

BEYOND SDGs: QUEST FOR A NEW DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM THROUGH G20 LENS

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The quest for an alternative development paradigm has become significant in view of the multiple crises faced by the global community. The increased concern about achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 is a clear indication of inability of existing development paradigm to help us achieve the desired objectives. Development has for a considerable time been argued to be achieved through optimisation of individual interests with a belief that it would automatically result in maximising aggregate welfare. However, the complex interactions among economic, social, cultural, political, environmental, and ecological spaces and the resulting plethora of crises make us realise that development calls for a collective effort that engages the simultaneous interactions, not only among the individuals but also with nature to ensure sustainable existence for all – the fundamental objective of sustainable development. The Group of Twenty (G20) as a collective platform of countries must play an effective role in delivering development as a collective good. The diplomatic clout and strategic stature of the G20 must bring an amplified change in our interactions with each other and with the planet. The prevalence of the conceptual paradigm of individual-led development was necessitated by two most cliqued understanding in the contemporary development discourse: development being understood synonymously with gross national product (GNP)-led growth, and the reversible and limitless nature of resources being exploited to achieve growth. This perspective is getting questioned as it is clear that one's development is not achieved without meaningful contributions from others. It is even argued that one's freedom today is often the result of unfreedom of some others as development pursued so far has mostly resulted from extraction – both from nature and other individuals. This realisation has resulted in the coinage of the term “no one left behind” as the spirit of sustainable development. The paper engages in a discussion on interlinked nature of development along the socio-economic, enviro-ecological, and physical strands of development and proposes a new “development paradigm” that involves dynamic interactions among these strands to ensure sustainable development in reality and argues that G20 platform is required to play an active role in ensuring the necessary interlinkages.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); G20; new development paradigm.

ALÉM DOS ODS: A BUSCA POR UM NOVO PARADIGMA DE DESENVOLVIMENTO POR MEIO DA LENTE DO G20

A busca por um paradigma de desenvolvimento alternativo se tornou significativa em vista das múltiplas crises enfrentadas pela comunidade global. A crescente preocupação em atingir os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) até 2030 é uma indicação clara da incapacidade de o paradigma de desenvolvimento existente nos ajudar a atingir os objetivos desejados. Há muito tempo argumenta-se que o desenvolvimento é alcançado por meio da otimização dos interesses

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individuais, acreditando-se que isso resultaria automaticamente na maximização do bem-estar agregado. No entanto, as complexas interações entre os espaços econômicos, sociais, culturais, políticos, ambientais e ecológicos e a consequente infinidade de crises nos fazem perceber que o desenvolvimento exige um esforço coletivo que envolva as interações simultâneas, não apenas entre os indivíduos, mas também com a natureza, para garantir uma existência sustentável para todos – o objetivo fundamental do desenvolvimento sustentável. O Grupo dos Vinte (G20), como uma plataforma coletiva de países, deve desempenhar um papel eficaz na entrega do desenvolvimento como um bem coletivo. A influência diplomática e a estatura estratégica do G20 devem trazer uma mudança ampliada em nossas interações com os outros e com o planeta. O predomínio do paradigma conceitual do desenvolvimento liderado pelo indivíduo foi necessário devido a dois entendimentos mais fechados no discurso do desenvolvimento contemporâneo: o desenvolvimento sendo entendido como sinônimo de crescimento liderado pelo produto nacional bruto (PNB) e a natureza reversível e ilimitada dos recursos explorados para alcançar o crescimento. Essa perspectiva está sendo questionada, uma vez que está claro que o desenvolvimento de alguém não é alcançado sem contribuições significativas de outros. Argumenta-se, inclusive, que a liberdade de uma pessoa atualmente é, muitas vezes, o resultado da falta de liberdade de outras pessoas, visto que o desenvolvimento buscado até agora resultou principalmente da extração tanto da natureza quanto de outros indivíduos. Essa constatação resultou na cunhagem do termo “ninguém é deixado para trás” como o espírito do desenvolvimento sustentável. O artigo discute a natureza interligada do desenvolvimento ao longo de suas vertentes socioeconômica, ambiental, ecológica e física e propõe um novo “paradigma de desenvolvimento” que envolve interações dinâmicas entre essas vertentes para garantir o desenvolvimento sustentável na realidade e argumenta que a plataforma do G20 deve desempenhar um papel ativo para garantir as interligações necessárias.

Palavras-chave: Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS); G20; novo paradigma de desenvolvimento.

MÁS ALLÁ DE LOS ODS: EN BÚSQUEDA DE UN NUEVO PARADIGMA DE DESARROLLO A TRAVÉS DE LA LENTE DEL G20

La búsqueda de un paradigma de desarrollo alternativo ha cobrado importancia en vista de las múltiples crisis a las que se enfrenta la comunidad mundial. La creciente preocupación por alcanzar los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) para 2030 es un claro indicio de la incapacidad del paradigma de desarrollo existente para ayudarnos a lograr los objetivos deseados. Durante mucho tiempo se ha argumentado que el desarrollo se lograba mediante la optimización de los intereses individuales con la creencia de que automáticamente se conseguiría maximizar el bienestar agregado. Sin embargo, las complejas interacciones entre los espacios económico, social, cultural, político, medioambiental y ecológico y la plétora de crisis resultantes nos hacen darnos cuenta de que el desarrollo exige un esfuerzo colectivo que comprometa las interacciones simultáneas, no sólo entre los individuos sino también con la naturaleza para garantizar una existencia sostenible para todos, el objetivo fundamental del desarrollo sostenible. El Grupo de Veinte (G20), como plataforma colectiva de países, debe desempeñar un papel eficaz en la consecución del desarrollo como bien colectivo. La influencia diplomática y la estatura estratégica del G20 deben propiciar un cambio amplificado en nuestras interacciones mutuas y con el planeta. La prevalencia del paradigma conceptual del desarrollo dirigido por el individuo fue necesaria debido a dos concepciones muy unidas en el discurso contemporáneo sobre el desarrollo: el desarrollo se entiende como sinónimo de crecimiento dirigido por el producto nacional bruto (PNB), y la naturaleza reversible e ilimitada de los recursos que se explotan para lograr el crecimiento. Esta

