Section I

Introducing the Issues

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Introduction

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Our Cause

Africa's most important challenge is the uneven development within and between countries and the pressing issues relating to poverty in Southern Africa and the continent as a whole. We acknowledge that development has been on Africa's agenda for a long time and progress has been variable. We contend that development has been limited partly due to the level at which discussion of the challenges and interventions made to tackle them have been conducted. Our contribution focuses on the social and cultural dimensions of development dynamics and, in particular, the role of values in shaping development. Values are at the core of the hopes and aspirations of individuals, communities and societies; while they also inform worldviews and therefore co-determine the path that individuals, communities and societies follow to realise their aspirations. We do not aim to analyse and then prescribe. Our aim is to understand as best as we can the values that motivate and inform African communities and societies; and then facilitate a dialogue about sustainable development in that context among academics and intellectuals, policy-makers and decision-makers and the communities. We take a minimalist view of what development is, in an attempt to reconstitute the development debate at a different level. The aim is neither a technical imposition from outside, nor a normative position that excludes dissenters of that position. The aim is to facilitate a dialogue.

Our methodology is informed by the realisation that the conceptual definition of social and cultural values is difficult; that empirical and comparative perspectives from both qualitative and quantitative data would be necessary; and, last but not least, that the available data is insufficient and sometimes misleading. On the quantitative level, some comparative data that is available was developed in terms

that are more appropriate in industrialized and Western contexts, while other data-sets do not deal directly with the issues that we consider central to our quest. Furthermore, we are well aware of the limitations of working with aggregate data on large populations when attempting to deal with a complex social issue or series of issues. On the qualitative level, the obvious problem was finding data that would enable consistent interpretation across the region as most qualitative insights are particular and not conceived from a comparative point of view. Therefore, attempts at developing capacity to collect data in terms of the conceptualisation of issues that we address are ongoing and this publication can only be seen as a start on a more comprehensive process and task.

The Southern African Values Comparative Research Network was set up in 2005 with support from CODESRIA, the South African National Research Foundation and Stellenbosch University. The network brought together researchers from different disciplines from six Southern African countries to investigate social and cultural values, and the social dynamics associated with values in the region. We decided to focus on the link between values and development as a first attempt at developing perspectives on the very popular, but diffuse and ideologically fraught concern with the role of values in society. Funding constraints limited the research activities to conceptual argumentation and secondary analysis of existing data.

The Imperative of Development

Development is the African agenda – if one can navigate the ideological constructions of the term by outside institutions and capitalism generally and just focus on creating a better life for Africans. African people are mostly poor and often have very little real choices in a wide variety of aspects of human existence. Extreme poverty exists in large parts of Africa. There is massive inequality within some comparatively wealthy countries, and significant inequality in most African countries. All poor people are plagued by loss of freedom and dignity and are often not able to effectively participate in their countries' political, economic, legal and social processes. Poverty, therefore, causes the victims to suffer social exclusion or political repression or any combination of these factors. Societies that experience poverty are under continuous threat of ecological disaster and disease. In a global perspective, the relatively poor position of Africa is glaring.

In purely income terms, the picture is fairly clear: African countries dominate the lower reaches of global income scales.

> In 1998, over 80% of the people in the world's lowest quintile outside China and India lived in Africa. The entire populations of Benin, Chad, Congo, Malawi and Togo … and Tanzania are in the lowest quintile. 80% of the population of Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique,

Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia, and 60% of people of Ghana, Mauritania, and Senegal, also belong to the world's lowest quintile. Only Botswana, Gabon, Guinea and South Africa have less than 20% of their citizens in the world's lowest quintile (Sala-i-Martin, 2002:38).[1]

In growth terms, the picture in Africa seems to be more promising as 14 out of 43 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have recorded average growth rates of 5 per cent per year between 2000 and 2008 (World Bank data). However, when we look at human development in a broader sense than income, we realise that not much has changed in spite of high growth in many African countries in the past decade. Of the 31 countries listed as exhibiting Low Human Development in the 2005 Human Development Index, only six are not strictly Sub-Saharan African countries, and only one is not strictly an African country (UNDP, 2005). All these factors and more make development a moral and practical imperative for any African person, in spite of the very real and structurally important causes that lie outside Africa.[2]

At the same time, it is quite imperative that some erroneous perceptions about Africa be dispelled and ideological and biased analyses be confronted. An example of this is the very simple fact which Mkandawire points out with regard to Deaton and Miller's view that African economies are very much open to 'external conjuncture and the role of foreign expertise', and that African economies do well when the rest of the world grows and do badly when the rest of the world is in decline (Mkandawire 2001b:303). The point is that development is neither the antithesis of the African state nor does it have to be undemocratic, as Botswana and Mauritius both prove the possibility of African developmental states (Mkandawire 2001b:309-310). However, many African states are at the bottom of a long list of states where large sections of society, and many communities suffer the humiliation of grinding poverty and exclusion on a sustained basis. Africans cannot and do not want anything else than a change in that reality.

