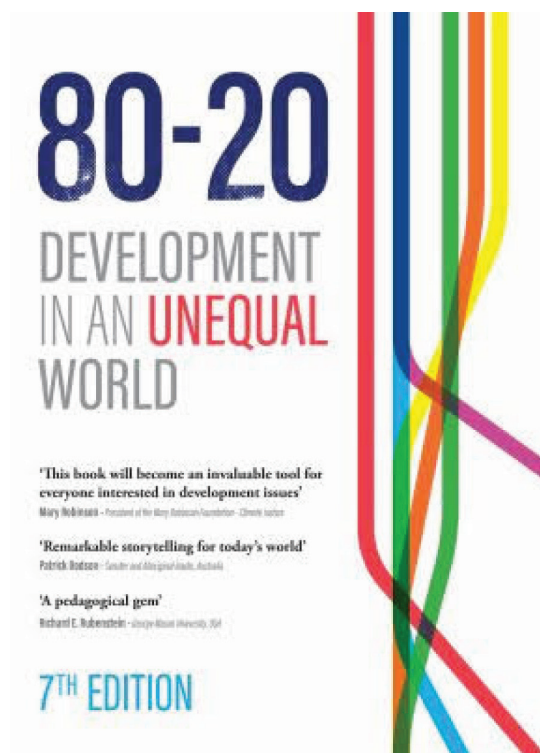


## Book review

***80-20 Development in an Unequal World (7th edn)*, edited by Tony Daly,  
Ciara Regan and Colm Regan**

Wicklow: 80-20 Educating and Acting for a Better World and  
New Internationalist, 2016, 308pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-78026-316-8

Reviewed by Tania Ramalho\*



Conscientization, according to Paulo Freire, invites people to participate critically in an act that transforms and changes the world. Through dialogue, it leads to the recognition that humans are designers and makers, and the world is always under construction. The authors associated with the Irish NGO 80-20 offer 15 chapters that do not allow for false consciousness concerning development issues, or any 'domesticating' practice in education. Their book contributes to a critical development education understood as the Freirean education for the practice of freedom.

Discussions in the book about the new extremes of wealth, poverty and human development set the stage for incursions into the very history of development as an idea, and for current concepts of sustainable development. The authors document how progress has been made in lifting people from poverty. Child mortality has decreased. Nutrition has also improved. Overall, criminality has diminished. A culture of human rights continues to spread. At the same time, such progress is uneven. Inequality has been growing under the prevailing 'economic fundamentalism' (16), accompanied by climate change, environmental degradation and civil wars.

Beyond the often thorny technical aspects of bringing about development, questions associated with it are ethical, philosophical and political. In addressing this, Regan (97) asks:

How do we understand why the world is so unequal; how did (does) this state of affairs happen; how do we fit in and what are our duties (if any) to those in desperate need, or to future generations? Is there a direct connection between wealth and poverty, or between the current dominant model of growth and climate injustice?

The 80-20 authors address these matters and point to possible solutions in this book's rich texts, charts, photographs and political cartoons, designed for readability and maximum impact.