perspectiva está siendo cuestionada, ya que está claro que el desarrollo propio no se consigue sin la contribución significativa de los demás. Incluso se argumenta que la libertad actual de uno es a menudo el resultado de la falta de libertad de otros, ya que el desarrollo perseguido hasta ahora ha sido principalmente el resultado de la extracción, tanto de la naturaleza como de otros individuos. Esta constatación ha dado lugar a la acuñación del término “que nadie se quede atrás” como espíritu del desarrollo sostenible. El documento aborda la naturaleza interrelacionada del desarrollo en sus vertientes socioeconómica, medioambiental, ecológica y física y propone un nuevo “paradigma de desarrollo” que implique interacciones dinámicas entre estas vertientes para garantizar el desarrollo sostenible en la realidad y sostiene que la plataforma del G20 debe desempeñar un papel activo para garantizar las interrelaciones necesarias.

Palabras clave: Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS); G20; nuevo paradigma de desarrollo.

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1 INTRODUCTION

It is now clear through various voices both intergovernmental³ and institutional⁴ that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are difficult to be realised by 2030. The Covid-19 led global crisis got synergised with increased threat of climate change, loss of biodiversity beyond retrieval and the crisis identified in terms of energy sources. These crises even though dealt with individually, are urgently necessary to be handled in an interlinked perspective. Unfortunately, our existing idea of “development” does not provide any clue to understand, analyse, and find solution to such a complex set of interdependent problems. Rising inflation, loss of livelihood opportunities, increasing inequality (both within and among the countries), and regional conflicts with associated displacement are symptoms of these problems. Thus, it is relevant to look for a new “development paradigm” that would help us creating a world that leaves no one behind and obviously think beyond the SDGs. The paper is an attempt to help us in this endeavour through the lens of the Group of Twenty (G20). The paper is divided in seven sections followed by a conclusion. The next section discusses the idea of development that is steeped in an understanding of extraction (both natural and human) and takes a historical discussion to establish this fact. The prevalent idea of development which has been commonly made synonymous with growth in gross national product (GNP) is followed up in the next section which describes this contemporary nature of development along with its shortcomings in detail. A collective understanding of development is also discussed in this section. However, the current development discourse emerges to question the idea. We elaborate the

3. Available at: <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/20th-anniversary-campaign/three-ways-we-need-to-change-to-meet-the-sdgs-by-2020>.

4. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/09/un-sustainable-development-goals-progress-report/>.

pertinent debates in the subsequent section which deliberates on the interlinked nature of development through the socio-economic strand, enviro-ecological strand, and physical strand of development. The following section identifies the G20 platform as an effective mechanism to identify the roads to be followed in a collective decision-making process to consider development as an interlinked process across the three stands. It is noted that they all the strands depend on each other and any change in one may lead to even catastrophic change in others. Based on the arguments given in the previous sections we attempt to articulate a new “development paradigm” and place them in perspective of achieving the goal of sustainable development. A roadmap for the future is argued in the penultimate section that ascribes important action points for the G20 to undertake and the final section concludes the paper.

2 DEVELOPMENT BEYOND EXTRACTION

To begin with it is pertinent to understand that development transcends a simple techno-mechanical process engaged in stabilising some identified macro-economic variables, most importantly the gross domestic product (GDP)/gross national product (GNP). Development in theory and more so in practice embodies a complex interplay of social, economic, environmental, ecological, cultural, political, and civic factors (Kanade, 2024). While developmental solutions involving techno-mechanical tweaking provides tools and frameworks, genuine development requires an inclusive and multifaceted approach. Structured planning, strong operational models, effective management practices and implementations, and thorough evaluation and impact assessments are important but, social structures, governance systems, maintaining environmental and ecological obligations and cultural norms heavily influence the success of the above-mentioned technocratic solutions (Schnurr and Holtz, 1998). The technical solutions to development centered around the growth of GDP/GNP alone misses the woods for the tree. It does not take into account the fact that development is an interconnected process, one cannot simply tackle poverty issues without simultaneously paying heed to the issues of hunger, health, education, environment, gender parity and increased global partnerships to achieve development. A singular technocratic focus on solving one dimension of development challenge often has implications on other interconnected aspects of development. Techno-mechanical model of realising development often comes at the expense of others. Thus, it is important to understand that techno-mechanical and technocratic solutions alone are not a panacea for all development solutions.

One also needs to zoom out a bit to realise that development, traditionally, has best been designed as an extractive model since European industrial revolution of the 18th Century (Veltmeyer, 2013). The extractive model of development

refers to an approach wherein a country's economic growth and development is heavily dependent on the extraction, exploitation, and exportation⁵ of resources – both natural and human. This model is characterised by a system that emerged with extraction of primary resources from the colonised countries and their conversion into finished manufactured products by the colonising countries (Aubet, 2013; Chakrabarti, 2021). International trade became important as it simultaneously allowed import of primary resources from the colonies and subsequent export of the finished products back to them (Davis, 2019). The substantial differences between the value of import and that of export, aided by the technological differentials, created the main source of development of countries that are tagged as “developed” today. This model brought substantial short-term revenue that contributed to continued increase in the GDP of the colonising countries and growth became almost synonymous with development (Koponen, 2020). Exploitation of human resources also went on simultaneously, first through slavery (Inikori, 2020), followed by freeing labour (Wright, 2021) from agricultural practices to join as free wage labourers at subsistence wage to serve the manufacturing sector. The trend continues even today as competitive model of global trade looks for investment of capital in regions where labour is cheaper and reducing labour rights (Hickel, Lemos and Barbour, 2024; Gilbert and Apffelstaedt, 2023). This mode of extraction made possible availability of two necessary inputs almost free or at minimum expenses in the short run.

