

Setting the Context

The development debate
thirty years after *What Now*

Sheila Coronel and Kunda Dixit

Siargao island, the Philippines

Those who come to the island of Siargao in the southern Philippines may think they have stumbled upon paradise. The tourist guidebooks call it ‘one of the Philippines’ best kept secrets,’ as its ‘pristine beaches, spectacular lagoons and islets make Siargao a special hideaway of rustic charm and beauty.’ It is also a surfer’s dream: the great waves of the sea of Siargao, not far from the Philippine Deep, the world’s deepest ocean trench, are so spectacular, they leave even the most jaded surfers in awe.

But Siargao has a dirty secret: It has possibly the largest per capita concentration of kidney sellers in the world. Between 2001 and 2004, nearly 60 residents of the island – about seven in every 1,000 inhabitants – had sold a kidney to one of the big hospitals in Manila, where their organs were transplanted to wealthy Arab, Japanese, and Filipino patients. Organ brokers offer USD2,000 to USD4,000 for each kidney. While there were few women, the sellers were mostly men in their late 20s and early 30s, impoverished coconut farmers or subsistence fishermen who wish desperately to escape the unrelenting poverty of their lives.

While tourists come to Siargao for the sun and surf, the island’s own residents are fleeing it in search of opportunities that, for all its beauty and perfection, the island can no longer provide. Foreign fishing fleets and years of dynamite fishing ravaging the corals around Siargao have made it difficult to eke a livelihood out of the sea. World coconut prices have been down for years, forcing farmers into bankruptcy. Social services are poor – most schools offer free education only up to the third grade and some residents have to walk two kilometres to the nearest water well. While tourist resorts make good business, they do not employ many locals.

Ricky, a farmer who dropped out of third grade because the nearest school was 11 kilometres from his home, bought a motorcycle

and a karaoke machine after selling his kidney in 2002. Today he remains jobless and survives by recruiting other potential organ donors, for which he gets a commission of USD200 each.

Among his recruits was Richard, 29, who sold his kidney in 2003. Richard was brought to a house in Manila where he was kept with 15 other potential donors. After a series of tests, he was matched with a 17-year-old Arab woman who urgently needed a transplant. Although the surgery has made Richard more prone to illness, he is one of the few organ sellers in Siargao who has had some economic success. He used his kidney earnings to lease coconut land from which he managed to make a profit.

Most aren't so lucky. Many end up like Junior, a farmer who worked for two years escorting kidney vendors from the island to Manila before selling his own kidney as well. Junior bought a TV set and a video karaoke from his earnings, but these were hocked when the money ran out. So weakened by the transplant that he was unable to work for a year, Junior is now penniless. After surgery, kidney donors suffer from physical and psychological trauma. They need regular medical attention even years after the transplant; they are also advised to avoid physical exertion and to lead a healthy lifestyle, including eating well. Medical services, however, are not easy to come by in Siargao. Health care is expensive; local health clinics provide only primary health services and poor farmers like Junior need to leave the island to get the medical attention they need. There are few business opportunities on Siargao, and the kidney sellers, who have little education and entrepreneurial skills, do not know how to invest their money. They earn barely enough to feed their families and put their children to school, so end up neglecting their health.

When the money from the kidney sale runs out, they go back, physically weaker and mentally stressed, to the unrelenting poverty they had hoped to escape.



Those who come to the island of Siargao in the southern Philippines may think they have stumbled upon paradise.

For many of the world's poor, there is no escape. The individual choices that they make – and the range of choices available to them – are determined not by themselves alone but by forces bigger and more powerful than they are. The story from Siargao island is only one of an infinite number of real-life snapshots that would tell a similar story of hopelessness and destitution which is the everyday reality today of

too many people. Expressions differ in different locations, but underlying causes and determinants are often much the same.

Ricky, Richard, and Junior, poor coconut farmers and fisherfolk on a little-known island in the Pacific, are linked to a transnational trade in organs that thrives in a global economy where both humans and their body parts are increasingly being seen as market commodities.

