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Perceptions of Development in Ghana

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Abstract

Entitled “Perceptions of Development in Ghana,” this work looks at how the concept of development is perceived in Ghana. In western, developed nations, development exists for the large part only as a concept. This paper shows, however, that in Ghana development takes assumes many forms. The work seeks to explore the essence of development by asking questions, such as: what does development mean? How does it manifest itself? How is the problem of underdevelopment approached by the Ghanaians that I interviewed? We will find that development is the subject of an open-ended dialogue, which sees no end in sight.
“The sharing of information is essential for sustainable development. It stimulates public debate on and broadens understanding of development issues, and enhances transparency and accountability in the development process”

James D. Wolfensohn

President of the World Bank Group
Introduction

Introduction:

The issue of development in Ghana is widely talked about, highly publicized and viciously debated. Through the television news, the printed press, and formal and casual conversations, development pervades Ghanaian life. It leaves few untouched and more often, it has a strong grip on the thoughts of Ghanaians and the future of Ghana.

Some might argue that development is a topic beholden only to an elite few – the educated, the wealthy, the leaders of Ghana, but during my study of perceptions of development in Ghana, I found that development is important in some way to everyone I spoke. Each person that I spoke with had some form of conceptualizing development – perhaps a policy idea, perhaps a hope, an anxiety, perhaps a disinterest. Their responses to questions about development varied across a wide spectrum of possible answers, but I found that each person realized that development was a topic that could not be ignored. Moreover, as I pondered my own definition of development and considered different aspects of each conversation, it became more than apparent that each person had something valuable to contribute to the discussion of development.

Given that development is such an important topic in Ghana, it is only natural to ask the question: What exactly is development? What do we mean by the world development? Underdevelopment? How does development manifest itself? How do we know that a country is developed? How do we know that a country is developing? What do any of these terms mean to the daily lives of people in both developed and developing countries? Is Ghana on a path towards development? Is it the only path, or even the right path? What, if anything, should Ghana do differently? And who is responsible for development – government of Ghana, the people of Ghana, the developed nations, the nongovernmental organizations? All of these question fit under the general question of how development is perceived in Ghana – is it a life source? A savior? A curse? A futile hope? Is it the future?

Before conducting this research, I had always believed that development was something that a nation shared – a vague, undefined belief that eventually life in the future will somehow
be better than it is now. After conducting this research, I believe that this notion is still true, but I also have a stronger sense in the manifestations of development. I know about what is gained, I know about what is lost; I know that the slowness with which this process is proceeding leads many to forgo hope. While doing this research, the concept of development, which exists primarily as a concept in the west took on new life; it even came to life. The research crystallized for me what “underdevelopment” means – it means not being able to send your children to school, it means having no way of reaching a hospital that is 10 kilometers away in the middle of the night when your aging grandmother is sick, it means searching for a job that does not exist, it means spending countless hours shuttling back and forth from Accra to Cape Coast so that you can buy some small goods in Accra that you can in turn, sell in Kotokraba market. For many, these are the struggles created by a lack of development; these are the meanings of underdevelopment.

Background on Development Theory and Literature on Development:

The 1994 edition of the World Book Encyclopedia gives the definition of a developing country as “any of the world’s poor, or ‘have-not’ nations,” adding that the majority of these countries are in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The encyclopedia adds that such nations are characterized by a shortage of food, few power sources, and a low gross domestic product. Most of these countries are dependent on one or two main crops and the people, particularly in the rural areas, where most of the population lives, suffer if these sectors fail. According to the World Book Encyclopedia, “Disease, illiteracy and inadequate equipment keep agricultural and commercial production low”.

The World Book Encyclopedia cites the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) as one of the most common measures of development, with developing countries having a per capita GDP of less than $3,000, while developed countries have a per capita GDP of more than

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1 The World Book Encyclopedia 1994 gave no definition for the word ‘development,’ otherwise the author would have defined the term ‘development.’ The term ‘developing country’ was the closest substitute.
$20,000 annually. According to the World Book, many of these countries are also coming under enormous population pressures, while death rates decrease and birth rates remain high. The growing number of people is an additional pressure on a system where resources, specifically physical and social capital, are already scarce. In closing their assessment of developing nations, the World Book Encyclopedia explains that 75% of the world’s population lives in developing nations.

This last fact caught my attention not because of the high percentage, but because I was wondering if the author of this section had spoken to anyone in a developing country while constructing this definition. Given the content of the definition, I thought that he probably had not and I became even more eager to converse with people in a developing country about their perceptions of development.

Early development theory believed in the existence of stages of development, where countries are moving along a continuum of developmental stages. In their article, “Economic Development in Africa: Aim and Possibilities”, G. J. Ligthart and B. Abbai discuss Rostow’s stages of economic development, specifically the “take-off” stage which is defined as a period of steady growth. At the same time, however, they do question these stages, “Unfortunately this state of growth ‘sustained and self-reinforcing is not defined, nor is it proven that it indeed is or can become a normal condition and with respect to the advanced countries, it certainly seems a bold assumption”.

