True Sustainability and the Evolution of Development Paradigms

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Development paradigms are based on a set of fundamentals characteristics. As specific assumptions about them are made, different views of development thinking and action are developed. The basic foundations of these specific world views are known, but no systematic theoretical attempt, to my knowledge, has been made at highlighting those assumptions, tracing their evolution, and linking that to evolving development paradigms, including the current true sustainability paradigm. The goal of this paper is to introduce a general development model which can be continuously rearranged to provide a sense of development paradigm evolution from utilitarianism to raw liberalism to moral liberalism to today's true sustainability thinking.

Utilitarianism, Raw Liberalism, Moral Liberalism, and True Sustainability: Basic Paradigm Foundations, Changing Assumptions, and the Evolution of Development Paradigms

Introduction

The general structure of development paradigms can be simplified by seeing them as based on six fundamental characteristics: i) the nature of the population(e.g. Homogeneous/ heterogeneous); ii) the desired goal of welfare changes(e.g. maximization/optimization); iii) the development goal(e.g. more growth/balancing growth; iv) the politics of ethics(e.g. practical/moral considerations); v) the concern with inequality(e.g. informal/formal); and vi) the type of development they advocate(e.g. exclusive/inclusive).

The different assumptions made by development thinkers about each of those six characteristics explain the variety of existing development paradigms such as the utilitarianism, raw liberalism, moral liberalism, and true sustainability. Below the known basic paradigm foundations of each of these views of development are listed:

a) The utilitarianism paradigm

It can be said that this paradigm is based in general on the following premises: i) the nature of the population is homogeneous, equal responsibilities and equal rights are assumed for each member of that society; ii) the desired goal of welfare changes is maximization of the common good; iii) the development goal is common good growth through the promotion of the social good/right; iv) the politics of ethics is based on practical considerations as if it is good for the majority it is a good policy; v) the concern with inequalities is informal as the model does not say much about the actual distribution of the good, leaving considerations about inequalities as external considerations; and vi) the type of development advocated is exclusive as it is not concerned about impacts on minorities or specific individuals that may be affected, especially negatively, by the pro-majority good policy.

Hence, the utilitarian view advocates for obtaining the highest benefit possible to society as a whole. In other words, general utilitarianism aims at achieving the most good for the most people possible or maximizing good for the good of most(Driver 2009); and when there are competing options, the one that benefits more individuals is taken as the superior one. And therefore, the option that maximizes utility should be taken as the best morally based option(Arneson 2000).

b) The raw liberalism paradigm

It can be indicated that this paradigm is supported in general on the following assumptions: i) The nature of the population is homogeneous, equal rights and equal responsibilities are assumed for each individual; ii) the desired goal of welfare changes is the maximization of individual benefits; iii) the development goal is individual growth through the promotion of the private good/right; iv) the politics of ethics is based on practical considerations as if it is good for individuals it is a good policy; v) the concern with inequalities is also informal, as inequalities are seen as relevant, but still external to the model; and vi) the type of development advocated is exclusive too as it is not concerned about impacts on society as a whole or other groups that may be affected, especially negatively, by the pro-individual good policy.

Hence, the main difference between the raw liberalism and the utilitarianism paradigm is that pure liberal thinkers believe that individual rights/individual good should prevail over social rights/common good when in conflict. In other words, the raw liberalism paradigm advocates the supremacy of individual self-interest over social material self-interest. Hence, to maximize the autonomy status of individuals is the central aim of the liberal model(Grasso 2001); a goal that now is being globalized by the ongoing elimination of all perceived impediments to the maximization of individuality(Kotz 2000); and which is being channeled or implemented through a process based on market economics(Scholte 2005).

