge has limited value in the development process. They noted further that:

> *The integration of traditional knowledge hinders rather than enhance the ability of government to more fully understand ecological processes since there is no mechanism, or will by which spiritually based knowledge claims could be challenged or verified. In fact pressures from aboriginal groups and their consultants have made traditional knowledge a sacred cow for which only the uncritical support is appropriate. Traditional knowledge is thus granted a sanctity which could lead to the acceptance of incorrect conclusions* (Howard and Widdowson, 1996:36).

What Howard and Widdowson are claiming is that traditional knowledge is held for uncritical reasons and could be anything the holders say it is since for them they cannot be challenged or modified. This argument is like a straw man argument for it is not the case that all indigenous knowledge is spiritually based. They are practical, experimental and hence verifiable. The reason is that traditional knowledge is developed during years of interaction with the lived-space of the people.

Thus, Berkes and Henley argue that interest in traditional knowledge is not a passing fad, nor is it merely politically motivated. The knowledge evolved over many generations, survival is the ultimate criterion for the verification of tradition of all knowledge (1997:56). And, they further argue that such traditions provide indigenous people with a meaningful way to be involved in decision-making (Ibid).

However, my defence of the place of tradition whether as knowledge or values, or beliefs in the development process does not imply that all traditional values and practices are beneficial to the sustainable development of local communities. In other words, not all indigenous knowledge can *a priori* provide the right solution for a given problem. Therefore, before adopting indigenous knowledge, integrating it into development programmes or even disseminating it, its practices need to be scrutinised for their appropriateness for any other foreign technology. Proofs, local evidences and socio-cultural background in which the practices are embedded also need consideration in the validation process.

Traditional knowledge has been contrasted with Western science and both are represented as constituting two different competing knowledge systems. Although Agrawal has suggested that this binary divide may indeed be false, the binary notion, however, persists. Western science is seen to be open, systematic, objective, dependent very much on being a detached centre of rationality and intelligence, while indigenous knowledge is seen to be closed parochial, unintellectual, primitive and emotional (Briggs 2005). Consequently, whereas Western knowledge systems are part of the notion of modernity, indigenous is seen as residual, backward, and unproductive. It is not a big step, therefore, to imagine that development, in the modernist perspective can only emerge from the application of Western knowledge and that indigenous knowledge has little to offer. This kind of thinking is unacceptable. Such thinking has been responsible

for why development thinking has relied on only one knowledge system, namely modern Western one. The dominance of this knowledge system has dictated the marginalization and disqualification of non-Western knowledge systems (Escobar 1995a:13).

There seems to be a deliberate politics on the part of mainstream development actors of the North to destroy indigenous knowledge and tradition in order to establish the socio-cultural and epistemological hegemony of the Western World. But it could be argued that such a politics only overlooks the significance of the local traditions in the development process. For Briggs,

> *Indigenous knowledge has an advantage over Western Science in the context of the poor communities, in that information is tested in the context of survival and hence, not true or false in some sort of dispassionate way (as western science might conclude), but is either more or less effective in providing the means of survival, a conclusion more meaningful in the context of everyday existence* (2005).

In other words, traditional knowledge is rooted in the context and experience of the people in their attempt to survive in their environment. So, what is needed is not its destruction but its development in the context of the developing community.

To detraditionalise the local communities in developing societies is to deculturise them. The deculturated people may hover at the periphery of both Western/modern scientific systems because they have been uprooted from their tradition and cannot afford Western scientific resources. This renders them useless as they are unable to access either indigenous or Western infrastructure. In this sense, the social capital of the indigenous people is undermined. In the social development paradigm, indigenous knowledge constitutes the social capital the local people have for development and have more value than other forms of capital. The reason is that it constitutes their main and cheapest asset in their efforts to gain control of their own lives and environment (Gorgestani 2001). And it constitutes the means by which most local people and people in the informal sector make their livelihood. To therefore neglect this aspect of the people's lives is almost to ensure failure in development. Grenier, acknowledging the significance of traditional knowledge and values, remarks:

> *Development efforts that ignore local circumstances, local technologies, and local systems of knowledge have wasted enormous amount of time and resources compared with many modern technologies, traditional techniques have been tried and tested; are affective, inexpensive, locally available and culturally appropriate; and in many cases are based on preserving and building in the patterns and processes of nature* (cited in Nyumba 2006).

The indigenous people can better understand, handle and maintain local traditions than Western practices and technologies. Further still, indigenous knowledge draws on local resources and makes the people less dependent on outside supplies, which may be costly, scare and available only irregularly.