Advances in modern medicine, which have made possible organ and tissue transplants, have increasingly allowed the rich of the world to cheat disability and postpone death. This indefinite extension of life relies not just on technological advancements but on a ready supply of vital, and healthy, body parts. Today the technology of kidney transplants is so developed that they can be performed with relative ease in many parts of the world. Modern medicine has created a demand for transplantable organs. Because of this, there is a rising demand for kidneys in the global market. This is a demand for which a supply can be found – among the poor who have run out of things to sell: The fish are gone, the coconuts are priced too low, and the demand for unskilled labour not as high as that for kidneys.



Today there is a blackmarket peddling human kidneys to those who can afford to buy them. Prices range from as little as USD1,000 for an Indian kidney, USD2,700 for a Romanian one, and USD10,000 for one that comes from Turkey. An international kidney bazaar, albeit underground, already exists, prompting some surgeons and public-health officials to argue for a market-oriented approach that will enable those who want to purchase an organ to do so openly. Already, in many countries, legal barriers to the organ trade are crumbling.



Ricky, a farmer who dropped out of third grade because the nearest school was 11 kilometres from his home, bought a motorcycle and a karaoke machine after selling his kidney.

This commodification of the human body is part of a global trend in which life and nature are for sale. The world has truly become a marketplace where everything – including human life, organs, and genetic material – is a commodity that commands a price. The 21st century is seeing the emergence of corporate control not just over products but also over knowledge and life forms. Human cells have been patented by private companies, as has genetic material from plants and animals. Biotechnology firms have moved genes from species to species, creating new, genetically engineered organisms that are sold globally. And, just as biotechnology is restructuring life, the emergence of nanotechnology, whose commercial applications include the manufacture and replication of machinery and end products that have been constructed from the atom up, will restructure matter and further entrench corporate ownership of essential knowledge, life forms and matter.

Unless these trends are challenged the future will surely be one of increasing surveillance, as technology makes it easier for states and corporations to monitor a whole range of human activity. It also augurs new forms of life – human cyborgs with computer-chip implants that can control thoughts and feelings, or other forms of machine-human mixes; performance-enhanced humans with exceptional motor skills or mental alertness; genetically engineered designer babies; robots with artificial life and artificial intelligence. The boundary lines will be blurred. What is life? What is human? What is matter? What really matters?

This redefinition of what were once sacred categories is driven by high-tech global oligopolies that dominate life- and matter-controlling technologies. Never have transnational corporations been so rich or so powerful; neither has their reach been as global. Nor has the range of their product lines and business activities been so vast. Never have they invested so much overseas or bought up so many companies abroad. The modern world is one marked by the unquestioning belief in the virtue of markets and the intrusion of corporations in many aspects of life.

In this globalised world, however, there are grossly unequal terms of inclusion. Kidney sellers have found that their role in the global economy is that of body-part suppliers. Others will join the throngs of migrants to rich countries in the hope of finding employment and a better life. A few fortunate enough will be successful, but many more will be stopped at the increasingly impenetrable gates of Fortress North.

Certainly, both in the North and the South, many will find a place as producers or consumers of goods and services that are churned out by the global marketplace. Many more, however, will be left out, part of the redundant multitudes consigned to poverty, alienation and misery.

The sad reality is that despite increasing levels of global wealth and giant leaps in technological development, global poverty and inequity are at higher levels now than 30 years ago. Today over a billion people live in extreme poverty. Even as science has made possible the most sophisticated life-saving and life-extending technologies, the majority of those who live on this planet still don't have access to quality health care.

The most troubling paradox is that even as the world is producing more food than before, with countries like China, India, and Brazil emerging as top agricultural producers, there are more hungry peo-



Biotechnology firms have moved genes from species to species, creating new, genetically engineered organisms that are then sold globally.

ple now than in the past. While global food production has outpaced population growth in the last 35 years, the number of undernourished in the developing world continues to grow. Despite overflowing granaries, India has more hungry people than any country on earth: as many as 350 million or about one third of its citizens according to a recent estimate by the United Nations' World Food Programme.

