Exploring Post-Development: Politics, the State and Emancipation. The question of alternatives

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Abstract
This paper explores whether there is any value to post-development. The central argument is that there is if the engagement with Michel Foucault is informed and accurate, and only if post-development can have helpful practical implications. The paper makes a distinction between post-development that is ‘influenced’ by Foucault and the one that stems from a more thorough use of Foucauldian concepts. This distinction has prompted an exploration of post-development theory that shows how an informed Foucauldian treatment of post-development adds value to the analysis and allows for relating post-development concerns to the practice of development. From this foundation it has been possible to identify a number of unanswered questions, but also to demonstrate the potential post-development holds for uncovering possible alternatives to development. Additionally the analysis is revealing to the implications of these alternatives for development practice, but also in relation to politics, emancipation and the State.

Introduction
Post-development articulates a dissatisfaction with the concept and practice of ‘Development’ that lead not to the search for alternative versions of it, but to dismissing it altogether and calling for alternatives to development (Esteva 1992; Escobar 1995; Rahnema 1997). The idea of moving ‘beyond development’ may seem unduly radical and unrealistic when contrasted with a well-established and accepted modernist worldview that has long since informed and justified powerful economic and political interests in the pursuit of ‘Development’ (Andreasson 2010 p.88). Not surprising then, post-development ideas have been the target of extensive critique that will be taken into consideration in the following chapters. This paper intends to show however, through a close engagement with the critiques put forward by post-development thinkers, that there are indeed some fundamental problems with the way that ‘Development’ has been pursued in the post-World War II era, and to argue, in spite of the critics claims to the opposite; that post-development can inform practice and reveal the direction in which potential alternatives are heading.
Post-development has its roots in postmodern critique of modernity. It has also been greatly influenced by the work of Michel Foucault. Attempts at the deconstruction of the concept of development has been undertaken (Escobar 1995) in order to reveal the operations of power and knowledge in development discourse and practices. This paper is an exploration of post-development and through re-evaluating the use of Foucauldian methodology the core arguments of post-development will be revealed; discarding the more arbitrary and unsophisticated post-development arguments found in some instances of the early writings (Sachs 1992; Rahnema 1997; Esteva and Prakash 1998b).

An ambivalence has hence been identified in post-development thinking where a significant difference exists within and between the writings and it appears as though there are two conflicting discourses to be found within post-development (Ziai 2004). Although a further enquiry into this important distinction will feature in Chapter One it would serve to highlight that this paper intends to bring to light the discourse in post-development that is informed by a more sophisticated application of Foucauldian concepts to ‘Development’. This paper has been motivated by the belief that post-development has not received adequate attention in mainstream debates owing to the number of critics that have dismissed the approach, arguably having been distracted and preoccupied with the less constructive discourse that relates to a poor use of Foucauldian analysis which is distinguishable within post-development thinking.

Critics have also tended to assign a limited use to post-development theory; as being able to offer a critique of development but lacking instrumentality in relation to practice. This paper intends to explore the ways in which post-development critique can offer insights into alternatives to development, while also addressing the implications of post-development theory for the practice of development.

There is a crucial emphasis to be made to the meaning of the term development employed in the post-development critique. What is actually referred to when an ‘end to development’ (Lummis 1994) is called for? What is envisioned in is not, according to Rahnema, ‘to be seen as an end to the search for new possibilities of change’ (1997 p.391.) Rather, it is ‘Development’ which refers to the various ideas and practices that have been undertaken in post-World War II era, attempting to engineer particular changes in the so-called ‘Third World’ and that are premised on the belief that some areas of the world are ‘developed’ and that others are ‘underdeveloped’ (Mattews 2004 p.376), which is to be abandoned.

‘Development as we know it is interventionism’ and it is difficult to imagine development
without intervention: no feasibility studies, no teams of experts, no projects or programmes or even participatory workshops and World Bank policies (Maiava 2002 p.1). The type of ‘development’ rejected by post-development theorists is the form of development that has been a response to the problematization of poverty that occurred in the years following World War II, and can be seen as ‘an historical construct that provides a space in which poor countries are known, specified and intervened upon’ (Escobar 1995 p.45).

It is necessary to emphasise that the purpose in the following discussions is not to evaluate post-development theory in relation to other existing development approaches, nor to use it as a tool to evaluate or dismiss the efforts made in the name of development in the post-World War II era, but rather to maintain a focus on post-development and critically engage with its theory in order to explore the potentials and shortcomings therein as well as the implications of a post-development analysis for politics, the role of the state and the issues that arise when attempting to relate their idea of alternatives to development to current development practice. To this effect, the paper is divided into two parts. Part One: Theory, intends to correct the shallow engagement with Foucault which in turn allows for setting up Part Two: Practice, that addresses the problem of political ‘silence’ of post-development by exploring how it can inform development practice.

Chapter One introduces the post-development critique of ‘Development’ while Chapter Two provides an analysis of the theory and the use of Foucauldian concepts, which will be the more substantial section of this paper as it enables advancing post-development theory so as to explore what is envisioned in alternatives to development and allow for discussing it in relation to practice; something which has been found lacking and close to absent in post-development literature. Chapter Three will discuss post-development and the call for alternatives to development, assessing the role awarded to new social movements and the implications for social change. A final discussion including critiques of post-development, the problems identified and some implications for the future role of international development institutions and the state will feature in Chapter Four, which attempts to relate post-development theory to practice. This has hardly been dealt with by post-development theorists and hence the objective here is limited to identifying a number of problems and questions for further study as well as highlighting potential benefits; ways in which a post-development analysis can improve the practice and pursuit of social change.
1. **Introducing the post-development critique of ‘Development’**

**Introducing post-development theory**

Although declaring a total failure of the post-World War II project of development in the South (Sachs 1992; Rahnema 1997) might appear to be a controversial claim in the light of UN statistics on the progress made for instance in terms of life expectancy and infant mortality since the 1950s, the two most fundamental hypotheses put forward by post-development writers are hardly contested even by the sharpest critics (Ziai 2007 p.8). Firstly, the traditional concept of ‘development’ is seen as a Eurocentric construct where the West is labelled ‘developed’ and the rest of the world is perceived as ‘underdeveloped’. This constitutes one society as the ideal norm and others as deviations of that norm and neglects numerous other possible conceptions and indicators for a ‘good life’ or a ‘good society’ as the different ways of measuring ‘development’ are modelled upon the European experience of progress. According to post-development theory these values of ‘development’ should not be taken as universal (Ziai 2007 p.8). Secondly, it is argued that the traditional concept of development has authoritarian and technocratic implications. Whoever gets to decide what ‘development’ is and how it can be achieved, usually some kind of ‘development expert’, is also in a position of power, which has been described as a ‘trusteeship’. Post-development critique emphasises that any position that ‘relies on universal standards for classifying and evaluating societies in fact subordinates countless different perceptions and values of other people’, and that such a position becomes dangerous when coupled with political power to transform societies according to supposedly universal standards (Ziai 2007 p.9). What is key to these post-development arguments is that development discourse is based on Western ideas of progress and as such cannot help but take the form of an imposition of those ideas on the South and hence repressing local cultures and interests (Parfitt 2002 p.7). Post-development writers seek to dismiss the post-World War II concept of development by reference to its top-down authoritarian form, as directed by intrusive state mechanisms and international development agencies (Escobar 1995; Esteva and Prakash 1998b).