The significance of indigenous knowledge and local traditions we have examined above should not lead developing nations and communities to play a

politics of otherness to the point that indigenous traditions are over-valued and over-romanticised. Because of the attractiveness of indigenous knowledge as an alternative epistemological model for development and because it does in an important way empower local communities especially, by supporting the notions of cultural renaissance, romanticism becomes a potential danger. This happens when indigenous knowledge is *a priori* supposed to be the solution to all local problems without questioning it, and by taking it as given, almost a benign and consensual knowledge, simply waiting to be tapped into. If local traditions are romanticised, it is likely to hinder the process of development. Tradition must be properly conceptualized, and where need be integrated and adapted into scientific information. As hinted earlier, it cannot be assumed that all traditional knowledge, practices and rules will necessarily provide sustainable development in its social, political and economic dimensions.

The issue of integration of local and scientific knowledge is normative for both the local people and the foreign development actors. The reason is that it calls for greater openness on both of them to explore and recognize the validity of alternative explanations and to acknowledge the importance of the negotiated character of knowledge production. One may suggest that such thinking and the attempt at integration has utility. At least, once official views and community values are integrated, conflicts and rivalry associated with traditional and modern land conservation measures will be considerably reduced. This is instructive for the mutual exclusive relationship that is possible between tradition and development. It suggests the need to understand the synthesizing and cumulative character of development.

In integrating indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge for sustainable development, Ortiz argues that there is the need to understand the interaction between the two knowledge systems. He identifies four interaction processes that occur when there is a confrontation between the two systems of knowledge. The first is the formative interaction which occurs when new knowledge is formed which may or may not replace the previous beliefs held by individuals in the community. He cited the example of the encounter between an extension project worker of the international Potato centre in Peru and the local farmers. He notes that many of the farmers had always thought that larva and adult were different insects. Most of the farmers, according to him, believed that potato worm (larva) originated in the soil, that plagues were sent from the sky by God, and that worms came from hail stones (Ortiz 1998: 7-8). Once the farmers had access and were able to interpret specific scientific information, new knowledge was formed.

The second interaction process is modifying interaction which occurs when local people's knowledge and tradition is slightly adjusted by scientific information so that the people are better able to understand the principles behind what they observe. This claim seems to imply that local traditions do not take underlying principles as part of the knowledge process and that only scientific knowledge offers such principles. To argue in this way is not to credit the local people with any rationality. When we examine the agricultural management processes of local

people we will understand that they are based on certain principles. The problem however is that where the knowledge of such principles is known among the local communities, they may not be formalized or systematized as we do in modern science. However, this does not undermine the proposal that scientific information may slightly modify traditional knowledge.

The third interaction is reinforcing interaction in which scientific information confirms local people's knowledge. This process validates indigenous knowledge and allows the people to feel confident about their own observation and practices. The fourth is confusing interaction which occurs when there is a conflict between indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge. At this point there is the need for adjustment and modern science never concedes anything to the indigenous people. This is because, as Huntington and Fernandez-Gimenez argue, information based on Western scientific studies is frequently regarded as superior (1999:12). For this reason, adequate attention has not been paid to indigenous knowledge. In the conflict between traditional and scientific knowledge, the one that needs to adjust is the formal even when people who will use the knowledge are local people. I think caution must be taken in this direction in the development process. If development actors are interested in the development of local people and those in the informal sector, respect should be given to their traditions. A forceful implementation of modern scientific knowledge on the people in an attempt to hasten their development and make them catch up with what is going on in the Western industrialized countries, may be counter-productive.

Ortiz's analysis of the interaction between indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge is incomplete if it does not involve adaptive interaction. It is here that the path to real development is found, whether in the Third World or anywhere in the world. In the case of cultural conflicts, neither conservatism nor uncritical appropriation of alien values holds the correct answer. The adaptive interaction involves mutual exchange between the two epistemological models. The adaptive process is consequent upon the flexibility and malleability of the systems involved in the interactive process. Wiredu commends the adaptive ability of the Japanese culture. He writes.

> *The striking thing about the Japanese is not their cultural conservation, but rather their cultural adaptability. They are famous for their capacity to learn things from other cultures and adapt them to their own purposes* (1992:61).

However, this adaptive process has to be handled not by foreign developers but by the developing people and communities. For instance, it was through a deliberate and systematic policy that the Meiji rulers in Japan in the second half of the 19th century worked to abolish Japanese feudalism while retaining their values on the family (Ibid).

It is the adaptive process that can foster appropriate models of the integration of both local and scientific knowledge. And such integrative and adaptive possibility reveals knowledge as constantly evolving and changing especially regarding indigenous knowledge. This process enriches knowledge systems. It is through the adaptive process that we can take care of Ortiz's recommendation that:

> *The process by which existing local knowledge and new information interact needs to be explored so that the development strategies can be designed to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge by local people and counteract the erosion of their prior knowledge* (1999:9).

Let us now turn to the issue of global concerns with indigenous knowledge. In contemporary times the recognition of indigenous knowledge is increasingly becoming part of the global development agenda (Gorjestani, 2001). In this direction, development agencies have developed a number of instruments and services for the capture, dissemination and application of indigenous practices. However, it must be noted that this recognition especially by development agencies such as the World Bank and its agents is not for the purpose of developing local communities but they appear to be mainly concerned with recording and systematising the knowledge so that it can become part of the global knowledge which can be preserved, transferred, or adopted and adapted elsewhere (Hagar, 2003). The motivation is not an attempt to reconceptualise and redefine development as bottom-up but to reinforce their top-down development thinking.

