After post-development

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ABSTRACT *Along with 'anti-development' and 'beyond development', post-development is a radical reaction to the dilemmas of development. Post-development focuses on the underlying premises and motives of development; what sets it apart from other critical approaches is that it rejects development. The question is whether this is a tenable and fruitful position. Taken up first in this article are major overt positions of post-development—the problematisation of poverty, the portrayal of development as Westernisation, and the critique of modernism and science. The argument then turns to discourse analysis of development; it is argued that, in post-development, discourse analysis from a methodology turns into an ideology. Next the difference between alternative development and 'alternatives to development' is examined. The reasons why this difference is made out to be so large are, in my interpretation, anti-managerialism and dichotomic thinking. The article closes with a discussion of the politics of post-development and a critical assessment.*

> The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crime have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated. (Sachs, 1992: 1)

Along with 'anti-development' and 'beyond development', post-development is a radical reaction to the dilemmas of development. Perplexity and extreme dissatisfaction with business-as-usual and standard development rhetoric and practice, and disillusionment with alternative development are keynotes of this perspective. Development is rejected because it is the 'new religion of the West' (Rist, 1990a), it is the imposition of science as power (Nandy, 1988), it does not work (Kothari, 1988), it means cultural Westernisation and homogenisation (Constantino, 1985) and it brings environmental destruction. It is rejected not merely on account of its results but because of its intentions, its world-view and mindset. The economic mindset implies a reductionist view of existence. Thus, according to Sachs, 'it is not the failure of development which has to be feared, but its success' (1992: 3).

Post-development starts from a basic assessment: that attaining a middle-class lifestyle for the majority of the world population is impossible (Dasgupta, 1985). In time this has led to a position of total rejection of development. In the words of Gustavo Esteva:

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> If you live in Mexico City today, you are either rich or numb if you fail to notice that development stinks … The time has come to recognize development itself as the malignant myth whose pursuit threatens these among whom I live in Mexico … the 'three development decades' were a huge, irresponsible experiment that, in the experience of a world-majority, failed miserably. (1985: 78)

Post-development overlaps with Western critiques of modernity and techno-scientific progress, such as critical theory, post-structuralism and ecological movements. It parallels alternative development and cultural critiques of development. It is to development what 'deep ecology' is to environmental management. There are different strands to this way of looking at development. *Anti-development* is rejectionism inspired by anger with development business-as-usual. *Beyond development* ('au dela de développment') combines this aversion with looking over the fence. In *post-development* these two are combined with a Foucauldian methodology and theoretical framework of discourse analysis and a politics inspired by poststructuralism. These positions are not all consistent and besides, as a recent approach, post-development thinking is not theoretically developed. The overlap among these sensibilities is sufficient to group them together here under the heading of post-development.

Development is the management of a promise—and what if the promise does not deliver? For those living in Chiapas or other oppressed and poor areas, the chances are that development is a bad joke. The question is what is done with this assessment. Post-development is not alone in looking at the shadow of development; all critical approaches to development deal with its dark side. Dependency theory raises the question of global inequality. Alternative development focuses on the lack of popular participation. Human development addresses the need to invest in people. Post-development focuses on the underlying premises and motives of development; what sets it apart from other critical approaches is that it rejects development. The question is whether this is a tenable and fruitful position.

In the 1980s critiques of development crystallised around the journal *Development: Seeds for Change.* They have been taken up by, among others, intellectuals in Latin America (Esteva, 1992; Escobar, 1995, 1996), India (see Dallmayr, 1996 on the 'Delhi school'), Pakistan (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997), Malaysia (Just World Trust, 1995), France (Latouche, 1993), Switzerland (Rist, 1997), Germany (Sachs, 1992), Belgium (Verhelst, 1990), England (Seabrook, 1994), Ireland (Tucker, 1999), Japan (Lummis, 1991). They have become prominent since they coalesce with ecological critiques and ecofeminism (Mies, 1986, Shiva, 1988b) and through bestsellers such as Sachs's *Development Dictionary*.

Discussed first in this article are some of the overt positions of post-development—the problematisation of poverty, the portrayal of development as Westernisation and the critique of modernism and science. The argument then turns to the methodological dimension of discourse analysis of development. Next the difference between alternative development and 'alternatives to development' is examined. The reasons why this difference is made out to be so large are, in my interpretation, anti-managerialism and dichotomic thinking. The exposition closes with a discussion of the politics of post-development and a critical assessment.

