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Contributions of Anthropology in Bringing Forth Local Perspectives and Challenges in Development Processes

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Abstract

Development can be considered as one the most researched and analyzed issue. Development is a multidimensional phenomenon that includes political, social, economic, psychological, physical and intellectual progress without any domination and discrimination. Anthropologists' realized the need to get involved in development paradigm as all the development oriented programs were failing. To find out the reason, anthropologists have brought the local perspectives in development to make development initiatives successful. Anthropologists tend to question the Western dominance that imposes development policies over Third World without understanding the need of the people. This article also depicts the challenges of development theories to understand the crisis from various perspectives, particularly modernization, capitalism, globalization theory and feminist post colonial views. These theories can be correlated with anthropological understanding to critique development process for continuous Western dominance and for giving less concern to local needs. However, development initiatives can bring effective change if the need of the people is properly heard or indigenous knowledge is used in development projects.

Keywords: Anthropology, Development, Local perspective, Indigenous knowledge, Feminist view

Introduction

In recent world, development can be considered as one the most researched and analyzed issue. Development is a multidimensional phenomenon that includes political, social, economic, psychological, physical and intellectual progress without any domination and discrimination. Goulet [1] in "Cruel Choice" articulated development as a means to own a country or people who need help instead of providing benefits to those people. This definition raised a question about the power and value of modernized elites for making the poor people oppressed and subordinated. The definition of development changed due to global capitalist expansion and persistence of colonial power over Third World. The expansion of development is found in all disciplines with debates or acceptance. Anthropology is a social science that deals with the origins, physical and cultural development, biological characteristics, social customs, and beliefs of humankind. It has origins in the humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences [2]. Anthropologists' realized the need to get involved in development paradigm as development initiatives focused to economic assistance or economic expansion. However, only economic aid to Third World could not make the development oriented programs successful as western ideology designed the programs [3]. At that point, anthropologist brought the local perspective in development to make development initiatives successful. The emergence of development anthropologists focused on the importance of local perspective in development and also highlighted the challenges to development. Anthropology was very keen to study 'traditional' or non western communities, who were vulnerable, small, subordinated or geographically remote; now they also focus in social lives and policy implications along with development concerns. Anthropology looks into the diverse social lives or survival technique, own method of living of different communities [4]. This notion is more applicable to understand and discover the local knowledge that is appropriate for community people. Escober [3] shows how Western power structure overlooks the local perspective or indigenous knowledge to frame policy for the underdeveloped world. Moreover, anthropologists tend to find out the limitations of western practices from a critical perspective if it is carrying complex, ambiguous, unreasonable or inapplicable policy interventions along

Anthropol ISSN: 2332-0915 ANTP, an open access journal with the suggestion to incorporate local knowledge.

Emergence of Development

Development as a concern first arrived at the end of the Second World War as poverty, social problem, unemployment and other problems raised. The poor countries were in need of economic development and they also demanded to be independent from colonial rule. Development is a dominant idea of twentieth century emerged targeting the population of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other areas of the world to bring positive change or progress that silently divided the world into two categories, developed and underdeveloped [4]. However, the idea of economic development introduced industrialization and modernization by First World to ensure economic growth all over the world [5]. At the end of the Second World War, USA was holding the top position among the powerful countries and they wanted to seal their power over the world [6]. Following that concern, Truman first coined the term "underdeveloped" in 1949 and created the differentiation between first world and Third World. His speech helped to enlist the underdeveloped countries to design concrete policies and measures for their economic development. However, it seemed to be a hegemonic will to distinguish and separate the poor countries to extend the authority over two-thirds of the world's people. Escober [3] also mentioned that Truman's dream of development produced debt crisis, massive underdevelopment, exploitation, poverty, and hegemonic control over the 'Third World'. He also manifested that the nature of development to economic growth started from 1950's became unsuccessful as it only focused to poverty alleviation. Robinson [7] mentioned that" the development projects came under sustained attack

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Received: August 26, 2014; Accepted January 30, 2015; Published February 12, 2015

Citation: Rosy SY (2015) Contributions of Anthropology in Bringing Forth Local Perspectives and Challenges in Development Processes. Anthropol 2: 140. doi: 10.4172/2332-0915.1000140

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in the 1960s for its evident methodological deficiencies, logical and empirical inconsistencies and ahistorism" (p. 1048). He also explained that modernization theory was the thinking of Western governments, international development agencies and many policy makers in the Third World.

