



Development Ethics – Three Questions:

Where does it come from?

Who gets to say?

Are there basic values?



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We can begin to see what development ethics is by thinking about these three questions:

- Where does it come from?
- Who gets to say what's right and wrong in development?
- Are there any basic values?

The first question is answered by the first picture, showing what was done to one village by the Narmada Dam project in India. To prepare for the reservoir, the people were removed from the village, and the buildings here were worn down by the subsequent monsoon. The people were subjected to impoverishment in several dimensions: including loss of land, loss of livelihood, loss of community.

Below you see a group of women beginning a hunger strike to protest the ways in which the developers and governments proposed to resettle them. All together, five thousand women were taking part in this protest.



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This project raised opposition to it, as bad development. That is largely where development ethics has come from: conflict over what is experienced as bad development.



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Are there basic values?

Second question: who gets to say what is bad development?

The answer is: anyone, IF they are interested in ethics, not ideology.
So what's the difference?

Ethics, not ideology

- Ethics: people & actions trigger moral psychology
 - Compassion: care & concern for well-being/harm
 - Perspective-taking (“in the shoes of others”)
 - Fairness (good deal for all)
 - Freedom/oppression
 - Universalizability (“What if everyone did that?”)
- Everyone’s good matters: “impartial spectator”
- Ideology uses normative (right/wrong, ought-to-be) language to defend personal or group advantage over others. Typically harm to some is ignored.

When we think about things ethically, we’re calling up responses and intuitions from our moral psychology.

An ethical response to morally questionable practices can include: compassion, putting oneself in the shoes of the other, a sense of fairness, solidarity with people who are held down or oppressed, and asking ‘What if everyone did that?’

Another distinguishing feature of ethics is that everyone’s good matters. Adam Smith suggested a thought experiment: what would an impartial spectator say?

Ideology may use moral language, but don’t be fooled, it’s all about defending advantage, and ignoring harm to others.

- Example: the convoy that occupied Ottawa in 2022 called for ‘freedom’. But this meant THEIR freedom FROM public health rules, ignoring everyone else’s freedom to stay healthy.

And that takes us to our third question



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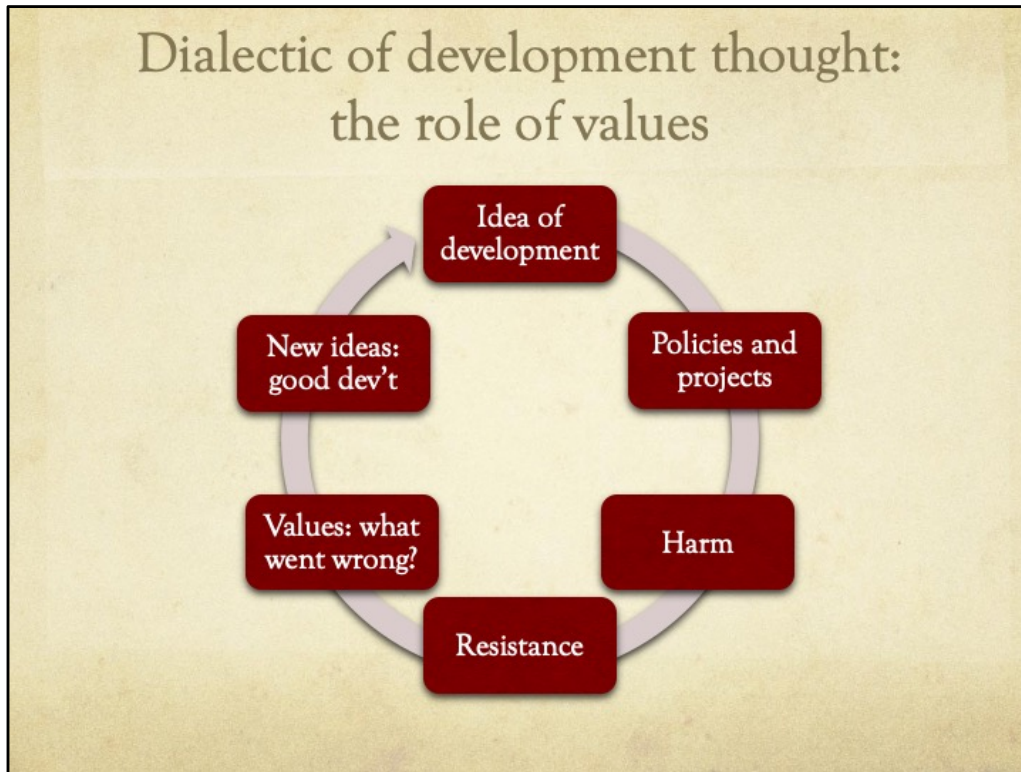
Are there basic values?