Ligthart and Abbai go on to argue that development consists of industries thrusting ahead of each other, providing the necessary “expansionary force”. A lack of expansion in any

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3 In his book, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Walter Rodney asserts that GDP per capita is not reflective of the true average income in any given country. He writes, “the national income is a measurement of the total wealth of the country, while the per capita income is a figure obtained by dividing the national income by the number of inhabitants in order to get an idea of the ‘average’ wealth of each inhabitant. This ‘average’ can be misleading where there are great extremes of wealth. A young Ugandan put it in a very personal form when he said that the per capita income of his country camouflaged the fantastic difference between what was earned by his poor peasant father and what was earned by the biggest local capitalist, Madhvani,” Rodney, Walter. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982), 15.

4 The assertion by the World Book Encyclopedia 1994 that resources in developing nations are scarce if highly debatable.


one industry, however, create “bottlenecks”, which slow down the process of advancement.\textsuperscript{7}

They go on to suggest that development inherently involves massive changes in the economy (and hence political and social structures) of a developing country, explaining “Economic development is normally associated with structural changes in the economy. Given a balanced distribution of resources, development usually involves, in the course of time, a growing share of non-agricultural output and services in the total gross national product.”\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, 5.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid, 6.
Methodology

The methodology for the research I conducted during ISP was relatively simple. It consisted mainly of primary sources, with some secondary sources that I used at the beginning of the project for background research. Although I made two trips to Accra, I spent the majority of my time in Cape Coast, which I found was both a plus and a minus.

I traveled to Accra twice to conduct interviews and I found both trips to be very productive. My time in Accra was cut short because of the Easter holiday, which was unfortunate because it caused me to need a second trip to Accra. I left Cape Coast for Accra on Monday, April 5 and was planning to return on Friday, April 9, but there were no buses running, so I returned to home late on Thursday night after three full days of research. The following week, I returned to Accra on Thursday, April 15 for just two nights. Both of these trips were very productive and I managed to squeeze five interviews out of this time, all of which were important to my research. I think that because I knew my time in Accra was limited, I was forced to work as quickly as possible and get several things done each day. In Cape Coast, I did not feel that same pressure, since the time seemed more indefinite and each day was not as rushed.

Initially I assumed that the majority of my research would consist of primary sources that I discovered through interviews. A few weeks before the start of ISP, however, my advisor Professor Atta Britwum of the French Department recommended that I immerse myself in some of the literature on development theory so as to provide a contextual framework for my own research. I found this advice to be very helpful and discovered as time went out my own research was more thought provoking, more insightful, and more analytical because of this background in development theory. All of my secondary source research was done at the University of Cape Coast library during ISP prep time and the first few days of ISP. I took comprehensive note of the readings that I did.\footnote{These notes can be found in the author’s Independent Study Project (ISP) journal and are discussed in the Introduction section of the paper. All of the texts used are listed in the footnotes and in the paper’s bibliography.}
The main source of information used in my project was one-on-one interviews. In all cases, the interviews were conducted in person except for one instance when the interviewee was too busy to schedule an interview. In this case, they suggested that I type my questions, leave the paper, and come back for it at a later date; all of which, I did. Before beginning the actual research, I knew that I wanted it to be mostly interview, because this was the most productive form of gathering information. It allowed for personal contact so that interviewees could feel comfortable with me and were willing to discuss my questions more and more as the interview progressed. It also allowed me to ask follow-up questions, which proved to be particularly important in revealing interviewees perceptions of development\textsuperscript{10}.

Generally, I was quite fortunate in finding that people were more than willing to talk to me (possibly I thought because they were eager to see real change in Ghana). I found that making myself available for questions or showing my face several times before the actual interview was quite helpful in finding interviewees and having them open up to me. For instance, in the market, my interviewees were much more comfortable with me after I had visited them a few times to chat and share my limited Fate. In the majority of my interviews, the interviewees had at least met me before the time of our scheduled interview.

During ISP prep time, Professor Britwum helped me in determining who to target for conducting my research. I emphasized to him that I wanted to interview people a wide range of people – people in the government and people out of government, people in the formal sector and people in the informal structure, people belonging to organizations and people who did not. I knew that the time was far too short to take a sampling of the population, but I wanted to get as large a variety as the time would accommodate. We pinpointed some people to speak with, including government officials, members of nongovernmental organizations, community leaders, people in the formal business sector, people in the informal business sector , and people in the scholarly community. I was able to reach many people, but in hindsight this was far too

\textsuperscript{10}The questions asked to all interviewees are attached at the end of the document in Appendix One. Specific questions that arose during the interviews are not listed because they were far too great in number. All notes of interviews and tape recordings, however, are in possession of the author, who can be contacted for further questions about the interview research.
many people to target and perhaps my conclusions could have been more focused if my target pool had been more focused. On the other hand, I did not want to limit my research to one population, so I’m glad that I at least spoke to a small number of people in these populations.

In analyzing data, I searched through the copious notes I had taken during interviews or had transcribed later on, trying to find similarities and gaps between people’s responses. I was specifically looking for responses that were similar or in opposition to each other, because this is what I wanted to focus my paper on. I knew before beginning my research that I could not discover a Ghanaian perception of development because nothing that coherent could exist, so I was looking instead for perceptions of development in Ghana and for where there are links, breaks and nonparallels.