Esteva [6] illustrated the documentation of underdevelopment in the post colonial era that dialectically differentiated the world into two groups- First world and Third World. He also depicted how first world formed new types of exploitation over the Third World in the name of development. Modern elites experimented their ideas on the poor people that turned out unsuccessful sometimes. It was considered that development could be achieved by economic growth, but later on failure of technological development and capital intensive programs resulted in the need to rethink social and cultural importance in development program [3]. Saunders [8] mentioned that Third World people were defined by an inherent racial inferiority and west initiated many programs to civilize those people with western values. The generalization of Third World countries separated them from civilized, developed and modern first world, which was considered as the ongoing imperialism [9]. The gap in knowledge and notion of ignorance to the Third World put the development theory in crisis. NGO also explains how in South voluntary and nonprofit activities working to ensure the welfare of poor has been questioned. The process of development merely could reach the demand of local people as the interest was not the same for both policy makers and the targeted people. Anthropologists pointed out these challenges to some extent to show the need of local perspectives in development process.

Knowledge as a Part of Development

Knowledge develops in a society through the cultural values and social systems that give people a systematic life and help to prevent dismantling the social harmony. Gupta [10] mentions about two types of cultures; non-material and material part of culture. He approaches to define non-material culture as the belief, values and norms whereas material part of culture is constituted of new machinery, tools, and techniques to develop the living standard or develop economically. The importance to material growth or development has initiated the debate between non-material and material part of culture to development. However, material part has weakened the importance of moral values and cultural knowledge which is actually overlooked in development process. At the same time, he also points out that new civilization and modernization interrupt the non-material part of knowledge through the invention and implementation of new technological advancement. It seems to discourage the material development that might be against of the new development process; however, this type of material knowledge put the traditional knowledge at the stake of challenge.

Anthropologists have discovered the insight of development process and documented the need to incorporate local perspectives in development. They tend to question the western dominance that imposes development policies over Third World without understanding the need of the people. Development was considered to be the replica of Western models that was challenged due to its limitation to understand the need of different people from different communities [11]. Anthropologists suggest including local perspective or indigenous knowledge that is concerned of culture, ecology, bio-diversity and resource. Concept of indigenous knowledge can be understood from Gupta's [10] definition.

"Indigenous Knowledge could be said that Indigenous Knowledge traits are oral, undocumented, simple; dependent over the values,

norms and customs of the folk life, production of informal experiments through trial and error, accumulation of generation wise intellectual reasoning of day to day life experiences, loosed and rediscovered, practical rather than theoretical as well as asymmetrically distributed" (P. 59).

The knowledge that essentially talks about the suitable and sustainable development according to the need is mostly unrecognized by the western policy makers. UNDP presented a report where six serious problems were pointed out due to the globalized market economy: problem of global warming, rapid loss of bio-diversity, unpredictable financial market, bridging gaps or inequality internationally, emergence of new-drug resistant disease strains and genetic engineering [12]. Development Planning worked as the instrument to promote crisis, as modernization in social planning and implementation of those planning in Third World was helping to persist colonialism. The credit is hardly given to the indigenous knowledge or local perspectives as it may reduce the western superiority or authority over Third World. Dei et al. [13] notes:

"The negation, devaluation, and denial of indigenous knowledge, particularly those of women, is the result of deliberate practices of establishing hierarchies of knowledge....Institutions are not unmarked spaces of thought and action. Knowledge forms are usually privileged to construct dominance, and can be 'fetishized' so as to produce and sustain power inequities." (P.40).

Anthropologists are keen to find out the creation of knowledge hierarchies that is helping to sustain the power politics of West. Indigenous knowledge or local perspectives are devalued under the Western dominant culture. However, anthropologists try to find out that modern development programs excluded from local knowledge is mostly unsuitable and bring underdevelopment for the community people. This notion mostly brought changes in development approaches and started incorporating participatory approaches to ensure local participation and empowerment of local people [11]. However, knowledge to development should contain the local people's voice and demands to remove the western domination and bias towards Third World.

