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Making Globalization Sustainable

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1 Making Globalization Sustainable

This essay is being written at a time that a new administration is taking over the responsibilities at the EU. The incoming EU development commissioner Louis Michel has set out an ambitious agenda for his area of responsibility, which includes quantitative, qualitative, and relational dimensions. Specifically, he envisages increased aid flows from EU countries (moving closer to the 0.7% aid target), making aid more effective (especially through a focus on the MDGs), and enhancing development cooperation both internationally – e.g., by improving relationships with large international actors (especially the UN and the WTO) – as well as within the EU, by ensuring that development cooperation is viewed as a "policy area in its own right", which is not compromised for other potentially conflicting EU policies.

Reading through the wide-ranging set of actions envisaged under this agenda, the uniqueness of the new approach and indeed its unifying theme appears to be that of "uniting and mobilising" Europe's citizens in support of development. This theme can help bring different components of the agenda into place. Increased efficiency of aid and a clear focus on consensus goals (e.g. MDGs) would enhance its legitimacy in the eyes of a demanding citizenry, increased coherence across internal (i.e. within the EU) and external actions would both require greater political support and also generate such a support. All this would help build a case not only for more aid flows, but also the placing of those aid flows within a broader sustainable development agenda.

The re-orientation of the agenda of development cooperation from a technical towards a political stance is both interesting and timely. The reason that it can even be asked how to build a Europe-wide, and indeed a global constituency for sustainable development reflects the change that has taken place since the "age of development" began in the aftermath of the Second World War. In fact, this question makes sense only in the context of a globalized and globalizing world, a world in which politics (as well as economics) increasingly transcends national boundaries.

2 Taking Globalization Seriously

The term globalization has received more than its share of attention, and there may be little point in attempting yet another definition or description. However, it may be useful to review a few salient threads that recur in virtually all descriptions.

First, it is a commonplace that globalization is a process of global integration, involving increased and more frequent interaction in a variety of domains: economic (trade and financial flows, investment, production, and corporate mergers), problems (arms, narcotics, crime, diseases, epidemics, and terrorism), demographic (migration, travel, tourism, and inter-marriages), cultural and informational (films, news, music, food, values and norms), policy making (through summits, agreements, treaties and conventions), and global political activism (ranging from increasing trans-border civil society involvement in policy making, increased salience of global issues in national political processes, to protests a la Seattle, and even militancy and terrorism). It is a curious phenomenon of the early 21st century that a vast range of actors – business leaders, financial managers, workers, policy makers, activists, and militants – consider the correct milieu for their operations to be the entire globe rather than a nation state or a locality.

Of course, this is not to suggest that such a perception was entirely absent in earlier generations. However, it is the case, and this is the second salient feature of globalization, that a stage that was reserved for a relatively small segment of the population (colonial administrators, missionaries, mercenaries, adventurers, and a few farsighted visionaries) is now more widely accessible. Every successful entrepreneur today seeks to operate in the global market, be it the North American market for images or the in Chinese market for raw materials. Every policy analyst or government official recognizes that effective policies must be defended in global and international contexts and institutions. Every child in the so-called third world grows up with the knowledge of migration as a way of getting ahead, indeed, as a birth right to which access is thwarted only by a coterie of racist immigration officials. And every political activist recognizes that the decision making structures the she or he seeks to reform or overthrow are no longer confined to a single nation state.

Third, consequently, there is today a much greater awareness of mutual interdependence (as opposed to unilateral dependence of the poor upon the rich, as in earlier periods). This awareness extends to such areas of global policy as climate change, trade, and the management of the global commons. In the aftermath of 9/11, it has also extended more formally to an awareness of the linkages between frustration and unrest in the South and terrorist threats in the North.

Having said that, however, it must also be acknowledged that a glib use of the term does not mean that the user has begun to take seriously its complexity and reach. In particular, what may be called "globalization from below" – including, e.g., migration, political activism, and even terrorism – have been viewed with the same hostility that so-called anti-globalization groups have reserved for "globalization from the top": trade liberalization, corporate mergers, and the rise of the global value chain. A little reflection shows that globalization is of one piece. The opening of national borders to trade, investment, and financial flows is only one side of the picture; the globalization of politics and identity is equally an aspect of globalization. In the event, the first has been championed primarily by the North and pro-business groups – the so-called Davos Man – and has been resisted most prominently by a diverse group of activists from the South and pro-civil society actors – the Seattle Woman – who also implicitly or explicitly embrace the second face of globalization (global activism, militancy, though not terrorism, and migration rights).