The only serious limitation I faced was the need to travel back to Accra in an already shortened second week, which took valuable time out of my schedule in Cape Coast. While it was somewhat inconvenient, I was very interested by the information shared during the interview so I found that it was definitely worth the extra effort.
Chapter One: Definitions of Development

Introduction

When asked for a definition of development, almost all interviewees struggled with this question, reflecting the difficulty in defining this word. Some initially responded that they did not know anything about development, or suggested that I speak to someone more knowledgeable. Some gave indicators of development, while others offered descriptions of development and underdevelopment. Definitions came in all shapes and sizes and ran a wide spectrum of answers. In the end, I found that each definition encompassed a different aspect of development and each reflected how development manifested itself in the person’s daily life.

Responses to my question, “What is the definition of development? Begin the presentation and analysis of my data for two important reasons. One, this question is the premise of my research – what does development mean? What does it mean to be developed or underdeveloped? How is the concept of development reflected in Ghana? This question is also one of a handful of questions that were asked to all interviewees, and my first question in thinking about my research.

The second reason is that responses to this question about the definition of development reveal how different interviewees approach the question of development differently. It is not only the words, the facts, the examples that interviewees used to define development that are different. The essence of each definition is also very different and reflects different contextual frameworks for considering development. As the reader will soon see, many different terms, statistics, examples and anecdotes are used in defining development. These differences, however, only skim the surface layer. These superficial differences reflect much deeper differences in approaching the question of development.
II. Responses to the question, “What is the definition of development”

Responses to the question, “What is the definition of development?” varied greatly in almost every way. Some answers were long, while others brief and concise. Some were able to pinpoint exact words to define development, while others used examples, facts, and terms to illustrate their definition development. On occasion, a single interviewee had more than one definition for the term.

Among all of the interviewees, there was a general consensus that development was some kind of forward movement in a position direction. At times, interviewees could offer no further specifics on the term. For instance, Kafu Kofi Tsikata, a Communications Officer at the World Bank Group, replied that “Development is whatever happens that makes people happier than they were”\(^{11}\). Similarly, Mr. Kwateng, the Principal Economist at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, answered that development is “improvement in the welfare of the total being“\(^{12}\). When asked the same question, one of the teachers at a local Junior Secondary School (J.S.S.), Esi\(^{13}\), replied that the process must be a positive one … if so, then development will take place”\(^{14}\). While these definitions share the same sense of forward movement and progression, they give little indication of the substance of development, revealing the difficulty in pinpointing a single definition of development.

According to several interviewees, the definition of development depends heavily on each person’s own life and experiences. Kafu Kofi Tsikata, illustrated this point by saying, “For the people of Liberia, [development] is peace, even if it doesn’t include food”\(^{15}\).

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\(^{11}\) Communications Office Kafu Kofi Tsikata of the World Bank Group, interview by author, 6 April 2004, Accra, written note in possession of author.


\(^{13}\) Some interviewees wished to keep their names anonymous. I have therefore selected day names to replace their actual names for the sake of keeping track of interviewees while reading the paper. From now on, at the first appearance of a name, an asterisk will mark a name that has been changed for reasons of anonymity.


\(^{15}\) Tsikata, 6 April 2004.
A market women, Efua* said that to her, development meant the development of her own business and that she could “care less” about national development\(^{16}\).

### III. Measures of Development

One of the most prominent aspects of development theory is that it is something to be measured. In determining a country’s level of development, statistics and facts are weighed against each other and quantified to determine which country has a higher level of development\(^{17}\). Studying how these measurements originate, or if they are reflective of real conditions is an important aspect in considering development. Measurement are especially pertinent to this discussion of definitions or illustrate points during our conversations.

Coming from a western education in development theory, I imagined that I would find western terms being used to measure development – words like gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, inflation, and expansionary growth\(^{18}\). Measurements in development theory and measurements in the reality of development, however, are very different and embody different approaches to development. In the west, development and underdevelopment are intangible concepts, but from my research that is not the case in Ghana. While some general terms, such as “GDP”, “budgetary constraints”, and “debt” were used to describe the development, measures of development in Ghana took on more tangible forms than these western concepts\(^{19}\).

Tangible forms included the quality and accessibility of the school system \(^{20}\), or maintaining a small business\(^{21}\). For example, instead of merely measuring the number of

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\(^{16}\) Anonymous market woman “Efua”, interview by author 22 April 2004, Cape Coast, written notes in possession of author.

\(^{17}\) Quantifying statistics and facts can be as precise as ranking specific numbers as higher or lower than each other, or it can be as subjective as labeling something “better” or “worse” than another thing.

\(^{18}\) In the Introduction to this paper, the author cited the World Book Encyclopedia’s 1994 edition as an example of this phenomenon. The encyclopedia cited annual GDP per capita as a determining factor in whether a nation is developed or underdeveloped.

\(^{19}\) Tsikata, 6 April 2004.

\(^{20}\) Anonymous market woman (Ekua*), interview by author, 23 April 2004, written notes in possession of author.

\(^{21}\) Anonymous market woman (Efua*), 23 April 2004.
schools, a measure of development in Ghana is the quality of the education or how easily accessible the schools are.\textsuperscript{22}

While the presence of western developmental terms was limited, the presence of western ideas of development were not. Western ideas on how to achieve development and what development would like in Ghana were fairly common. Presumably, these western ideas that were preeminent in discussions of development originate in years of international involvement in Ghanaian politics and economy. They suggest one of the most controversial aspects of development – should underdeveloped countries, like Ghana, develop by proceeding in the direction of the western, developed nation like the United States and the United Kingdom, or is a new, creative, country, society, culture-specific remedy needed for eradicating poverty in Ghana?