Theories of Development

Development theories were made to bring progressive change in society and develop the disadvantaged countries economically and socially. Development theories are a 'set of ostensibly logical propositions, which aim to explain how development has occurred in the past, and/or how it should occur in the future' [14]. He explained development theories can be normative that generalize ideas about what should happen or what has been in the case earlier. To implement development theories, development strategies are important that are the techniques utilized by the international agencies, states, NGOs and individuals to make improvement and change. But this development theory is in crisis as it could not bring large scale positive change, instead has initiated 'the development of underdevelopment' [15] in the Third World countries. This paper focuses on the theories of development to point out the crisis of development. The following theories outline the shift in development approaches and the challenges arrived so far. This paper also explains the need of anthropological understanding to solve the crisis and make the development initiative relevant and successful.

Modernization to Capitalism: Economic Development Raised Crisis of Development

Development is a political concern now to dominate Third World

Page 2 of 6

and separating them from others. The increased diversity among the Third World started in 1960's criticized the development theory. Frobel and his colleagues [16] illustrated that modernization raised structural unemployment due to the labor repression, degradation of women and children labor's situation, devaluation of skilled workers in the traditional sectors. Modernization involved development planning which was widely followed by the Third World governments to achieve development [17]. Their intention was to increase the productivity of labor and raise living standards. However, the notion that economic progress would develop a country was failing as poverty and hunger situation did not improve. They also mentioned that the living standard became even worse for poor people, specifically for women and children. Anthropologists figured out that the discourses of modernization led the Third World countries to develop economically with the expansion of industrial and technological advancement. Later on the generalization of Third World countries separated them from civilized, developed and modern first world, which was considered as the ongoing imperialism [9]. This generalization was based on cultural essentialism which predicted that all Third World countries belong to the same culture [18]. This perception destroyed the whole venture of development activities in Third World as local needs were unheard. Anthropologists' work with human kind and various culture; they identify the problem or understand the view of people before designing the policy recommendation. In development project designing, they thus contribute by integrating cultural and social interests. Development theories can be correlated with anthropological understanding to critique development process for continuous western dominance and for giving less concern to local needs. Development theories faced the drawback not only for inappropriate development planning and gender biased policy but also for the expansion of capitalism through modernization and increased dependency of Third World over first world for economic development by limiting state control [7].

After the Second World War, there was widespread interest among economists in finding solutions to the poverty and underdevelopment left behind by the disintegrating colonial system [19]. There are three theoretical approaches proposed to explain the global inequalities that have been developed over the past several centuries and have strong link with capitalism, globalization, imperialism, dependency and world system theory. Andre Gunder Frank [15] explained the theory of underdevelopment in a way to show that capitalism was exploiting the underdeveloped nation through the trade system. Moreover, First World countries expanded their hierarchy though capitalism as poor nations had to depend on them for their economic development. The theory of imperialism was first advanced by J.A. Hobson which assisted the economic development of the West, also impoverished rest of the world through draining off resources from the developing to industrialized countries. It maintained the control over Third World like old empires. Both theories are giving the same message of exploitation and oppression over the poor countries. Globalization can be considered as the consequence of capitalism, is a process, completed in the twentieth century, by which the capitalist worldsystem spreads across the actual globe. In the late 1950s, the field of development was dominated by the modernization school, which came under attack by dependency theories and other radical Third World approaches to international inequalities. World system theory pioneered by Immanuel Wallenstein is the most sophisticated of theses attempts to interpret world patterns of inequality [20]. World-system theory, however, started out not as a theory of globalization but of development. Modernization of technology and industry opened up a Page 3 of 6

path to capitalism that ended up in globalization, could be considered as a continuous process of imperialism.

Modernization As transnational corporate and political elites emerged on the world scene in 1980s, they made explicit claims to build and manage a global economy though restructured multilateral and national institutions. They pushed public sectors and non market community spheres to be opened up to profit making and new production to flexible accumulation [7]. The World Bank in 1980 redefined development, no longer as national economic growth, but as successful "participation in the world market" [21]. This new policy made state centrism outdated and focused to global and transnational spheres which created crisis in development theory in regard to globalization as state lost control over national economy and enlisted in global social hierarchy. However, it initialized the domination of first world over Third World and the West captured the culture of Third World and overlooked their need as they got money power.