Yes, distinguishing bad development
from worthwhile development

Are there basic values?

For development ethics, these are the values that distinguish worthwhile development from bad development.

How do we know what these are?



In the history of debate about development since the Second World War, there is a pattern that keeps repeating.

The starting point is some ideal of development, then strategy follows w policies and projects.

Harmful aspects of these programs and projects are met with resistance.

Conflict leads to debate about what was wrong with the initial idea of development and its implementation. Debate appeals to values.

Some people will flip this, leading to positive ideas of what development ought to be.

Some of the values that have emerged are ...

Values

- Well-being
- Equity (social/global justice)
- Empowerment
- Environmental sustainability
- Human rights
- Identity (and cultural) freedom
- Integrity: honesty, accountability, respect

#1 Worthwhile development must improve people's well-being. So development is not the same as economic growth.

\$2 The development that is worth having must be equitable, both locally and globally. There are many different interpretations!

#3, Good development is not done to people; rather, the people must be the agents of their own development. Growth of their freedom to shape their own lives for the better is what we call 'empowerment'.

#4 Worthwhile development is environmentally sustainable.

#5 Worthwhile development does not weaken but strengthens human rights.

#6 Worthwhile development reduces social exclusion and enhances identity freedom - to be who we are & who we want to be.

#7 Worthwhile development is distinguished from corruption by honesty, accountability, respectful interactions.

Many are concerned with decolonization. This involves reversing violations of all the values listed above. Should decolonization also be recognized as a distinct value of worthwhile development?



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Yes, distinguishing bad development from
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For a written discussion of these points, see Drydyk &
Keleher, 'Development Ethics in Policy and Practice',
<https://carleton.ca/development-ethics-forum/resources/>

These are short answers to the questions raised at the outset.

They are discussed at greater length in an article available on the
Development Ethics Forum website at
<https://carleton.ca/development-ethics-forum/resources/>.

The next slides present an application of development ethics values
to a case.

Kariba Dam, Rhodesia, 1955-59

Helped:

- Mines & industries
- Other electricity users

Harmed: 57,000 Tonga

- Famine
- Loss of language and identity



One of the largest dams in the world, the Kariba Dam was built across the Zambezi River between 1955 and 1959. Designed primarily for power generation, its main beneficiaries were 'electricity consumers, the copper mines, and other industries, who could enjoy low prices for electricity. Some 57,000 Tonga people were displaced and resettled. Compensation varied: in Southern Rhodesia (future Zimbabwe), compensation was limited to land replacement, food during resettlement, and exemption from a tax, whereas in Northern Rhodesia (future Zambia), land replacement was accompanied by compensation for lost earnings and lost crops. On both sides of the Zambezi, however, replacement land was of poor quality and would not support farming methods traditionally used by the Tonga. Food production fell, a famine occurred in the period following resettlement, and the Tonga ceased to be self-sufficient in food production for decades to come. Resettlement of the Tonga on different sites, divided by the river, led to their isolation from each other, especially when the river became a boundary between the independent states of Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some resettled groups melted into host communities, losing their language and Tonga identity.

Values applied to Kariba Dam

Power lines passing over resettled Kariba village.



- Decreased well-being: Poor land -> famine
- Inequity: Industry profited at their expense
- Tonga disempowered by government, developers
- Denial of human rights
- Loss of cultural freedom: cultural genocide

What do the values of development ethics tell us about the case of the Kariba dam? The picture above nearly says it all. Like the power lines, all benefits of the dam bypassed the displaced Tonga villagers completely. The displacement and attempted resettlement of the Tonga was clearly damaging to their well-being. The land they received as compensation was of poor quality. As a result, food production fell, a famine occurred, and the Tonga ceased to be self-sufficient in food for decades. While *their* well-being was diminished, others (including copper mines and other industries) profited from lower energy costs. So this project had a negative impact on well-being and equity alike.

Governance was as disempowering as it could be, dictated by project managers and state authorities. The colonial denial of human to Africans made this possible. Finally, the project had a negative impact on identity and culture: some resettled Tonga merged with host populations and lost their language and culture, so that, on top of everything else, even their cultural and identity freedom was diminished. What development ethics tells us about the Kariba dam, then, is that this was a case of maldevelopment, five times over.