

Review Article

ARTURO ESCOBAR AND THE DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract : Development as a category has the potential to embrace a number of dimensions. In this review article, an attempt has been taken to shed light on the development discourse and Arturo Escobar's views and opinions on it. Initially, the terms 'development' and 'discourse' have been explained followed by the analysis of development discourse.

Introduction

'Development' as a category has potential to embrace a number of dimensions. This is very difficult, rather impossible, to reach to any universally accepted meaning of this most confusing and as well as most inspiring term. 'Development' has been the central organizing concept of today. It has differing meanings and there are diverse views on the processes leading to development. Today, the United Nations has its development agencies (i.e., UNDP) and the World Bank takes development as part of its official name — the international Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Hundreds and thousand of people are in development's employ and billions are spent each year in its pursuit. It would be difficult to find a single nation-state in the North which does not have its departments or ministries of local, regional and international development. Nor can any Third World nation expect to be taken seriously without the development label prominently displayed on some part of its governmental anatomy.

Development as discourse shares structural features with other colonizing discourses, such as Orientalism, as Said argues "can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for

dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it". Likewise, development has functioned as an-powerful mechanism for the production and management of Third World in the post-1945 period.

The Concept of Development

Development is an extremely vague and all-encompassing term which appeals to various groups who often view it in different ways, although related terms such as growth, modernization and socio-economic progress are less difficult to understand. At the simplest level, development implies growth or maturation and advancement. The term came to prominence in the academic literature after the Second World War when major political and social changes were taking place in the Third World (a polite word to denote 'poor' countries), and development, in its broadest sense, refers to 'the process by which poor countries get still richer, or try to do so, and also to the process by which rich countries still get richer' (Berger, 1976: 34).

Since the Second World War, development has been synonymous with economic, social and political change in the countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. These countries have been variously labelled as underdeveloped, less-development, developing, the Third World and the South. They are a diverse group but united in their commonly declared commitment to development. But, there is no consensus about the meaning of development. It is a contested concept and there have been a number of battles to capture its meaning. Turner and Hulme (1997) reviewed the ideological engagements of development as follows :

Competing meanings of development

- Modernization is a "total" transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into the types of technology and associated social organization that characterize the "advanced" economically prosperous and politically stable nations of the Western World.

- The questions to ask about a country's development are three: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned.
- '... these capitalist contradictions and the historical development of the capitalist system have generated underdevelopment in the peripheral satellites whose economic surplus was expropriated, while generating economic development in the metropolitan centres which appropriate that surplus - and, further, that this process still continues'.
- In much of the preceding discussion we have in fact referred to the struggle among three contending "fundamental classes," [indigenous bourgeoisie, metropolitan bourgeoisie and landowning classes] which seek various forms of representation in the state and vie with each other to direct the formulation and implementation of public policy along lines that serve their particular class interests.'
- We in Africa, have no more need of being "converted", to socialism than we have of being taught democracy. Both are rooted in our past — in the traditional society which produced us. Modern African socialism can draw from its traditional heritage, the recognition of "society" as an extension of the basic family unit.'
- What happened [*i.e. economic development*] was in very large measure the result of the individual voluntary responses of millions of people to emerging or expanding opportunities created largely by external contacts and brought to their notice in a variety of ways, primarily through the operation of the government, without large expenditures of public funds and without the receipt of large external subventions."

- Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development.' (Chambers, 1985,p. 147).
- Development always entails looking at other worlds in terms of what they lack, and obstructs the wealth of indigenous alternative.' (Sachs, 1992, p. 6).

So, it is clear that the term 'development' has been used differently by different authors keeping their priorities first. To me, development is not just growth (in economic sense), it should also encompass socio-political and cultural aspects with it.

Discourse

What Foucault had in mind by discourse refers to the "*delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories*" (Foucault, 1972: 199). What Foucault had to say about discourses in general turns out to be insightful when applied to the discourses on development in the Third World.

Development Discourse: Arturo Escobar

In his book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Arturo Escobar has given us an important and exciting take on issues of Third World development and its alternatives. He indisputably provides some exciting and significant new insights along with the Western models to achieve the so-dreamed "development". Although the results of these western-driven interventions over decades have usually been catastrophic for Third World's populations and cultures, Western 'experts' keep coming to the Third World and elaborating new forms of discourses on development, now addressing objects like sustainable development, women and development and poverty eradication – all ethnocentric and based on western values.