And yet, India in the last few years has fully embraced 'globalisation'. Hi-tech outsourcing centres in cities such as Hyderabad, and Bangalore stand out as models of the new prosperity that foreign investment and a neo-liberal economic policy can bring about. The mechanisation of agriculture has resulted in surpluses of wheat and rice; India today is also one of the world's leading producers of fruits, vegetables, and milk. Yet millions still go hungry, their misery exacerbated by the withdrawal of state subsidies on power and agriculture, the lack of state investment in rural infrastructure, corruption and natural disasters like droughts and floods. In Andhra Pradesh and many other states in India, thousands of cotton farmers commit suicide every year due to indebtedness.

While hunger haunts the poor, overnutrition, a new kind of malnutrition from diets high in calories but low in nutrients, imperils the affluent. With food being so cheap and so abundant in the industrialised world, many in the rich countries suffer from diseases such as stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart ailments, and certain forms of cancer from eating too much of the wrong kinds of food. Already, the World Health Organisation has identified obesity as a 'global public health epidemic'. In the United States, obesity is second to smoking as a cause of preventable deaths. Misery afflicts the affluent as well.

The scale of human suffering in an increasingly rich, technologically advanced, informed, and networked world is made more disturbing by a sense among many that such suffering cannot be helped. Globalisation is widely seen as inevitable. Market mechanisms from the village to the global levels are deemed superior to all others by most economists. They, and the policy- and decision-makers they advise, hold the primacy of the market to be inviolable; the withdrawal of the state from important spheres of human activity to be preferable; and its replacement by corporations desirable, because they are considered to be the more rational, more efficient and less 'political' option.

This kind of thinking, especially in global institutions that are supposed to address the world's most pressing problems, leaves little room

for more innovative and far-reaching solutions. The alternatives being posed to the gospel of globalisation are often seen as extreme and uninformed. Global institutions, to a considerable extent in the hands of rich countries and transnational corporations, are imposing on the rest of the world a view of development based on ‘free trade’ and ‘free’ and ‘open’ markets. This single formula for all ignores the diversity of economic systems that exist in the world, including those in the North, and claims that neo-liberal capitalism is the ideal to which the rest of humanity should aspire.

Furthermore, the political spaces for dissent are shrinking and the social spheres where dissent thrives – academia, mass media, civil society – are themselves increasingly being brought under the spell of the market. The shrinking spaces, meanwhile, provide fertile ground for extremisms and fundamentalisms (Christian, Islamic, Hindu), making civilised discourse more and more difficult. In this situation, war and violence take the place of negotiation and dialogue.

Many have similarly shown how the gospel of ‘sustainable development’ has been infected by the neo-liberal ethos. The prevailing orthodoxy today is that sustainable development must be promoted by continued international financing and increased free trade. It is assumed that environmental protection can take place only in ‘free’ markets, with a minimum of state intervention, and with the cooperation of industry. The contribution to environmental ruin of free (but unequal) trade, of the plunder by corporations, and of global financial institutions that mire poor countries in debt and force them to undertake environmentally unsound policies is glossed over. Moreover, the current paradigm focuses on poverty, when the problems are as much overconsumption and uneven development, which markets have tragically and spectacularly failed to address.

Meanwhile, ecological catastrophes are looming on the horizon: carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere may triple pre-industrial levels by the end of this century. Even if action is taken now by implementing the Kyoto Treaty carbon dioxide levels will double – meaning more intense storms, droughts, spreading deserts, sea level rise submerging island nations and coastal areas, and retreating glaciers in the Himalaya.

Looking Back: The time of What Now

Thirty years ago, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation hosted a series of meetings, bringing together a group of people from the North and the South concerned with development. Many of them had ques-

tioned the development orthodoxy that prevailed at the time and were seriously pondering alternatives and imagining a different world order. One of the outcomes of these meetings was the publication of the report *What Now: Another Development*, whose principles have since constituted the backbone of much of the work of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.