Be all this as it may, these developments have slowly and almost imperceptibly challenged the normative foundations of development cooperation. What had begun in the late 1940s as international philanthropy (combined with a sense of post-colonial responsibility), metamorphosed during the cold war period into a system of building and sustaining patron-client relationships, has seen the emergence in recent years of the first hints of a normative framework for a shared agenda of global peace and (sustainable) development. This is by no means an uncontested development, and it is far too early to say whether this will be the defining framework during the era of globalization.

Indeed, it is possible to discern a sharply contrasting alternative, which continues to approach the issue from the vantage point of inter-state competition, and therefore views development cooperation as a means of furthering the core national policy objectives of the donor countries. These objectives now include, in addition to the traditional concerns of opening up of areas for trade or investment, the protection of the security of the country and its nationals against threats of terror attacks. This approach leads towards a strategy of building client states, investing in the police and military institutions of these states, and giving short shrifts to concerns about fairness, transparency, and international justice. In the long run, doubtlessly this approach will collapse under the burden of its own inconsistencies. However, it cannot be written off as unviable for a donor country in the short run.

A forward-looking approach would take globalization seriously. It would recognize the two faces of globalization, and seek to combine and sustain the best elements of both. On the one hand, the promise for economic progress through the fostering of greater economic interaction, and on the other hand, the promise of greater equity and solidarity as implicit in the growing political interaction. It is precisely in this context that the mobilization and unification of Europe's citizens behind a (sustainable) development agenda becomes an essential means of making globalization itself sustainable. This is particularly important because the forward-looking agenda needs a strong champion; it will not emerge in and of itself.

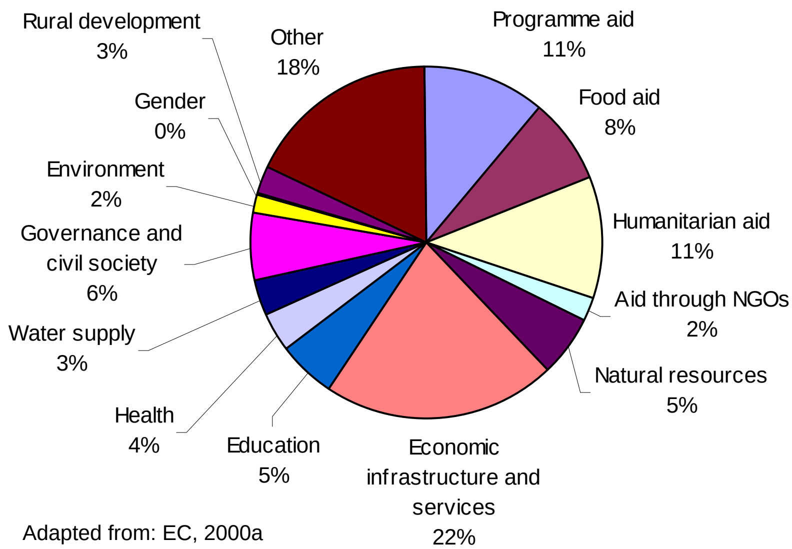
In fact, there is only one candidate for such a championship role at this moment of history, and it is the European Union.

3 A Position of Leadership

The European Community's (EC) development policy promises, "support for sustainable economic and social and environmental development, promotion of the gradual integration of the developing countries into the world economy and a determination to combat inequality" (Statement by the Council and Commission November 2000). Embedded in the policy are six priority areas: (i) trade and development including assistance with integration into the multilateral trading system (ii) regional integration and cooperation, including tackling of transboundary economic, social and environmental problems (iii) support to macroeconomic policies with an explicit link to poverty reduction strategies (iv) reliable and sustainable transport (v) food security and sustainable rural development strategies and (vi) institutional capacity-building, good governance and adherence to the rule of law (EC, 2000b). In financial terms, the EC allocated funds to the tune of over EUR 8.6 billion in 1998 (US$ 10.1 billion), the breakdown per sector is illustrated in Chart 1 below. However, according to the 2003 budget, the current aid allocation is lower by approximately EUR 0.3 billion (US$ 0.35 billion) than the level in 1998, declining to 8.3 billion (US$ 9.8 billion) (EC, 2003).