Development as a Colonial Invasion

Anthropologists find that development planning as the western conception of domination tries to establish the colonial rule. Esteva's [6] illustrated that development paradigms were made from western point of view and targeted Third World people in different names. The different initiatives and policy approaches under modernization process came mainly in the 1960s, undertaken by the first world and imposed on the Third World. Chech and Higgins [17] mentioned that West imposed their invasion in the name of economic progress and civilizing the people of East who seemed to be unaware of modern life. Ashish Nandy [17] also described how in nineteenth century through colonialism, Western cultures were introduced in non-Western countries to make them civilized. Colonial administrators considered themselves as the agents of progress who could transform the colonies into a modern country. However, economic benefit to the indigenous population was not the prime concern of colonialism. Esteva [6] explained past lootings in the colonized countries by the first world and the capitalist exploitation tagged the Third World countries as poor or backward. It was the creation of development to view West in a supreme state and the East in a vulnerable state. Development was not universal to global metaphor rather the concentration was to separate the world into two groups and make the Third World more subjugated and dominated.

Escober [22] projected that colonization was the result of the discourse of development. Development in his view was more successful to persist underdevelopment than colonialism. Development planning initiated by western thinkers was economy oriented and was based on unfair trading practices and debt burden. Development practice was following the superior Western culture and ideologies, that categorized it as modern, liberal and development oriented approach. It was not applicable to all over the world and the crisis in development theory started. The implementation of Western conception in Third World was the continuation of power relations of colonized era and through this West dominated Third Worlds' culture, economy and politics. Later on, the development initiatives were taken by Western development thinkers to distribute aid or help to bring development. However, they overlooked peoples need of Third World and generalized all as poor, vulnerable and victims instead of considering them as participants and directors of own independence and development. Later on, 'basic human needs approach' initiated in 1970's focused on both economic and social development that gave a new dimension in development process. However, this new approach to development also could not

bring enough success as understanding different societies and their problems from Western eye's seemed quite challenging to development. Mostly, the initiatives were proved ineffective and inappropriate for the different communities as participation of local people could hardly be found. Thus, due to the failure of development programs, poor people remained poor that enhanced their dependency over first world elites.

Failure of Western 'Development' Approaches Targeted Third World women

After the modernization, many activities started working on development and women were excluded from that. Saunders [8] mentioned that development agencies were dominated by men, who framed welfare strategies for women considering women as passive beneficiaries of development. Their perception about women's vulnerable identity initiated biased development approaches that led to the impoverishment of Third World women. This planning was criticized by the feminists who came with the intention to eradicate masculinist oriented development planning [23]. Feminist anthropologists also started to document the importance of women's need and their knowledge in development process. Kothari [23] argued that ideas of development got failed and criticized by the feminists as it was conceptualized with Western ideas and was masculinist. This attempt was the continuation of colonialism as it generalized all Third World women as vulnerable, subordinated, and oppressed. Due to this notion, they suggested universal development theory for all women by neglecting individual demand and background [24].

Feminists also raised debate about development approaches. WID [Women in Development] was solidly grounded in modernization theory which assumed wrongly that women were not integrated in the process of development. It accepted existing patriarchal social structures. It did not question about the sources of women's subordination and oppression. It did not raise any voice about why women had not benefited from development process and strategies. It treated women as undifferentiated category [25]. WAD [Women and Development] failed to analyze the relationship between patriarchy, differing modes of production and women's subordination and oppression. WAD did not question about the relations between gender roles. Then finally GAD (Gender and Development) emerged with a learned experience from WID and WAD. It exclusively focused on gender relation and women were seen as agents of change rather passive recipients [25]. GAD with post colonial theory attempted to decentralize the masculinist/colonialist knowledge and study of those who were represented as marginalized [23].

With the implementation of new development approaches, it was perceived that women would get benefitted from the development equally and the intra-household allocation of resources would be equal. It was never found in reality though. Moreover, Neo colonial masculinist approach impacted women badly. Batliwala [26] believed that it might take a long way to achieve women's empowerment through this biased development process. The process of development in the Third World largely marginalized women and deprived them of control over resources, without reducing the heavy burden of their traditional duties [27]. Feminists and feminists anthropologists depicted that majority of development planners and workers did not fully address women's position in the development process [28]. All the development policy exclusively focused on economic factors rather than social, political and cultural factors in the development of the world system [29]. Development thinkers did not understood women's need broadly and increased the injustice by influencing colonial domination in development planning.