Problematising poverty

An insight that runs through post-development is that poverty is not to be taken for granted. In the words of Vandana Shiva:

> Culturally perceived poverty need not be real material poverty: subsistence economies which serve basic needs through self-provisioning are not poor in the sense of being deprived. Yet the ideology of development declares them so because they don't participate overwhelmingly in the market economy, and do not consume commodities provided for and distributed through the market. (1988b: 10)

Poverty is in the eye of the beholder. Sachs (1989) distinguishes between *frugality*, as in subsistence economies; *destitution*, which can arise when subsistence economies are weakened through the interference of growth strategies; and *scarcity*, which arises when the logic of growth and accumulation has taken over and commodity-based need becomes the overriding logic. In this early work, Sachs's policy recommendation is to implement growth strategies with caution and to build on frugal life styles. This matches the recommendations made all along by 'ecological developers' such as the agronomist René Dumont (1965, 1974), to follow growth strategies in parallel with appropriate technology and maximum use of local resources. But the rejection of either growth or development does not follow.

'Poverty' is not simply a deficit, for that would assume simply adopting the commodity-based perspective of the North; 'poverty' can also be a resource. Attributing agency to the poor is a common principle in alternative approaches such as 'conscientisation' *à la* Paulo Freire, human-scale development (Max-Neef, 1982, 1991; Chambers, 1983), participatory action research and the actor-orientated approach. According to Rahnema, while poverty is real enough, it is also a culturally and historically variable notion. 'The way planners, development actomaniacs and politicians living off global poverty alleviation campaigns are presenting their case, gives the uninformed public a distorted impression of how the world's impoverished are living their deprivations. Not only are these people presented as incapable of doing anything intelligent by themselves, but also as preventing the modern do-gooders from helping them.' (1992: 169) This is a different issue: it concerns the representation of poverty. By way of counterpoint, Rahnema draws attention to 'vernacular universes' that provide hope and strength; to the spiritual dimension ('Most contemporary grassroots movements have a strong spiritual dimension', p 171); and to 'convivial poverty', 'that is, voluntary or moral poverty' (p 171). This suggests affinity with the lineage of the Franciscans, liberation theology and Gandhian politics.

In this view, it is the economics of development that is truly pauperising. While these considerations may be valid up to a point, a consequence is that poverty alleviation and elimination—for what these efforts are worth—slip off the map. Another problem is that less market participation does not necessarily imply more social participation—lest we homogenise and romanticise poverty, and equate it with purity (and the indigenous and local with the original and authentic). The step from a statistical universe to a moral universe is

worth taking, but a moral universe also involves action, and which action follows?

Development = Westernisation

> The debate over the word 'development' is not merely a question of words. Whether one likes it or not, one can't make development different from what it has been. Development has been and still is the *Westernisation of the world* (Latouche, 1993: 160).

According to Escobar (1992), the problem with 'development' is that it is external, based on the model of the industrialised world, and what is needed instead are 'more endogenous discourses'. The assertion of 'endogenous development' calls to mind dependency theory and the 'foreign bad, local good' position (Kiely, 1999). According to Rajni Kothari, 'where colonialism left off, development took over' (1988: 143).[1] This view is as old as the critique of modernisation theory. It calls to mind the momentum and pathos of decolonisation, the arguments against cultural imperialism, CocaColonisation, McDonaldisation and the familiar cultural homogenisation thesis, according to which Western media, advertising and consumerism induce cultural uniformity.

All this may be satisfying as the sound of a familiar tune, but it is also one-sided and old-hat. In effect, it denies the agency of the Third World. It denies the extent to which the South also owns development. Several recent development perspectives—such as dependency theory, alternative development and human development—have originated to a considerable extent in the South. Furthermore, what about 'Easternisation', as in the East Asian model, touted by the World Bank as a development miracle? What about Japanisation, as in the 'Japanese challenge', the influence of Japanese management techniques and Toyotism (Kaplinsky, 1994)? At any rate, 'Westernisation' is a catch-all concept that ignores diverse historical currents. Latouche and others use the bulky category 'the West' which, given the sharp historical differences between Europe and North America is not really meaningful. This argument also overlooks more complex assessments of globalisation (eg Nederveen Pieterse, 1995). A more appropriate analytics is polycentrism. Here the rejoinder to Eurocentrism is not Third Worldism but a recognition that multiple centres, also in the South, now shape development discourse (e.g. Amin, 1989; Nederveen Pieterse 1991).

