

How inclusive can economic growth be?

Bert Koenders, Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation

Truman Packard, Deputy Director World Development Report 2009, World Bank

Jo Ritzen, President Maastricht University

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Auditorium Minderbroedersberg, Maastricht

Report

Maastricht Debates organized a debate with Truman Packard, Deputy Director of the World Development Report 2009 of the World Bank and Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation Bert Koenders. The event was moderated by Jo Ritzen, President Maastricht University.

World Development Report

Truman Packard summarized what the World Development Report (WDR) entails. He especially emphasized the convergence and divergence within and between countries. In order to understand what is meant by that, the report is divided into three main sections dealing with first urbanization, second the territorial development and third with regional integration. Moreover, economic density, distance and divisions were used to describe the changes taking place, to explain why they took place and to understand the policy implications behind it. Thus, a distinction is made between local, national and international level. The biggest concern he voiced was the uneven growth, so characteristic of nowadays society.

Minister Bert Koenders

Minister Bert Koenders commented on his presentation. He said that he liked the extra-geographic dimension of the World Development Report and particularly the emphasis on the increasing divergence which is hard to change. He divided his reply into three main sections. First, he talked about sustainable poverty reduction, followed by the lesson for the Netherlands development policy and last but not least about the relevance of the recommendations of the report given the current economic crisis. Concerning sustainable poverty reduction, the minister suggested to enforce regionalization so that one can benefit more from one another and thereby reach diversification. The lesson for the Netherlands development policy would be to use a multi-disciplinary look at the present world situation, in stead of a pure economic one. He especially stressed the role of agricultural productivity in this context. In relation to the current economic crisis, he mentioned the worrisome widening gap between the rich and the poor. He stressed that we should be aware of the negative effects on the world's poorest countries. Poverty can only be ameliorated when a solid growth is enabled which is at great risk at the moment.

[Full text of the speech of Minister Koenders](#)

Discussion

After both presentations, there was time for the audience to react and ask questions. Truman Packard was asked about the role of NGOs, the aspect of decentralization, the Washington consensus as well as the top/down as compared to the bottom/up approach within the health sector. He replied that NGOs are really important in that they provide accountability through local actors. The aspect of decentralization is referred to in chapter eight of the report. Minister Koenders was asked about his opinion concerning the relevance of the report for the Netherlands development policy. He replied that it will be difficult to operationalize the report even though it contains good proposals for solutions. In addition he remarked the World Development Reports are key publications that ought to be discussed more on the highest policy and political level. Last, Koenders made a plea for changing the way we think about strategies meaning that we should put less emphasis on spatial aspects and rather concentrate on regional intervention.

The debate has been part of the event 'Career Development in Development Work' of Maastricht University (Career Services, Mundo, and student association AIESEC).

<http://www.maastrichtdebates.net/programme/2008-2009/world-development-report-2009/>