Such an extractive model has significant long-term consequences and challenges. Major concerns with the extractive model are its tendency to underscore the fundamental issues of access to resources, inclusive rights to enjoy them, leading to equity (Meadows, Randers and Meadows, 2004). These three components are necessary to ensure development in the real sense of the term. Increase in inequality points to the differential positions of individuals in terms of access, equity and inclusion. Southern countries rich in primary resources are often not able to add further values to them as they do not have access to complimentary resources like technology, human resources and institutional set up (Rigo, 2021).

Environmental degradation is another critical concern. The intensive exploitation of natural resources often results in deforestation, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, and water contamination. These environmental impacts can have severe repercussions on local communities, agriculture, and overall ecological and environmental health, compromising sustainable development and long-term economic stability (Nathaniel, Nwulu and Bekun, 2021). What we are to recognise

5. Europe benefitted immensely through the importation of resources (natural and labour) from their colonies in the Global South.

is the fact that human beings are to consider themselves as participants in the ecosystem, not ones controlling it from above. This is the threat of anthropogenic crises often raised by those concerned with climate change and other ecological disasters (Hoelle and Kawa, 2021).

Social and political ramifications are also significant. The extractive model can exacerbate inequality, as the benefits of resource extraction often accrue to a small group of individuals, while vast majority of local communities across the globe bear the environmental and social costs (Bainton et al., 2021). This extraction rich process of development helps the extractors and those being extracted remain out of focus. They are treated faceless. This disparity can lead to social unrest and conflicts being observed in many places. The social dimension of development does not concern with the social characteristics or identities of individuals. All goods that we consume are not necessarily private goods. Environmental and ecological resources are used (public goods) and protected (common pool resources) collectively. Current development discourse considers individuals as autonomous agents making rational choices to maximise their own well-being (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009). New perspective on development has to be cognizant of the social and political ramifications of the present discourse and simultaneously be careful about the observed trade-off between material wellbeing and destruction of natural resource base. We have to realise that development is also emerging as a public good as resources necessary for improved welfare for all is getting scarce at a rapid rate. Development paradigm relevant at this stage will have to find ways to use them collectively as much as possible.

3 THE CONTEMPORARY IDEAS OF DEVELOPMENT

Development is the most desirous thing to be achieved by everyone. All stakeholders with all possible forms of governance and institutions in the international system aspire to provide a better living for themselves and others. The traditional understanding of development has been the achievement of GNP growth for the sovereign countries through the techno-mechanical tweaking of macroeconomic variables like inflation, interest rates, money supply, and other parameters. This is the premise of Monetarist approach to an economic system (Chakrabarti, 2022). This fundamental idea is revealed in the World Bank classification⁶ of countries into high income, upper-middle income, lower-middle income, and low-income categories. IMF's Fiscal Monitor⁷ divides the countries into advanced economies, emerging markets and middle-income economies, and low-income developing economies on the basis of their GDPs. UN's World Economic Situation and

6. Available at: <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html>.

7. IMF – International Monetary Fund. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/datasets/FM#:~:text=The%20country%20classification%20in%20the,58%20low%20income%20developing%20countries>.

Prospects Report⁸ classifies countries into developed economies, economies in transition, and developing economies also based on GNPs of the countries. The importance of GNP and other macro-economic variables were highlighted in the document on Washington Consensus as well (Grier and Grier, 2021). The alternative model of Structuralist approach offers a path that accommodates macroeconomic disequilibrium in a developing economy to take care of their problems (Chakrabarti, 2022). This approach also cannot escape from the GNP-centered arguments, either. It should appear that if the development wants are straightforward and the process of achieving them is uncomplicated, the clique of development must be easy to realise for everyone through increased GDP or GNP. This perspective of development suits well with the mainstream idea that relates the process with individual achievements and assumes that to automatically maximise aggregate level of welfare for all. However, it has been observed repeatedly and continuously with increasing frequency that development is almost always beyond the reach of most individuals, communities, societies, and countries. The fundamental question to be answered is “what is development?”. Development in its present perspective also generates externalities – both positive and negative. Our existing development paradigm does not consider such possibilities or at the most puts the emphasis on reducing the negative externalities. However, enjoying the positive externalities that can be enjoyed by the humanity across the globe is understood to be the real approach to ensure sustainable development. The basic principles of South-South Cooperation are developed to enhance the positive externalities of development and achieve development for all (Chakrabarti, 2016). Such an approach is possible through encouraging collective action that would create trust and solidarity among the differentiated groups of humanity. It is also necessary to answer how to achieve development for all as it would call for different attainments meant for different constituencies. Such an effort is all the more necessary in view of the continuously increasing inequality both within and among the countries. Once the definitional aspects of development are being understood, simultaneous alternatives exist in the process/methods of achieving development (Kirchherr et al., 2023). Thus, development has multiple interpretations depending on how we define it, and how do we want to achieve it.

In a sense, development is about more than just increasing wealth or advancing technology; it is about ensuring that every individual, regardless of their background, gender, or social standing, has an opportunity to thrive. While economic growth is important, it does not automatically translate into improved living conditions for all people. In many cases, unchecked economic growth can exacerbate inequality, leaving large segments of the population behind. This is particularly evident in

8. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_current/2014wesp_country_classification.pdf.

many Southern countries where rapid industrialisation and globalisation have led to increased disparities between the rich and the poor. In these contexts, development policies must go beyond the pursuit of GDP growth to focus on the distribution of wealth and opportunities. Development as a collective good requires an inclusive approach that prioritises equity, social justice, and sustainable growth. It recognises that the well-being of a nation or society is only as strong as its most vulnerable members. This means addressing issues like poverty, inequality, access to healthcare, education, and basic services, all of which are fundamental to a society's progress. The idea promotes a sense of shared responsibility, where both the state and society work together to ensure that development benefits everyone.

Moreover, development as a collective good also highlights the importance of participatory governance. Development cannot be imposed from above; it requires the active participation of citizens, civil society organisations (CSOs), and local communities in shaping policies and decisions that affect their lives. By involving a wide range of stakeholders, governments can ensure that development policies are more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. This approach fosters social cohesion and ensures that development outcomes are more equitable and sustainable. The notion of collective development also extends to environmental sustainability. As the world grapples with the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, it has become increasingly clear that sustainable development is only possible when we consider the common good. This includes the protection of natural resources, the promotion of renewable energy, and the adoption of green technologies that benefit both present and future generations. In this context, development is not just about economic gain, but about creating a sustainable future for all.