Critique of modernism

Part of the anti-Western sentiment is anti-modernism. It is true that development suffers from a condition of 'psychological modernism' and has erected monuments to modernism—vast infrastructures and big dams—placing technological progress over human development. But states in the South have used science as an instrument of power, creating 'laboratory states' (Vishvanathan, 1988), as in Rajiv Gandhi's high-tech modernisation drive in India and Indonesia's experiment in aircraft technology. In Latin America, the work of the *científicos* is not

yet complete. Brazil's commitment to high modernism is on display in Brasilia (Berman, 1988). Islamabad in Pakistan is another grid-planned capital city without heart or character. The 1998 nuclear tests in South Asia are another rendezvous of science and *raison d'état* (Subrahmanyam, 1998). For Gilbert Rist (1990) development thinking represents the 'new religion of the West', but indeed the worship of progress is not confined to the West.

Aversion to modernism also exists in the West; rationalism is one face of the Enlightenment and romanticism is another. There are many affinities and overlaps between critical theory and the counterculture in the West (Roszak, 1973; Berman, 1984) and anti-modernism in the South. Schumacher ('small is beautiful') found inspiration in Buddhist economics (Wood, 1984) and Fritjof Capra in Eastern mysticism, while Ashis Nandy's outlook has also been shaped by Freud, the Frankfurt School and Californian psychology.

Part of the critique of modernism is the critique of science. A leitmotif, also in ecological thinking, is to view science as power. 'Science' here means Cartesianism, Enlightenment thinking and positivism, an instrument in achieving mastery over nature. The critique of Enlightenment science runs through the work of Vandana Shiva (1991). But this is not a simple argument. For one thing, science has been renewing itself, for example in quantum physics and chaos theory, and undergoing paradigm shifts leading to 'new science'. In addition there are countertrends within science, such as the methodological anarchism of Feyerabend and the work of Latour (1993). In social science, positivism is no longer the dominant temperament; increasingly the received wisdom in social science is constructivism. In economics positivism prevails, but is also under attack. Thus, for Hazel Henderson economics is not science but politics in disguise (1996). A clear distinction should be made between a *critique of science* and *anti-science*. Acknowledging the limitations of science, the role of power/ knowledge and the uses made of scientific knowledge does not necessarily mean being anti-science. The critique of science is now a defining feature of new social movements North and South (Beck, 1992). Ecological movements use scientific methods of monitoring energy use, pollution and climate changes. 'Green accounting' and 'greening the GDP' use scientific apparatuses, but for different ends than previously.[2] Anti-development at times sounds like twentieth-century Luddism, with more rhetoric than analysis and a certain lack of consistency (e.g. Alvares, 1992).[3] Also from a Third World point of view there are other options besides anti-science (cf. Goonatilake, 1999).

It is more appropriate to view modernism as a complex historical trend, which is in part at odds with simple modernisation. Thus, the dialectics of modernity are part of modernity, which has given rise to critical and reflexive modernity (Beck, 1992). Ironically, the aversion to modernism is also an expression of high modernism, advanced modernity and postmodernism (Lee, 1994; cf. Nederveen Pieterse, 1999).

Development as discourse

According to Escobar, the 'discourse of Development', like the Orientalism analysed by Edward Said, has been a 'mechanism for the production and

management of the Third World … organizing the production of truth about the Third World' (1992b: 413–414). A standard Escobar quote is: 'development can best be described as an apparatus that links forms of knowledge about the Third World with the deployment of forms of power and intervention, resulting in the mapping and production of Third World societies' (1996: 213).

Discourse analysis forms part of the 'linguistic turn' in social science. It involves the careful scrutiny of language and text as a framework of presuppositions and structures of thought, penetrating further than ideology critique. Prominent in literary criticism, discourse analysis has been applied extensively in cultural studies, feminism, black studies, and now in the social sciences generally. Discourse analysis contributes to understanding colonialism as an epistemological regime (Mitchell, 1988), it can serve to analyse the 'development machine' (Ferguson, 1990) and development project talk (Apthorpe & Gasper, 1996; Rew, 1997) and has become a critical genre in development studies (Crush, 1996; Grillo & Stirrat 1997). Discourse analysis applied to development is the methodological basis of post-development, which in itself it is not specific to post-development; what is distinctive for post-development is that, from being merely a methodology, discourse analysis has been turned into an ideological platform.