According to several interviews I conducted, the answer to becoming a developed country lies with the west and is based in western ideology. When asked about the major insufficient resources are dedicated to developing small businesses, saying “government policies doesn’t [don’t] favor entrepreneurship”\textsuperscript{23}. Entrepreneurship, however, is a modern idea based in western capitalism that argues that any person should have the opportunity to establish a business, making sufficient money to sustain himself and his dependents, and make a profit on his business.\textsuperscript{24}

The idea of entrepreneurship, however, did not exist in pre-colonial Ghana, where a mainly communal, subsistence economy existed. In this book, \textit{Socio-Economic Development Strategies of Independent Africa Countries: The Ghanaian Experience}, Ansa Asamoa writes,

> Our survey of the economic scene of pre-colonial Ghana reveals a fairly high level of the productive forces and a self-reliant, inter-sectorally well-balanced communalist mode of production. The articulateness of the economy could be mainly explained in terms of internal factors of production, organization and management.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} J.S.S. teacher, Esi, 21 April 2004.
\textsuperscript{24} Author’s own observations.
Asamoa further explains that societal organization and cultural values supported the maintenance of a subsistence economy, saying the “socio-material solidarity … protected the subsistence economic regime.”

In contrast, the concept of entrepreneurship reflects not only the importance of the individual in Western society, but also the desire for an individual’s advancement over his peers. Esi’s response reflects how Western conceptions of development have come to dominate the current discussion on development.

Similarly, in defining development, an anonymous bank manager, Kojo*, said that “people [are] not well conscientized” to access funds, referring specifically to accessing loans from formal credit institutions. Explaining that Ghanaians need easier access to funds so that a greater amount of monetary capital can be continually reinvested into the economy, Kojo said that the bank would offer funds to individuals without collateral so long as their salary is “rooted through the bank.” Salaries, however, must consist of at least 2,000,000 cedis, but this “percentage [of salaries] is too small” to show any real improvement in the Ghanaian economy. The idea of being able to access credit based entirely on a person’s income is not indigenous to Ghanaian culture. For hundreds of years, Ghanaians have been able to access funds through the susu savings system, which includes options for all income levels.

IV Comparisons

Like measurement, comparisons are an equally aspect of development that follows directly from quantifying a country’s degree of development. Comparisons are at the heart of the current notion of development and speak to many of the difficulties of “achieving” development.

Even in some of the earliest literature on development, comparisons are central to development theory. In their article, “Economic Development in Africa: Aims and Possibilities”, which was published in 1964, G. J. Ligthart and B. Abbai discuss “the process of catching up in less developed countries.” In doing so, they argue that essential to the discussion on development is that one country is compared to another. A similar phenomenon was apparent in the data that I collected. Kojo, the bank manager, used a that in Ghana, people are unable to take care of their basic needs, while this phenomenon does not occur in the United States. In the US, he said, “basic amenities are available,” while they are not in Ghana. This definition illustrates how essential comparisons are to development. Instead of speaking of

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26 Ibid.
27 Anonymous bank manager (Kojo*), interview by author, 19 April 200, written notes in possession of author.
basic human rights or merely of what problems need to be rectified in Ghana, Kojo describes the underdevelopment of Ghana in relation to the development of the US.

Several other interviewees supported their definitions with comparisons. Kwesi, a J. S. S. teacher, spoke of the lack of teaching equipment in Ghanaian schools. He explained that in the US, which is a “fully developed” nation, students could use computers, the Internet and the radio to aid their studies, whereas in Ghana, students can only learn from books. Kwesi continued, saying that students in western, developed nations were taught hands-on learning, such as assembling a car, so that when they were faced with the need to assemble a car in real life, they were capable. In contrast, Ghanaian students could only learn about car assembly through books, so that when they were faced with the real-life situation of assembling the machine, they could not\textsuperscript{31}. Another interviewee, an anonymous officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development, spoke of “attitudinal” differences between Americans and Ghanaians, saying that in developed countries people are more willing to “sacrifice” and “do their bit” to ensure that the nation is moving in a positive direction\textsuperscript{32}. The interviewees’ responses show that comparisons have become a common form of discussing development and are present not only in literature, but also in peoples’ conceptions of development.

\textsuperscript{31} Anonymous teacher “Kwesi”, interview by author, 26 April 2004, Cape Coast, written notes in possession of author.

\textsuperscript{32} Anonymous Officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development, interview by author, 7 April 2004, Cape Coast, written notes in possession of author.
Chapter Two: The Ghanaian Government

I. The Responsibility for Development

Among interviewees, debate existed over who held the greater responsibility for development – the Ghanaian government, or the Ghanaian people. Responses varied greatly and explanations offered a wide range of views. It is impossible to say whether more interviewees opted for the people over the government, or vice versa. In any case, it is the explanations of their answers that I found most interesting and thought provoking and reflected their understanding and approach to development.