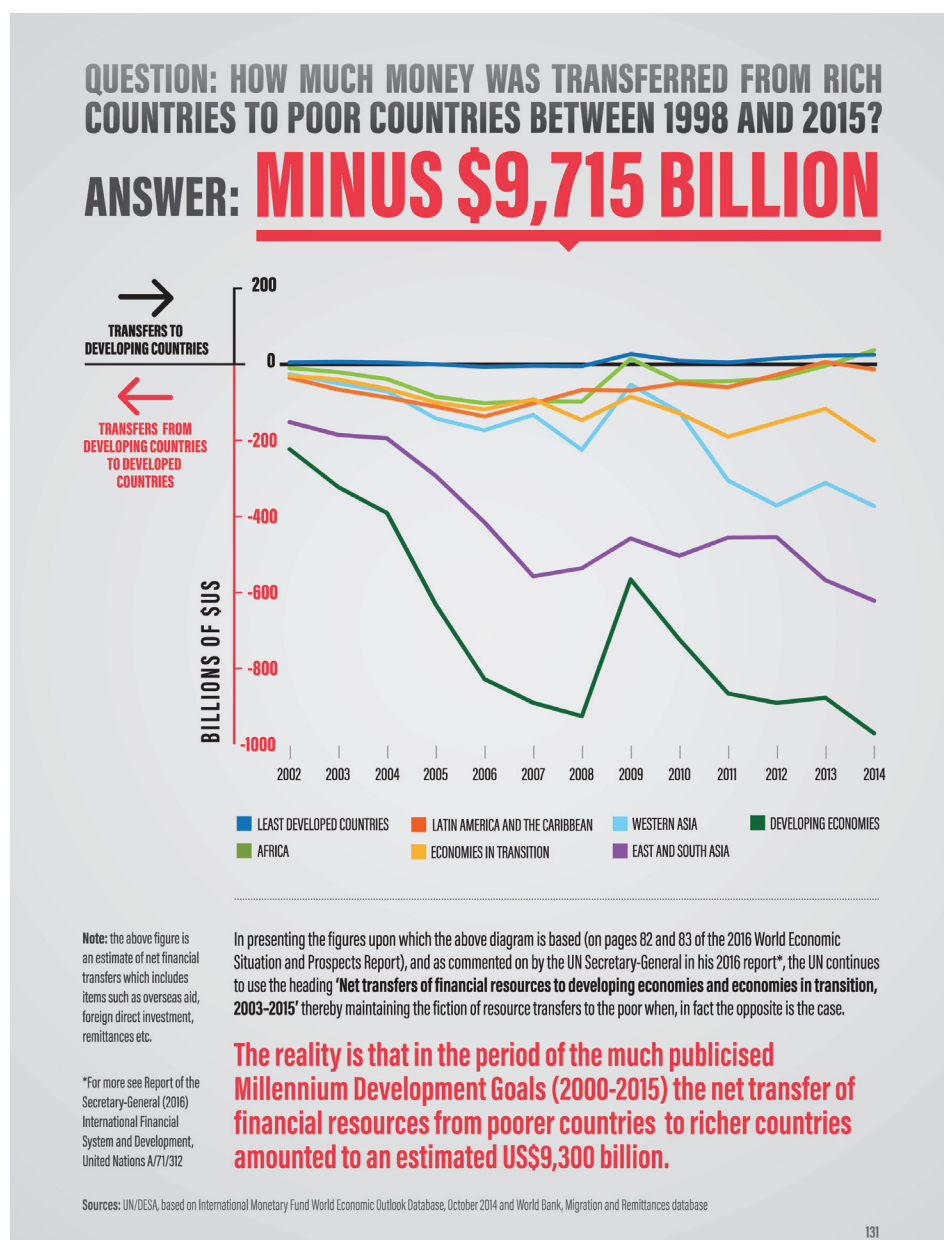


Figure 1: 'How much money was transferred from rich countries to poor countries between 1998 and 2015?'. Reprinted with permission from Chapter 7: 'From the rich to the poor' by Bertrand Borg and Colm Regan (131).

The infographic in Figure 1 on the transfer of capital *from poorer to richer nations* shows what Borg and Regan (131) call 'the most devastating economic issue impacting the global south'. If real problems concerning human development – education, health, the conditions of womankind, the rights and lives of indigenous people and minorities, access to clean water, climate change and so on – are of sincere concern, then the interrelated political, economic and financial systems affecting them demand close examination.

What should we expect in terms of economic and human development when, except for the 'least developed' countries, significant levels of resources are transferred from poorer to wealthy nations? In exploring this problem, Borg and Regan discuss the legal system of international financial reserves and the complex system of illicit financial transfers that cause a 'haemorrhage of resources', which otherwise could be employed in assisting general needs. Here, they look at the impact of an array of illegal economic activity, including unlawful trade in general, and trade in wildlife, timber, gold, drugs and people (for sexual and labour exploitation and even sometimes human organs). They also examine the question of national debt and repayment politics. In terms of the effects of brain-drain migration, the impact of female brain drain is higher due to lower levels of female education in countries of origin. Borg and Regan (146) further raise the 'scourge' of offshore tax shelters (shell companies, disguised corporations, fake charities, tax free zones and tax incentive epidemics) that protect the mobile wealthy and intensify inequality at home.

The only area that the 80-20 collective needs to consider in greater depth in a future edition or companion book is in relation to armed conflicts – both between nation states and in civil wars – and their impact on development and resource transfers to arms-dealing nations. No doubt, the push for development has brought further dependence, disagreement, social dislocation and inequality in nations that have been attacked or have experienced violent strife, even genocide. The Western wars initiated by the United States, for example, have been criticized for their interest in the control of key natural resources – oil in the case of Iraq, and oil, gold, iron, copper, lithium and other minerals in Afghanistan. These disputes, which include anti-Western development stances on the part of tribal peoples in the Middle East and Africa, need to be seriously considered in relation to questions of human development, along with environment degradation and climate change resulting from war pollution.

*80-20 Development in an Unequal World* is a valuable resource aimed at the conscientization of scholars, global and development educators, and students of all ages and backgrounds in informal as well as formal education. It provides a comprehensive, clear, big picture of the significant development-related issues affecting people, nations, institutions and the natural environment. It provides readers with a wide-ranging view of the work of development attempted thus far – of its great challenges and not-so small victories – inviting learners, as Freire would say, to unveil reality critically. Most importantly, it discusses the processes of change, indicating how we can organize to advance policies that favour the creation of an international peaceful, sustainable and just social order.

## Notes on the contributor

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