Development was - and continues to be for the most part – a top-down ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treat people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of “progress”. Development was conceived not as a cultural process (culture was a residual variable, to disappear with the advance of modernization) but instead a system of
more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some “badly needed” goods to a “target” population. It comes to no surprise that development became a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people’s interests. (Escobar 1995 p.44)

As a result of this discursive formation of development, the succession of various development strategies and approaches up to the present, are always made within the same discursive space. (Escobar 1995 p.42) It is to a considerable extent on these grounds that the whole development paradigm is dismissed by post-development writers, along with alternative development, because it will invariably be a project of “modernisation” based on western ideas of “progress” leading to cultural and social homogenisation, threatening people’s autonomy. Indeed, one fundamental objection to ‘development’ is that all the successive schools of development thinking envisage a process of development through ‘the exercise of trusteeship over society’ (Cowen and Shenton 1996 p.ix-x). Trusteeship has been defined as ‘the intent which is expressed by one source of agency, to develop the capacities of another’ (Cowen and Shenton 1996 p.ix-x). Cowen and Shenton arrives at an objection to trusteeship in development through identifying both a ‘distance and disjunction between the intent to develop and the practice of development’ as it entails an ‘exercise of power in which the capacity to state the purpose of development is not accompanied by accountability’ (1996 p.454). This issue of trusteeship has been further emphasised in the work of contemporary post-development theorist Mark Duffield in relation to security, where he relates it to a ‘culturally coded racism’ that effectively decides the boundary between the ‘included and excluded’ (Duffield 2007 p.227).

However, it has been pointed out that a level of trusteeship is unavoidable in the pursuit of development, whether it is through the policies of the State or international development agencies (Parfitt 2002 p.43). The objection to trusteeship might have little to do with the question of agency, but rather that the project of development rejected by post-development has involved an act of power over a target population that has had little to no ability to call the agency to account (Parfitt 2002 p.42). Cowen and Shenton related these concerns to Amartya Sen’s work and his conception of ‘development as freedom’, which they find best accords with their vision of development, quoting Sen to the effect that ‘the process of development is best seen as an expansion of people’s “capabilities”’ (Sen cited in Cowen and Shenton 1996...
The fundamental post-development position arguably shows that if authoritarian and ethnocentric elements for development are to be avoided, it would be impossible to define development in normative terms as the state of a ‘good society’. Such a definition can only legitimately be reached through a democratic process by the people concerned (Ziai 2004 p.1056). The aims of the post-development perspective is effectively a transfer of power, the power to define the problems and goals of a society; from the hands of outside ‘experts’ to the members of the society itself, which adds up to a radical democratic position (Ziai 2004).

Before moving on to locating this position within post-development, it is necessary address some of the critiques that have been raised against post-development in order to distinguish between two readings or discourses within post-development. The ‘sceptical post-development’ discourse (Ziai 2004) as it has been referred to is found to be based on a more sophisticated use of Foucauldian methodologies and holds a constructive potential in that it is revealing of the nature of the alternatives to development.

**Critiques of post-development theory and the distinction between ‘sceptical post-development’ and ‘anti-development’**

A number of serious critiques have been raised against post-development theory. These will have to be addressed in order to move forward to explore the implications and possibilities of post-development alternatives to the post-World War II project of development. For this purpose it is necessary to make a clear distinction between two different discourses inherent to the post-development school of thought.

The call for the ‘end of development’ (Lummis 1994) in post-development thinking, does not according to Rahnema (1997 p.391) amount to an end to the search for new possibilities of change but rather that a transformation must occur at the level of the people, and that what they seek is change that will enhance their ‘inborn and cultural capacities’ which would allow them to be free to change the content and rules of change according to their culturally defined aspirations (Rahnema 1997 p.384). Other post-development writers have signalled what they refer to as ‘the inevitable breakdown of modernity’ that is being ‘transformed by the non-modern majorities into opportunities for regenerating their own traditions, their cultures, their unique indigenous and non-modern arts of living and dying’ (Esteva and Prakash 1998a p.290). Comments of this nature have prompted critics to discredit post-development for romanticising the community and the local as well as advocating anti-modernist ideas (Schuurman 2000; Nederveen Pieterse 2000). Nederveen Pieterse argues that the ‘quasi-
revolutionary posturing of post-development reflects both a hunger for a new era and nostalgia for a politics of romanticism, glorification of the local, grassroots and the community with conservative overtones’ (1998 p.366). Post-development is also criticised for attributing to development a single and narrow meaning, suggesting its homogeneity and consistency, and for Nederveen Pieterse this essentialising of development, equating it with ‘Development’ (earlier referred to as the post-World War II development project) ‘is necessary in order to arrive at the radical repudiation of development’ (2000 p.183). The claim that post-development fails to address whether there are alternative conceptions of development which might involve less domination (Storey 2000) is hardly on target, as post-development writers frequently make clear that it is a certain from of development - as a global project which is to be abandoned. Furthermore it is made clear why ‘alternative development’ or ‘participatory development’ are also dismissed and even deemed more ‘insidious’, the new ‘siren songs’ of development as Serge Latouch (1993) describes them, as they give a new lease of life to ‘Development’ by providing a new friendly exterior through mainstreaming sensibilities put forward by alternative thinkers, while really amounting to little more than the pursuit of the same ends by different means (Latouch 1993 p.149). Nevertheless, Nederveen Pieterse argues that the problem is not with the critiques put forward by post-development ‘which one can easily sympathise with’, but with the accompanying rhetoric, exaggerated claims and anti-positioning (2000 p.188). He further argues that there is no positive programme, only critique and no construction as he claims that ‘alternatives to development is a misnomer because no such alternatives are offered’ (Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.188). This paper will take issue with these claims and argue that a closer reading of the core hypotheses of post-development coupled with a more sophisticated understanding of the methodological and intellectual basis in Foucault’s work can give a good idea to what is implied in the pursuit of alternatives to development.

It is necessary however at this point, to make a connection to one of the main concerns of this exposition, which regards the connection between development or aspirations for social change with politics. The question is also a concern for Nederveen Pieterse as he finds post-development to offer no forward politics, which he attributes to the use of Foucault’s conception of power which he perceives as ‘an imagination without an exit’. In this vein it is argued that post-development’s political horizon is limited to that of resistance rather than emancipation characterised by ‘local struggles à la Foucault’ (2000 p.186). This position
arguably reflects more on Nederveen Pieterse’s understanding of Foucault’s analysis of power, and his views on the politics of post-modernism and his conclusions stand in sharp contrast with the post-development critique itself which takes issue with and criticises what is perceived as the “de-politicising effects” of the post-World War II development project as well as the fact that post-development calls for a re-politicisation of development and poverty and for these issues not to be reduced to “technical problems” (Fergusson 1990; Nustad 2007; Nakano 2007; Munck 1999). The point to make here is that when treating post-development as a coherent school of thought, many critics fail to differentiate between the heterogeneous positions subsumed under the heading of ‘post-development’, and have accordingly not fully grasped their political implications (Ziai 2004 p.1058).

In order to further explore the ways in which post-development can be constructive and offer insights into the search for alternatives to development and to discuss the implications of post-development theory for development practice it is therefore important to draw a distinction between two competing discourses within post-development. This paper dismisses the ‘neo-populist’ or ‘anti-development’ discourse which tends to romanticise traditional culture, portraying culture as static and rigid and thus rejects modernity promoting a return to subsistence agriculture and vernacular ways of life (Ziai 2004 p.1054). It is this conception that is most susceptible to the critiques of post-development as discussed above, and the political implications of which can ‘invite political impasse and quietism’ (Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.187). A cultural critique that is linked with a static conception of culture risks amounting to a conservative or reactionary anti-modern position, a danger that should not be ignored (Ziai 2004). This is particularly apparent in Rahnema’s idea of development where he compares it to AIDS, where development is depicted as a virus that colonises the mind and is internalised. The change that occurs to the culture of a people from contact with Western modernity is seen as an illness, in other words, culture is seen as something static and something that must be preserved as it is (Rahnema 1997b p.119). This speaks of the neo-populist or anti-development strand of post-development thinking that has prompted critics like Nederveen Pieterse to claim that post-development shows no regard for the progressive dialectics of modernity or for democratisation and technologies (2000 p.187). The preoccupation of critics with this strand of post-development arguably distracts from the potential of the ‘sceptical post-development’ discourse, grounded in a thorough ruse of Foucauldian concepts; this approach is considerably more sophisticated when critically
undermining and engaging with the post-World War II development project, and is where a forward politics can be found. When the critique of the Eurocentrism and cultural imperialism of ‘Development’ is combined with a constructivist and anti-essentialist perspective post-development has been claimed to hold an emancipatory potential through the project of radical democracy (Ziai 2004). From this point, a deeper analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of the ‘sceptical post-development’ discourse, which holds constructive potential, will be undertaken and used to develop an understanding of what is implied through, and envisaged in the alternatives to development that post-development proposes.