Many of the interviewees asserted that development was a responsibility of the Ghanaian people and that the future of Ghana rested in their hands. Kafu Kofi Tsikata of the World Bank explained that development was about people – making “incremental improvements” in the lives of the poor. Explaining that the general reduction of poverty was the overall aim of the World Bank, Tsikata explained his view that people “make a choice to remain poor, [or they] make a choice to develop”33. An anonymous officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development criticized Ghanaians for being resistant to development because they do not want to accept the fact that they are poor34. Similarly, the bank manager, Kojo, expressed a similar belief, saying “[I] blame my own people [for underdevelopment] … When you look at the money bequeathed by colonial masters, more than enough to develop. Never got good leaders”35. Both of these interviewees expressed their beliefs that it is the failure of the Ghanaian people – their resistance, their incompetencies – that have kept the nation from developing. At the same time, it is interesting to note that both of these interviewees come from high-ranking salaried positions and do not face the daily difficulties that many Ghanaians do struggle with.

While these interviewees offered simple statements about who is responsible for Ghana’s future, others discussed more complicated issues involving the gap in responsibility and why it exists and the problems that ensue in enacting change. An unnamed officer at the Ministry of Rural Development blamed both the average Ghanaian citizen and Ghana’s political leaders for the lack of decisive developmental change. The government, they

33 Tsikata, 6 April 2004.
34 Anonymous officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development, 19 April 2004.
explained, is a “human institution” and therefore struggles with many of human problems, citing selfishness and “professional arrogance” as hindrances to the government’s efforts at development. At the same time, however, the officer faulted private Ghanaian citizen for their unwillingness of sacrifice for the sake of their nation, saying that one of the biggest problems facing Ghana today is “the level of involvement of the people in taking positions and implementing things”.36

A factory worker, interviewed for this project, held another interesting belief about the responsibility for development. He explained that the responsibility lies with the people of Ghana, who should each make some small sacrifices to gradually forward their nation. Ghanaians should band together to contribute whatever they can – money, labor, tools – and create the things that communities need most, calling these efforts “self-help projects”. He cited, rural school buildings, toilets, and small buildings as examples.37 This extra effort from Ghanaian citizens is necessary, because the government of Ghana is focused on a plan for development that does not affect his life. According to this interviewee, when the government is asked about development, they contiously reply that development is a slow process and that they are using development money on national projects, such as building roads and a railway system.

The interviewee explained, however, that these are not the greatest needs of the country, citing sanitation and a decent education system as more urgent projects.38 This interviewee clearly thought of development in two parts: the first part, which affected him and were his community’s greatest needs, and the second part, the national development plan, which the government donates all of their time, energy and money towards. This segmented approach to development reveals different frameworks for considering development.

II. Engagement with the Ghanaian government

Dr. R. N. Osei of the philosophy Department expressed the sentiment of many when he asserted that the biggest problem facing Ghana was the perception of Ghanaian political leaders about the appropriate path to development.39 It is not only that their efforts and their monies are too small to create significant change, but that they are leading Ghana down a path for continued dependence on western, developed nations, instead of creating a new paradigm of thought to lead Ghana into the future. In fact, Dr. Osei uses the word “underdevelopment” to

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37 Anonymous factory worker (Kweku*), interview by author, 27 April 2004, anonymous, written notes in possession of author.
38 Ibid.
39 Dr. R. N. Osei of the Philosophy Department at the University of Cape Coast, interview by author, 27 April 2004, Cape Coast, written notes in possession of author.
describe political leaders’ perceptions of “how to deal with our problems”\textsuperscript{40}. Dr. Osei cites the example of countries, organizations or individuals giving a tiny bit of aid and landing on the front page of all national newspapers and yet no structural change has occurred to forward Ghana\textsuperscript{41}. Instead of believing that structural change is necessary, Ghanaian political leaders seem overwhelmingly content to celebrate incremental changes – the construction of several new toilet blocks or a private donation of a minimal sum. Dr. Osei’s opinion reflects the emotions of many; frustration and discouragement seep out of this discussion on development, as Ghanaians wait for change regardless of their political orientations or philosophies of development.

Conducting interviews with two market women quickly reinforced the sentiments of Dr. Osei. One of the women, Ekua*, explained that she did not identify with the politicians in the current administration, because they do not feel the daily hardships of underdevelopment that she does. She explained that the responsibility for development lies with both the people and the government, but that those people who pay their taxes are fulfilling their responsibility, however, by enacting the necessary changes\textsuperscript{42}. Another market woman, Efua*, explained a similar belief that she could “care less” about development because the concept does not mean any real change in her life. She asserted that President Kufour and other political leaders only thinking about themselves and are no different than any of the other past political regimes. She added that she has registered to vote and voted in every election for almost twenty years, but will not vote in the upcoming election because she has seen no benefit from years of voting\textsuperscript{43}.

A general disengagement from the governmental and lack of identification with Ghanaian political leaders are undoubtedly results of a frustrated and discouraged populace. At the same time, however, these sentiments along with beliefs about the responsibility of development lead to a government and a people that are for the most part waiting for change to occur. Years of frustration, failed efforts and squashed hopes can not be underestimated in this equation, but if real developmental progress is to be made, something must happen to orient Ghana on the path to development, whatever that may be.

