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## Book review (Peet, R., Hartwick E. – Theories of development: Contentions, Arguments, Alternatives)

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**Abstract.** This book review aims to discuss the new perspectives on theories of development provided by two outstanding scholars: Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick in their recent published book “Theories of development: Contestations, Arguments, Alternatives”. An interesting point a view is presented from the beginning: development means a better life for everyone but economic growth can occur without touching problems like inequalities, poverty etc. The introductory chapter explains the differences between Growth and Development, and it is followed by a part I Conventional Theories of Development, part II Nonconventional Critical Theories of Development, part III Critical Modernism. Readers will find this book review intriguing and interesting enough to stimulate their curiosity to explore this fascinating book.

**Keywords:** one, two, three, etc.

**JEL Codes:** B12, B13, B14, E12, O1, O4, P16,

### 1. Introduction

Richard Peet is Professor of Economics, Technologies and Environment and Professor of Geography at Clark University USA where he was the founding member of a radical geography movement and a long time editor of the “*Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*”. Peet’s research interests gravitates around development, global policy regimes, power theory and philosophy, political ecology and finance capitalism. Elaine Hartwick is Professor at Framingham State University where she teaches courses in political, cultural and regional geography and global development.

Those two scholars have reunited their knowledge to write a book on theories of development, in an objective manner, presenting the most important theories, accepted or criticised. Their purpose was to provide readers arguments or alternatives and helping them to find their own research orientation.

The book clarifies the basic ideas of contemporary controversies and debates surrounding economic growth, environmental crisis, and global inequality. It emphasizes the points of contention among the various theories, and their relationship with historical and current world events, and works toward envisioning a form of development that makes life better for all. New to This Edition reflects the latest data and global development trends, such as the effects on economies of extreme weather events and climate



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change. New discussions throughout the chapters, including the work of Thomas Piketty, Richard Florida, William Easterly, Niall Ferguson, and Arturo Escobar. The authors discuss the current crises, including the global financial meltdown and its consequences and the rise of finance capitalism.

Introductory chapter: “Growth versus Development” start by defining the concept of development which means a better life for everyone. But, in today’s world a better life means meeting the basic needs such as sufficient food, a safe healthy place to live, affordable services available for everyone, and being treated with dignity and respect. These needs are the basics for human survival, after meeting them, development can be seen in a broader perspective: in term of material and cultural vision of different societies.

Development understood as a better life is a powerful emotional ideal, more a discourse that has the power to move people, to affect us immediately or to change us forever.

Instead, economic growth, in authors’ vision, means achieving a more massive economy able to produce more goods or services reflected in GDP (gross domestic product) and to generate a larger total income in the GNI (gross national income). But economic growth can occur without touching problems like inequality and poverty when all the increase of income goes to a few people.

Authors are seen economic growth as a mean to channel money and power to the already rich and famous, but for the developmentalists consider this a travesty of ethics and a tragedy of modern economic theory and practice. So, development is interested not so much in growth of an economy but rather in how production occurs and how the results are divided among society members. Economic growth damage the environment but development pay attention to the environment affected by the economic activities.

The introductory chapter illustrates the differences and commonalities between the two concepts: development and economic growth.

Being human geographers, authors seem to embrace the analysis of the relation between humans and nature and how environment was dramatically changed by the economic growth.

## **2. Part. I Conventional Theories of Development**

To understand the value of this book you just need to follow closely the authors’ journey from the classical economics theories to the newest ones. In first part, authors present the conventional theories of development starting with Classical and Neoclassical Economics, from Keynesian Economics to Neoliberalism, Development as Modernization. As been the third edition, the book caught attention of various readers, from eminent scholars, as Piers Blaikie, to undergraduate/graduate students in Geography, Political Economy or International Development.

*‘Theories of Development, Third Edition, is as far reaching, widely referenced, and penetrating as its predecessors. The book has been updated with the work of Piketty, Ferguson, Escobar, and others, as well as strengthened argumentation throughout. Perhaps it is ironic to say this book has kept pace with global crisis. This is an ideal text for upper-level undergraduate and graduate programs in geography, international and development studies, and other social sciences focusing on social change. Beginning doctoral students*



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*will find the book useful for situating their own research in a wider context of social theory.”*  
— says Piers Blaikie, PhD, Professor Emeritus, School of International Development, University of East Anglia, United Kingdom.