Importance of Local Perspectives in Development Process

Local perspectives in development planning are important as it gives the knowledge of a society and culture. Indigenous knowledge is not homogenous which means all local cultures vary [30]. Local knowledge takes into account the local environment, proper participation in development measures, feasibility of development programs in society, approaching with local technical solutions, local capacity and institution. Hobart [31] mentioned that with the construction of 'ignorant and underdeveloped', West got the recognition of 'knowledgeable and developed'. He also said that modernization theory does not incorporate wider social and historical processes that limit the possible success of modernity. Modernization process deteriorates the traditional values, institutions and practices like extended family, kinship based organization and communal control and these are replaced by rational, scientific and efficient knowledge which gets various negative outcomes and works as barrier of development [32]. In development project designing, anthropologists contribute by integrating cultural and social interests. Hobart [31] explained the need of local perspective in development program. He provided an example to understand the need of intensive local knowledge. One project was taken in drought prone Sahel region in Africa to irrigate. 5000 hectares of land were brought under irrigation and exactly same amount of previously irrigated land turned into salty desert because of poor drainage. For this, social considerations are important as it defines the need of development program. If equal consideration would be given to technology and social knowledge or demands, the problem could be solved and purpose of development could be successful.

Another example can be given from Indonesia. In Timor, it rained for three months heavily and rest of the times was very dry. Six large dams were made under the dam building project to serve water in arid areas. No one could use those dams as people lived far away and it was difficult to collect water. Hobart said "There is a twist to the tale. Coincidentally or otherwise, the dams were mostly near roads. So, if people migrated to where water was, government would be able to what they were up to" [P.3]. These examples denote the ineffectiveness of development programs because of less concern to local understanding or social demands. Before the planning of development, rationality of the project must be understood and anthropologists can effectively focus more on epistemological knowledge. In making the dam, the need of dams was the main concern but not the people; for this, it was not made nearby their living place. The government ignored the local peoples need and even migration is also not possible due to cultural integrity, property and livelihood. In the beginning of planning, rationally thinking is important along with the local perspective to make development successful. Escober [33] exemplified town planning in Europe to underscore the limitation of Western planning. He focused on how people were disciplined in the new planning and detached from their own norms, experience and livelihood. He described about the planning made for Third World in the name of social and structural development. It was a process to destroy own traditions and social structures. This process can be understood as the colonial effort to develop the Third World by Western ideas, or in a sense, imposing own cultures and structures to expand dominance to continue imperialism.

Last example can be drawn from Bangladesh to explain my arguments in favor of crisis of development theory. This example is closely connected to development planning, neo masculinist approach and globalization theory. Trade liberalization has been one of the major policy reforms carried out in Bangladesh. It has been implemented as part of the overall economic reform program and Structural Adjustment Program [SAP] was initiated in 1987 [34]. Structural adjustment is a term used to describe the policy changes implemented by the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Bank [the Bretton Woods Institutions] in developing countries [35]. SAP was primarily introduced to Third World countries by the First World country's to promote economic growth through loans and different policy approaches. The macroeconomic performance of Bangladesh in the 1980s has been discouraging after adopting SAP. Due to privatization, a total of 89,971 workers [men and women] lost their jobs in the state owned enterprises [SOEs] till June, 1997. SAP destroyed not only the economic capacity of Bangladesh, but also its social, political and cultural capacity to participate in the world market with strength. It also hampered the favorable position of Bangladesh within the international division of labor. The precise purpose of SAP was to retain and reinforce the colonial domination of the North over the South by controlling the flow of commodities and money. It could be termed as the new form of colonialism in Bangladesh. SAP was the Western development idea for the Third World which was based on modernization through technological advancement, proposed economic growth and extensive global capitalist world. Colonialism remained the dependency of Third World over First World and capitalism created new dimension of biasness and violence against women in globalized era. Neo liberalization which promoted capitalism, monetary expansion, free trade made rich the richest and poor the poorest, that planning helped to persist colonialism.