Thus, Escobar concurs with Gustavo Esteva that development is a 'Frankenstein-type dream', an 'alien model of exploitation' and besides reflects urban bias (1992: 419). 'The dream of Development is over' and what is needed is 'Not more Development but a different regime of truth and perception, (pp 412–414). Escobar refers to a 'group of scholars engaging in the most radical critique of Development' viewed as the 'ideological expression of postwar capital expansion'. In this view, World Bank studies and documents 'all repeat the same story'. 'Development colonized reality, it became reality'. It 'may be now a past era … The dream of Development is over' (p 419). To 'establish a discontinuity, a new discursive practice' it is appropriate to 'undertake an archaeology of Development' (pp 414–415). To effect change means to effect a 'change in the order of discourse', to open up the 'possibility to think reality differently'. The grassroots orientation disrupts the link between development, capital and science and thus destabilises the 'grid of the Development apparatus' (p 424).

Escobar's perspective provides a broad and uneven *mélange*, with exaggerated claims sustained by weak examples. It is broad in combining vocabularies—poststructuralism, social movement theory and development—but uneven in that the argument centres on anti-development without giving any clear delineation between anti-development and alternative development. It is exaggerated in that his position hinges on a discursive trick, a rhetorical ploy of equating development with 'Development'. This in itself militates against discourse analysis, caricatures and homogenises development, and conceals divergencies within development. Escobar's perspective on actual development is flimsy and based on confused examples, with more rhetoric than logic. For instance, the claim that the World Bank stories are 'all the same' ignores the tremendous discontinuities in the Bank's discourse over time (e.g. redistribution with growth in the 1970s, structural adjustment in the 1980s, and poverty alleviation and social liberalism

in the 1990s). And while Escobar and Esteva associate 'Development' with urban bias, World Bank and structural adjustment policies in the 1980s have been precisely aimed at correcting 'urban parasitism', which for some time had been a standard criticism of nationalist development policies (a classic source is Lipton, 1977).

Alternatives to development

Many concerns of post-development are not new, they are shared by other critical approaches to development. Post-development parallels dependency theory in seeking autonomy from external dependency, but now taken further to development as a power/knowledge regime. Post-development faith in the endogenous resembles dependency theory and alternative development, as in the emphasis on self-reliance. While dependency thinking privileges the nation-state, post-development, like alternative development, privileges local and grassroots autonomy. Alternative development occupies an in-between position: it shares with post-development the radical critiques of mainstream development but it retains belief in and accordingly redefines development. The record of development is mixed but does include achievements (as noted in human development), so what is the point of rejecting it *in toto*? In many ways the line between alternative and post-development is quite thin, again except for the rejection of development.

Scanning 'the present landscape of Development alternatives' looking for 'a new reality', Escobar is 'not interested in Development alternatives, but rather in alternatives to Development'. Alternative development is rejected because 'most of the efforts are also products of the same worldview which has produced the mainstream concept of science, liberation and development' (Nandy, 1989: 270). Latouche (1993: 161) goes further:

> The most dangerous solicitations, the sirens with the most insidious song, are not those of the 'true blue' and 'hard' development, but rather those of what is called 'alternative' development. This term can in effect encompass any hope or ideal that one might wish to project into the harsh realities of existence. The fact that it presents a friendly exterior makes 'alternative' development all the more dangerous.

This echoes Esteva's fulminating against those who want to cover the stench of "Development" with "Alternative Development" as a deodorant' (1985: 78).

Latouche examines 'three principal planks of alternative development: food self-sufficiency; basic needs; and appropriate technologies' and finds each of them wanting (p 161). In fact these are part of 'another development' in the 1970s and are no longer specific to alternative development in the 1990s, if only because they have entered mainstream development discourse. Latouche maintains that 'The opposition between "alternative development" and *alternative to* development is radical, irreconcilable and one of essence, both in the abstract and in theoretical analysis … Under the heading of "alternative development", a wide range of "anti-productivist" and anti-capitalist platforms are put forward,

all of which aim at eliminating the sore spots of underdevelopment and the excesses of maldevelopment' (p 159).

At this point other arguments come into the picture: anti-managerialism and dichotomic thinking. These are not necessarily part of the explicitly stated post-development view, but they might explain the size of the gap between alternative development and post-development.