It is, therefore, assumed for now that development at least means positive and sustained change in the freedom of choice and living conditions of the poor and marginalised. Of course, the whole point of a real definition of development also needs to say how development is to occur; but for now, we settle for a parsimonious definition. If the poor and marginalised do not benefit in a sustained manner, development has not occurred in an African society. Of course, such a benchmark would be much more controversial in relatively more developed parts of the world than Africa. Given the circumstances sketched above, such a parsimonious definition cannot be controversial in Africa.

Development in Africa will not necessarily follow the path of the industrial modernisation that took Europe and the Western world from the traditional societies to the current affluence. It is clear that attempts to impose development in Africa from outside, in terms of a theory of modernisation or capitalist or

socialist versions of the theory of modernisation, have failed, even though no application would satisfy the theoretical purist. The current context seems to be dominated by debates on neo-liberalism and globalisation. Neo-liberalism and globalisation are often seen as two faces of the same coin – a coin that excludes Africa deliberately or, at least, effectively (Nyamnjoh 2004:42; Mhone and Bond 2002).

The debate about development and modernisation theory and even globalisation may be a sidetrack even if it is interesting. Positive and sustained change in the freedom of choice and living conditions of the poor has been mostly absent in African societies in the past 40 years. Furthermore, on average, positive and sustained change in freedom of choice and living conditions has not even been effected in most African societies. Development in Africa has to mean that societies as a whole develop and that the most marginalised and poor also benefit significantly. This has not been happening in Africa during the past two or three decades unlike in other parts of the world where positive change has happened. In fact, African nations are doing worse and can offer fewer opportunities for their people than before.

The question is why societies in other parts of the world have been able to increase the standard of living and at least some important dimensions of freedom of choice for marginalised people? Why has development happened in other places in the world and not in Africa? Why are there such immense differences within Africa?

The Imperative of Cultural and Social Insight in Development

In a context where Africa is a unitary cultural concept to many, if not most non-Africans, African poverty seems to have a logical and self-evident link with African culture. Another dimension of Africa that should be logical and self-evident to most non-Africans is the colonial and continued post-colonial imprint of exploitation and devastation in the way businesses are run, governments instituted and function, global rules of trade operate and education and health are kept under pressure.

However, what seems to be self-evident and logical, and what is really the case, is often far apart. First of all, the racist conflation of African poverty and lack of development with African culture is quite powerful as a trope in the global media and popular perception outside of Africa. Not only is Africa diverse, it is also not to be captured in singular and linear explanations. For that reason, we need to delve into the seemingly self-evident explanations of the development paths of African communities and societies and Africa a whole. Seeing that the cultural and the social are both the most difficult and the most susceptible to superficial and often racist explanations for poverty, it seems apt that scholars

tackle the issues head on. It is imperative that the cultural and social explanations for poverty and underdevelopment in Africa be investigated. It is imperative that the social and cultural dynamics of development in Africa be understood. An interpretation of African development that does not take the cultural and social dynamics of development processes into account would only seem better than one that blames African culture for poverty as it would ignore the people of Africa in its definition of development.

In a public institution and especially the multi-lateral agency context, one has to recognise that there has been a growing interest in social capital explanations for development and the lack of development (Utting 2006:2). This is clear in the approach of various international institutions to the analysis of poverty as well as a broader consciousness of social and cultural issues in theoretical arguments about development. In general terms, it serves the African development agenda well to be suspicious of this interest in social capital. The failure of development as a project of a teleological conception of modernisation (Kothari and Minogue 2002:2-12), and specifically as a failure of the policy-makers and donors to have the effects that they assumed would follow from their interventions, has lead to some agitation in the ranks of the development agencies (Stiglitz 2002). One of the major issues has been the way in which terms like participation and social values and indigenous knowledge have been instrumentalised and used in the continued neo-liberal development agenda (Cornwall and Brock 2006).