SAP affected women's development also and it expanded garment sector due to privatization and global market demand. It has been argued that the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and the IMF are creating problems for women by imposing greater burdens on them through the abolition of price controls and food subsidies, public service cutbacks and increased male unemployment. Structural adjustment policies aim to ensure economic growth, that widely created the gap between men and women. Development planning in adjustment policies stressed on technological developement and men became the beneficiary of this as they knew how to deal with new technology. At the same time, women were separated from the workforce, sometimes paid very less due to their limited knowledge of machinery products [27]. Women were not specialized as they lacked training and education, whereas development policy overlooked their need and focused on economic development. Third World countries like Bangladesh are dependent on foreign aid and follow Western designed policy as condition. The economic conceptualization of production and economic work made women vulnerable as they had to manage household work also; they could spend less time, energy in production area and household work remained invisible and undefined [17]. Women were negatively affected by privatization and trade liberalization policies in a number of sectors such as handlooms, jute, cotton, food and beverage, etc. They either lost their jobs or were affected by job losses of their spouses. SAP in Bangladesh could not ensure development as economic growth and market expansion in international arena was the concern, poor people and women were detached from this "development process".

Discussion

Development is a political concern now to dominate Third World and separating them from others. The generalization that Third World people are homogeneous was based on cultural essentialism which predicted that all Third World countries belong to the same culture [36]. This perception limited the intention of development activities in Third Anthropologists contribute firstly by doing ethnographic research which brings about the local difficulties and necessities and policy makers can create the development plan based on this. Secondly even after the implementation, anthropologists can help to follow up and get the peoples voice more clearly than development workers. Thirdly the anthropologists as researcher can bring local perspective not as a part of research only but also as a part of development. For this, development anthropology is considered as a new dimension in development concept now-a-days.

Development was initially conceptualized as economic growth. Neo liberals adopted many adjustment policies for developing countries as the only solution to economic crisis, but it failed to eradicate poverty especially women's poverty with aims of privatization of social service etc. Much of the dependency theorists say the first world countries have established a position in which they are able to exploit the resources of less developed societies for their own needs. Economic crisis in many Third World countries, enhanced by their peripheral position in the world economy, has led to reductions in spending on health, education and food subsidies and the impact is heaviest on poor women. For this in 1990s human development came as a demand of new development mechanism which withdraws more concentration on economic growth as this could not reach the poor. Alternative development is important to think about the individual demand of countries and erase the Western domination in development planning. Moreover, though global participation is important, the state must have control over own economy to benefit the citizen. With these concentrations, gender neutral development strategies need to be adopted to achieve the development in reality, not in theories only. The crisis of development theory is not a new concern anymore, neutral alternative development planning should be incorporated to reduce the colonial interest, exploitation of globalization and ensure gender justice.

Anthropologists also focused on the challenges of development process by showing its basis on Western conception and how local knowledge is overlooked. It is responsible for the continuous power domination process and transformation of indigenous knowledge to Western. When local understanding and demands are not given attention in the development process, it cannot change people's life or bring sustainable development. The knowledge of similarity or equality of the modern groups is to shift local culture to Western culture and position Western culture over all cultures. Development program is designed only for Third World people, and made by West. That is why Purcell and Akinyi [37] mentioned about the local judgments that should derive from the people's understandings, not from imposed assumptions. It is increasingly recognized that development initiatives that pay attention to local perceptions and ways are more likely to be relevant to people's needs and to generate sustainable interventions [29]. Thus anthropologists show the importance of local knowledge and put their attention to measure the need of unheard people. However, development paradigm has been challenged by many scholars from different fields and anthropologists also have brought the issue of local perspective to identify the causes of the failure of development processes. Anthropologist's specialization to deal with people and culture has increased their demand in development process. They have also outlined challenges of development with the focus to include local perspective in development policies or projects.

Conclusion

Development concern in today's world is a new business which needs to be revisited avoiding cultural essentialism and generalization regarding Third World. Cultural variation persists in all society and local needs may be different. The ongoing failure of development policy somehow is the result of ignorance of traditional knowledge and understanding the real conceptions of local people. The pregeneralization of need in the name of Third World, deteriorates the goal of development. Moreover, Western domination over poor countries by tagging them as 'Third World' countries explicitly produces the domination and hegemonic control that invade the culture, identity and independence. In the name of development, First World holds up the power to help others that seems ineffective most of the time. However, the shift from economic growth and the inclusion of anthropologists or social scientists show the need to think development from various perspectives. The anthropologists pay attention to local perspectives to know the social bindings and need to implement and plan the development program properly. Anthropological studies show the significant need of reshaping development program by mentioning the challenges and move to solution by prescribing the incorporation of local perspectives in development process.

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