Broadly, viewing development as a collective good shifts the focus from individual or elite progress to the well-being of society as a whole. It requires a commitment to equity, inclusivity, and sustainability. Whether through social policies that address inequality, participatory governance that empowers citizens, or environmental strategies that ensure long-term survival, the pursuit of collective development is essential for a more just and prosperous world. This perspective reminds us that true development is not just about progress for a few, but about creating a future where everyone has the opportunity to flourish. The interconnected nature of development, particularly in today's globalised world, can indeed lead to the unfreedom or non-development of some groups while benefiting others. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as "uneven development", highlights the way in which the progress of a few is often built on the exclusion, exploitation, or marginalisation of many. This dynamic undermines the broader objective of development as a collective good and perpetuates systems of inequality and domination.

To break this cycle, development must be re-envisioned as truly inclusive and equitable. Instead of concentrating on growth metrics like GDP, development should focus on human well-being and freedom, ensuring that policies and practices benefit all members of society, especially those who have been historically marginalised. A shift toward sustainable development that takes into account environmental limits, social equity, and participatory governance is essential. This approach recognises the interconnectedness of development but seeks to ensure that progress for one group does not come at the expense of another. It emphasises fairness, transparency, and accountability in global and local development practices.

The interconnected nature of development has often resulted in the unfreedom and non-development of marginalised groups, whose labour, resources, and lands are exploited for the benefit of a privileged few. To rectify this imbalance, a collective approach to development must prioritise inclusivity, equity, and sustainability. Development should be understood as a process that uplifts all, rather than perpetuating systems that widen inequality and create unfreedoms for many. Moreover, the importance of regulation in the economy cannot be overstated when it comes to ensuring the freedoms and well-being of all individuals in society. A well-regulated economy serves as a mechanism to balance competing interests, prevent exploitation, and promote equity, particularly in the face of market failures, power imbalances, and externalities. Regulations, when properly designed and implemented, help create conditions where economic freedoms are more broadly shared, not concentrated in the hands of a few. Preventing exploitation by protecting worker's rights, ensuring fair competition and protecting consumer rights, addressing externalities and promoting environmental sustainability are some of the areas where regulations play an important role.

4 INTERLINKED COMPONENTS OF DEVELOPMENT – MOVING BEYOND THE CONTEMPORARY IDEAS

We realise that intricate relationships between social and ecological systems are to be brought into the mainstream while identifying our future paths of development. This section will delve into the three interlinked components of development, namely, socio-economic, enviro-ecological, and physical strands of development. The first strand takes care of issues linked to access, equity, and inclusion while the next two strands consider the enviro-ecological and physical strands of livelihood.

To begin with, the socio-economic dimension of development encompasses the interrelated social and economic factors that contribute to the overall progress and well-being of a society. The perspectives of culture, race, religion, language, caste, class, gender, location and physical ability of individuals also play important roles in locating the future development paths. These features

go unnoticed in the individualistic approach to development which is prevalent across societies in contemporary times (Bromley, 2019). This approach sidelines the community-based collectivist approach that takes care of the group identities (prioritising group goals) to development which is essential when discussing the socio-economic dimension of development.

The second important component of development is the enviro-ecological strand of development. The enviro-ecological component of development focuses on integrating environmental sustainability and ecological health into the broader discourse development agenda (McGinnis and Ostrom, 2014). This approach recognises that economic growth and social progress must occur within the limits of the planet's natural resources and ecological systems (Spash, 2017). Moreover, the enviro-ecological component focuses on the fact that human beings are to be considered as part of the environment and the ecology, not a species that can control it (Berkes and Folke, 2000). It is important to remember that human being tried to control nature owing to scientific knowledge generated since the 18th Century (Dasgupta, 1995). However, in the process it destroyed the environmental and ecological stability of the planet, leading to a potential situation where the human life and life of flora and fauna has come under existential threat (Dasgupta, 2021). Therefore, development cannot be achieved without maintaining the stability of the environment and the ecosystem. Key aspects of the enviro-ecological component of development include: sustainable resource management, biodiversity conservation, pollution control and waste management, climate change mitigation and adaptation, renewable energy and energy efficiency, environmental governance and policy, ecological footprint and carrying capacity, and green economy and sustainable development. Persistent policy level actions are seen around these components for considerable period of time. However, unfortunately, they are being designed independently of their relationship with the socio-economic structures of the societies (Gunderson and Holling, 2002). In a nutshell, the enviro-ecological component of development emphasises the necessity of aligning economic and social progress with the principles of environmental sustainability and ecological health (Gunderson, Allen and Garmestani, 2022). It seeks to create a harmonious relationship between human activities and the natural world, ensuring that development is both sustainable and equitable.

The second reason of linking social and ecological systems is the realisation that it is impossible without a collective perspective of ensuring equity, access, and inclusion in both the systems. In view of the reality that many resources are accessible and require inclusion at collective levels across global, regional, national, sub-national, and local levels we require governance models of resources at all of these levels. Further, even resources consumed at individual levels (private

goods) are also required to be regulated to avoid the possible negative effects on others not consuming them (Ostrom, 2011).

The third component of development is the physical strand of development which emanates from the second law of thermodynamics. The challenge lies with the mechanistic outlook of modern economics which treats economics like classical mechanics as reversible and qualityless (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971). These understandings have conceptualised the economic process as a mechanical analogue and has been a dominant economic thought. Such a representation of economic process neither induces any qualitative change nor is affected by the qualitative change of the environment into which they are anchored (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971). It does not suggest that in reality, with every energy-based transformation a system loses part of its ability to perform useful mechanical work (Kümmel, 2011). After a while, the system's potential for work becomes zero. The mechanistic model or the economics based on classical mechanics views development centered around the use of mechanical energy, generated from various energy sources in a reversible manner. The reality states that the process is rather irreversible, it indeed has its long-term limitations. These limitations stem from environmental, economic, and social challenges associated with the reliance on mechanical energy. Therefore, development in its new paradigm must ensure the required balance in energy use as well. The circular theory model to take care of climate change also assumes a reversible energy system. The emerging renewable energy model also does not consider irreversibility of the system as significant. For example, a solar panel created using silica and other materials is still considered difficult to be converted back into the material used when they are no longer capable of generating renewable energy.

