Development is a widely used, taken for granted concept that has spawned a global industry of
development practitioners, NGOs and aid agencies. But development is also a contested concept equally
widely criticised as overly economistic, technocratic and a form of neo-colonialism in the form of
developmentalism. This has led to calls for alternative development, alternatives to development and
discussions about post-development.

The impetus for this Symposium arises from the question whether development is a concept whose time
has passed. If so, what should replace it? If not, how should it be understood early in the twenty-first
century?

This paper has two dimensions. The first is a critique of contemporary development and law and
development thinking. The second is to consider new imaginaries. We suggest that the conceptual
framework or discourse of development itself has been so fundamentally affected by a variety of factors
(in particular the inter-related impact of globalisation, digitalisation, climate change, gender justice and
social activisms) that we require new ‘imaginaries’ to engage with the issues and to consider whether
these continue to provide space for concepts such as development or law and development, or whether
other conceptual frameworks may be more appropriate.