The political spaces for dissent are shrinking and the social spheres where dissent thrives – academia, mass media, civil society – are themselves increasingly being brought under the spell of the market.

At the time of *What Now*, the problem was defined as development, or rather, the lack of it, that consigned most of the world's peoples to lives of poverty and misery. To many of those looking at the state of the world then, the problem was fundamentally that of unequal economic relations between a few dominant countries and the majority of dominated countries. The global divide was seen as that between the North and the South, the First World of rich industrialised countries and the Third World made up of poor and 'underdeveloped' nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

A majority held that the rich countries exploited the poor ones, taking advantage of their natural resources while selling them expensive manufactured products from the North. There was hence a crisis in development, as the majority who were poor did not have the means – the knowledge, skills, capital, and technology – to develop an industrial base and reach a level of 'progress' equal to that of the First World. They were consigned to a 'periphery' that was mired in poverty and 'underdevelopment'. At that time, it was thought that infusions of foreign capital, in the form of loans and foreign aid as well as knowledge and technology from the industrialised 'centre' would bridge the global divide. The North was the model to which poor nations should aspire, and it was a matter of transplanting to the South the economic, political, and social structures of the 'developed' world, including systems of feeding, housing, and educating its people.

It seemed a simple, straightforward notion, and an entire industry providing loans and aid to poor countries sprang up. But the reality was far more complex. By the 1970s, it had become clear to the more insightful thinkers in both the North and the South that the problems of the Third World could not be resolved simply by mimicking the solutions that had been tried in the North. Moreover, it was becoming obvious that development was not simply a matter of enabling economies to grow so the benefits would trickle down to the poor. On the contrary, the fixation with growth was itself a problem, as it neglected issues of equity (growth seldom trickled down), environmental degradation, and the increasing dependence of the Third World on infusions of aid, knowledge, and capital from the First.

The 1970s was the time when concerns about the pollution of the air, the rivers, and the seas led to a realisation that economic growth came at a stiff ecological price. In 1972, world leaders met in Stockholm to assess environmental problems and draw up a plan for the conservation of the biosphere.

At about the same time, E F Schumacher, who was strongly influenced by Buddhism, preached frugal living in an endangered planet. His book *Small Is Beautiful*, published in 1975, and, later, the posthumously edited volume *Small Is Possible*, became a lifestyle guide to a whole generation of ecologically conscious people. The ‘deep ecology’ movement and other non-anthropocentric groups emerged, often giving prominence to non-Western and indigenous cultures and experiences as a critique of the materialism and environmental deterioration of Western culture. In 1972, scientists and economists of the Club of Rome met and wrote deeply alarmist projections on a cataclysmic future in the book, *The Limits to Growth*, which influenced many nascent Green movements in Europe and elsewhere. As it turned out, the prophets of planetary doom underestimated the Earth’s capacity to adapt and change and its ability to heal – despite the scenarios in *Limits to Growth* we are still here. Some of the crises that were forecast have turned out to be either exaggerated or wrong. The Malthusian pronouncements of a population explosion and depleting resources were off the mark. Globally, population growth has gone down dramatically, even though there are regional hotspots. However, the message that there are environmental limits laid the ground for a growing environmental movement within parliamentary politics and civil society.

The early Greens spawned a whole political movement in Europe, which linked up with similar movements in other parts of the world and made ecological thinking a part of the modern credo. And when confronted with a global crisis like acid rain, and later, ozone depletion, the international community showed that when conditions were right, and powerful interests were not too threatened, it could act quite rationally and pragmatically in a time-bound manner to reduce the production and use of pollutants.

The mid-1970s were also a period of heightened Third World assertiveness. The Non-Aligned Movement was gaining ground. The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced a sharp increase in the price of oil and it seemed that for the first time the poor but resource-rich countries of the South had discovered that collectively they had the power to shake the world. The end of the



When confronted with a global crisis like acid rain, and later, ozone depletion, the international community showed that when conditions were right, and powerful interests were not too threatened, it could act quite rationally and pragmatically in a timebound manner to reduce the production and use of pollutants.