It is also important to remember that these three features or strands of development are seen from the standpoint that changes are not reversible. This reversibility has been always assumed to be the fundamental dictum of the techno-mechanical approach to development, following the Newton's perspective of mechanics, whereas the thermodynamic model always put emphasis on the fact that changes are mostly irreversible. Biodiversity loss or climate change point to such irriversibilities. This is where this paper will move into the discussion around the new paradigms of development. However, it will be meaningful to understand the position of G20 platform in this context beforehand.

5 G20 IN PERSPECTIVE

G20 as informal governance groupings holding annual summits of Heads of State to discuss issues of global governance, held its first summit in 2008 in Washington, D.C. It took place in the backdrop of subprime mortgage crisis, and the leaders

discussed measures to strengthen economic growth, deal with the crisis, and prevent further crisis. G20 in 1999 started off at the level of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. A similar smaller informal grouping of industrialised nations has existed in the past and continues to do in present times. The G7 is comprised of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan, and Germany. The group first met as G6 in 1975 to address oil crisis, and recession, and were united in their opposition to the Soviet Union and the larger Eastern bloc. Canada and Russia joined in 1976 and 1998, respectively. Since 2014, post the Crimean annexation by Russia, the G7 nations have suspended Russia's membership. At a broader level, G7 has dealt with political and security related issues where as G20 to begin with dealt with issues of economic governance.

G20 started as a collective effort of countries accounting for 90% of world GNP, 80% of global trade, and two-thirds of world's population can be an effective platform to take care of this complex situation. With the inclusion of African Union in the group during the last year under the presidency of India, the respective shares have increased. It is evident that formulation of G20 is based on the primacy of GNP and the consequent share in global trade (Agarwal and Whalley, 2020) as the criteria for membership of this important global grouping to take actions in respect of global issues. Consequently, countries with lower global share of GNP do not get a chance to raise their voice in global debates. India's efforts at organising the Voice of the Global South during 2023 may be considered an exercise to effectively bring in the countries not included in the global forum to contribute to the debate. Brazil's decision to organise G20 Social to bring the civil society into the debate is also an important step to bring in the participants from Global South in the debate.

Incidentally, G20 established in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis became more prominent post 2008 Economic Crisis. While the first phase involved meetings of the Finance Ministers and Governors of the Central Banks; the second phase observed the elevation of the meeting to the Summit Level (Dobson, 2024). Since the first meeting in 1999, the first Southern country to hold the Presidency was Mexico in 2012. Between 2015 and 2020, four Southern countries did have the opportunity to hold the Presidency. An interesting feature emerged in 2022 with Presidency assigned to Indonesia followed immediately by India and Brazil with South Africa to take over the Presidency in 2025, implying four consecutive Presidencies by countries of the Global South that creates an opportunity to bring in focus the issues faced by the Global South in the context of a complex set of crises faced by the world as a whole. Furthermore, the elevation of G20 activities from the domain of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to that of political heads indicate that the problems are not purely economic or financial but political, social, environmental, cultural, and other aspects of human life are also relevant.

Another important characteristic of G20 meetings is in terms of their choice of themes, while the choices under Southern Presidencies emphasised on reforms of global institutions, food security, climate financing, inclusive economy, and sustainable infrastructure, the G20 under Northern Presidencies focused largely on broad macroeconomic issues, and expanded its agenda to inter-alia include trade, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, environment, climate change, and anti-corruption. Another noted feature since the Indonesian Presidency in 2022 runs in terms of conscious efforts to offer implementational perspective to the Summit declaration. Idea of “creative economy” by the Indonesian Presidency, generating a Lifestyle for Sustainable Environment (LiFE) perspective by the Indian Presidency, and Brazilian efforts to generate income and reduce inequalities for the people affected by climate change are distinct actionable points towards “building a just world and a sustainable planet”.⁹ G20 Brazil has put three main agenda priorities for the G20 Dialogue in 2024. They are social inclusion and the fight against hunger; energy transition and sustainable development in its social, economic, and environmental aspects; and Reform of Global Governance Institutions. South Africa in the next round of the Presidency is also expected to carry this process forward.

The G20 is seen as a more inclusive platform that acknowledges these shifts, allowing for greater representation of countries driving much of the world’s economic growth. As a result, major decisions on global finance, trade and more broadly development have increasingly moved to the G20, where the interests of these emerging powers are better reflected. The G20 gained significant visibility during the 2008 global financial crisis, when it played a central role in coordinating the international response. This event underscored the need for a forum that could address both the concerns of advanced and emerging economies. Since then, the G20 has become the primary platform for global economic governance, especially in dealing with economic stability, trade, and development. Absence of Russia and China from the G7 and their presence in the G20 has allowed for more comprehensive discussions even on geopolitical tensions, and security concerns which traditionally was in the domain of the G7. The G20 has a broader agenda, addressing not only traditional economic issues but also matters like climate change, sustainable development, and health crises (e.g., the Covid-19 pandemic). These are global challenges that require input from a wider range of countries, which the G7 alone cannot provide.

As the G20 includes many countries from the Global South, it allows these nations to have a stronger voice in global governance discussions. The G7, on the other hand, tends to be seen as representing the interests of the world’s wealthiest

9. Tagline of G20 Brazil.

nations, which sometimes limits its ability to address issues important to developing countries. Global cooperation today requires a more inclusive approach to deal with complex, interconnected issues such as climate change, digital governance, and global trade imbalances. The G20 is better suited for this because of its diversity in terms of economic models, levels of development, and regional representation. While the G7 remains a key group of advanced economies that often align on democratic values and strategic issues, the G20's broader representation makes it more relevant for tackling today's global challenges. The transition reflects the changing nature of global power dynamics, with the inclusion of emerging economies becoming increasingly important for effective global governance.