2. Analysing post-development theory and the use of Foucauldian concepts

Development as discourse: post-development’s theoretical foundation and use of a Foucauldian analysis

Foucault has been the single greatest intellectual influence on post-development theory. Development is seen as constituting ‘a specific way of thinking about the world, a particular form of knowledge’ and in the Foucauldian sense it does not reflect reality but instead constructs reality, and as such ‘it closes off alternative ways of thinking and so constitutes a form of power’ (Kiely cited in Story 2000 p.40). Escobar has undertaken a Foucauldian deconstruction of the development discourse (Escobar 1995) revealing how pursuing Foucault’s analysis of power, knowledge and discourse in relation to development can show how Western disciplinary and normalising mechanisms have been extended to the Third World and how the production of discourses by Western countries about the Third World becomes a means of effecting domination over it (Munck 1999 p.205). ‘Development discourse’, from this perspective is about disciplining difference – establishing what the norm is and what deviance is, indeed creating ‘underdevelopment’ as Other to the West’s ‘development’ (Munck 1999 p.205). This “invention” of development which occurred in the post-World War II era involved the creation of an institutional field from which discourses are produced and put into circulation. This institutionalisation of development, which took place at all levels from the international organisations like the IMF, the World Bank and the UN to the national planning agencies of states in the Third World to local development agencies and community development committees and NGOs – all together constitute an apparatus that organises the production of knowledge and the deployment of forms of power. This “development apparatus” overlaps with the process of professionalization of development that started post-World War II in the mid-1940s (Escobar 1995 p.46). To understand the
development discourse and how it operates, one must look at the system of relations established among these institutions and practices, and to the systematisation of these relations to form a whole that ‘defines the conditions under which objects, concepts, theories and strategies can be incorporated into the discourse’ (Escobar 1995 p.40-41). The objects that development began to deal with post-World War II were numerous and varied, some which stood out clearly like poverty, insufficient technology and capital, rapid population growth, inadequate public services and agricultural practices (Escobar 1995). ‘Everything was subjected to the eye of the new experts: the poor dwellings of the rural masses, the vast agricultural fields, cities, households, factories, hospitals, schools, public offices, towns and regions, and, in the last instance the world as a whole’ (Escobar 1995 p.41). By deconstructing development through analysing it as a form of discourse, Escobar sees ‘Development’ as:

the result of the establishment of a system that brought together all those elements, institutions, and practices creating among them a set of relations which ensured their continued existence. ‘Development’ as a mode of thinking and a source of practices, soon became an omnipresent reality. The poor countries became the target of endless number of programs and interventions that seemed to be inescapable and that ensured their control (Escobar 1988 p.430).

Through the professionalization of development it also became possible to remove all problems, including poverty from the political and cultural realms and to recast them in terms of the apparently more ‘neutral’ realm of science. In this way, ‘Development was conceived not as a cultural process’, but instead as a ‘system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions’ intended to deliver solutions on identified problems to “target” populations (Escobar 1995 p.44). ‘Development’ has contributed to the understanding of social life as technical issue, as a matter of rational decisions and management to be entrusted to those whose specialised knowledge makes them qualified – the development professionals in international organisations, national governments and specific development programmes. Inherent to the post-World War II development project is the assumption of a teleology to the extent that all societies are assumed to be moving along the same path of “progress” towards the same end goal of “development” that is modernisation. It endlessly reproduces the separation between reformers and those to be reformed by relying on the premise that the
Third World is different, inferior or “behind” in relation to the accomplished West against which success is measured and where from this privileged position it is allowed to continue to provide guidance and identify the “anomalies” of the ‘underdeveloped’ (Escobar 1995).

The idea of “progress” – a genealogy of the development paradigm

Other post-development writers have made use of other Foucauldian concepts in order to criticise ‘Development’. The development project has been analysed through a genealogy of the paradigm (Shanin 1997) – paradigm being taken here as the sum of the underlying assumptions, beliefs and world-views underpinning the concept (Rahnema 1997 p.xiv). Foucault's analysis of power can uncover historically specific systems of norm-governed social practices which he refers to as power/knowledge regimes that define and produce distinctive subjects and objects. Genealogy is a kind of historiography that can chronicle the emergence and disappearance of such systems of practice and can describe their function. Genealogy is ‘an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework’ (Foucault 1980 p.117). Shanin (2007) examines the genealogy of the development paradigm, which goes as far back as to the idea of progress.

The Enlightenment of the 16th and 17th centuries, with its scientific advances provided the basis for the secular notion of progress in which science and reason are the driving forces behind societal advancement. The core of the concept of progress sees all societies as ‘advancing naturally “up”, on a route from poverty, barbarism, despotism and ignorance to riches, civilisation, democracy and rationality, the highest expression of which is science’ (Shanin 1997 p.65). It is important to acknowledge the extent to which the ideas of progress have penetrated all strata of contemporary societies and ‘become the popular common sense, and as such resistant to challenge’ (Shanin 1997 p.66). The language has evolved with fashion: ‘progress’, ‘modernisation’, ‘development’, ‘growth’ and so on, and likewise did the legitimisations: ‘civilising mission’, ‘economic efficiency’ and ‘friendly advice’ (Shanin 1997 p.66). The impact of the idea of progress is substantial, involving modernisation theory, development strategy, the goal of economic growth, and can be categorised as being threefold: ‘as a general orientation device, as a powerful tool of mobilisation, and as ideology’ (Shanin 1997 p.68). It has enabled social planning due to its claims to being founded in “objective” patterns of history, and ‘endless planning disasters’ have followed (Shanin 1997 p.69) The most significant concrete representation and instrument of the idea of progress has
been the modern state as it provides a legitimate representation of the nation with its claims to bureaucratic rationality and as it reiterates the understanding that it is necessary to manage people as a means to achieving societal advancement (Shanin 1997 p.69). ‘Progress’, ‘development’, ‘growth’ and so forth became the main ideological raison d’être for statehood’ and ‘the governability of people’ (Shanin 1997 p.69). The blueprints of “progress” and ‘Development’ have given legitimisation to repressive bureaucracies, both on a national and international level, to act on behalf of science, presenting as technical problems and objective matters those which are essentially political and thereby taking away choice from those influenced the most by the decisions taken by these institutions (Shanin 1997). The central role of the state in the development process has been one of the main characteristics of the post-World War II development paradigms, which is epitomised in the construction of the welfare state in the Western industrialised world (Schuurman 2000).

Post-development critiques of the role of the modern state in ‘Development’ and the question of autonomy

Exploring the ways that the idea of progress ties in with the role of the modern state as the main agent of development - through being managerialist and primarily concerned with engineering social change and economic growth - is imperative for understanding why the post-development critique of ‘Development’ logically also entails a similar critical engagement with the state. Understanding how this critique relates back to the core concerns of post-development might shed light on what is envisioned in the call for alternatives to development.