If one includes the development assistance provided by EU member states, EU's total contribution to development works out to 55 per cent of all international official assistance (ODA), making the EU the main aid partner of the developing world. It is also the biggest partner in international trade and foreign investment (EUR 185 billion in 1998, US$ 217 billion) (EC, 2001a). Annex 2 illustrates the contrast between EC and non-EC countries in this respect; EU Member States are closer to the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) set by the Millennium Summit; in 2001, nine of the top ten countries that give the highest ratio of ODA/GNI are EU Member States (OECD, 2002). The EU also boasts what is coined the "most ambitious and comprehensive agreement between developed and developing countries" namely the Cotonou Agreement, which was ratified in April 2003, and which unites the EU with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries in a partnership whose central tenet is the eventual eradication of poverty and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy (European Community, 2000). The Cotonou Agreement is supported by a financial package of EUR 16.4 billion (US$ 19.3 billion) over five-years 2002-2007 (EC, 2002d) to benefit 78 ACP states, of which 37 are LDCs and over thirty are small island developing states. The EU has also placed importance on regional partnerships (see Annex 1) with the aim of creating large, integrated local markets.

Chart 1 EC Aid - Sectoral Allocation in 1998



Adapted from: EC, 2000a

4 Coherence: A Perspective from the South

Taken together, these are an impressive range of actions. However, it would be premature to describe these as a strategy or even as part of a strategy. The word "strategy" has military origins; it suggests deploying resources most efficiently in order to achieve certain outcomes. In regard to the EU developmental actions, there are questions whether all the resources are being deployed in a mutually reinforcing manner, whether the outcomes are defined clearly and consistently, and whether the means through which these resources are deployed are the most conducive to producing the desired results. In industrialised countries, concerns about such matters have begun to emerge repeatedly in recent years in the form of calls for *policy coherence* in order to minimize the wastage of resources or dissipation of energies.

However, the idea of policy coherence lacks an overarching theme. If one asks the question, "Policy coherence for what"? several candidates present themselves. The first and most obvious is development itself: policy coherence in order to lead to development that is sustainable socially, economically, politically, and ecologically. The problem is that this goal is too diffuse and broad. In recent years, an attempt has been made to narrow down the focus to the MDGs, and the EU has been at the forefront of efforts to focus the development agenda through these goals. However, the practice diverges considerably from this desire, and often for very good reasons. While the MDGs have been universally adopted as a framework for development cooperation, the developmental agendas of rich as well as poor countries are only tangentially linked to this commitment. Admittedly, the policy attention to the MDGs has increased after their adoption, but this is a far cry from their becoming the overarching framework for development policies. Rich countries adopt one set of priorities for their own programmes of developmental cooperation while the multilateral financial institutions – which they fund and whose decisions and policies they approve – are permitted to pursue radically different paths.

A third objective of policy coherence has presented itself lately in the form of the mobilization and unification of Europe's citizens behind a development agenda. As may be evident from the foregoing remarks, our view is that this provides perhaps the most effective means of introducing coherence into the development agenda. This may be illustrated by referring to the arguments for coherence in the policies of *developing* countries.