Vietnam War had proved that US military power was not invincible. It seemed that the existing world order was coming apart and a new one, more just and more attuned to the needs of the world's poor, was possible. The UN General Assembly adoption of the 'Declaration of the Establishment of a New International Economic Order' (NIEO) in May 1974 was perhaps the most striking example of this.

Revisiting What Now: Strengths and weaknesses

The *What Now* report was therefore written with guarded hope. It called for structural transformations in the global order, rather than mere palliatives. What was needed, it said, was to strengthen the capacity of the Third World for self-reliant development and to transform socio-economic and political structures, including redistributing wealth and means of production.

What Now criticised the emphasis on growth and the use of gross national product as an indicator of progress. It said: 'Development is a whole. Its ecological, cultural, social, economic, institutional, and political dimensions can only be understood in their systemic interrelationships, and action in its service must be integrated.' The Report further laid out a framework for a holistic view of development – referred to as 'Another Development' – that was based on five core principles:

- › *Need-oriented.* Development should be geared to meeting human needs, both material and non-material.
- › *Endogenous.* It should stem from the heart of each society, which defines in sovereignty its values and the vision of its future.
- › *Self-reliant.* The development of each society should rely primarily on its own strength and resources in terms of its members' energies and its natural and cultural environment.
- › *Ecologically sound.* The resources of the biosphere must be utilised rationally in full awareness of the potential of local ecosystems as well as the global and local outer limits imposed on present and future generations.
- › *Based on structural transformation.* Structural reforms are needed so as to realise the conditions of self-management and participation in decision-making by all those affected by it, from the rural or urban community to the world as a whole, without which the goals above could not be achieved.

What Now in 1975 was revolutionary as it challenged existing models and definitions of development. It rejected the idea of a one-size-fits-all development model, stressing instead pluralism, diversity, and the need for societies to tap the reservoirs of their own cultures and histories. Translated into six languages, the Report was widely read in development circles, in the UN, and by influential thinkers and policymakers around the world. Indeed, parts of its critique of the development paradigm eventually became accepted into mainstream thinking. Alternative, non-GNP-oriented indicators of poverty and development, for example, have been developed and are now in use for policymaking by both international organisations and nation-states. In addition, critical analyses of the environmental dimension of development and concepts such as sustainable development are now part of the everyday discourse in the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Several other core elements have not, however, been adopted.



What Now's great attraction lay in the freshness of some of its ideas: Another Development – a new paradigm of development, which aims to satisfy basic human needs on the basis of self-reliance and harmony with the environment. Equally important was its emphasis on endogenousness and equity, and its questioning of Western-dominated positivist notions of modernity and progress. *What Now's* call for redressing North–South inequalities and ushering in a more just and humane world order was in many observers' eyes as passionate as it was coherent and well-argued.

What Now's call for redressing North-South inequalities and ushering in a more just and humane world order was in many observers' eyes as passionate as it was coherent and well-argued.

What Now began with a simple premise: 'In a world whose gross national product trebled over the last 25 or 30 years, whereas population increased by barely two-thirds, resources are available to satisfy basic needs without transgressing the "outer limits". The question is primarily one of distributing them more equitably.' Nation-states and state-based multilateral institutions would play the pivotal role here, with the United Nations occupying pride of place among them. The world as it then existed, with all its miseries, injustices and inequalities, was unacceptable. It had to be radically reformed.

Thirty years, however, gives us the benefit of hindsight. For sure, *What Now* was path-breaking; it blazed the trail for more critical thinking about development and the problems of the South. But it was also too focused on the development problematique and the creation of a New International Economic Order that it did not touch on issues such as war and peace, gender and indigenous peoples. Moreover, the prescriptions in *What Now* were almost exclusively directed

toward states and global institutions of governance such as the United Nations. These were envisioned to be the primary agents of change. The role of business and civil society was not given the attention it deserved.