‘As the state emerged as the guarantor of progress, the objective of government became the efficient management and disciplining of the population so as to ensure its welfare and ‘good order’’ (Escobar 1992a p.146). Escobar’s arguments here, hold a close affinity to what Foucault contends in Power/Knowledge (1980) as he suggests that the governmental management involved to ensure that the path of progress and development was pursued allowed for poverty, health, education, hygiene, and unemployment and so on to be constructed as ‘social problems’ which in turn required detailed scientific knowledge about the population and society, and extensive social planning and intervention in everyday life (Escobar 1992a). ‘The management of the social has produced modern subjects who are not only dependent on professionals for their needs, but are also ordered into realities (cities,
health and education systems, economies, etc.) that can be governed by the state through planning’ (Escobar 1992a p.147). Planning inevitably leads to what Foucault has termed normalisation and occurs through a standardisation of reality by subjecting people to the dominant norms, and as to its more insidious effects it entails a disavowal and erasure of difference and diversity (Escobar 1992a). As a result of the close relationship between the idea of progress and development, post-development critics are targeting the teleological concept of history inherent in development. It is argued that because societies are self-instituting this closed off imaginary inherent in the concept of ‘Development’ negates the self-instituting power of society. ‘Since the teleological concept of development excludes the creation of something radically new, any attempt to pursue autonomy must necessarily criticise development’ (Sauviat 2007 p.104). Since the social imaginary of development is tied to Western ideas of progress it stands in contradiction with the social imaginary of autonomy, because autonomy means that all the institutionalised social traditions can be questioned, and the goals redefined at any time (Sauviat 2007). Central to this meaning of autonomy is the idea of an autonomous subject and always when discussing autonomy and certainly when thinking about autonomy in an intercultural dimension, one has to pay attention to power relations. For the moment, the ‘West’ is still in a superior position of power and thus has more means to export its imaginary, and its ideology. This is identified as a problem by post-development thinkers as autonomy has to be made a practical reality and to be struggled for, and by definition cannot be imported from the outside. (Sauviat 2007).

Thinking about development along these lines brings to mind Rahnema’s argument - that the development project was flawed to begin with because of the very premises and assumptions that it was based on. The issue here is not that ‘development strategies or projects could or should have been better implemented’ but rather that ‘development as it imposed itself on its ‘target populations’, was basically the wrong answer to their true needs and aspirations’ (Rahnema, 1997a p.379). When discussing the African experience of development, Stefan Andreasson suggests that the ‘development-as-modernisation discourse’ becomes so focused on that which has worked elsewhere, that it neglects the importance of finding what may be conducive to a better future in African experiences and values themselves (2010 p.82). He finds that post-development challenges this mindset by ‘making the simple assumption that the quest for a way forward out of the quagmire begins at home’ (Andreasson 2010 p.83).
Depoliticising poverty and the State: findings from Ferguson’s case study of development interventions in Lesotho

James Ferguson’s analysis of how the development apparatus have been employed in the context of the involvement of development agencies in Lesotho provides this discussion with empirical examples of the pathologies of conventional development by looking at the unintended “instrumental effects” of planned interventions. Ferguson has found the “instrumental effects” to be twofold: ‘alongside the institutional effect of expanding bureaucratic state power is the conceptual or ideological effect of depoliticising both poverty and the state’ (Ferguson 1990 p.256).

Ferguson (1990) adds to post-development theory by analysing the ‘development discourse’ on Lesotho and the ways in which the development agencies presented the country’s economy and society. He furthermore examines the effects that the underlying assumptions and misrepresentations have had on development projects there in practice focusing mainly on the unintended side-effects, the ‘instrumental effects’ as the history of the development projects in Lesotho is one of almost unremitting failure. In 1975 the World Bank issued a report on Lesotho that was used to justify a series of major World Bank loans to the country. Ferguson exposes what he refers to as myth-making about Lesotho, as the World Bank report is filled with inaccurate representations of the country such as claiming Lesotho to be a ‘traditional peasant society’ and that agriculture provides the livelihood for 85% of the people, while in reality something like 70% of average rural household income is derived from wage labour in South Africa (Ferguson 1997 p.225). The argument put forward by Ferguson highlights several underlying assumptions and representations of Lesotho that were not based on the reality of the country. The knowledge that was produced by the development apparatus necessarily had to construct a reality in which Lesotho “could” be “developed” – as an appropriate target for intervention (Ferguson 1990). Lesotho had to be represented as agricultural so that it could be “developed” through agricultural improvements and technical inputs. A representation in which Lesotho appeared as a labour reserve for the South African mining industry, where migrant wage labour was recognised as the basis for Basotho livelihood would leave development agencies almost without a role to play. The subsequent deployment of a development project according to the false assumptions constructed by the development apparatus unsurprisingly failed in its goal of commercialisation of livestock as this proved to be the wrong answer to Lesotho’s problems which turned out not to be simple
matters for a technical solution. The Thaba-Tseka Project failed to effect transformation in livestock practices because of the presumed characteristics of the “target” population and by ignoring the traditional political and economic structures that govern livestock keeping in Lesotho including a mystique glorifying cattle ownership where non-commercial livestock practices support local power relations (Ferguson 1990).

The development projects in Lesotho reveal another striking feature of the development discourse on Lesotho that concerns the way that the State is portrayed; as an impartial instrument for implementing plans. Development agencies presented the country’s economy and society as lying within the control of a neutral government perfectly responsive to the blueprints of planners seeing ‘the government as a machine for providing social services and engineering growth’ (Ferguson 1997 p.226). Ferguson argues that this misrepresentation of the role and power of the state contributes to the failure of development projects in general but more interestingly also to the instrumental effects of the expansion of bureaucratic state power and de-politicisation. These instrumental effects may also lead ‘Development’ to effectively squash political challenges to the system through the enhancement of the powers of administration and repression, but also through reposing political questions of land, resources, jobs or wages as technical “problems” responsive to technical development interventions (Ferguson 1990 p.270).

By uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of the powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of “development” is the principal means through which the question of poverty is de-politicised in the world today (Ferguson 1990 p.256).

The project of ‘Development’ is for Ferguson capable of pulling a good trick, that of the ‘suspension of politics from even the most sensitive political operations’ leading him to refer to the “development project” as ‘the anti-politics machine’ (Ferguson 1990). There are further observations made by Ferguson that are worthy of note here. According to Foucault’s account, the development and spread of techniques for the disciplining of the body and the optimisation of its capacities, making the population an object of control and knowledge, has enabled in the modern era, a new form of power, one that does not simply imply domination, but is instead a normalising “bio-power” that is productive (Ferguson 1990). Bio-power
watches over, governs and administers the very “life” of society and in this process the state occupies a central role – coordinating, managing and optimising, according to its own calculus, the productive forces of society (Ferguson 1990 p.274). Ferguson finds however, that this understanding does not fully explain what he has observed in Lesotho. Instead of expanding capabilities of the state, the instrumental effects have only served to extend the reach of a particular kind of exercise of power where power relations must increasingly be referred through bureaucratic circuits and hence it has only contributed to the ossifying or ‘coagulation’ of power (Ferguson 1990 p.274).

Expanding on the core arguments of post-development through a closer engagement with Foucault

This section intends to reiterate the main post-development critiques and further clarify the post-development position – “sceptical” post-development, that has been found the more constructive discourse within post-development so as to take its sensibilities forward to the next section on post-development theory in relation to development practice. This will be done through a closer engagement with Foucault’s conception of power, and from this analytical standpoint reassess some of the post-development claims as a way of advancing the post-development critique of development.