In developing countries, concerns about coherence have been expressed in at least three different forms. First, there are concerns about the *effectiveness* of aid itself, both with regard to the conventional goal of economic growth and the more comprehensive goal of sustainable development. A long literature, dating back at least to the mid-1960s, has raised questions about whether foreign aid actually contributes to development. In contrast to the recent literature on this question, which has been funded by and reflects the perspective mainly of the World Bank (see World Bank 1999; Dollar and Kray 2002), and which therefore seeks to link the question to the policy and institutional structure of developing countries, the earlier contributions were from commentators and observers in developing countries, who linked the effectiveness of aid mainly with the policies and institutions of rich countries (Bhagwati 19??; Hassan 2001). A key issue in this regard is whether foreign aid has led to the sidelining and even inhibition of other, more effective mechanisms of promoting economic development – especially but not exclusively trade promotion and provision of market access. Concerns have also been expressed consistently with regard to the adverse impact of the tying of aid, not only because tying reduces the net value of the aid, but also because it serves inadvertently to inhibit capacity development in the South. Finally, there is the problem of the alleged lack of consistency over time – donor priorities are often dismissed derisively as “flavours of the day” from which donor countries soon get tired regardless of achievement. The conception of policy coherence is thus different from the perspective of developing countries, which place greater emphasis on tying, substitution, capacity building, and consistency over time.

A framework that can bring together developing and developed country perspectives is that of coherence as a form of constituency building. A coherent policy provides to the rest of the world (including the intended beneficiaries) a clear set of incentives, transparent and consistent priorities, and a sense of commitment and partnership. It leads to the desired outcomes not only because of the consistency between means and ends but also and more importantly by forging a cooperative relationship between a diverse set of actors whose perspectives, priorities, time horizons, and interests may not necessarily coincide. It is also a means of improving the coordination of different agencies providing a particular service or action.

Take the case of development finance. The Finance for Development process witnessed a robust debate over the respective roles of domestic and international resources for development. Northern countries insisted that the domestic resources of developing countries should provide the primary basis for development – essentially, that these countries must get their domestic “houses in order” if foreign aid is to be effective. Developing countries argued that foreign support was necessary for the very process of working through the present crises and building the capacity and conditions for domestic investment. In the context of the EU’s sustainable development strategy, a more nuanced position would focus on building a constituency for financing for development. Socioeconomic and political constraints – e.g., fiscal instability, the effects of privatization and workplace survival strategies, the impacts of centralization and decentralization, and the ineffectiveness of emerging democratic governance (see UNRISD 1999) – have led to a loss of trust on the part of prospective recipients in the loan- or grant-making process and thus weakened demand for development finance. Potential users of finance are discouraged when it is supplied through channels – public sector, or private – that are unable or unwilling to accommodate the views of the users, or worse, are corrupt or incompetently managed. Thus, building demand for credit is an integral part of the solution to mobilizing more credit. Despite considerable policy-level recognition in many countries of the importance of making finance available through alternative mechanisms and at alternative-scales (beyond the micro-credit market), formal mechanisms to provide financial support to them are quite limited. Where such support exists, it is often limited in scope to financing very traditional economic activities, most of which offer little potential for generating surplus, savings or reinvestment.

Similarly, in the area of investment, a coherent policy position would recognize that while developing countries need to address the persistent challenges to domestic investment, with improved governance at the core of this effort, donor countries should *at the very least* ensure that their policies do not create a bias against this investment in favour of FDI. This bias crops up in a number of ways, the most obvious of which is "tied aid" – commonly expressed as aid that is contingent upon the hiring of donor country contractors for aid-funded projects – but it can be expressed in other ways as well. Let us take for example, a Pakistani leather tanner who wishes to make upgrades to his production process and requires investment to do so. Since aid from EU member programmes is available for this type of cleaner production project, financial support is offered to the tanner to work with Bally shoes, a Swiss company, on the necessary technology transfer and upgrades. The tanner, meanwhile, is aware of an Indian firm that offers comparable technology more cheaply, and wishes to purchase from them. However, since the EU programme, while not directly opposed to such an arrangement, has little experience supporting non-EU partnerships, it is unwilling to support such a South-South arrangement.

However, pursuing such a policy requires building a development constituency within Europe on a basis that is different from the pure self-interest that is invoked in current efforts to build support for development cooperation.