The World Bank has changed its approach to culture in spite of the neo-liberal assumptions that accompany the use of the social capital terminology (Fine 2001; Francis 2002), aside from the fact that often it is still only an afterthought and a residual category for the World Bank and other like institutions (Elson 2002:1; Cornwall and Brock 2006). The United Nations has also increased its focus on cultural and social dimensions of development (Mkandawire 2001a). Furthermore, the post-basic-needs era has seen considerable and significant interest in the notions of trust, networks and freedom (Marini 2004; Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1995; Sen 1999) and thus, by implication or directly in the notions of culture and values.

It seems less surprising then that the recent Commission for Africa (CFA) stated their interest in the social and cultural dimensions of development explicitly:

> The overall lesson is that outside prescriptions only succeed where they work with the grain of African ways of doing things. They fail where they ignore, or do not understand, the cultural suppositions of the people they seek to address. The international community must make greater efforts to understand the values, norms and allegiances of the cultures of Africa and in their policy-making display a greater flexibility, open-mindedness and humility (2005c:33).

We think that these efforts will be well served by cultural and social analysis that emanates from within Africa, and that provides content to statements like that of the CFA. The 'African way of doing things' cannot be left as an open-ended phrase as all the stereotypes and uninformed interpretations will simply occupy the empty space left by such statements. One also has to be careful that the interest in culture and values does not follow the route that has often been taken in business organisations where attempts are made to manipulate and control this new aspect of the brief of executives. Instrumentalisation of objects of management is in the genetics of management as a discipline and politicians and development agencies are also often similarly tempted (for a serious critique of the CFA see: Bush 2007:25-48).

What about Culture?

The question is 'what' specific role culture and social values play and could play. This is not articulated directly in the Millennium Development Goal strategies (emanating from UN resolution 55/2, 2000b)[3] or in other important international policy documents. These issues are to be articulated more clearly in order to show how the claim that values play a definitive role in development is not the same as blaming the victims, that this claim is not a simplistic conclusion that 'the fates of countries are effectively *sealed* by the nature of their respective cultures' (Sen 2004a:38, his italics). It is also important if we are to be able to define practical ways of drawing on culture for development. Culture is a resource because it is a framework of meaning and social structure. In general terms, culture and values can motivate development by intelligent and organic policies, agencies and leadership. At the same time, there may indeed also be important inhibiting or contradictory cultural forces to be reckoned with when designing and implementing development policy.

However, opinions about the exact meaning of values and culture in Africa vary. First of all the obvious point must again be made: there is no single set of African values or one African culture but many clusters and contradictions within clusters of values and many cultures within and outside of Africa that can be called African but are not the same. African values are often sanctified (thereby also reduced to a singular set) as primal examples of communal support and solidarity – especially by politicians (Müller 2000) and some Pan-Africanist philosophers and writers (Oyeshile 2004; Teffo 1999). When making such statements, the focus is often on African culture as it is portrayed as having been in the past and with a somewhat selective view demanded by the logic of opposing the West. Therefore, the logic is then often to complain that these values have been compromised or lost due to non-African influences like materialism or capitalism (Nkrumah 1964:74; Gyekye 1997; Lassiter 1999a). The assumption

seems to be that change brought about by forces that have their origin outside of Africa is necessarily, or at least, mostly to the detriment of African culture and African people.

The opposite of that line of thought is the very direct argument that values associated with development are often distasteful to traditional societies. Alcalde (1991:114-16), Grondona, (2000) and Montaner (2000) cite the notions and constructs of human triumph over nature, the orientation towards the future, individualism and self-interest, frugality, and work as moral activity or instrument to get ahead, as rare in many non-Western countries. Etounga-Manguelle is even more controversial and argues, among other things, that Africans are slaves of their environment as this is seen as an 'immutable order'. This supposedly leads to an attitude and behaviour where nothing is done to prepare for the future; where 'the entire social body accepts, as a natural fact, the servitude imposed by the strong man of the moment'; where the community suppresses the individual; where material accumulation is not a priority; and where, lo and behold, Africans are by and large irrational and 'to some extent cannibalistic' (2000:68-75). This is in line with the general argument that traditional societies cannot sustain and deal with market-oriented development and are therefore limited in terms of economic growth potential (Landes 2000; Harrison 2000; Huntington 2000; Landes 1998). These arguments assume or directly argue a static definition of African (and non-Western) culture and a universalist model of development.