See that utilitarianism and raw liberalism have in common the following aspects: both of them have populations of the same nature(homogeneous); both of them have the same desired goal of welfare change(maximization); both of them have the same type of politics of ethics(practical); both of them have the same nature of concerns with inequalities(informal); and both of them have the

same type of development(exclusive).

c) The moral liberalism paradigm

It can be highlighted that this paradigm is based in general on the following characteristics: i) The nature of the population is homogenous as equal rights and responsibilities for each member in the poor class are assumed; ii) the desired goal of welfare changes is maximization of the welfare of the poor class; iii) the development goal is pro-poor growth through the promotion of the rights of the poorest groups and/or individuals in society; iv) the politics of ethics is based on moral considerations, we should put the poor first; v) the concern with inequality is formal and it seeks the eradication of poverty based inequalities; and vi) the type of development advocated is also exclusive as it is not concerned about the impact that the pro-poor good policy may have, especially negative, on other social groups.

Therefore, moral liberalism is similar to raw liberalism in three assumed ways: Both have homogenous populations; both are based on maximization behavior; and both have development that is ruled by exclusion. On the other hand, these two views of the world differ in the assumptions made about their development goal(pro-poor development vrs pro individual development), the politics of ethics(moral vrs practical), and their view on inequality(formal vrs informal). The adoptions of moral liberalism suggest the need to depart from utilitarian self-interest and raw liberal self-interest as a precondition to achieve better and more compassionate development results. By excluding some groups in society such as the rich, this view is simply promoting the substitution of practical materially based self-interest by morality based material self-interest.

The view that pro-poor development policies are a better way to deal with the problems usually found in the poorest groups of society is widely accepted today even at the global institutional level. For example, the World Bank now uses pro-poor growth as a tool aimed at maximizing reductions in absolute poverty (PN 2011) ; and development planners in developed countries are promoting it now as superior way to ensure that the poor benefit from growth strategies (OECD 2006).

d) The true sustainability paradigm

It can be pointed out that this paradigm is based in general on the following premises: i) The nature of the population is heterogeneous, but equal rights and responsibilities for each group in society is assumed; ii) the desired goal of welfare changes is optimization of the interaction of the welfare functions of all groups in society; iii) the development goal is balancing pro-rich/pro-poor growth; iv) the politics of ethics is based on balancing practical/moral considerations to include the concerns of all groups in society; v) the concern with inequality is also formal and it aims at eradicating all inequalities through optimal interactions; and vi) the type of development that it is advocated is inclusive as it is concerned about the impact that the pro-true sustainability good policy may have on all groups in society.

It can be seen that the true sustainability paradigm is similar to the moral liberal paradigm only in that both of them show deep concern over existing inequalities; and therefore, both of them envisions development processes that are more equitable. However, true sustainability and moral liberal paradigm are different in the five following aspects: in the nature of their population (heterogeneous vrs homogeneous); in the desired goal of their welfare changes(optimization vrs maximization); in their development goal(balanced growth vrs pro-poor growth); in their politics on

ethics(balanced vrs moral); and in the type of development they advocate(inclusive vrs exclusive).

It can also be highlighted that the true sustainability paradigm has no common assumptions at all with the utilitarian and the raw liberal paradigms as they have different views on the nature of each of the six fundamental paradigm premises. Hence, a move toward true sustainability requires not just abandoning utilitarian and raw liberal self-interest, but also going beyond just morality grounds to give a chance to full cooperation, participation, and optimization processes and to create that way balanced development solutions or win-win situations. In other words, true sustainability advocates for the balancing of material/moral self-interest.

The need to move away from economic aims only based development and to include also the social and environmental components of development was first formally put forward by the Bruntland Commission in "Our Common Future" in 1997 so we could move away from unsustainability(WCED 1997). Later, the need to design socially friendly eco-economic development programs to include all the components of development if we wish to achieve true sustainability was highlighted(Muñoz 2003). And recently, global thinkers apparently decided to finally act on the Bruntland Commission's call, but partly, by recognizing formally only the need to green up traditional development thoughts so as to achieve eco-economic sustainability through the now accepted concept of green growth (UNCSD 2012), leaving social issues still external to the modeling process.