5 Elements of a Coherent Policy

Viewed in the above context, a sustainable development strategy of the EU would go beyond current policies and associated programs in a number of ways. First, current conceptions of the development policy are concentrated mainly in official development assistance, and therefore exclude the impact produced by other policies. Besides official development assistance, the EU and its member countries affect conditions and prospects in developing countries through a variety of other means. These include trade policies (including the stance in trade disputes and trade negotiations, especially the common agriculture policy, CAP, the stance on the agreement on agriculture AgOA, and approach to implementation of WTO agreements); immigration policies (the CMP);[1] policies on international investment; environmental policies; influencing the policies of multilateral institutions; and policies regarding international security. This vast range of policies is driven by different agendas, different priorities, different bureaucracies, different conceptions of the

[1] The EU is in the process of developing a Community Migration Policy that would, in addition to lending credibility to EU decisions on migration, communicate a clear and consistent message to third countries (migrant's developing country of origin). The Community Migration Policy will encompass the various migration policy components and legislative instruments established to date (EC, 2002; ACP-EU, 2001). The current inward migration rate for the EU – 2.2 per 1000 population – is less than that of the United States and Canada; however, forecasts indicate that migration to the EU will either stabilize or increase (EC, 2002).

developmental process and development relationship, and different sets of partnerships (CGD 2003).

It is fair to say that the policies of rich countries are conceptualized in binary terms, i.e., as national policies (regardless of the impact that they produce on developing country partners) and aid policies. The former are crafted purely on the basis of domestic considerations, even though it might be more cost effective to support development through them instead of viewing them as incidental contributors to development, or in the worst case scenario, as a potential source of obstacles to development, whose impact may have to be offset through compensatory developmental assistance or other actions.

This dualism is reminiscent of a similar pattern in the policies of *developing* countries towards sustainable development. The traditional stance of many countries is to grow first and take care of other problems later, where the phrase "other problems" refers to inequity, poverty, lack of social services and provision of basic human needs, environmental degradation, and good governance. Over time, this approach has been questioned on grounds of efficacy as well as equity, and developing countries have been urged to adopt more integrated policies – addressing all goals in an integrated manner as well as deploying *all* policy instruments – in order to advance the integrated agenda of sustainable human development. Partly through the change in thinking and partly through active encouragement by some (though not all) donors, developing countries have tried to combine public sector development investment with trade and exchange rate policies, monetary and credit policies, environmental policies (i.e. policies governing the use of natural resources), and governance reform into an integrated and coherent package. The EU's call for greater coherence in its policies towards developing countries appears, therefore, to be an effort to apply the same logic to its own actions.

More specifically, while the "development policies" of industrialized countries typically include supporting the efforts of developing countries to integrate into the global trading system, their trade policies (including the policy stance in international negotiations or international disputes) is not generally viewed as a integral component of the "development" objective; indeed, the support provided under the banner of trade and development is in some cases a means of overcoming the disadvantages created by the trade policies. Similarly, the choice of immigration policies, environmental policies, and investment policies are determined solely by domestic considerations, rather than as a balancing of the aggregate costs and benefits across the entire policy spectrum (i.e. including the developmental agenda as an integral component of the policy objective function).

Second, sustainable development comprises a number of goals – economic growth, poverty eradication, social equity, provision of social services, natural resource conservation, and human and political security – which can be prioritised in a number of different ways. If different policy documents provide different approaches to prioritization, and thus create different expectations and different sets of incentives, they can baffle developing country policy makers, civil society activists, and more generally the champions of sustainable development, and lead to non-transparency, arbitrariness, and unpredictability. This is a particularly sensitive point in developing countries, giving rise to the earlier mentioned allegation of policy priorities being flavours of the day. Different directives laying out different sets of priorities not only obscures the intent of policy makers, it relegates strategic decisions to the operational level of decision making, and thus introduces an additional source of inconsistency because of personnel changes. Finally, the potential for changes in programme direction and orientation can create variability in funding available for different activities and this cycle of largesse and withdrawal can often be more harmful than beneficial for a developmental goal; resources are wasted in wet years while the starving of promising programmes in dry years makes it difficult to restart them later.

Once again, as in the case of policies of *developing* countries, which were addressed independently to a number of different goals often at cross purposes with each other, the development cooperation programmes of *rich* countries are also addressed independently to a number of different goals, which are equally often at cross purposes with each other.