Anti-managerialism

Development thinking is steeped in social engineering and the ambition to shape economies and societies, which makes it an interventionist and managerialist discipline. It involves telling other people what to do—in the name of modernisation, nation building, progress, mobilisation, sustainable development, human rights, poverty alleviation and even empowerment and participation (participatory management). There is an anti-authoritarian sensibility running through post-development, an aversion to control and perhaps an anarchist streak. Poststructuralism also involves an 'anti-political' sensibility, as a late-modern scepticism. If the public sphere is constructed through discourse and if any discourse is another claim to truth and therefore a claim to power, what would follow is political agnosticism. This also arises from the preoccupation with autonomy, the problem or representation and the indignity of representing 'others'.[4]

Douglas Lummis declares an end to development because it is inherently anti-democratic (1991, 1994). Viewing development through the lens of democratisation is pertinent enough, not least in relation to the Asian authoritarian developmental states. Nowadays development managerialism not only involves states but also international financial institutions and the 'new managerialism' of NGOs. All of these share a lack of humility, a keynote of the development power/knowledge complex. In post-development there is suspicion of alternative development as an 'alternative managerialism'—which may make sense in view of the record of many NGOs (e.g. Sogge, 1996). So what to do? Emery Roe's response, in a discussion of sustainable development as a form of alternative managerialism, is 'Nothing' (1995: 160).

However, as Corbridge (1994: 103) argues, 'an unwillingness to speak for others is every bit as foundational a claim as the suggestion that we can speak for others in an unproblematic manner' (quoted in Kiely, 1999: 23). Doing 'nothing' comes down to an endorsement of the status quo (a question that reverts to the politics of post-development below). Gilbert Rist in Geneva would argue: I have no business telling people in Senegal what do, but people in Switzerland, yes.[5] This kind of thinking implies a compartmentalised world, presumably split up along the lines of the Westphalian state system. This is deeply conventional, ignores transnational collective action, the relationship between social movements and international relations, the trend of post-nationalism and the ramifications of globalisation. It completely goes against the idea of global citizenship and 'global civil society'. Had this been a general view, the apartheid regime in South Africa would have lasted even longer. Under the heading of 'post' thinking, this is actually profoundly conservative.

Dichotomous thinking

Post-development thinking is fundamentally uneven. For all the concern with discourse analysis, the actual use of language is sloppy and indulgent. Escobar plays games of rhetoric: in referring to development as 'Development' and thus suggesting its homogeneity and consistency, he essentialises 'development'. The same applies to Sachs and his call to do away with development: 'in the very call for banishment, Sachs implicitly suggests that it is possible to arrive at an unequivocal definition' (Crush, 1996: 3). Apparently this kind of essentialising of 'development' is necessary in order to arrive at the radical repudiation of development, and without this anti-development pathos, the post-development perspective loses its foundation.

At times one has the impression that post-development turns on a language game rather than an analysis. Attending a conference entitled 'Towards a post-development age', Anisur Rahman reacted as follows: 'I was struck by the intensity with which the very notion of "development" was attacked … I submitted that I found the word "development" to be a very powerful means of expressing the conception of societal progress as the flowering of people's creativity. Must we abandon valuable words because they are abused? What to do then with words like democracy, cooperation, socialism, all of which are abused?' (1993: 213–214)

There are several problems with this line of thinking. First, some of the claims of post-development are simply misleading and misrepresent the history of development. Thus, Esteva and several others in the *Development Dictionary* (1992) refer to Truman in the 1940s as beginning the development era. But this is only one of the beginnings of the application of development to the South, which started with colonial economics; besides development has an older history—with the latecomers to industrialisation in Central and Eastern Europe, and in Soviet economic planning.

Second, dichotomic thinking, pro and anti-development, underrates the dialectics and the complexity of motives and motions in modernity and development. Even though at given points particular constellations of thinking and policy seem to present a solid whole and façade, there are inconsistencies underneath and the actual course of development theory and policy shows constant changes of direction and numerous improvisations. Thus, some speak of 'the chaotic history of development theory' (Trainer, 1989: 177) or 'the fashion-conscious institutional language of development' (Porter, 1995).

Third, post-development's attitude towards real, existing development is narrow. The instances cited in post-development literature mainly concern Africa, Latin America and India; or reflections are general and no cases are discussed (as with Nandy). The experience of NICs in East Asia is typically *not* discussed: 'the assertion that "development does not work" ignores the rise of East Asia and the near doubling of life expectancy in much of the Third World' (Kiely, 1999: 17).