In this context, it seems wise to concur with Sen that the key question is not 'whether' values matter, but 'how' they matter (Sen 2004a:37-38) and to push the point further, and ask 'how what' values matter. It is universally true that value orientations can be supportive, but also an impediment to achieving developmental goals of governments and other agencies. In that sense, African values are indeed of key importance for the future development of Africa. However, being specific and investigating the complexities of values and culture matter more than acceptance of the general point that values matter. Such statements become empty or susceptible to prejudices and ideological embroidery of various kinds if not followed up with research. This applies to specific statements like those of Etounga-Manguelle and others. It is easy to make statements about seemingly self-evident features of African societies. It is, however, a very different matter to understand the complex dynamics that lead to some of the most disturbing features of African societies, and to understand the ambiguity that is hidden in the bland depiction of these features by sensationalist media and superficial analyses.

To follow Sen's argument further, there are a number of ways in which values and culture 'do not matter' and cannot and should not be conceived. Cultural prejudice and political asymmetry tied together can be a lethal concoction; cultural determinism supported with scanty evidence has lead to later embarrassment

(remember the 'Asian condition' and the way in which culture has been reified and manipulated over a long time in Rwanda and recently in Kenya and South Africa?), but may very well lead to current investment blunders. Culture does not work in isolation from other social influences and is not 'uniquely pivotal in determining our lives and identities' (Sen 2004a:43-52). It is the dynamic between cultures and between cultural and political-economy and geography and disease, etc., that has to be studied and understood before we know 'how' culture and values matter.

The book is about the cultural and social dimensions of the development challenges of Africa, and specifically Southern Africa. However, it makes no sense to discuss this dimension of the matter without due recognition of the structurally induced reasons for underdevelopment and poverty in Africa.

Global Systemic Dimensions

Global systemic causes of both economic and political nature are the most obvious and probably also the most significant for Africa's comparative lack of development. Colonialism and imperial exploitation, international political-economic systems of trade, credit, technological and intellectual exchange, recent financial and competitive business globalisation, entrenched structures of dependence resulting in weak African states and weak institutions are key aspects (Osagha 1999:182-195). To this list, one has to add the slave trade, colonial and post-colonial production for export and internal predatory malpractice – especially by states that function as the dominion of an elite and that is fed and kept erect by the vagaries of international political and economic needs. Institutionalised exploitation and degradation are still rampant in some countries and threaten others, while states are weak in many countries (Clapham 1996:3, 163-167).

However, some impressions that seem obvious may not be correct. According to some analysts there is no proof that African governance is comparatively worse than other regions (UN 2005:146). Other types of reasons are cited as being critical in Africa. The same important UN report lists the following:

- very high transport costs and small markets;
- low-productivity agriculture;
- a very high disease burden;
- a history of adverse geopolitics;
- very slow diffusion of technology from abroad (UN 2005:148).

The same report argues that a poverty trap exists on national or regional level.

> The starting conditions in Africa in the 1960s were far behind those of other parts of the developing world. Contrary to casual discourse (the common comparison of Ghana and Korea in the 1960s, for example),

> African countries at the time of independence had very few individuals with higher education, very few paved roads, almost no electrification of rural areas where the bulk of the population lived, and food yields far below those of other parts of the developing world. Africa had a much harder path to follow, and was much more vulnerable to getting stuck in a poverty trap' where countries are too poor to invest in their own development (UN 2005:152).

It seems that the list of critical reasons that are unique to Africa as well as the starting conditions, point to specific and unique systemic features that characterise Africa.[4]

While significant aid and support goes towards alleviating or solving some of these problems and conditions, the outlook on changing these global systemic dimensions of African poverty in general and the poverty trap of many African countries in particular is not clear. There seems to be some convergence between initiatives like NEPAD, the UN Millennium Development Goals and other multilateral initiatives, but the level of convergence cannot be specified in a quick overview. What one can, however, point out without fear of contradiction is that the development emphasis should be on systemic issues. The same applies to governmental initiatives on unilateral and multilateral levels. It may be that the reason why systemic issues are not addressed systemically is because it would threaten vested interests in the global systems (see Amin 1997:12-45 for a 1990s critique, Bush 2007, and many more for a more recent critique) and the implications of a systemic change would at least uncover the type of independence that was created in African nations in decolonisation. However, if we knew how to intervene on the political level, it is even more difficult to know how to intervene in the social and cultural area of development without again manipulating cultural and social institutions and relationships.

At the same time, it does not help pointing out that African culture is critical to the success of development initiatives and not finding out how this is important. It is here that the significance of our research lies.

The Significance of our Research

The research presented here is important for at least three reasons. Firstly, it adds substance to general statements regarding the role of culture in African development and, secondly, it reflects on the limitations of existing approaches and data. Lastly, it makes a unique reconstitution of the development debate in Southern Africa possible.