Foucault has been the single greatest intellectual influence on post-development theory. However, it has also been noted that some post-development writers limit their use of Foucault to a rather impoverished version of Foucault’s discourse analysis, and employing a ‘somewhat vulgar use of Foucauldian concepts’ (Ziai 2004 p.1048). This has been ‘characterised more by decrying of Eurocentrism and injustice of development than a Foucauldian analysis of the operation of power through development’ (Brigg 2002 p.422). The criticism of the improper use of Foucault can be limited to some of the authors that have been referred to, Rahnema (1997), Esteva (1992) and in part also Sachs (1992), whilst other post-development writers like Escobar (1995) and Ferguson (1990) have been found to base their work on a more thorough reading of Foucault (Ziai 2004). As previously mentioned, it is possible to distinguish two distinct discourses within post-development – a sceptical and a neo-populist or anti-development one – and most of the criticisms here are only valid for the latter (Ziai 2004). This is observable in Morgan Brigg’s otherwise lucid analysis (2002) as he reproaches post-development as a coherent paradigm, claiming post-development theory to be
stuck within a sovereign, repressive concept of power rather than making use of Foucault’s conceptualisation of power by recognising the operation of “bio-power”. Here Brigg is at best only partly accurate as this largely only applies to the neo-populist reading of post-development (Ziai 2004 p.1048). Nevertheless, to take the post-development critique seriously and to move forward with it requires, according to Brigg the moving away from a colonising metaphor to a deeper understanding of the operation of power through development, including its productive modality of “bio-power” (Brigg 2002) which confirms the need to discard of the neo-populist discourse of post-development as a way of advancing post-development, which has been the approach taken in this paper.

It is necessary then, to highlight how Foucault’s analysis of power makes a distinction between power in its negative sense as constrictive and power in its positive sense as enabling or productive. The first meaning implies power as coercion and domination by another and the second refers to the constraint of being limited by one’s identity, implying a degree of self-subjection. (Simons 1995 p.31) Whereas the paradigm of the pre-modern sovereign power was ‘the right to take life’, modern power is exemplified by the right of the social body to maintain the development of its life and is now concerned with the generation of life through regulation of the population as a whole, or a bio-politics. (Simons 1995 p.33) The developmentalist character of bio-power as it fosters, organises and optimises life by administrating life in order to manage it in a calculated way, is immediately apparent (Brigg 2002).

The issue of overcoming using a colonising metaphor in post-development writing is part of a broad trend in post-development that tends to equate development with Westernisation of the world. Rahnema writes of the ‘colonising of the mind’ (1997) and Escobar refers to the ‘colonising mechanisms of development’ (1992a) and the colonisation of reality (1995). The problem here lies in the maintenance of a conception of power that operates through a singular intentional historical force such as “the West” which adheres to an anachronistic sovereign notion of power. Ascribing agency to the West in this way, and by viewing development as a Western imposition or hegemony (Sachs 1992 p.4) ‘ossify force relations in development discourse in ways that have implications for the relative agency of actors within the development project’ (Brigg 2002 p.425). Analysing development as a powerful discourse has led post-development into an ambiguous relationship with agency (Sande Lie 2007). ‘Too
strict of a conception of discourse and its formative power has implications for the general view of actors and their agency’ (Sande Lie 2007 p.54). A rather static account of actors and their agency in relation to discourse is for instance found in Ferguson’s account where actors are seen as mere representatives, carriers and producers of the development discourse (Sande Lie 2007 p.54). There is also a tendency in Ferguson’s analysis to fall into an understanding of development as a tool of Western hegemony assigning a measure of intentionality to the West, which sometimes gives a conspirational and fatalistic tone to his conclusions.

This tendency to omit agency is a major weakness of post-development theory and has great implications for the view of the free subject in relation to larger structures (Sande Lie 2007 p.55). In this way, post-development theory might be seen to offer a valuable approach and critique to the systemic and structural (macro) level of development but has shortcomings in its relation to practice and agency. Post-development should, according to Sande Lie, be supplemented by an actor-orientated approach (2007 p.59). However, the ambiguous relationship between post-development accounts and agency can arguably also be attributed to the narrow and eclectic use of Foucault’s analysis of power, as post-development generally ascribes only to the sovereign modality of power dismissing the more relational aspect of how power operates (Sande Lie 2007 p.55). This questions the necessity to supplement post-development theory with an actors-orientated approach as recasting post-development within a more thorough understanding of Foucault’s analysis of power might be a sufficient corrective to forward post-development both in relation to practice and in order to gain a better understanding of what the desirable alternatives to development are without a disregard for the agency of actors involved. Addressing the shortcomings of post-development requires doing away with the outdated sovereign conceptualisation of power and engaging more closely with Foucault’s more productive and positive analytics of power that is bio-power (Brigg 2002).

The challenge here is to make appropriate use of Foucault’s analytical concepts for understanding the post-World War II development project. Brigg finds the use of Foucault’s notion of a dispositif with a macro-level application of his concept of normalisation to have a lot of purchase assisting us in understanding the operations of power through development. The concept of a dispositif, or concrete social apparatus is an ‘ensemble of discursive and material elements – for example, discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory
decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements’ and so on – and the ‘system of relations…established between these elements’ (Foucault cited in Brigg 2002 p.427). This conceptualisation is appropriate to the post-World War II development project which involved the establishment of a range of institutions, where the desirability of social change modelled upon the West, professional development practitioners, scientific efforts and governmental and non-governmental organisations dedicated to development have emerged (Brigg 2007).

The ways in which overall governing effects occur through a dispositif can be understood through a macro-level operation of the mechanism of normalisation. By 1945 the broad institutional framework for this scale of operation of normalisation had been laid through the foundation of three major international institutions, all of which hold “development” as one of their goals; the formation of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank saw the emergence of an international developmentalist whole (Brigg 2007 p.429). These international institutional together with discursive developments allowed for the emergence of a dispositif ‘on a scale not seen before’ and allowed for the insertion of nation-states as component elements to an overall apparatus (Brigg, 2002 p.427).

These events – the establishment of an inclusive single international social field and of the norm of development – constitute the field of differentiation and a basis for a massive operation of power in which entities, from individual subjects to nation-states, are acted upon and act upon themselves in relation to the norm development (Brigg 2002 p.429)

The operation of bio-power differs from traditional domination forms of power and it is important to acknowledge that power is not exercised by the state, but rather through the state which acts as a fulcrum for operations of power in the dispositif, while recognising also, that diffuse micro-techniques of power support or give rise to the state so that there is a continuity in both upwards and downwards directions.

A more sophisticated employment of Foucault’s analysis of power would hence allow a lot more room for the agency of actors at all levels of insertion in the development apparatus, and for resistance. Foucault emphasises subjects’ ability to yield resistance ‘because power is relational and cannot exist without the possibility of resistance’ and as indicated by his concept of governmentality there is a reflexivity attached as the subject governs itself ‘defined
as the conduct of conduct’ (Sande Lie 2007 p.55). A post-development approach that does not fully take into account Foucault’s analysis of power, including bio-power and its productive modality of governmentality through normalisation and discipline tends to omit agency and would even have a hard time accounting for or understanding local resistance in the forms of the new social movements that post-development writers pin their hopes to in the struggle for alternatives to development.

3. Post-development and ‘alternatives to development’

The post-development call for ‘alternatives to development’

What sets post-development apart is that while it shares a lot of its critiques of the post-World War II development project with other critical schools of thought, post-development arrives at dismissing the whole paradigm, arguing that what is called for is not ‘development alternatives’ but ‘alternatives to development’ (Escobar 1995 p.215). Some authors (Nederveen Pieterse 2000; Schuurman 2000) have evaluated post-development and find that although their critiques are sensible post-development is flawed as no alternatives can be derived from it. This has been identified as a major weakness of post-development theory. It is argued that while post-development offers an interesting and convincing critique of the development apparatus, it lacks instrumentality for development practice as it does not point to a way forward (Nustad 2007). Other critics do not agree on this reading. Brigg (2002) has for instance insisted that post-development has been unduly dismissed for lacking a programme for development and should not be limited to helping us understand why so many development efforts fail. By addressing post-development’s shortcomings it can certainly contribute to much more than this (Brigg 2002 p.421).

This chapter will consequently build on the insights gained from the closer engagement with Foucault and the post-development critique of development in the previous chapters, focusing on the more constructive ‘sceptical’ discourse identified in post-development in order to discern what is implied when calling for alternatives to development.