Politics of post-development

If we strip away the exaggerated claims, the anti-positioning, what remains is an

uneven landscape. Eventually the question must be asked: what about the politics of post-development? Fine points of theory aside, what is to be done? Post-development does make positive claims and is associated with affirmative counterpoints such as indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity. It opts for Gandhian frugality, not consumerism; for conviviality, *à la* Ivan Illich, for grassroots movements and local struggles. But none of these is specific to post-development nor do they necessarily add up to the conclusion of rejecting development.

Forming a position in relation to post-development might proceed as follows. Let's not quibble about details but take your points on board and work with them. What do you have to offer? This varies considerably: Sachs (1992) is a reasonable refresher course in critiques of development. Latouche's arguments are often perceptive and useful, though they can also be found in alternative development sources (such as Rahman, 1993; Pradervand, 1989) and are mostly limited to sub-Saharan Africa. A common-sense reaction may be: your points are well taken, now what do we do? The response of Gilbert Rist is that alternatives are not his affair.[6] The general trend in several sources is to stop at critique. What this means is an endorsement of the status quo and, in effect, more of the same. This is the core weakness of post-development (cf. Cowen & Shenton, 1996).

If we read critiques of development *dirigisme*, such as Deepak Lal's critique of state-centred development economics—which helped set the stage for the neoconservative turn in development—side by side with post-development critiques of development power, such as Escobar's critique of planning, the parallels are striking.[7] Both agree on state failure, though for entirely different reasons. According to Lal, states fail because of rent-seeking; Escobar's criticisms arise from a radical democratic and anti-authoritarian questioning of social engineering and the faith in progress. But arguably, the net political effect turns out to be much the same. In other words, there is an elective affinity between neoliberalism and the development agnosticism of post-development.

Escobar offers one of the more forward post-development positions but is also contradictory. On the one hand he caricatures 'Development' and argues for 'alternatives to Development', and on the other he pleads for redefining development. Other positions, such as Sachs's, are both more limited and more consistent—all past and no future. *The Development Dictionary* features critiques of the market, state, production, needs, etc, which are historically informed but overstate their case and offer no alternatives, and thus ultimately fall flat. What is needed, according to Escobar, is 'Not more Development but a different regime of truth and perception' (1992b: 412–414). Escobar refers to a 'group of scholars engaging in the most radical critique of Development' viewed as the 'ideological expression of post-war capital expansion'. To 'establish a discontinuity, a new discursive practice' it is appropriate to 'undertake an archaeology of Development' (414–415). To effect change means to effect a 'change in the order of discourse', to open up the 'possibility to think reality differently'. Recognising the nexus between knowledge and power in discourse, Escobar proposes 'the formation of nuclei around which new forms of power and knowledge can converge' (p. 424). Basic to his approach is the 'nexus with grassroots movements'. He evokes a 'we' that, following Esteva (1985), com-

prises 'peasants, urban marginals, deprofessionalized intellectuals'. What they share is an 'interest in culture, local knowledge', 'critique of science' and 'promotion of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements'. In another passage, grassroots movements include: women, ecological movements, peasants, urban marginals, civic movements, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, popular culture, youth movements, squatter movements, and Christian-based communities. Their common features, according to Escobar, are that they are 'essentially local', pluralistic and distrust organised politics and the development establishment.

As nodal points Escobar mentions three major discourses—democratisation, difference and anti-Development—which can serve as the 'basis for radical anti-capitalist struggles'. What is 'needed is the expansion and *articulation* of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-productivist, anti-market struggles' (1992: 431). Again, as in 1980s alternative development discourse, this is the aspiration to construct a grand coalition of opposition forces, now combined with a Foucauldian search 'toward new power–knowledge regimes' (p. 432). The desire for a grand oppositional coalition involves the evocation of a 'we' that, in the desire for discontinuity, claims to capture all social movements in the 'Third World', now under the heading of anti-Development. 'Many of today's social movements in the Third World are in one way or another mediated by anti-Development discourses … although this often takes place in an implicit manner' (p. 431). In the West, social movements militate against commodification, bureaucratisation and cultural massification; in the Third World, according to Escobar, they militate 'against bureaucratization achieved by Development institutions (eg peasants against rural development packages, squatters against public housing programmes), commodification, capitalist rationality brought by Development technologies' p. 431).