\textbf{III. Political corruption}

The most prominent reason for a general disengagement from the Ghanaian government is the paramount perception that Ghanaian politicians are corrupt. Kafu Kofi Tsikata of the World Bank cited political corruption as one the largest problems facing Ghana, explaining that

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
Politicians are more concerned with being businessmen than they are with governing. Tsikata both criticized past economic policy and asserted that these same political leaders who implemented misguided policies were corrupt. Arguing that state-owned enterprises, which are now defunct, stifled economic growth, Tsikata added that political leaders also appointed “cronies” and “military buddies” to these companies, which only further damaged the initiatives because they know little or nothing about managing a company. Winfred Nelson of the National Development Planning Commission echoed this criticism of past Ghanaian political leadership, arguing that the resources Ghana was endowed with had been mismanaged, but did not explain further how this had occurred.

IV. High Rate of Turnover in Administrations

Opinions as to how Ghana should develop and what this development will look like differ greatly. Among the many problems hindering the development process, however, is political instability. Many of the interviewees agree that political instabilities – specifically, the large number of coup d’ états – have slowed Ghana’s development process tremendously. They have led to constant policy changes and hence unfinished projects and broken promises of help.

Principal Economist Kwateng at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning explained that the lack of “consistent policy implementation” has led to a lack of continuity and cohesion in policy and has greatly segmented the process of development. He argued that when one regime replaced another regardless of how they came to power, the new regime threw out the old framework and established another. A factory worker illustrated the point by saying that one regime will start building factories, but when it is overthrown the next government will not continue the project, because they do not want to accept that those who came before them had valuable ideas.

Development Planning Analyst Adjei Fuso Kwaku at the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) noted that many developing countries were characterized by political instability. Arguing that the political, economic, social and technological systems were all a “network”, Kwaku asserted that when one is not functioning they all collapse. Each system affects other systems outside of its own sphere. Dr. Osei added to this point by arguing that all governments since Kwame Nkrumah’s had no long-term policy program and

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44 Tsikata, 6 April 2004.
45 Ibid.
49 Development Planning Analyst Adjei Fuso Kwaku at the National Development Planning Commission, interview by author, 7 April 2004, written notes and recording in possession of author.
that the political instability that ensued was not the cause of the problem, but a symptom of a much deeper problem of who actually controls the Ghanaian political state. De. Osei said, this “shows the fragility of the political state as it exists”\textsuperscript{50}.

V. Lack of Coordinated Efforts

Given that so many governments, so many branches of government, so many theorists and “experts”, so many international organizations, and so many nongovernmental organizations are working on development, it is not surprising that a lack of coordinated effort is hindering development. When considering development from the theoretical perspective, it is not surprising to find that each different institution is approaching the question of development differently. One interviewee, an officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development, however, explained that this same problem existed within the Ghanaian government as well\textsuperscript{51}.

They explained that there are both human and structural problems within the Ghanaian government that hinder the development process. Regarding the human problems, which they called “attitudinal”, they said, “The Ghana government is doing development, but of course, there are always limitations” – “attitudinal” problems being one of them. The officer described an environment of “professional arrogance’, where government officers are unwilling to cooperate and compete amongst themselves to gain favored status within the government. In illustrating the point, the officer said that the ministries are unwilling to take orders from each other and that government officials should drop the egotism and “individualistic attitude”, in order for Ghana to develop\textsuperscript{52}.

Structurally, the officer criticized the Ghanaian government for being far too centralized and offered hopes that the Decentralization Implementation Action Plan could begin to deconstruct the enormous apparatus of national government. Initially, the Ghanaian government was concentrated so that it could operate as efficiently as possible \textsuperscript{53}, but in hindsight, this has become a severe limitation to implementing development programs that require local specificity.

The local government system is a three-tier system, consisting of (from largest to smallest) district assemblies; aerial, zonal, and town councils; and unit communities. Aside from the district assemblies, however, these systems are not functioning. It is those local governments at the lowest levels, which know the needs of the community best, but these needs are not currently being met because there is a gap in the communication process from the

\textsuperscript{50} Osie, 27 April 2004.
\textsuperscript{51} Anonymous Officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development, 7 April 2004.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
lowest levels of local government to the national government, where any available funds are held. The officer explained that the sub-district systems were designed to be the most workable, but instead they are not functioning at all\textsuperscript{54}.

The incompatibility of the national and local government systems, however, is not the only structural problem facing the Ghanaian government. They also described a process of “empire building “ that is prevalent in the ministries. Many of the programs for development are designed to have a positive impact on several different sectors, such as agriculture, education, and health. They, therefore, require the cooperation and coordination of the efforts of these ministries. At the same time, the officer argued that ministries usually preferred working independently and projects that would have an impact on multiple sectors fall by the wayside. Furthermore, ministries are also hesitant to work with local public and private organizations because they enjoy being in complete control of their projects and programs\textsuperscript{55}.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
Chapter Three: External Factors

I. International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations

Western-based international organizations and non-governmental play an active role in Ghanaian life that is both supported and criticized. While these organizations have varied goals, ideas and results, it is easy to see from walking through urban areas that they are currently holding a place in Ghanaian society. From my own interactions with other whites who come from western nations, I found that many of them belong to a non-governmental organization or are performing some kind of “service” work. On a number of occasions, while speaking with both white foreigners and Ghanaians, they were surprised to find that I was a student instead of a humanitarian worker. On one occasion, the first question I was asked by a Ghanaian was “What NGO are you with?” people were frequently surprised to learn that I had come to Ghana to study.\footnote{Author’s own observations.}