Third, there are a number of concerns with regard to the *channels* through which the policies of rich countries affect conditions in poor countries. Most of these concerns pertain directly to official development assistance, and especially the tying of this assistance through formal or informal arrangements. This leads to concerns about the ramp-up in the unit costs of programmes that receive donor funding (Hassan 2001), as well as the implicit bias in institutional support of northern organizations (including educational, research, consultancy, and service organizations) and the undermining of Southern ones. A related set of concerns pertains to the channelling of resources through multilateral financial institutions, which are often viewed as unresponsive, undemocratic, non-transparent, overly expensive, and inefficient. These concerns surfaced most visibly during UNCED, when the Group of 77 and China expressed considerable reservations regarding the utilization of existing institutions to channel financial resources into sustainable development. Finally, aid and other resources are channelled through governmental agencies rather than private sector or civil society organisations, regardless of the relative efficiency of these groups.

The EU has perhaps undertaken the most aggressive actions to introduce transparency and competitiveness in its practices. However, given that there are no mechanisms of review of performance of the transparent practices against overall programmatic goals (including institutional strengthening in the South), it is difficult to make a balanced assessment of their effectiveness. In particular, the resource requirement of the sustainable development agenda can be viewed from the supply side as well as the demand side. The "supply side" refers to the need to support activities by providing funds for technical assistance, credit, investment, or other inputs. By the "demand side" is meant the need to strengthen institutions that create the capacity of development institutions ton use, access, and benefit from the technical assistance. A useful analogy is the practice of agricultural subsidies, which provide Often times, these two tracks are in opposition to each other. Programmes that supply resources or services directly often end up inhibiting the very institutions that can benefit from their use.

6 Bottom Line: How to Build a European Constituency

To return to the theme of this essay, the over-riding question is how to build a viable constituency for sustainable development in Europe. This is a long-term process, but some key strategic ideas are visible at this point. These include:

1. A focus on numerical goals, especially 0.7% and the MDGs.
2. Cooperation with global civil society. As mentioned, several civil society groups are active in this arena, and explicit cooperation with them would be extremely valuable.
3. International cooperation: The EU influences the policies and actions of various global institutions (UN, WTO) through several institutional arrangements. The development cooperation agenda needs to be linked closely into these processes.

4. Internal cooperation: The EU affects development through a variety of actions, most of which are taken without any explicit attention to developmental impacts. There is a need for analysis as well as institutional arrangements that can ensure integrated decision-making.
5. Link development and investment policy: For EU aid flows to leverage domestic resource flows for sustainable development, EU policy should ensure, at the very least, that domestic investors face no competitive disadvantage in securing funds and that they receive the same measure of support. Under a more progressive approach, EU policy would in fact target certain aid toward domestic investment through partnerships, direct investment, royalty arrangements, etc.

These are important steps. However, the danger is that these will remain purely rhetorical and will not result in any significant change in the practice of development cooperation. In order for a more ambitious agenda, the following steps might be helpful:

1. Learning from civil society: A number of civil society organizations (e.g. Episcopalians for Global Responsibility www.e4gr.org) have taken these goals as their rallying cry for social mobilization. The EU could do the same.
2. Learning from the South: The efforts to produce coherent SD policies in the South led to considerable institutional innovation, e.g., linking planning processes across various departments of governments. The EU could learn from this experience.
3. Learning from Best Practice: Recent experience suggests that civic entrepreneurs have provided the most consistent means of pursuing the goal of SD. They require the input of financial, technical and human resources to reach this potential. While the EU cannot undertake the necessary 'incubation' process, it can invest in an infrastructure that enables civic entrepreneurs to access information, support networks, markets, and not least, finance. It can also help communicate success stories, and disseminate best-practice knowledge.
4. Learning from the Market: To build a constituency for development finance, the EU must invest in the users of development finance.
5. Learning from Corporations: The best amongst the corporate sector have moved to embrace the ideas of social environmental and responsibility, and in order to make this operational, have voluntarily begun to invest in institutions of disclosure and transparency. Many governments are already committed to these goals as far as their domestic agendas are concerned. It is important to extend them to the development arena as well. This may require supporting independent research capacity in the South for the assessment of development cooperation and investigation of development reform.

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