This is clearly a biased representation: social movements in the South are much too diverse to be simply captured under a single heading. Many popular organisations are concerned with *access* to development programmes, with inclusion and participation, while others are concerned with alternative development and renegotiating development, with decentralisation, or alternative political action. 'Anti-development' is much too simple and rhetorical a description for the views of the 'victims of development'. Indeed 'victims of development' is too simple and biased a label (cf. Woost, 1997). This view suffers from the same problems as early alternative development arguments: it underestimates the desire for and appeal of development and engages in 'island politics' or the politics of marginality. Besides it is contradictory. In its reliance on deprofessionalised intellectuals and distrust of experts, post-development rubs shoulders with anti-intellectualism, while it also relies on and calls for 'complex discursive operations'. Post-development no longer focuses on class interests and is post-Marxist in outlook, yet Escobar also reinvokes radical anti-capitalist struggles. Like some forms of alternative development, post-development involves populism, but seasoned by an awareness of the articulation effect; yet its striving for a new great articulation of anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism and other movements is populist.

At the same time, the political horizon of post-development is one of

resistance rather than emancipation. Made up of resistance *à la* Scott, it participates in the 'romance of resistance' (Abu-Lughod, 1990). Its other component is local struggles *à la* Foucault. I have argued elsewhere that, in post-development discourse, analysis is used not merely as an analytical instrument but as an ideological tool (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000); this avenges itself when it comes to politics. As many have argued (Said, 1986, Hoy, 1986), Foucault's imagination of power is an imagination without exit. Foucault engages in a 'monologue of power' (Giri, 1998: 198). In the footsteps of this logic, post-development takes the critique of development to the point of retreat. Retreat from business-as-usual can be a creative position from which an alternative practice may grow. Thus critical theory and its negation of the negation, though pessimistic in outlook, has served as a point of reference and inspiration, for instance to social movements of the 1960s. But the imaginary of power that inspires post-development leaves little room for forward politics.

The quasi-revolutionary posturing in post-development reflects both a hunger for a new era and a nostalgia politics of romanticism, glorification of the local, the grassroots and the community with conservative overtones. Different adherents of post-development advocate different politics. Escobar opts for a 'romance of resistance'. The politics of Gilbert Rist are those of a conventionally compartmentalised world. Rahnema opts for a Confucian version of Taoist politics (discussed in Nederveen Pieterse, 1999). Ray Kiely adds another note: 'When Rahnema (1997: 391) argues that the end of development "represents a call to the 'good people' everywhere to think and work together", we are left with the vacuous politics of USA for Africa's "We are the World". Instead of a politics which critically engages with material inequalities, we have a post-development era where "people should be nicer to each other" '. (1999: 24)

In the introduction to the *Power of Development*, Jonathan Crush offers this definition: 'This is the power of development: the power to transform old worlds, the power to imagine new ones'. The context is a comment on a colonial text: 'Africans become objects for the application of power rather than subjects experiencing and responding to the exercise of that power' (1996: 2). Crush comes back once more to the power of development: 'The power of development is the power to generalize, homogenize, objectify' (p. 22). There is a disjuncture between these statements. While the first is, or seems to be, affirmative, the other two are negative. Clearly something is lost in the process. It is what Marx, and Schumpeter after him, called the process of 'creative destruction'. What happens in post-development is that, of 'creative destruction', only destruction remains. What remains of the power of development is only the destructive power of social engineering. Gone is the recognition of the creativity of developmental change (cf. Goulet, 1992). Instead, what post-development offers, besides critique, is another series of fashionable interpretations. Above all it is a cultural critique of development and a cultural politics (Fagan, 1999). This reflects on more than just development: 'development' here is a stand-in for modernity and the real issue is the question of modernity.

It may be argued that the power of development is the power of 'Thesis Eleven'. According to Marx's Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The time has come to change it.'

Nowadays the ambition to 'change the world' meets with cynicism—because of the questionable record of several development decades, doubts over social engineering and rationalist planning as exercises in authoritarianism, and over modernism and the utopian belief in the perfectability of society. Yet all this does not alter the necessity to 'change the world', nor does it alter the fact that development is about changing the world, with all the pitfalls that involves, including the legacy of social engineering and Enlightenment confidence tricks.

Coda

Post-development is caught in rhetorical gridlock. Using discourse analysis as an ideological platform invites political impasse and quietism. In the end post-development offers no politics besides the self-organising capacity of the poor, which actually lets the development responsibility of states and international institutions off the hook. Post-development arrives at development agnosticism by a different route but shares the abdication of development with neoliberalism. Since most insights in post-development sources are not specific to post-development (and are often confused with alternative development), what makes post-development distinctive is the rejection of development. Yet the rejection of development does not arise from post-development insights as a *necessary* conclusion. In other words, one can share post-development's observations without arriving at this conclusion: put another way, there is no compelling logic to post-development arguments.