A factory worker expressed a similar sentiment, when he discussed development; he spoke immediately of attending a school, while growing up, that was run by white people who were associated with the Catholic Relief Services. He stressed the importance of “American assistance” and added that they also gave away clothing\footnote{Anonymous factory worker. “Kweku”, 27 April 2004.}. The influence of non-governmental organizations is quite strong and it clearly has an enormous impact on Ghanaians, but throughout my interviewees this influence and impact was not frequently discussed and perhaps cannot be determined until further down the road. This worker clearly thought that western agencies were an essential aspect of Ghanaian development, but this sentiment could be very damaging to the Ghanaian psyche, leading people to feel the need to rely on outside support, outside monies, and outside products. Another factory worker essentialized this concern, when he worried that already Ghanaians preferred foreign rice to locally grown rice, not because it is less expensive, but merely because it comes from the west and therefore, people assume that is must be better quality\footnote{Anonymous factory worker “Kwame”, interview by author, 27 April 2004, Cape Coast, written notes in possession of author.}.

Not all Ghanaians share this sentiment, however, in his lecture, “Appropriate Technology in Ghana,” Kofi Sam expressed his opinion succinctly when he said, “Tell the NGOs, they’re wasting their time.” Sam expressed his belief that instead of contributing to development, they are only hindering it by not allowing Ghanaians to take control of their future.

II. World Bank/International Monetary Fund/Western Aid

Nongovernmental organizations however, are not the only western institutions that dominate the development landscape. Equally as important is the world economic order,
including the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund, and loans coming from western, developed countries such as the United States and the European Union\textsuperscript{59}. Debate surrounding this aspect of development is perhaps the most controversial and for many interviewees, a determining factor in framing their beliefs on the future of development in Ghana.

Responses to questions about the world economic order varied perhaps the most of any response. Some interviewees were supportive of international institutions, while others were hesitant about supporting the structure of the world economy, and others outrightly advocated for change. Not surprisingly, the strongest support of such institutions was during an interview with World Bank representative Kafu Kofi Tsikata. He argued that the aid given to Ghana during the 1980s, when the Ghanaian economy was in a freefall, was crucial to restoring the Ghanaian economy and stopping it from spinning out of control. The World Bank, he said, provided a cushion. He added that on average, the World Bank loans $150 million to Ghana annually, but this amount is far too small to hold Ghana “ransom” in comparison to the annual budget of $2 billion. Instead, he cited the problem to development an any government that allows $150 million to control them\textsuperscript{60}.

Similarly, Kwateng at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning supported the effort of the World Bank and IMF, but added, “What they do is what should do on our own”\textsuperscript{61}. Support specifically for the World Bank and I.M.F. was not particularly strong and it seemed like many interviewees believed that something completely new was necessary to see real change.

Criticisms of such institutions, however, ranged from moderate to fierce; some interviewees perceived that the World Bank (and hence world economic order) were problematic, but others went further to describe their destructive results in detail. Bank manager Kojo expressed the futility of the situation and seemingly his own discouragement, when he discussed the World Bank. Using the example that the IMF stipulates that to receive monies from them Ghana must cease subsidizing electricity, water and telephones, thereby greatly increasing the cost of each of these to the Ghanaian customer, who frequently cannot afford them after this price increase. Kojo wondered aloud about Ghana’s path to development and the paralyzing situation the country is in, saying “… but because we are in need, we need it”\textsuperscript{62}. These brief words expressed the frustration of many; Ghana is a country with many needs

\textsuperscript{59} As part of this research, the author interviewed representatives from the World Bank Group, but not the International Monetary Fund or American or European government agencies. It is important, however, that they be included in this section along with the World Bank, because interviewees frequently categorized them in the same group as the World Bank.

\textsuperscript{60} Tsikata, 6 April 2004.

\textsuperscript{61} Kwateng, 7 April 2004.

and although institutions in western, developed countries do not offer a fair playing field, Ghana must accept the money offered to stave off worse conditions than already exist.

Given the unbalanced positions that each country brings to negotiations, some in Ghana suggest a more radical change that will break the injustice of the current world economic system. Perhaps, the officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development summarized the sentiments best, when he said, “It’s not fair…it isn’t”.

Dr. Osei suggested a complete break with the current world economic order, because the current system is perpetuating Ghana’s dependency on developed countries. “Aid interventions,” he said, “are not meant to help us.” Instead, aid from other countries is “a way of subsidizing their industries’, citing the example of a fleet of buses that were just bought from an Asian nation and received widespread publicity. Dr. Osei suggested that technology should be developed so that Ghana can begin manufacturing products. If Ghana is unable to manufacture products, it will continuously be required to buy products from other countries, keeping these industries in producing companies afloat. Kwesi Pratt, Editor-in-Chief of The Insight, echoed Dr. Osei’s opinion by explaining that in the last year Ghana has received a loan from the European Union to buy helicopters. For the money the nation was loaned, Ghana could buy the best helicopters from Russia; it was stipulated in the loan contract, however, that the helicopters be bought from a European country. Therefore, it was necessary for Ghana to use the British company Wellfind Ltd. to buy the helicopters from Russia and Wellfind subsequently took a large portion of the sum loaned as a service fee. This cycle of coerced dependency through loan contracts is highly destructive to Ghana’s development and is one account for the slow pace of this process.