In context of these transitions and movements in the global order, it will not be a stretch to concur that G7 now plays a smaller and a diminished role as compared to the G20 both in its size, and in substantive discussion points. In fact, the work areas within these mini-laterals has gone beyond convergence where the decisions taken at the G20 are of greater importance and consequence for the world. United States, that will hold the G20 Presidency after South Africa in 2026 will have to tackle with development issues which have gained prominence and importance during the Presidencies held by countries of the Global South. To not alienate the development concerns of the Global South, the United States administration has come out with a policy document US Strategy on Global Development,¹⁰ a US "approach to global development rooted in partnership, transparency, and a commitment to sustainable outcomes".¹¹ The document has been released in anticipation of consolidating global development issues and concerns by the time of the US Presidency of the G20 in 2026. We will raise the issue later to understand as to how the lack of access by countries with relatively lesser endowment of resources contribute to failure of arriving at global solutions. Development is also not to be decided upon by the State's alone. Each and every citizen of the world has some obligations to be taken care of and consequent rights to enjoy development so G20 is necessary to be thought of as of platform to engage States, the CSOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and even regional organisations to look for effective solutions to the complex problems we have been facing. It should be a polycentric model of organisational structure where each participant contributes for creation and strengthening of development as a public good (Ostrom, 2010).

6 NEW PARADIGM OF DEVELOPMENT: EXPECTATIONS FROM G20

The new paradigm of development has to be imagined in the context of the three strands of development that has been discussed in the earlier section.

10. Available at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/FINAL-U.S.-Strategy-on-Global-Development_091824.pdf.

11. Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Releases U.S. Strategy on Global Development.

The socio-economic strand, enviro-ecological strand, and the physical strand of development have to be viewed within the understanding that there needs to be a balance between these three strands which are altogether interdependent on one another and work on the stated role of irreversibility of change. This brings in the complexity around the thinking and understanding of development paradigm. This complexity goes above and beyond the definitional and implementational challenge of development that was discussed in the introduction of this paper.

SDGs adopted by the global community in 2015 were formulated to take into account these three components. SDGs do claim that these challenges are interrelated and interdependent with each other. Article 13 on page 5 of the Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development document specifically states

the challenges and commitments identified at these major conferences and summits are interrelated and call for integrated solutions. To address them effectively, a new approach is needed. Sustainable development recognises that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are linked to each other and are interdependent.

However, the recommendatory and declaratory nature of article 13 in the SDGs document gets lost in the subsequent articles and sections of the same document. A simple word search for “interdependent” does not appear even once in the entire document apart from in article 13, and “interrelated” appears once more in article 74 on page 32 of the 35-page document in the context of follow-up and review processes. Thus, it is clear that despite acknowledging the interdependent and interrelated nature of development, not much thought has gone into the operational and structural models of achieving sustainable development. And this is where the new paradigm of development appears poised to offer alternatives.

To begin with, the realisation has to be universal that this balancing is impossible using invisible hands of the market¹² alone. One of the many longstanding and somewhat unresolved debates in economics is the relation between the government and the market. The views on this ranges from government’s total macro-fiscal control on the markets to no government intervention at all. Researchers have claimed that government’s involvement in the economy ranges from being incidental to being of critical importance. The idea of “invisible hand” was first introduced by Adam Smith

12. Market with its invisible hand is considered the most efficient economic system for resource allocation and distribution under neo-liberalism. The key characteristics of the market that purportedly makes it efficient are in the aspects of price mechanism, taking care of demand for and supply of goods and services, leading to competition in the market. While market economies are often praised for their efficiency, it’s important to note that they are not without flaws. Market failures, such as externalities, and imperfect information, can limit the efficiency of markets and necessitate non-market intervention to correct these shortcomings.

in his 1759 book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and later in his 1776 book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, popularly known as the *Wealth of Nations*. A related popular term *laissez-faire* explains abstention by governments from interfering in the workings of the free market. Both the terms invisible hand and *laissez-faire* in mainstream economics and in the capitalist order has come to mean that an equilibrium would be reached in the market if it is left alone to its workings through the functioning of demand and supply.

Thus comes the importance of a re-defined governance system that is modelled as a multi-tier one, that takes care of resources relevant at several layers of use. It is absolutely necessary that visible hands are also engaged. Through regulations, incentives, and inclusive participatory mechanisms, governance can take care of externalities, correct market failures, and foster sustainable development. In order to address issues related to social identities and promoting greater equity require interventions beyond the market. Government policies, regulations, and social programs are needed to counteract systemic inequalities and ensure a more inclusive economic environment. Like social dimensions could be catered to by the market upon the infusion of governmental policy and regulations, the absence or inadequacy of regulations addressing long-term concerns, such as environmental protection or employee well-being, can contribute to a scenario where businesses prioritise short-term gains over broader societal or environmental considerations. Governmental intervention through policies and regulations are the requirement if we want our development to be sustainable. Thus, a new paradigm of development must evolve to cater to the needs, requirements, and demands of the current complicated times.

India, during its G20 Presidency in 2023, proposed Lifestyle for Sustainable Environment (LiFE) which entails the transformation of individual and societal behaviour to shift away from unsustainable consumption and production. In June 2023, the development ministers of the G20 endorsed the G20 High Level Principles (HLPs) on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE), which is a substantive elaboration of nine principles covering the integration of development and climate agendas. The adoption of these principles has been a milestone in global consensus building around advancing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the SDGs, emanating from the India G20 Presidency's themes of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" and "LiFE" (Lifestyle for Environment).

The four broad dimensions of LiFE are in the domain of

- promoting sustainable consumption and production in which every citizen and stakeholder contributes to the green transition effort;
- examining the technologies, re-skilling initiatives, financial support, and other efforts required to reduce the burden on developing and communities;

- exploring integrity and ethics in banking, finance, and insurance to make the economic system more robust, just, and inclusive; and
- investigating socio-economy based growth measurement models.