Post-development analysis awards new social movements a central role in achieving various emancipatory projects (Parfitt 2002 p.117) and in finding ‘alternatives to development’. Esteva and Prakash have declared that ‘an epic is unfolding at the grassroots’ (Esteva and Prakash 1998a p.287), where ‘pioneering social movements’ are struggling for liberation from
the ‘Global Project’ of development being imposed upon them by ‘creating new freedoms to sustain their autonomous spaces’ (Esteva and Prakash 1998a p.287-288). New social movements can be seen as attempts by people at the grassroots to exert control over unaccountable power centres. They seek to deconstruct the dominant culture as defined by the power centres and to reinstate excluded cultures and interests so as to have a voice in the ongoing definition of society and the political system (Parfitt 2002 p.121). In this way, the call for alternatives to development should not be interpreted as a belief that bettering of social organisation is impossible, nor as a return to earlier ways (Matthews 2004 p.376), but what is rejected is rather the attempt by the post-World War II development project to ‘engineer particular changes in the so-called “Third World”’ in order to bring about changes deemed more desirable by development experts – and what is called for is ‘a new way of changing, of developing, of improving, to be constructed in the place of the ruin of the post-World War II development project’ (Matthews 2004 p.377). To gain a fuller understanding of what is implied in alternatives to development, it is necessary to locate it in the wider context of critical thinking that post-development is part of.

Post-development is a vein in post-modern critical theory, and has at times been conflated with a more radical critique of modernity. This point of view is symptomatic of a narrow reading of post-development, adhering only to the anti-development discourse, and does not hold up in the face of ‘sceptical post-development’ that reveals a more nuanced engagement with modernity. However, critics have argued that we are now in a time of paradigmatic transition in relation to modernity in general and development in particular (Munck 1999 p.206). It is within this context that the role of new social movements have been identified both as symptomatic of and the driving forces behind this process of reinvention of democracy, of community and development. Boaventura de Sousa Santos claims that ‘the goal of postmodern critical theory is, therefore, to turn into a new common sense, an emancipatory common sense’ (Santos 1995 p.x). As such, ‘postmodern emancipatory knowledge aims at the global repoliticisation of collective life’ (Santos 1995 p.51) and for post-development theorists, new social movements offer the possibility of a radical reclaiming of the political which is considered necessary in the field of development and in the broader arena of social transformation (Munch 1999). It is argued that through the vitality of these movements, the development apparatus will be challenged and the coming of a new era ‘more pluralistic and less oppressive, can be visualised’ (Escobar 1988 p.439). This post-
development vision casts new social movements to challenge and ‘problematicize the definition and control of the “needs” of diverse communities by the state and international forces’ and thereby uncovering spaces for autonomous local action (Blaney 1996 p.478). In this way, post-development calls for a new political vision that protects the autonomy of political communities and requires a space for self-determination and for the capacity to control one’s own destiny in the face of external forces, and according to Sachs (2002); this demands the revitalisation of local communities.

Post-development and new social movements: the implications for social change

In order to meditate on what a post-development future would look like, or more importantly what it would imply for social change and peoples’ lives, it might be revealing to ask what role the new social movements have been awarded by post-development theorists, and the kind of change post-development expects them to be able to contribute towards. Critics assessing post-development thought tend to divide around the issue of transcendence, of moving ‘beyond development’ or as referred to earlier, Escobar’s (1992b) vision of ‘alternatives to development’ which have been rejected by some critics for being vacuous while others have welcomed it as a genuine possibility for radical social change (Nakano 2007 p.63). Some have identified as a central theme in post-development that of an emancipatory politics (Nakano 2007 p.64). Nakano finds - through an advanced philosophical unpacking of the alternatives to development, drawing on the work of Serge Latouch (1993) and contrasting it with the post-Heideggerian theme of emancipatory politics - that post-development thought opens up for ‘plural possibilities of the political beyond the grammar of development’ (Nakano 2007 p.65). This transformation, the opening up of the imaginary of development, can best be achieved by building on the practices of new social movements, especially those in the South that have emerged as a response to the hegemony of the post-World War II development apparatus (Escobar 1992b p.22). ‘These grassroots initiatives, although still clearly limited, are nevertheless significant. They provide the means for an alternative to development by means of political practice’ (Escobar 1992b p.27). Esteva and Prakash meditate upon the use of the term ‘grassroots’, which they admit is an ambiguous word, but which they still dare to use because of its important political connotations in this context, as they identify it with initiatives and movements emanating from ‘the people’, ‘ordinary men and women who organise themselves to cope with their predicaments’ (1998a p.290).
Implicit then in the notion of alternatives to development is a search for an emancipatory politics through creating spaces where people can reclaim their autonomy with regards to articulating and pursuing goals of social transformation that correspond to their ideas of a “good life”, and their cultural norms and values.

The necessity of this move is further highlighted by Escobar through his consideration of the Latin American ‘dependent’ case, where ‘the state intervenes in all aspects of life so that actors are above all actors in the development process, a process which is often led by exogenous forces’ (Escobar 1992b p.36). What is at stake here is the measure of control people have over their own destinies and a greater participation in determining the shape of the political system. However, post-development insights call for further critical reflection on the politics of knowledge and to the role of the state as part of transforming our understanding of new social movements and development. Although new social movements are thought of in connection with the state, they stand in a relation of exteriority to the state and the development apparatus (Escobar 1992b p.43). This exteriority is crucial, and to fully understand why this position is necessary one needs to be reminded that not only does post-development reject the post-World War II development project but it also provides a challenge to and a critique of the role of the modern state. The new social movements can arguably only be understood when placed in context of the great inequality of relationships within the country of origin, where the groups that are penalised by development policies are often marginalised politically in the sense that their interests are not represented in the decision-making bodies of the State, as well as in the wider international context of the inequality of relationships between countries and the international organisations - the countries in the North and transnationals’ alike - which influence the orientation of national policies (Polet 2007 p.7). Theresa S. Encarnacion Tadem writes in relation to the efforts led by Philippine social movements to counter the development policies of their government - that as a result of the transnational character of economic policy-making the state has been made more accountable to the institutions of global governance such as the IMF and the WB and the World Trade Organisation, than to its citizens (Encarnacion Tadem 2007 p.193). Post-development furthermore highlight the role that new social movements have to play in the repoliticisation of issues that have been depoliticised through the development apparatus and the state treating for instance poverty as a technical problem to be solved by the plans of
‘development experts’. Expert discourses have repositioned groups as “cases” for the state and the development apparatus and is in that way depoliticising needs. Popular actors like new social movements are challenging expert interpretations and goals with varying degrees of success; for instance, rural development programmes have provoked numerous movements for the recuperation of land (Escobar 1992b p.46).

Another interesting example of the role new social movements have to play to counter-act a situation where the state have allowed major social issues to become depoliticised through the growing influence of the institutions of the international development apparatus like the WB and the IMF on the policy-making process, is found in Niger. A number of movements came together in Niger in the beginning of 2005 to create the ‘Equity/Quality of Life Coalition against the Cost of Living’ (Tidjani Alou 2007 p.119). This new structure of the political arena allowed for bringing forward the different visions of the people on the management of public affairs and enabled them to organise themselves and pressure their government for change and the government was after negotiations forced to take the social demands for a reduction in the price of electricity, water and oil products into account. These civil society activists re-injected politics into public life and involved the re-politicisation of development issues which concerned their lives by organising effective demonstrations. They launched ‘dead town’ and even ‘dead country’ operations that meant that for a whole day, the population stayed at home. The ‘dead country’ operation more or less involved the whole country and thus proved very effective by causing a situation of general standstill (Tidjani Alou 2007).