What Now, however, should be taken in the context of its time, and in the context of the people who put the report together. They were individuals immersed in the problems of Third World development, as intellectuals, policymakers or international civil servants. There was no one in the group from the peace movement that had emerged in the West as a reaction to U.S. intervention in Vietnam. The feminist movement then gaining ground was also not represented (women and gender equality are hardly mentioned in *What Now*). Certainly, the transnational, global justice, pro-democracy social movements that sprang up in the late 1990s were still unheard of then. The 1970s did not portend the coming together of ecological, feminist, social justice, indigenous, peace and ethnic justice groups in a still-amorphous movement united in the search for new solutions to counteract the problems of globalisation.

In 1975, globalisation as a discourse did not yet exist. The world was still frozen in the Cold War and the age of triumphalism of global markets and the neo-liberal doctrine, a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union, was a generation away. Today there is only one superpower, and its hegemony is evident in the market, the battlefields, the mass media and the minds of many.

While the global reach of transnational corporations (TNCs) was cited in the 1975 Report, their power then was confined largely to dominating the market for Third World natural resources, bought cheaply by TNCs, which sold back to the Third World manufactured goods and services. Today the power of corporations far exceeds what they wielded 30 years ago. They not only have a monopoly of goods and services, but also of capital, which can now move around freely and instantaneously. In addition, corporations control to a large extent the mass media, Information Technology and the frontiers of knowledge. Moreover, they exert significant influence on the global governance, trade, and financial institutions that set the rules for the new world order. Thirty years ago, development was the paradigm peddled by these institutions; today globalisation is the new mantra.

Despite its shortcomings, *What Now* held an optimistic, emancipatory view of global realities and passionately advocated ways of changing them for the better. Its overwhelming concern was to transform

the world into a more equal, peaceful, and environmentally sound place in which all of humanity, especially the poor, have a stake. The methods it espoused could be faulted, but hardly the moral clarity of its vision of a more humane future.

Development Today

Thirty years after *What Now*, the bulk of the alternative views expressed there and elsewhere has not materialised, but provides still largely a marginal, ‘counterpoint’ perspective. Certainly, alternative development thinking and practical initiatives have proliferated and matured over the years, constituting a steadily more sophisticated area. But they have had limited impact at the level of policy and state action. While significant concepts and terms with the potential to transform development practice, such as ‘sustainability’, ‘participation’, ‘partnership’ and ‘equity’, have become part of the established development discourse, they have not necessarily been translated into new patterns of concrete action. Despite the numerous drawbacks it is associated with, the mainstream development paradigm continues to hold sway.

Perhaps the most striking expression of contemporary, mainstream development is found in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Signed by the heads of states of 189 countries in the year 2000, albeit without wide popular consultation, the MDGs represent a common agenda for the international community. Appearing highly practical, measurable and feasible, the MDGs have a strong appeal. They have been firmly endorsed by international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, and have also become a major focus for many NGOs and civil society organisations, mobilising support and engagement across different areas of expertise and geographical locations.

Any commitment on the part of the international community to rally around a common framework for combating poverty, disease, hunger and environmental degradation is laudable. In themselves, the MDGs could represent important stepping stones for a more humane, just and sustainable world. Yet, there are limitations that should be recognised.

To begin with, development is perceived as a linear and uniform social process towards Western-style modernisation and increasing economic growth, and the only way forward. The challenge for poor countries is to catch up with the world’s rich nations. Not only does this posit an antiquated worldview which divides the globe into a

‘developed’ North and an ‘underdeveloped’ South. It also fails to recognise the problems that have arisen in the materially rich countries as a result of ‘development’. In other words, the framework appears markedly homogenising and leaves little room for a diversity of development options and self-reliant, ‘endogenous’ approaches.