The interest in the development of indigenous knowledge is not unconnected with its potentiality in enhancing development worldwide, but also its connection with environmental conservation which is germane in discussions of sustainable development (Agrawal, 2002:287). For Agrawal, the shift of focus to indigenous, traditional knowledge in development, coming after long decades, perhaps centuries, of easy dismissals of the traditional and what it signifies, is a welcome development (Ibid). For him, it is closely allied to the advocacy on behalf of indigenous people that is becoming a hallmark of much research policy in the arena of development.

For the purpose of global sharing of traditional, indigenous knowledge, Agrawal makes a case for the creation of databases for indigenous knowledge. Databases on indigenous knowledge, according to him, "document specific elements of knowledge for later analysis" (Ibid). The documented knowledge can be a piece of technical information or it can be drawn from detailed studies of particular ways of addressing a problem.

Recording indigenous knowledge and preserving them in the face of myriad of pressures that are undermining the conditions under which indigenous people and knowledge thrive such as urbanisation, influence of modernisation, education and loss of local language in which the knowledge is passed on from generation to generation. Such process of archiving indigenous knowledge also, as Agrawal notes, allows its specific features to be identified so that it can be generalised and applied more widely in the service of more effective development and environmental conservation (2002:288). And when it is done this way the knowledge becomes global.

For Agrawal, as more studies become available and as more instances of the relevance of indigenous knowledge are found and achieved in national and international centres, development and conservation practitioners will become persuaded of its importance. I believe that he might be right about this, but to

further claim as he does that "the greater appreciation of the benefit of indigenous knowledge will lead, in turn, to greater efforts to further the interests of those who possess such knowledge" (Ibid) is to misunderstand the reason why international organisations are trying to record and develop indigenous knowledge; namely to wrestle it from the hand of the original possessors and turn it to global knowledge and once this is done, the indigenous people may forfeit their social capital to transnational corporations.

However, Agrawal feels that in order to make indigenous knowledge usable in the development process, it must pass through the process he calls 'scientisation' which involves particularisation, validation and generalisation (2002:290–291). The first step in the process is particularization, a process in which the useful aspects of indigenous knowledge are separated from other knowledge and practices, milieu, context and cultural believes in the combination of which it exist. The second step involves testing the knowledge using criteria deemed appropriate by science. It is the use of scientific criteria to test and examine the claims of indigenous knowledge and practice. This process is known as validation. Following this step is the process known as generalisation in which the knowledge is catalogued, archived and then circulated. This stage, for Agrawal, is facilitated by the stripping away of what seems to be non-essential in the indigenous knowledge. However he argues that:

> *Only insofar as a particular element of indigenous knowledge is capable of being generalized is it really useful for development. If suitable only for an individual and particular context, indigenous knowledge need not be studied at all - not at least by those interested in development* (2002:291).

Agrawal seems to miss the point here. Development is not an abstract non-contextual process. He seems to limit the value of indigenous knowledge unless it can be generalised and used from above. This betrays his rootedness in the top-down development orientation. If we are concerned with local, bottom-up development, as post-development theory suggests, we cannot argue that indigenous knowledge, which is developed in a particular local context, based on the experience of the local people through generations of interaction within the environment cannot be useful in the development of that local context or should not even be studied at all if it is not capable of being generalised or applicable in other local contexts.

In fact when we look at the whole scientisation process critically, we would be quick to realise that there are problems. For instance, it is easy to see how the process of creating databases of indigenous knowledge is in error precisely in striping away all the detailed, contextual, applied aspects of the knowledge that might be crucial in producing the positive effect claimed for that particular piece of indigenous knowledge. The scientisation process, decontextualises con-textualised knowledge, and in so doing limits the examination of contextual facts that might be responsible for the effect being claimed for a particular indigenous practice and hence limits its application for the development of the context from which it develops.

5. Conclusion

What we have done in this paper is to demonstrate that there is some sense in the post-development concern for local traditions in the process of development. This shows that there is a cultural dimension to development and that there is the need to critically engage tradition in this process. From the analysis of the importance of cultural identity and cultural knowledge, it would be realised that it is absurd to think that tradition should be regarded as something to be overcome or jettisoned in the development process. Tradition would serve as the means through which the meta-narratives of the mainstream development experts can be deconstructed to as to give voice to societies in their own development. Apart from this, the development process of particular societies, taking off from a cultural traditional base can be enriched by foreign/Western development models which may lead to multiple modernities. Development would normally induce continuous interaction between people's cultural heritage and alien cultures. But this should not lead us to the conclusion that tradition should surrender all in the name of development.

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