We attempt to say something about the content of how values matter in development in a manner that is empirically informed and theoretically engaged. In that sense, it is a real attempt at giving some definition to the simple platitude that the African way of doing things should be recognised in that it is a step in the

development of a Southern African perspective on the role of values in development, and the role of specific values in communities and societies in Southern Africa in particular.

Secondly, it is an attempt at interpreting the existing data-sets on social and cultural values within a comparative framework and with the aim of understanding the cultural and social dimension of development in Southern Africa. The World Values Survey and its origin, the European Values Study, must rate as important international surveys that provide data and challenge conceptualisation of the role of values in society and the interaction between values and other dimensions of social interaction and structure. These types of data-sets are to be analysed in terms that will be familiar to the researcher in this field to see how much can be learnt from these data-sets about African development issues. In the process, it also becomes clear what some of the important limitations of these existing empirical data-sets are.

Finally, the study is significant in that it provides a theoretical argument and the beginning of an empirical perspective on the role of values in development in Africa that may facilitate a dialogue about African development. Such a dialogue is more useful than either the imposition of a technical process or the announcement of a normative framework. 'Where sustainable development is conceived as a unifying ethic, its implementation is pursued in terms of defining the content of that ethic and winning adherents to its practice – an effort at achieving ethical consensus. Where it is conceived as a set of formally comparable dimensions, its analysis and measurement becomes a technical exercise reserved for experts. We argue for a third view, a pluralistic conception of sustainability not as a fixed end but as a dialogue of values, a view that accentuates the need to identify and strengthen social institutions to manage value conflict at different scales' (Ratner 2004:51). Such a dialogue could enable development to become a dynamic African concept instead of a foreign imposition.

The dialogue can happen at many levels. First of all there is the immediate academic and intellectual interest that a book about a controversial theme generates (if the book is good enough). Then, there is the policy environment where it seems that there is increased consciousness that values and culture do play a distinct and important role in development and should play a much larger role in development policy and development projects. We would like to deconstruct some of the easy ideas about values and culture that are sometimes found in this arena and provide ways in which policy discussions can deal with this cluster of issues in a more serious and sophisticated manner. If the book is to lead to more quantitative studies where the concepts presented can be discussed in focus group or action research settings, there would be some benefit from having a number of controversial but important issues to place on the table.

The Structure of the Book

Chapter One is this introduction that is meant to present the main issues without too much debate on the merits of this or that way of formulating the case and giving some perspective on where the project fits in a bigger scheme of things. Chapter Two of the book deals with matters that have been dealt with in a very simple and unqualified manner in the introduction. It makes the case for the Southern African region as unit of analysis with reference to the interwoven nature of geo-political and economic dynamics of the region as well as its historical and cultural linkages. It then defines what we mean by social and cultural values and by the notions of development and poverty. Of course, we need to take a position on these matters as there is a plethora of definitions and approaches in these fields. We then set out the objectives of the study in a slightly more structured and argued manner than in the introduction and specify areas of concentration. We also deal with methodological issues that relate to our task in some detail as the comparative method is a reasoned mode of operation in our case – even if we understand and explain the limitations thereof.

Chapters One and Two also form the first section of the book as we thought it sensible to divide the book into three main sections. The first section sets the scene, the second reflects theoretically and the third attempts to explore the theoretical concepts empirically. The theoretical section comprises two chapters: the first locating the issue of culture in development literature generally and the second proposing content to the cultural dimensions that are at stake in development.

Chapter Three, therefore, sets out the main lines of the history of development theory and of empirical research relating to development in Africa and Southern Africa as specifically as possible. The point is not to regurgitate all the theories and empirical research that has ever been put forward, but to review these with the aim of establishing what has been done that speaks to our own interest in the cultural and social dimensions of development. We argue that the state of the art in development theory and in empirical research is lacking in that it does not provide a nuanced and contemporary perspective on the impact and potential of values in development.

Chapter Four puts forward the content of what we believe should be investigated about values following Sen's point that it is not so much whether values and culture matter, but how and what it is that is at work when it is said that values matter in development. We argue that cosmology in general and specific aspects of cosmology matter; that notions and values associated with power matter; that values relating to personal relationships matter; and that, lastly, certain personal characteristics that are valued and desirable matter. These arguments are laid out in terms of literature that we consider noteworthy, but the value aspects and ordering of these aspects is the product of our discussions as a network. It

is preliminary in that it consists of the aspects that we would consider important to do research on in the field. We are well aware of the tendentious nature of these choices and follow it up with what we found possible in terms of secondary data analysis. Of course, further and much more comprehensive research is needed to establish a more than exploratory framework for such a theoretical position.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven, therefore, are chapters that lay out the arguments for and the results of exploratory analyses of existing data-sets and other material. These three chapters form Section Three of the book.

