

Abstract

This paper examines how the concept of poverty has waxed and waned within development thought and how these fluctuations have shaped development policy and action towards, or away from, direct goals of poverty reduction or eradication. It provides an overview of poverty in social thought; examines the contestations over how poverty analysis is positioned in development theory; charts the conceptual contestations around poverty; presents a brief history of poverty in development thought and action; looks at the contrasting geographies of contemporary poverty; and concludes by considering whether a synthesis is emerging from structuralist and liberal understandings of poverty at present, or merely an uneasy compromise, while each 'side' looks for a way to regain a dominant position.

Keywords: poverty, development theory, history of development, human development

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