Commonly distinguished reactions to modernity are neo-traditionalism, modernisation and postmodernism (e.g. McEvilley, 1995). Post-development belongs to the era of the 'post'—post-structuralism, postmodernism, post-colonialism, post-Marxism. It is premised on an awareness of endings, on 'the end of modernity' and, in Vattimo's (1988) words, the 'crisis of the future'. Post-development parallels postmodernism both in its acute intuitions and in being directionless in the end, as a consequence of its refusal to, or lack of interest in, translating critique into construction. At the same time it also fits the profile of the neo-traditionalist reaction to modernity. There are romantic and nostalgic strands to post-development and its reverence for community, *Gemeinschaft* and the traditional, and there is an element of neo-Luddism in the attitude towards science and technology. The overall programme is one of resistance rather than transformation or emancipation.

Post-development is based on a paradox. While it is clearly part of the broad critical stream in development, it shows no regard for the progressive potential and dialectics of modernity—for democratisation, soft-power technologies, reflexivity. Thus, it is not difficult to see that the three nodal discourses identified by Escobar—democratisation, difference and anti-development—*themselves* arise out of modernisation. Democratisation continues the democratic impetus of the Enlightenment; difference is a function of the transport and communication revolutions, the world becoming 'smaller' and societies multicultural; and anti-development elaborates the dialectics of the Enlightenment set forth by the Frankfurt School. Generally, the rise of social movements and civil society

activism, North and South, is also an expression of the richness of overall development, and cannot simply be captured under the label 'anti'. Post-development's source of strength is a hermeneutics of suspicion, an anti-authoritarian sensibility, and hence a suspicion of alternative development as an 'alternative managerialism'. But since it fails to translate this sensibility into a constructive position, what remains is whistling in the dark. What is the point of declaring development a 'hoax' (Norberg-Hodge, 1995) without proposing an alternative?

Alternative development thinking primarily looks at development from the point of view of the disempowered, from bottom-up, along a vertical axis. It combines this with a perspective on the role of the state. In simple terms: a strong civil society needs a strong state (Friedmann, 1992; Brohman, 1996). Post-development adopts a wider angle in looking at development through the lens of the problematic of modernity. Yet, although its angle is wide, its optics are not sophisticated and the focus is unsharp. Its view of modernity is one-dimensional and ignores different options for problematising modernity, such as 'reworking modernity' (Pred & Watts, 1992), or exploring modernities in the plural (Nederveen Pieterse, 1998a). Thus, reflexive modernity is more enabling as a position and reflexive development is a corollary in relation to development (Nederveen Pieterse, 1998b).

In my view post-development and 'alternatives to development' are flawed premises—flawed not as sensibilities but as positions. The problem is not the critiques, which one can sympthaize with easily enough and which are not specific to post-development, but the companion rhetoric and posturing, which intimate a politically correct position. 'Alternatives to development' is a misnomer because no such alternatives are offered. There is no positive programme; there is a critique but no construction. 'Post-development' is misconceived because it attributes to 'development' a single and narrow meaning, a consistency that does not match either theory or policy, and thus replicates the rhetoric of developmentalism, rather than penetrating and exposing its polysemic realities. It echoes the 'myth of development' rather than leaving it behind. Post-development makes engaging contributions to collective conversation and reflexivity about development and as such contributes to philosophies of change, but its contribution to politics of change is meagre. While the shift towards cultural sensibilities that accompanies this perspective is a welcome move, the plea for 'people's culture' (Constantino, 1985) or indigenous culture, can lead, if not to ethno-chauvinism and 'reverse orientalism' (Kiely, 1999: 25), to reification of both culture and locality or people. It presents a conventional and narrow view of globalisation, equated with homogenisation. At a philosophical level we may wonder whether there are alternatives to development for homo sapiens, as the 'unfinished animal', ie to development writ large, also in the wide sense of evolution.

Notes

1 Elsewhere Kothari addresses development in more affirmative ways.
2 Modernism and science are discussed more extensively in Ndederveen Pieterse (1999a).

3 In an earlier work Alvares (1979) proposes appropriate technology as an alternative approach.
4 On representations of others, note the observation by Crush: 'The current obsession with Western representations of "the Other" is a field of rapidly diminishing return' (1996: 22).
5 In correspondence with the author.
6 At a seminar at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.
7 Both papers are reproduced side by side in Corbridge (1995)

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