Chapter Five trawls through the Afrobarometer data on opinions and views of the countries in the region that we have data for and in terms of the content that we find important and that can remotely be investigated within the aspects covered in the Afrobarometer. Interesting results are found regarding some of the aspects that we profile theoretically, but the limitations of mass opinion surveys as a means to values analysis also become clearer.

Chapter Six reviews data on the demography of two countries in terms that are important to value change. We review the three components of population growth, fertility, mortality and migration, variables with an intricate interrelationship with development. The variables not only create social conditions, but are also the expression of deeply held values. We find development or lack of such, as important determinants of these variables; yet development is also deeply affected by these components. An understanding of these relationships provides a launch pad for relevant policies.

Chapter Seven deals with the world of work, which is the most obvious proving ground for theories and perceptions of African specificity regarding values that supposedly determine development. We, firstly, look at work values that are supposed to run on a continuum from instrumental to expressive interest in work. The model holds up well for Europe and points to instrumental work values associating with social conditions in which getting and holding a job is more important than expressing yourself at work. Expressive values are found at the higher end of the social ladder where work security and working conditions are no longer issues to contend with. The expectation that Africans would tend to have an instrumental orientation to work was disappointed however, confusing the expectation of a cultural effect in work orientation. Africans are more like Europeans than would be expected with the given theoretical approach, considering the economic conditions under which they work. We follow this up with another, even more classical expectation that the Protestant Christians (or in our time those who defer satisfaction for religious reasons) would be more hardworking and thrifty than those who are Catholic (or those who live from the fruit of their labour, are fatalistic and do not see an economic relationship between what they do in life and thereafter). This expectation is confounded on a fundamental level as the standard constructs needed for such an analysis do not

succeed. The expectation is also confused by the results which show that the only more or less interesting avenue along which to pursue the religious line of questioning about work ethos would be the impact of Pentecostalism and evangelicalism in Africa. The expectation that religion would have the same kind of effect on work ethos than that of Europe is not fulfilled and the similarity with the Latin American experience in this regard is pointed out.

The last chapter draws some conclusions regarding the limitations and benefits of our research as we see it, and scopes some dimensions of future research that we consider to be useful and feasible.

Notes

1. The same Sala-i-Martin has presented statistical evidence that inequality has declined in the world as a whole and that this is due, in some way, to globalisation in the 1980s and 1990s. The 'evidence' for this claim is disputed (Firebaugh and Goesling 2004; Wade 2004) but the positive change Sala-i-Martin directs our attention to does not lie in Africa but in Asian economic growth and therefore does not really concern us.

2. While development is a practical imperative for Africans, the causes for Africa's underdevelopment and poverty are complex and cannot simply be ascribed to one or the other agent or cluster of agents. These causes are structural, but not in the objectivist sense of the word as if these structures are institutions or systems that can be identified and, if changed, will lead to a solution. The causes of poverty and development are social and as with all other social phenomena, these causes lie in the structure of patterns of action, reflexive responses to these patterns and resultant rules that can be deduced from the interaction between what went before and how it is instituted again and again. Of course, not all agents in the social system operate with the same power or under the same constraints. To say this in less theoretical language: neither capitalism not the World Bank, nor a particular predatory African state can be held solely responsible for the existence of poverty and the underdevelopment of African societies. The entire social edifice of global relationships, including the governments, development and aid agencies, development intermediaries, business and local communities, etc. have over time created or allowed or not resisted effectively the development of a dire situation. While not all participants have the same position in the system and effective power is relative, the solutions will lie in transformative action on all levels.

3. The Millennium Development Goals were adopted within the UN system in 2000 and comprise 8 goals broken down in 21 targets and 60 indicators. The goals themselves are: 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2: Achieve universal primary education; 3: Promote gender equality and empower women; 4: Reduce child mortality; 5: Improve maternal health; 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7: Ensure environmental sustainability; 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

4. It is disturbing that this very same United Nations report does not discuss culture or social values in any significant manner throughout the text – culture only appears as a word in the text as part of agriculture. However, this is in keeping with Jeffrey Sachs's (the major author of the text) argument that culture does not really matter much in development (Sachs 2000)!