Understanding the fabric of evolving development paradigms

The discussion above suggests that there are several development paradigms out there reflecting different theoretical structures as they are the result of partially different, and sometimes, of totally different sets of assumptions. And this makes it difficult to appreciate systematically how different paradigms compare to others and/or may be linked to others in evolutionary terms. Hence, there is a need to identify in a systematic way basic paradigm structures, their similarities and differences, and their possible link to evolutionary processes in term of paradigm development.

Goal of the paper

The goal of this paper is to introduce a general development model which can be continuously rearranged to point out basic theoretical paradigm foundations, to trace changing paradigm assumptions, and to provide a sense of development paradigm evolution from utilitarism to raw liberalism to moral liberalism to today's true sustainability thinking.

Methodology

First, the terminology used to present the ideas in this paper is introduced. Second, a general development model is presented and reorganized in four different ways. Third, the models above are placed under known sets of assumptions relevant to specific development paradigms to point out their unique theoretical structures. Fourth, those theoretical structures are presented in such a way as to provide a possible logical path linking the evolution of development paradigms. And finally, some relevant conclusions are listed.

Terminology

The qualitative comparative terminology used to advance the goals of this paper is listed below.

Table 1

D = Development	I = Individual
G = Group, all individuals	G_1 = Group, not all individuals
I_n = Individual "n"	I_i = Individual "i"
R = Rich individuals	P = Poor individuals
V = Very rich individuals	M = Middle class individuals
W = Welfare function	S = Sustainability
* = Maximization change	( )* = Optimal change

General development model

Societies are made up of individuals(I_i) and over all development(D) can be thought as the process made up by the summation of individual(I_i) development, which can be expressed as follows:

1) $$D = I_1 + I_2 + I_3 + \ldots + I_{100} + I_{101} + \ldots + I_{1000} + I_{1001} + \ldots + I_n$$

The model above indicates that over all development (D) results from adding the individual development levels of all members of the population, from individual "I_1" all the way to individual "I_n".

If we assume that all individuals (I_i) in model 1 above are homogeneous; and that only the welfare function of the over all group (G) matters, then over all development (D) can be expressed as shown below:

2) $$D = G \qquad\qquad \text{Where } G = \sum_{i=1}^{n} I_i$$

Model 2 above says that changes in the wellbeing of the whole group (G) are good indicators of changes in over all development levels (D). If we assume that individuals (I_i) in model 1 above are heterogeneous; and that both the welfare function of the majority of the group (G_1) and the welfare function of specific individuals such as individual "I_n" matters, then over all development (D) can be stated as follows:

$$3) \quad D = G_1 + I_n \qquad \text{Where } G_1 = \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} I_i$$

Model 3 above states that general development has two sources, impacts coming from the majority group (G_1) and impacts coming from specific individuals such as individual "I_n". Now, if we assume that individuals (I_i) in model 1 above are heterogeneous; that they can be organized into two main groups, the rich (R) and the poor (P); and that both the welfare function of the rich (R) and the welfare function of the poor (P) are important, then over all development (D) can be represented as below:

$$4) \quad D = R + P \quad \text{Where} \quad R = \sum_{i=1}^{1000} I_i \qquad P = \sum_{i=1001}^{n} I_i$$

Model 4 above shows that both changes in the wellbeing of the rich (R) and changes in the wellbeing of the poor (P) contribute to over all development (D). Moreover, if we assume that individuals (I_i) in model 1 above are heterogeneous; that they can be organized into three groups, the very rich (V), the middle class (M), and the poor (P); and that all welfare functions are relevant to development, then over all development (D) can be listed as follows:

$$5) \quad D = V + M + P \quad \text{Where } R = V + M$$

$$\text{And } V = \sum_{n=1}^{100} I_i \qquad M = \sum_{i=101}^{1000} I_i \qquad P = \sum_{i=1001}^{n} I_i$$

Model 5 above indicates that the very rich (V), the middle class (M) and the poor (P) are all drivers of over all development (D).