From this angle it is logical that the goals are almost entirely geared towards developing countries. The fundamental goal of poverty reduction, for example, seems framed as a discrete phenomenon disconnected from structural issues of central concern for North–South economic relations, such as trade regulations, financial flows, investment conditions, the power of transnational companies, levels of indebtedness and labour rights. Instead of recognising the global power dynamics and international political and economic structures and interests as determinants of poverty, there is little contextual analysis. Poverty and development, it seems, are problems situated in a power vacuum.

There is, furthermore, an unquestioning belief in the benefits of the free market and economic growth, and in continued efforts towards privatisation and export-orientation as general solutions to a range of social and economic problems. Although economic growth is necessary for improving the conditions of the very poor, it is far from sufficient. As development scholar Su-ming Khoo puts it: ‘Markets, no matter how fast they grow, do not distribute health, education, clean water, sanitation or shelter.’ If growth is not coupled with social and political reforms beneficial to the least advantaged, social improvement will not be achieved. Poverty must be approached as the multi-

Development is perceived as a linear and uniform social process towards Western-style modernisation and increasing economic growth.



faceted problem it is, encompassing such factors as employment possibilities, access to basic services and availability of natural resources crucial for people's livelihood, among others. It cannot be reduced to being primarily a problem of lack of capital.

Moreover, the current emphasis on economic growth is largely discussed without reference to the earth's ecological carrying capacity and the present environmental deterioration. Little demand is made on the rich countries whose ecological footprints and pollution levels far exceed those of the poor countries. Today – thirty years after *What Now*, almost twenty years after the Brundtland report and more than a decade after the Rio conference – the biophysical 'outer limits' are still at best seen as marginal. The MDG framework regrettably fails to engage in a much-needed debate on the problems of economic growth, the evident limits to it and the less than clear-cut relationship between growth and quality of life.

★ ★ ★

This view of 'development' propagated by decision-makers around the world has direct bearing on the life chances and living conditions of many people, from the kidney donors on the Philippine island of Siargao to the cotton farmers of Andhra Pradesh in India and many other groups across the South and the North. In the name of 'development', trade agreements are being signed. Markets are being opened. Technologies are being developed and subsidised. Aid projects are being designed.

It is difficult to foretell with certainty what life on Siargao island would be like in the coming decades. Given present trends, it does not seem likely that Siargao would be a thriving, 'developed', mass-consumption society that has finally 'caught up' with Europe, North America and the East Asian Tigers. Many may find such a vision enticing, but it is an impossible mirage. If the 'modernisation' and 'development' project is pursued along current trajectories, both the Siargao of the future, and even some of the more affluent societies in the North, would probably be marked by greater division and inequity, with their ecological resources spent and many of their people mired in poverty.

Echoing the spirit of *What Now*, there must be other ways forward. Can we imagine a different future guided by another, more humane understanding of 'development'? What other, viable ways are there for the people of Siargao to make a living in an increasingly glob-

alised world? Indeed, what movements and ideas in ‘peripheral’ corners of the world are now growing in influence and may contain the seeds of different, and vastly better, modes of living? What proposals and visions for a deepened democracy, radically new forms of governance and organisation of the global economy exist?

The future is not written in stone. Many paths are possible. Let us examine these closely as we envision a better future. What Next?



Sheila Coronel is Executive Director of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), a nonprofit agency specialising in investigative reporting. She has written extensively on politics and the media in Southeast Asia and has conducted training on investigative reporting for Southeast Asian journalists. In 2003, Sheila Coronel was given the prestigious Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature and the Creative Communication Arts.



Kunda Dixit is one of Nepal’s leading journalists and editors, and an international authority on the press in Asia. He is founder, editor and publisher of the *Nepali Times*, and co-publisher at Himalmedia. Kunda Dixit was Asia-Pacific Director of the Inter Press Service from 1990 to 1996 and Director of the Panos Institute South Asia from 1997 to 2000. His publications include *Dateline Earth: Journalism as if the Planet Mattered* (Inter Press Service, 1997) and numerous articles on contemporary media issues and information technology.
