

D/Introduction

Removing Unfreedoms July 7th Colloquium London School of Economics

Introduction to July 7th Colloquium with Michael Mutter

Welcome everybody and it's good to see so many faces that I know and more faces that I don't, which is always the exciting thing about these sorts of gatherings. This is part of what has been quite a long process and it runs parallel to lots of other processes and it's not meant in any way to be a preclusion of those other processes. What I think we want to do today is compare how the process that we've been exploring on **Removing Unfreedoms** fares in comparison with other peoples perceptions, other processes, other ways of looking at the world of development and to see where these ideas may converge, may have acknowledged differences. And to how we can move forward in the most practical way without causing any further undue burden on the people that we're attempting to assist, attempting to represent, attempting to bring improvements to their lives.

Just to go back to some of our starting points, Romi and I have been working together for the best part of ten years on a whole variety of different projects. But from about five years ago, we began to realise that there was some very profound fundamentals that were in a way leading us in our thought processes. And we wanted to explore those to see quite how they measured up in terms of-- I was going to say the more "conventional" world of development, but "conventional" is probably the wrong term to use because it's what everyone is used to in their way of going about development. But certainly the ideas that Romi was exploring in his work, that covered a lot of post conflict reconstruction work in the Balkans in Palestine and places like that, how that fared with some of our earlier work, mainly in India where we were dealing directly with communities, assisting communities to take the leads in the way in which they look at development and undertake development. Very practical implementation programmes and yet it did seem that there was a need for interpretation between what was happening on the ground and the way in which development is viewed.

Romi had the great fortune to have had a grounding in these thought processes with Professor Amartya Sen, in your earlier days, in your youth even. And this

took us then to a presentation that was made, looking at the ideas of Professor Amartya Sen and how they can be used as a lead to understanding people's perception of development, those people being the people that we are trying to assist.

In October last year we made a presentation at UN World Habitat Days event which this year took place in Brussels, that was the CD Rom and film, the interview that Romi had undertaken. Well the whole team had been involved in with Professor Amartya Sen and introduced the ideas to a wider audience. And from that we wanted to see where we could take the ideas further and hence we are here today. I think where we have reached is still the exploration of the idea. There is not a hard and fast framework that says this is what we want to do. So I want everybody to keep their minds open, to participate together. The idea of the day is that we will end up, through a series of participatory processes, with five questions that we think are where we want to get to, five questions that we would like to put to professor Amartya Sen, this afternoon.

We have got an interesting arrangement of participatory events that we will come to and Jane will explain those to us in due course. We wanted to start the day with a quick, relatively quick overview, bearing in mind that it is quite a complicated subject with an introduction from Romi and an explanation of the workshop that was undertaken in Mumbai from Jane. And with a perspective to be given to us through a film that Janet, from TVE, has made on the work that has been done in Mumbai with Jockin and Sheila. Jockin from the National Slum Dwellers Federation of India and Sheila Patel from the NGO Spark that has been assisting the women's group in Mumbai, to undertake work that we think is interesting but also has given us an opportunity to explore the ideas of Amartya Sen in a very practical way.

So Romi, I think the time has come to give us an idea of where Amartya Sen's work from the Development of Freedom reaches through to the kind of very practical work that takes place on the ground.