Evolution of development thoughts

In the following sections, the models above are subjected to a specific set of assumptions to make them consistent with the theoretical structure of specific development paradigms in order to be able to make later some general comparisons. Moreover, paradigms are presented in the order in which they have come to be through time in the history of development to keep historical/evolutionary consistency.

a) The utilitarian model

As mentioned in the introduction, two of the basic assumptions of this utilitarian paradigm are to advocate for growth in a way that promotes the best interest of society as a whole (G); and to assume homogeneity of individuals. Hence, it is appropriate to start with model 2 above to point out the basic theoretical foundations of the utilitarian paradigm:

$$6) \qquad D = G$$

The model 6 above says that the contribution of the group (G) is the driver of overall development (D). Since the utilitarian paradigm takes maximization as the development goal, then changes in its welfare (W) function can be expressed as follows:

$$7) \qquad \overset{*}{W} = \overset{*}{D} = \overset{*}{G}$$

See that model 7 above says that the only welfare changes (*W) that are relevant to development (*D) are those coming from the group as a whole (*G) and therefore, if other groups or individuals are affected especially negatively by the policy, it is assumed, it does not matter. In other words, since the utilitarian model assumes that only society (G) matters, then the welfare function is:

$$8) \qquad W = D = G \qquad \rightarrow\rightarrow \qquad \overset{*}{W} = \overset{*}{D} = \overset{*}{G}$$

Notice that model 7 and model 8 above are consistent with the other three assumptions of the utilitarian paradigm, namely, it is not formally concerned about inequalities, its development is exclusive, and it has practical considerations as its ethical basis. Moreover, as only the welfare of the group matters in model 8, then we can see the utilitarian paradigm as having a singular welfare function.

b) The raw liberal model

As listed in the introduction, one of the main tenets of the pure liberal model is that it advocates for growth in a way that promotes the welfare of specific individuals such as individual "I_n". And this leads to the need to separate the contribution of specific individuals (I_n) from the contributions of other individuals (G_1) affecting the over all development process (D). Therefore, the best point of departure to uncover the basic theoretical foundations of the pure liberal model is model 3 above as indicated below:

$$9) \qquad D = G_1 + I_n$$

The model 9 above says that the contributions of the group G_1 and the contributions of individual I_n are important to over all development process (D). Since the pure liberal paradigm takes maximization as the development goal, then changes in its welfare (W) function can be expressed as follows:

$$10) \qquad \overset{*}{W} = \overset{*}{D} = \overset{*}{G_1} + \overset{*}{I_n} = \overset{*}{I_n}$$

See in model 10 above that the only welfare changes (*W) that are relevant to development (*D) are those coming from specific individuals such as individual "*I_n" and therefore, change *G_1 = 0 as what happens to the majority/common good (G_1), it is assumed, it does not matter.

In other words, since the pure liberal model assumes that other individuals like in the group G_1 are irrelevant (G_1 = 0); and that only individual I_n matters, then the welfare function is:

$$11) \qquad W = D = I_n \qquad \rightarrow\rightarrow \qquad \overset{*}{W} = \overset{*}{D} = \overset{*}{I_n}$$

Also, notice that model 10 and model 11 above are consistent with the other assumptions of the raw liberal model, namely: it has homogeneous individuals; it is not formally concerned about inequalities, its development is exclusive, and it has practical considerations as its ethical basis. Moreover, as only the welfare of the individual matters in model 11, then we can see the raw liberal paradigm as having too a singular welfare function.

c) The moral liberal model

As the moral liberal model believes that rich (R)/poor (P) inequality matters then the best way to start to point out its basic theoretical foundations is model 4 above as follows:

$$12) \qquad D = R + P$$

The model 12 above says that both the contributions of the rich (R) and the contributions of the poor (P) matters to over all development (D). Since the moral liberal paradigm takes maximization as the development goal, but it focuses its attention only on the best interest of the poorest (P) elements or poorest groups of society, then changes in its welfare function (*W) can be expressed as indicated below:

$$\overset{\displaystyle *\quad *\quad *\quad *\quad *}{\textbf{13)}\qquad \textbf{W = D = R + P = P}}$$