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63 Anonymous officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development, 7 April 2004
64 Osei, 27 April 2004.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Editor-in-Chief of The Insight Kwesi Pratt, interview by author, 15 April 2004, tape recording in possession of author.
Conclusions

The question of development in Ghana is multi-faceted and difficult to answer, throughout my research, I found that many interviewees struggled with their responses, illustrating how difficult it is to be specific, to speak generally, but realize the daily effects of development, and to assembly coherent thoughts on the subject. At the same time, however, it is a topic that dominates the Ghanaian landscape – from news sources, and government actions, to casual conversations among regular people.

Differences in perceptions of development, as evidenced by responses during interviews that I conducted, suggest that there are many different framework for approaching development. People use them in understanding a concept that affects everyone’s life, but means something very different to different people. For some, development is exactly that: a concept. For others, development is the hope for positive change that will alleviate some of their daily difficulties. And for others still, development is the action of the government striving to make Ghana a better place to live. Frameworks for approaching development are limitless and vary by person.

Definitions of development vary greatly, but of the most part, they include the sense that development is positive action in improving peoples’ lives. Even if people cannot pinpoint a definition, this belief that somehow, during development, life will change for the better pervades as the discussion on development. Most definitions and discussion of development include both measurements of development and comparisons to other countries, showing that western development theory has significantly permeated the discussion of development of Ghana.

Development is closely associated with the Ghanaian government, who was both praised and criticized during the interviews I conducted. From the government officials and regular citizens that I interviewed, there seems to be a gap in who is responsible for development, with each group wanting the other to contribute more than they already are. Generally disengagement from the government and the perception that the government is composed only of corrupted politicians looking out for their own interests compounds this problem. Furthermore, the lack of continuous development policy implementation and coordinated efforts among the different structures of government are perceived as problems to development.

At the same time, many of the interviewees saw external factors, such as the World Bank and country loans as damaging to the Ghanaian economy, causing a continuous cycle of dependence. These interviewees called for structural change instead of minute change within the system.
On the whole, feelings of frustration and discouragement pervaded the interviews about development – the lack of change, the failure of Ghanaian leaders to guide their country into a prosperous and peaceful era was painful for the interviewees. The failure of the developmental process is not just a theoretical failure in Ghana. Instead the effects of a lack of funds, discontinued policy, and little control over the development process are seen easily in the streets of any Ghanaian city or village. The discussion of development, however, goes on, the debate continues, and Ghanaians anticipate the future to arrive.
Suggestions for further study

This paper set out to do a large amount of research in a small amount of time and any of the questions raised and discussed could be studied in greater depth. There are questions that are important not only to many of the world’s countries, but also to many of the world’s people and this study is in no way comprehensive or exhaustive. A greater number and variety of interviewees would also be an interesting study to do.

Given that several of the interviewees had adopted the western philosophy of development, it would be interesting to study perceptions of development along a continuum, if one exists at all. Do people think that all countries are proceeding in the same direction? Are their stages to development as early developmental theorists believed? What will the world look like if all countries move along in the same direction? Will cultures be harmonized or assimilated or lost entirely?
Anonymous bank manager, “Kojo” Interview by author, 19 April 2004, Cape Coast. Written notes in possession of author.

Anonymous factory director. Survey composed by author, collected 23 April 2004, Written notes in possession of author.

Anonymous factory worker “Kwame” Interview by author, 27 April 2004, Cape Coast. Written notes in possession of author.


Anonymous market woman “Efua” Interview by author, 22 April 2004, Cape Coast. Translated by Mustapa Ampeh. Written notes in possession of author.

Anonymous officer at the Ministry of Manpower and Rural Development. Interview by author, 7 April 2004, Accra. Written notes and tape recording in possession of author.


Kendie, Dr. Director of the Center for Development Studies at the University of Cape Coast.
Interview by author, 22 April 2004, Cape Coast. Tape recording in possession of author.


Osei, Dr. R.N. Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Cape Coast. Interview by author, 27 April 2004, Cape Coast. Written notes in possession of author.

Pratt, Kwesi, Editor-in-Chief of The Insight. Interview by author, 15 April 2004, Accra. Tape recording in possession of author.


Appendix 1

These questions provided the basic framework and structure with which I approached each interview. They do not, however, encompass all of the questions asked or all aspects of the conversation. In many instances, after these questions were asked, the questions had to be reworded to suit each interviewee's understanding.

Interview Questions:

1. What is the definition of development?
2. What are some characteristics of a developed country?
3. What are some characteristics of an underdeveloped country?
4. How does a country become developed?
5. How should Ghana develop? What should Ghana do differently than it is doing right now?
6. Why are some countries developed and others are not?
7. Ghana has been independent for forty-seven years, why is it not developed already?
8. What are some of the external factors leading to Ghana’s underdevelopment – the Slave Trade, colonialism, world economic order?