What is highlighted through the activities of these new social movements, in addition to the post-development analysis is a recognition that ‘existing actors and institutions must be transformed to work for different purposes: i.e. if states and markets are to remain relevant, they must support rather than direct social needs’ (Andreasson 2010 p.10). However, imagining a post-development era cannot ignore questions of the future role of the development apparatus; the institutional structures are not likely to be abandoned, and neither are the good intentions of development practitioners to whom the dire situations of the poor cannot be ignored, and to whom doing nothing is just as unacceptable as imposing external goals and ideas through interventions are to post-development writers. The implications for development practice of a post-development analysis and the emancipatory politics that the
new social movements are contributing towards will be discussed in the coming and final chapter. However, arguing from a post-development perspective it can be assumed that for the existing development institutions, and the development apparatus as a whole to remain relevant, these must support rather than direct social goals and needs, which must be recognised as existing in the plural reflecting the diversity of peoples local histories, cultures and aspirations.

4. Relating post-development theory to development practice
What ‘alternatives to development’ could mean for practice, problems and further objections to post-development
When simultaneously considering the post-development critique as well as their alternatives to development one is confronted with an implicit contradiction within the post-development analysis. Post-development has been identified as offering a sophisticated macro-level critique of the post-World War II development project and of the functioning of the development apparatus (Sande Lie 2007) while the post-development alternatives to development are found on the most local level in communities, and through the initiatives and activities of new social movements which stand in a relation of exteriority to both the state and the development apparatus (Escobar 1992b). The question of whether or not there is an acceptable role for international development institutions and for development professionals in a post-development future has hardly been addressed in post-development literature. This final chapter shall address some of the critiques that have been raised against a potential post-development paradigm and alternatives to development as well as assess the approaches that have been taken by post-development writers, and develop the theoretical and instrumental arguments in the previous chapters to further highlight the value of a post-development analysis for practice and the implications that this entails for the role of the state, international development institutions and a possible politics of emancipation for people in the South.

Development thinking has been criticised by post-development theorists for being permeated by social engineering and the ambition to shape economies and societies modelled on the “developed” West, 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’ (Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.182). Douglas Lummis declares
an ‘end to development’ because it is inherently anti-democratic, and this is arguably the case as post-development points out that nowadays, development managerialism not only involves states but also international development and financial institutions and the ‘new managerialism of NGOs’. (Lummis cited in Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.182). Those critical of post-development like Corbridge however, have found that ‘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’ (Corbridge cited in Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.182). Post-development thinking has thus also been criticised for being profoundly conservative, and although post-development critique arises from a radical democratic and anti-authoritarian questioning of social engineering and the faith in progress, the political implications according to Nederveen Pieterse (2000), turn out to be more or less an endorsement of the status quo. Another criticism touched upon in the previous chapters is that the use of Focault’s analysis of power is said to leave post-development without a forward politics, and hence it has been argued that post-development invites quietism and political impasse and in the end offer no politics besides the self-organising capacity of the poor, ‘which actually lets the development responsibility of states and international institutions off the hook’ (Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.187).

It is clear that the practical implications of a post-development analysis, and of the alternatives to development favoured by this paradigm poses a number of unanswered question in regards to future development practice not only at the level of the international development institutions, but also at state level. The implications for practice have not been sufficiently dealt with in post-development literature and thus what follows here is an attempt to identify potential issues and questions with regards to the relation of post-development theory to practice.

One major criticism raised against post-development and their alternatives to development is that the political project of post-development has been entrusted to new social movements that are far from guaranteed to be politically progressive (Storey 2000 p.44). Furthermore, post-development falls on the same grounds as other postmodern theorising in relation to practice: by denying universal normative grounds, they are left with no satisfactory basis for distinguishing emancipatory from non-emancipatory practices. Parfitt maintains that Foucault leaves us unable to make distinctions between movements such as the Ku Klux Klan and the
women’s movements, and that this clearly represents a problem for post-development observers (2002 p.52). This all adds up to what Ray Kiely has termed a Pontius Pilate politics, which signals the danger of falling in to a “cultural relativist trap” and political paralysis (Storey 2000 p.44). This ethical problem has been overlooked, together with the problems that would arise if we were to take a relativist position, following the arguments of post-development and taking it one step further by arguing that the characteristics of all cultures are to be valued equally and regarded as legitimate (Parfitt 2002). However, most post-development writers give clear indication that this is not the idea, as Esteva and Prakash for instance dismisses Islamic fundamentalist movements while proclaiming the Zapatistas of Mexico to be a genuine post-development emancipatory movement without being able to give reasons for doing so (Parfitt 2002 p.9; Esteva and Prakash 1998a p.290).

The difficulties raised by the post-development ‘alternatives to development’, a scenario of emancipation led by new social movements, is essentially an ethical problem (Parfitt 2002 p.8). The problem arguably arises most acutely in the context of figuring out an acceptable role for the North and the international development institutions in the struggles of a post-development South. One potential way out of the maze would have been by taking a cultural relativist stance and allow projects and movements to be evaluated within their own cultural perspective characterised by indigenous norms and values. Nevertheless, it is evident that a dilemma enters the picture when considering which initiatives are to be supported by external institutions and actors, and on what basis these are to be evaluated or judged as legitimate. In post-development ‘the designated agents of change’ – the new social movements – are not guaranteed to be ‘anti-authoritarian and democratic in their structures’, and even concepts such as “bottom-up” can work to conceal and perpetuate relationships of inequality and domination (Storey 2000 p.43).

Cautions have thus been raised, that while the shift towards cultural sensibilities that accompanies the post-development analysis is a welcome move it can lead to ‘ethnocentrism’ and ‘reverse orientalism’ or to a reification of both people, locality and culture (Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.188). Post-development also appear to ignore that ‘many popular organisations are concerned with access to development’, and are working towards achieving conventional development goals (Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.185). Critics of the post-development paradigm are uncomfortable with how this theorising, although providing a potent critique of the post-World War II development project has left many concerns for
development practice unanswered. The lack of another blueprint or clear agenda for future change has been interpreted as a call for complete abandon, prompting critics to respond that ‘doing ‘nothing’ comes down to an endorsement of the status quo’ and is morally unacceptable for the North and implies a compartmentalised world presumably split along the lines of the Westphalian system (Nederveen Pieterse 2000 p.182).

Ferguson (1990) concludes his book *The Anti-Politics Machine* with some very effective questions. He argues that any form of the question “what is to be done?” implies both a subject and a goal and an actor that strategizes towards that aim. The first aim from a post-development perspective should be to reformulate the question somewhat more politically, as the issues of concern are inherently political. If the question is to make any sense, it concerns a real-world tactics and “what is to be done?” requires first of all an answer to the question “by whom?” (Ferguson 1990 p.280). The subsequent question of “what should the ‘development agencies’ and ‘donors’ do?” falsely implies, according to Ferguson, ‘a collective project for bringing about empowerment for the poor’ (Ferguson 1990 p.282), but he also highlights that any answer to any of these questions must entail an understanding or a theory of how economic and political empowerment comes about (Ferguson 1990 p.283).

The analysis of post-development theory and “alternatives to development” have found that it is indeed possible to discern a constructive discourse in post-development (sceptical post-development) which can reveal the core problems that post-development find within the post-World War II project of development, and subsequently holds a potential to show what the alternatives would need to avoid, and in what direction the new social movements are taking us. This analysis has shown that the issues at the heart of development are fundamentally political, and that any attempt to move past the dominant development discourse must be inherently political.

**Bringing politics back in? Implications for development practice and the State**

In order to discuss potential implications of post-development theory to practice it is arguably necessary to trace the roots of post-development back to its methodological foundations in the works of Foucault, as well as acknowledge that it as an extension of postmodernism. What is fundamental to the postmodern critique of modernist social theory is the undermining of the universalist pretensions of the Enlightenment, which is also found in post-development critique of the post-World War II development project. Ronaldo Munck argues that taking a
Postmodernist perspective will allow us to bring politics back into the debate on the development discourse, pointing out that the notion that the world can be analysed according to objective universal criteria looks particularly shallow from a Third World perspective (Munck 1999 p.204). It has been argued that the most extensive and exciting interaction between theory and practice has occurred between feminism, postmodernism and development. Chandra Mohanty, among others, rejected the image of the Third World woman as uniformly poor and powerless in contrast to the modern ideal of Western women; this critique of essentialism in feminist theory represented a genuine methodological breakthrough (Munck 1999 p.206) and we now accept much more readily that there are multiple and fluid identities involved in the development process. The new social movements are a sign of the fragmented postmodern society that we live in and have contributed to laying to rest the myth of totality. They are contributing towards emancipation from the homogenizing global project of development by repoliticising collective life, which from a post-development perspective is necessary in the field of development and in the arena of social transformation in general (Munck 1999 p.206).