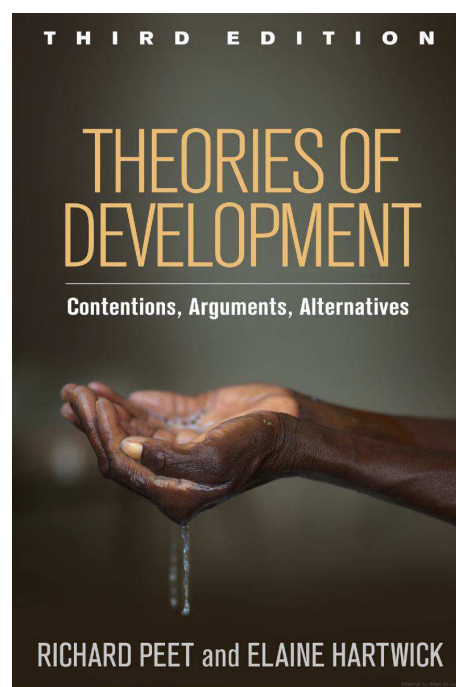


Fig. 1: The book's cover

It is interesting to discover that there a lot of theories on development, old or recent ones, and authors ask themselves rhetorically: Could scholars agreed upon one development theory? Is it possible to find the arguments to support all of them that “best” theory and concentrate their efforts to show what policies to pursue? The answers cannot be simple ones just because each theory reflects the diverse political positions of their adherents. Some of the theories can be categorised as been “conventional” who accept the existing basic capitalism structure as being the best society structure that could ever be. These theories tend to emphasize the economic growth over development or, in other words, to see development as economic growth.

Conventional theories are focused on Economics or synthesised the mainstream of Keynesianism and growth theory onto a classical and neoclassical framework.

Chapter 3 Modernisation theory – the chapter explain us that the theory derives from sociology and began as a mild criticism of neoclassical economics. The criticism vanishes into a accomplice positioning and this evolution is subject of the chapter 4 Mainstream economics. Development is seen as a “stage-type” process, uniform lead by the historical rise of Western economies over the years. In this view, the rest of the world is continuously trying the catch –up with Westerns.



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Authors' work is considerable and the ways in which they extract what is relevant for each of the mainstream policies that derive from these development theories are extremely beneficial for readers being in their early stage professional career. Comparisons can be and should be developed most of all because it is a big need to understand which policy is more beneficial or not on long term.

Part two – Nonconventional, critical theories of development is dedicated to Marxism, Socialism and their link to Development. Apart from the descriptive presentation of Marxism, production as transformation of nature and Development as Social Transformation, authors are equidistant in their presentation because they include Criticism of Marxism and Ne-Marxist Theories. To better illustrate their arguments, authors took some cases: Socialist Development in USSR, Cuba, Venezuela and formulated their own conclusions. Chapter 6 Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism and Postdevelopmentalism is dedicated to Enlightenment and its criticism and Post –enlightenment criticisms that cannot be forgotten. An interesting description can be discovered when readers turn pages at Intellectually Dependency Theory. Feminist Theories and there links to Development is one of the themes largely discussed in chapter 7, most of all, the position of “Women in Development” or “Women and Development” were described in a easy to understand manner which allow readers to develop their own point of view on Feminist theories. It should be clear for anyone, gender cannot be ignored in development studies.

The last part of the book – Part III Critical modernism is dedicated to alternatives, as much viable they can be. A significant overview on ethical issues of development studies is provided and social movement and radical democracy are equally represented and discussion themes.

Nevertheless, readers with less knowledge in this field are welcome too, just because authors have employed a easy to understand linguistic style at the same time with comprehensive sample or description that help readers to connect information and to develop their own critical thinking patterns.

### **3. Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to our Board of Trustee that have understood how important is the access to latest information in the field when they decide to keep the investments in our libraries at the same level as previous years despite the fact that number of students is declined continuously.