Though, LiFE does not aim to radically alter the market and our understanding of the market it aspires to work within the confines of the market with the focus to reduce the ecological, and social impacts of invisible hand and *laissez-faire*. However, the adoption of the G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development provides a basis for a move to action. The G20 could leverage the past decades of innovation and the shifts in the demands of citizens, consumers, managers, employees, investors, social entrepreneurs and youth to accelerate the growth of the LiFE economy and scale its contributions. Based on experience and expertise gained across its member countries, the G20 may encourage and support governments worldwide in creating regulatory and policy environments, financial mechanisms, incentive structures, impact measurement and reporting standards, and other factors conducive to levelling the playing field for values-driven enterprise.

7 ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE: IMPORTANT ACTION POINTS FOR G20

G20 has to initiate the efforts to create a framework that moves away from the extractive model of development and aims at balancing the three interdependent strands of development to ensure sustainable development in the real sense of the term. It will have to facilitate a global discussion through interdisciplinary dialogues among stakeholders who can capture the links between socio-economic, enviro-ecological and physical components of development and understand their complex interlinkages.

The three main agenda identified by Brazil G20 Presidency capture the three strands of development we argued for. Social inclusion and fight against hunger is to be seen as an effort to emphasise the importance of access, equity and inclusion and hence considers the socio-economic strand. The next agenda of energy transition and sustainable development in its social, economic, environmental aspects is to be considered to identify the other two strands – enviro-ecological, and physical – gives realisation about the interlinkages across these three strands. The final agenda point of reforms in global governance institutions may be considered as an attempt to operationalise these interlinkages through changed discourse in global governance. Just as social inclusion is impossible without tackling the problem of increasing incidence of hunger it cannot be taken care of without considering the problems of energy transition or even sustainable development. The call for global governance reforms has to be aware of the necessity that we require autonomous but interlinked institutions for governance at several levels.

In view of the reality that many resources are accessible and require inclusion at collective levels across global, regional, national, sub-national, and local levels we require governance models of resources at all of these levels. Then and only then will the concerns for localisation of SDGs will be taken care of. At an operational level, we have to be extremely conscious that the 17 SDGs cannot be treated individually for achievement of certain targets. As has been made amply clear in this paper that SDGs are interlinked, and a mere techno-mechanical tweaking done to realise a set of targets or one of the goals will not suffice in reaching all the 169 targets and 17 SDGs. They need to be tackled in a collective manner involving vertical and horizontal coordination along and across the stakeholders of development.

The move away from extractive model would call for realisation of actual values for natural resources on the one hand, and gradually reducing the wage differential, across the globe on the other. This process will facilitate increased access for all leading to social inclusion, and reduction in inequality. Countries in the Global South must specifically engage in these processes. Southern members of the G20 must take active interest in engaging the other Southern countries in defining and appreciating this new paradigm of development as then only the catch phrase “taking development destiny in your own hands” and “South-South Cooperation is development of the Global South aided by the South’s cooperation for the overall development of the South” will come true.

Technological difference is ultimately the main driver of development today where the availability of resources has been globalised in the neo-liberal world. Given the unconstrained availability of primary resources through global trade, capacity to create value is dependent only on access of technology. Incidentally, access to technology has been constrained by intellectual property rights and has been made a cannon making rule of the game for exchanges to happen across the globe. The recent example of India, and South Africa requesting wavering of Intellectual Property Right (IPR) formalities with respect to Covid vaccines is a clear eye opener of this phenomenon. Technology generation is highly capital intensive, a recourse for value addition not available neither free of cost like natural resources, nor underpriced like labour. The availability of capital right from industrial revolution had been concentrating the developed world. This concentration of capital helped expenditure on research and development and even subsequent experiences of innovation of ideas and processes. The new development paradigm must carefully investigate this differential to ensure that nobody is left behind and ensure that global public goods and the strategic technologies that are required to provide them are kept out of the IPR regime.

Development viewed mostly through the economic lens (Hickel and Sullivan, 2024) – making economic growth synonymous to it – has brought about the reductionist approach in identifying the developmental paths and made the analysis following the Classical Newtonian Mechanics model. Thus, the process became linear, and simple without considering the possibilities of non-linearities, irreversibilities and complexities faced by communities in their achievements of improved livelihood. Therefore, local factors were mostly neglected, qualitative features like gender, class, caste, race were also not brought into the purview of development analysis. Perspective of a new development paradigm should take care of plurality at its heart (Ostrom, 2009).

Another important element that many countries in the Global South must deal with in coming years, if not dealing with it already, is the issue of middle-income trap. Since the 1990s, many developing countries did well enough to escape the low-income levels and eradicate extreme poverty, leading to general perception that the last three decades have been great for development (Canuto, Dinh and Aynaoui, 2024). However, this has been based on the low expectation where the poverty figures were calculated with a baseline of USD 1 a day. Most countries in the Global South have higher ambition of reaching high-income levels in the next two-three decades (Islam et al., 2023). The total population of the 34 middle-income economies that transitioned to high-income status since 1990 is less than 250 million.¹³ The going has been even tougher in the last decade as issues of rising debts, aging populations at home, growing protectionism in advanced economies, and escalating pressures to speed up the energy transition, the current middle-income countries are getting into tighter spaces.¹⁴ In any case imagining the movement of 6 billion people from today's middle-income countries to high-income status within a generation or two were never really good, now it appears even more daunting. The three interconnected strands that this paper has discussed in the previous sections do have some solutions worth working at. The only hope in these difficult scenarios is to not look for straight jacketed and run of the mill solutions but look for solutions that manages the aspirations of holistic development not at the expense of worsening climate disasters, and at the same time making sure that poverty levels are reduced at the faster rate.

Another area worth working towards is to make the G20 more inclusive by not necessarily increasing the number of States to join the G20 bandwagon but, to induct regional organisations and community-based organisations in the mix of the G20. Currently, European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) are the continental organisations that are member of the G20, but the G20 would do

13. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2024>.

14. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2024>.

better by expanding and extending the membership to other possible continental groupings. Countries with low economic might along with low share of global population may not be effective individually in raising their perspectives on global development. However, they may exert enough pressure collectively if their joining hands in forming continental groupings is ensured.

CSOs have carved a niche for themselves in preceding years at being heard in the international fora be it at the United Nations levels or at other international organisations, multilateral fora and various other mini laterals. How effective is the presence of CSOs in having their suggestions and feedback being inducted in the final communique and declarations of these summits are a discussion that is beyond the scope of this paper. However, as a forward-looking discussion point, it is important to look at the CBOs and how they can contribute to these processes in a comparatively more effective manner (Igalla, Edelenbos and Meerkerk, 2020). CBOs and CSOs both play critical roles in societal development, but they have different structures, focuses, and strengths (Mendiawelso-Bendek, 2015).

When comparing the two, there are some reasons why CBOs might be seen as better or more effective in certain contexts than CSOs.

- **Local focus and knowledge:** CBOs typically operate within specific communities and are deeply embedded in the local context. They have intimate knowledge of the community's needs, culture, and challenges. This grassroots approach allows them to create solutions that are directly relevant to their communities. CSOs, on the other hand, often have a broader mandate and may not have the same level of community-specific understanding.
- **Trust and relationships:** because CBOs are typically formed by members of the community they serve, they often have higher levels of trust among the population. The community can feel a sense of ownership and investment in CBOs, which may not always be the case with larger, external CSOs that may be perceived as outsiders.
- **Flexibility and responsiveness:** CBOs are often smaller and less bureaucratic than CSOs, which allows them to be more flexible and responsive to changes in the community. They can adapt quickly to emerging issues without needing to navigate the layers of administration that might slow down larger CSOs.
- **Sustainability and long-term impact:** since CBOs are community-driven, their initiatives are often more sustainable in the long run. They are built on the needs and capacity of the local people, ensuring continuity beyond external funding cycles. CSOs, especially those dependent on external

donors, might face challenges in maintaining projects if funding or external interest wanes.

- **Empowerment and participation:** CBOs tend to encourage more community participation and empowerment. Members of the community are often directly involved in decision-making, leadership, and execution of projects. This sense of agency can lead to greater community engagement and collective action. CSOs may also involve communities but are often led by external professionals or experts.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** due to their smaller scale and local focus, CBOs often operate with fewer resources and lower overheads. Their deep community ties allow them to mobilize local resources effectively, sometimes resulting in more cost-effective interventions compared to larger CSOs that may require higher operational costs.
- **Tailored solutions:** CBOs are more likely to tailor their solutions to specific local conditions, taking into account cultural, social, and economic factors. This localisation often results in programs that are more accepted and effective. CSOs may apply standardised approaches across different regions, which can be less effective in addressing unique local issues.

Limited involvement of CBOs have been observed at the G20 level, however there is no formal working group or any specific mechanism which provides a space for CBOs to work, voice, and formulate development strategies alongside the other stakeholders in this process. Involvement of CBOs in the G20 process at a more formal level must be looked at.

Lastly, it is important to maintain the momentum of development being at the centre of G20 work. There is a greater confidence in this regard till the Presidencies of the G20 lies with the Southern countries, however concerns have been raised that the development agenda may get diluted once the Presidencies move to the developed countries. United States for its Presidency in 2026 has tried to assuage some concerns by releasing a global development strategy paper but it is important to make sure that the core themes of the G20 must not change drastically depending upon the country's Presidency. One can only hope that the Development Working Group within the G20 umbrella does not dilute with the Presidencies moving from the Global South to the Global North.

8 CONCLUSION

To conclude we argue that development is not a simple techno-mechanical process achievable through making individualistic targets and realising that. Such

individual targeting always creates a situation where some achieve them while some others cannot. This is a result of the extractive model of development that is being followed for the last few centuries. This made the development process a zero-sum game. Those who could extract, developed; while those who could not, faced constant threat to their livelihoods and even existence. The extraction happens at two levels. First, natural resources are extracted and used for value addition without being assigned any value on themselves, they are considered free gifts of nature. Secondly, labour, also an important component in value addition, are also extracted often by paying no wages during slavery and subsistence wages since the industrial revolution. Development models pursued so far help the extractors and those being extracted remain out of focus. This created the division of the Global North and the Global South.

G20 stands at a positionality of bringing the convergence towards the ideas held by the two groups. The near impossibility of achieving the SDGs by 2030 makes us further conscious about the need to go beyond SDGs and look for a new development paradigm that actually looks into the interlinkages and comes out with possible solutions at several levels of governments to honour the diversities – economic, political, social, cultural, environmental, and ecological. These diversities should not be considered as hindrances towards sustaining and improving livelihoods, rather they are capable of providing several possible solutions.

G20 on the face of multiple crises across the globe is expected to play a constructive role in coming out of this extractive model and provide a new development paradigm. We observe that several interdependent factors are to be considered simultaneously to create a balance in our development process that were lost sight of ever since animal power gradually replaced by machine power. These interlinked components are socio-economic, enviro-ecological, and physical. The socio-economic component must ensure access, equity, and inclusion of resources to everyone irrespective of culture, race, religion, caste, gender, location, and physical ability. Further, as access to many resources are possible only at collective levels, they are to be governed at several possible collectives from local to global. The enviro-ecological component calls for human beings to be considered as part of the ecosystem, not a species capable of controlling it. This consideration obviously put constraints on human behaviour *vis-à-vis* use of natural resources. The physical strand of development emphasises on the irreversible process of change that is the reality. Changes in the society are often assumed to be reversible which in real sense are never possible. Climate change, pandemics, are clear examples of such irreversibilities. In terms of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, it is argued that with every energy-based transformation a system loses part of its ability to perform useful mechanical work. This brings the

third constraint on use of energy. Thus, the new development paradigm must balance across these three constraints of human life. This realisation is the new benchmark in our quest for sustainable development. Our days of yearning for unlimited growth are constrained by increasing absolute scarcities.

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