It can be seen in model 13 above that it only accounts for welfare changes (*W) associated with development changes of the poor (*P) ; and therefore, change in *R = 0 as what happens to the rich, it is assumed, it does not matter. In other words, since the moral liberal model assumes that what happens to the rich (R) is irrelevant (R = 0); and that only what happens to the poor (P) matters, then the welfare function is:

$$\textbf{14)}\qquad \textbf{W = D = P}\qquad \rightarrow\rightarrow\qquad \overset{\displaystyle *\quad *\quad *}{\textbf{W = D = P}}$$

Moreover, see that model 13 and model 14 above are consistent with the other assumptions of the moral liberal model, namely: it has homogeneous poor individuals; it cares about inequalities; its development is exclusive; and it has moral considerations as its ethical basis. And notice that as only the welfare of poor individuals matters in model 14, then we can see the moral liberal paradigm as having a singular welfare function too.

Notice that if we break the rich population (R) into two sub-groups: the very rich (V) and the middle class (M) and we substitute this for R in model 12 above, we get a structure similar to model 5 also above, and therefore, the extended moral liberal model takes the following form:

$$\textbf{15)}\qquad \textbf{D = V + M + P}$$

And the welfare change of this extended moral liberal model then is:

$$\overset{\displaystyle *\quad *\quad *\quad *\quad *\quad *}{\textbf{16)}\qquad \textbf{W = D = V + M + P = P}}$$

Model 16 above holds true since change *V = change *M = 0 as impacts on the very rich (V) and on the middle class (M) are assumed to be irrelevant. Moreover, notice that all assumptions of the moral liberal model listed above still hold when looking at its extended form.

e) The true sustainability model

As true sustainability (S) assumes that individuals are heterogeneous and that both rich (R)/poor (P) inequalities are relevant, then its basic paradigm foundations can also be derived from model 4 above as indicated below:

17) $D = R + P$

The model above says that both the contributions of the rich (R) and the contributions of the poor (P) matters to over all development (D). Since the true sustainability (S) model has optimization [( )*], not maximization (*) as the desired goal of welfare changes, then it has the following structure:

18) $(W)^* = (D)^* = (R + P)^* = S$

Therefore, true sustainability (S) cares about the optimization of the interaction of rich (R) and poor (P) elements/groups in society as indicated in model 18 above. In other words, as all issues important to the rich (R) and those important to the poor (P) are accounted for, then the welfare function of sustainability has the following structure:

19) $W = D = R + P \rightarrow\rightarrow (W)^* = (D)^* = (R + P)^* = S$

Notice that model 18 and model 19 above are consistent with the other assumptions of the true sustainability model (S), namely: it cares about inequalities, its development is inclusive, and it has balanced practical/moral considerations as its ethical basis. Moreover, as the welfare of all groups matters in model 19 above, then we can see the true sustainability paradigm as having a non-singular welfare function. See that if we break the rich (R) population into two sub-groups: the very rich (V) and the middle class (M) and we substitute that for R in model 17 above we can extend the true sustainability model (S) as shown below and again we get a structure similar to that of model 5 also above:

20) $D = V + M + P$

And the welfare change of this extended true sustainability model can then be represented as:

21) $(W)^* = (D)^* = (V + M + P)^* = S$

Now, it can be seen that sustainability (S) is concerned with the optimization of interactions between the very rich (V), the middle class (M) and the poor (P) at the same time.

The extended model 21 above is also consistent with the other assumptions of the true sustainability

model indicated above.

Conclusions

The general development model introduced in this paper can be rearranged in different ways to present a systematic view of general paradigm foundations, specific paradigm assumptions, and a sense of trend in paradigm evolution. It was shown that by subjecting specific model rearrangements to specific set of assumptions the theoretical foundations of specific development paradigms can be highlighted. The results were presented in the historical order in which paradigms have come to be, first the utilitarian view, the raw liberal view, the moral liberal view, and finally, the current true sustainability view. And this was done with the goal to point out the possible existence of an evolutionary paradigm trend towards true sustainability, albeit a very, very slow one.

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