Post-development thus implies a reclaiming of the practice and imaginary of development and firmly relocating it within a radically democratised political process which at a local level provides a means of emancipation for people by taking back a measure of control over shaping their lives. Chantal Mouffe highlights that many of these struggles do in fact renounce any claim to universality, showing that in any such claim there lies a disavowal of the particular and a refusal of specificity (1988 p.35). It is argued that the reformulation of the democratic project in terms of radical democracy requires giving up the Enlightenment universalism as it demands that difference is acknowledged (Mouffe 1988 p.36). This challenge ties in with the principal critique put forward by post-development writers and the emphasis here makes it clear that the politics of emancipation that is implied in post-development theory, in practice leads to yet further questions as the proliferation of political spaces demand that we abandon the idea of a unique constitutive space of the constitution of the political (Mouffe 1988). Nakano has argued that the transition towards a post-development order can be conceived as the complication of the social field and the pluralisation of the universal (2007 p.73). ‘The pluralisation of the universal, though it may sound contradictory, is a necessary condition of the emancipatory politics in post-modernity… in post-modern politics, the location of the universal and the manner of
emancipation becomes, in essence, plural’ (Nakano 2007 p.76). Hence, it is further pointed out that it cannot be assumed that this multi-polar politics is based on state politics, and so post-development envisions a possibility of a political community that can be explored beyond the state system (Nakano 2007).

The new vision that can be discerned in post-development thinking is put to practice as new social movements problematize the definition and control of the ‘needs’ of diverse communities by the state, and by external international forces and there by uncovering spaces for autonomous local action and hence a politics of emancipation (Blaney 1996 p.478). Post-development, in this way, raises questions of the appropriate sites of collective life and political community. What is involved in the alternatives to development - the seeds of which are found at the grassroots and in the various struggles of new social movements - is the idea of a new way of thinking about politics, a re-imagining of the role of the state and an emancipation of people from the imperatives of the development apparatus to pursue their own objectives.

‘For an initiative to be considered post-development it should contribute to the dismantling of the physical and discursive hegemony of development so that new locally grounded futures may be imagined and pursued. This includes freeing bodies, minds and community processes from the pursuit of development and opening up new socio-political spaces in which local imaginaries can be enacted and empowered. Crucially, in the context of foreign aid, locally based communities should have control over the actions and initiatives of external actors operating in their locality’(McGregor 2007 p.161).

Blaney (1996) however, highlights a very important issue that remains to be explored by post-development writers, namely that quite complicated relations might be called for between autonomy and sociality in a global community of self-realising communities if that global community is to respect both difference and equality. Post-development thinkers hold that the language of equality/inequality are constructs of the ‘development imaginary’, and in their view implies speaking about different stages of development, relative growth rates, standard of living or comparisons of global competitiveness (Esteva 1992; Latouch 1993). In this way post-development has been seen as to refuse demands of equality since this implies some
common basis for evaluation and making claims (Blaney 1996 p.482). By giving up an appeal to a common moral language they risk a general “inaudibility” or incapacity to condemn injustice, violence and suffering (Blaney 1996 p.482). The question of where one is left in terms of development practice after having followed through with post-development's demands to abandon abstract universalism, the essentialist conception of social totality and the myth of the unitary subject (Mouffe 1988) arguably comes down to a concern for legitimacy and a problem of judgment and of the evaluation of various projects which will have to occur - and not only at a local level - if there is to be an acceptable role for the development practitioners and experts of the international development institutions in supporting the poor in their initiatives.

Conclusion
This paper set out to explore the ways in which post-development critique can be constructive as well as offer insights to the search for alternatives to development, and for initiating a discussion on the implications of post-development theory for development practice. It has been found that the core arguments of post-development theory can be discerned by making a distinction between two conflicting discourses within post-development, and that a ‘sceptical’ reading of post-development, which is employs a more sophisticated application of Foucauldian concepts to development, can indeed be constructive and illuminate what is implied in post-development alternatives to development.

From a closer engagement with Foucault the discussion has found that addressing the shortcomings of post-development requires doing away with the outdated sovereign conceptualisation of power and instead incorporate Foucault’s concept of bio-power when analysing the development apparatus. A post-development approach that does not fully take into account Foucault’s analysis of power tends to omit agency and would have difficulty accounting for local resistance in the forms of the new social movements that post-development writers claim as the seeds of alternatives to development.

The analysis indicates that the issues at the heart of development are fundamentally political, and that any attempt to move past the dominant development discourse must be inherently political. The grassroots initiatives, although still clearly limited, play a significant role as the new social movements provide the means for an alternative to development by means of
political practice. A genealogy of the development paradigm reveals that which is being increasingly challenged: the way that the Western experience and ideas of progress have become the universal goal and trajectory of development, and so constitutes the norm against which any attempts at social change is being measured. Post-development theory objects to the universal standards of “progress” and “development”, and how these have given legitimisation to the management of people as a means to achieve societal advancement. This professionalization of development made possible the removing of problems, including poverty, from the cultural and political realms and to recast them as technical issues responsive to more or less universally applicable technical interventions.

In the light of a Foucauldian analysis, the alternatives to development can be seen as providing an opportunity for people to reinvent the state, create new spaces for autonomy and entails an emancipatory politics through radical democracy. This post-development vision casts new social movements to challenge the definition and control of the “needs” of diverse communities by the state and international forces. For post-development theorists development as defined in normative terms, as the aspirations to a “good life” or a “good society” means that it can only legitimately be reached through a democratic process by the people concerned. From this point of view it makes sense to argue that for existing development institutions to remain relevant, these must support rather than direct social needs which must be recognised as existing in the plural reflecting the diversity of people’s culture and aspirations.

It has been noted that post-development writers have not adequately dealt with the implications of their analysis for the practice of development. It has been argued that what is highlighted through the activities of the new social movements, and post-development theory is that existing actors and institutions must be transformed and that this transformation ideally should involve a transfer of power - the power to define the problems and goals of a society - from the hands of outside “experts” to the members of the society itself. The question of whether or not there exists in such a model, an acceptable role for the international development institutions and for development professionals has been found to be a complicated issue, telling of the ambiguous relationship that post-development theory bears in relation to development practice. Not only does post-development theory imply a new way of thinking about politics, a reclaiming of development issues by firmly relocating them within
democratic process, but a need to reinvent this process which might not necessarily involve the politics of the State, in order to make room for peoples autonomy.

The principal problem of relating post-development theory to practice is not just that the alternatives to development envisioned operate according to a different rationality than the formally institutionalised order of the development apparatus but that the rejection of universal normative grounds which hereto has provided the basis for the post-World War II project of development, has further elevated the problem of legitimacy. Post-development has been found to leave many questions pertaining to development practice unanswered. The most profound of which is the problem of judgement. Some form of evaluation will have to occur, and not only at a local level, if there is to be an acceptable role for the development institutions and practitioners in supporting the poor in their initiatives. The challenge for future study will be to connect the post-development analysis to a theory of justification that does not require a foundation in a universality that undermines the project of emancipation, which is in essence plural. It might also be useful to further explore the ways that post-development connects to Amartya Sen’s conception of ‘development as freedom’ as a possible means of evaluating development initiatives which ought to expand peoples capabilities.

Bibliography