In Arturo Escobar's (1995: 17-18) words, the emergence and consolidation of the discourse and strategy of development in the early post-World War II period, as a result of the problematization of poverty that took place during those years. It presents the major historical conditions that made such a process possible and identifies the principal mechanisms through which development has been deployed... to speak development, one must adhere to certain rules of statement that go back to the basic system of categories and relations that defines the hegemonic worldview of development, a worldview that increasingly permeates and transforms the economic, social, and cultural fabric of third world cities and villages, even if the languages of development are always adapted and reworked significantly at the local level,

The discovery of mass poverty on global scale in general and in third world¹ in particular is an outcome of early post Second World War period. Thereafter, the nascent order of capitalism and modernity relied on the politics of poverty the aim of which was not only to create consumers but to transform society by turning the poor into objects of knowledge and management. In 1948, the World Bank defined those countries as poor with an annual per capita income of less than \$ 100. Thus, if the problem was insufficient income then the solution was economic growth. In this way, poverty became an organizing concept and the object of a new problematization.

Escobar mentions about a World Bank economic mission in Colombia whose primary function was to propose a development programme for the country. The mission proposed a comprehensive and integrated approach of reforms for multitude of improvements. For them, the task of salvation/development is complex. It was made clear by Escobar that development discourse emerged in the context of a complex historical conjunction and there was an important connection between the decline of the colonial order and the rise of development. The representation of the third world as a child in need of adult guidance was not an uncommon metaphor and lent itself perfectly to the development discourse. When describing the historical conditions, Arturo clearly informed that the notions of underdevelopment

and Third World were the discursive products of the post-World War II climate.

The post World War II era brought the United States to an undisputable position of economic and military pre-eminence, placing under its tutelage the whole Western system. This position was challenged by socialist regimes and old colonies in Asia and Africa claiming independence. In other words, a reorganization of the structure of world power was taking place. Though Third World was not deserving the same treatment, the United States gave up the rule on which capitalist world was based with 'its so called Marshall Plan. The third world was instructed to create the 'right climate' including a "commitment to capitalist development, the curbing of nationalism, and the control of the Left, the working class, and the peasantry". The cold war was undoubtedly one the single most important factors play in the conformation of the strategy of development. The fear of communism became one of the most compelling arguments for development. It was believed that if poor countries were not rescued from their poverty, they would succumb to communism.

To A. Escobar, *development* was not merely the result of the combination, study, or gradual elaboration of the elements (some of these topics had existed for some time: capital formation, technology, population and resources, monetary and fiscal policies etc.); nor the product of the introduction of new ideas (some of which were appearing or perhaps were bound to appear); nor the effect of the new international organizations or financial institutions (e.g., the UN, World Bank and IMP which had some predecessors such as the League of Nations). It was rather the result of the establishment of a set of relations among these elements, institutions and practices and of the systematization of these relations to form a whole. And the *development discourse* was constituted not by the array of possible objects under its domain but by the way in which it was able to form systematically the objects of which it spoke, to group them and arrange them in certain ways, and to give them a unity of their own. To understand development as discourse, one must look not at the elements

themselves but at the system of relations established among them. It is this system that allows the systematic creation of objects, concepts, and strategies; it determines what can be thought and said. These relations - established between institutions, socio-economic processes, forms of knowledge, technological factors and so on - define the conditions under which objects, concepts, theories, and strategies can be incorporated into the discourse (ibid, pp. 40-41).

Analysis of Development Discourse

Edward Said argues in the introduction to *Orientalism* that there is 'no such thing as a delivered presence; there is only a re-presence, or a representation' (1979: 21). The study of development has traditionally paid little attention to the politics of representation, as the practical challenges of development have been perceived as far too urgent to allow for a 'purely academic' or even esoteric concern with words and discourse. A focus on representation, however, does not deny the existence of a material world or the very real experience of poverty and suffering by millions of people. Nor is an analysis that focuses on discourse by its nature any less motivated by a desire to see a world free from human misery than the conventional development text. Instead such analyses suggest that because objects and subjects are constituted as such within discourse, an understanding of the relevant discourses is a necessary part of any attempt to change prevailing conditions and relations of power.

The approach of this study draws in particular on the insights of Michel Foucault, whose forceful articulation of an intrinsic and irreversible relationship between power and knowledge is of immense value to the analysis of development and North-South relations. According to Foucault, power and knowledge are intimately connected and directly imply one another, so that 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (1991: 27). This close relationship between power and knowledge alerts

us to the fact that the problematization of a particular aspect of human life is not natural or inevitable, but historically contingent and dependent on power relations that have already rendered a particular topic a legitimate object of investigation. Underdevelopment and poverty, in other words, do not exist as Platonic forms; they are discursive constructs and their constitution as objects of scientific enquiry can be understood only in the context of the prevailing balance of forces at the time of their formation. An analysis informed by such insights does not accept at face value any particular categorisation of the world, but seeks instead to establish how certain representations became dominant and acquired the position to shape the ways in which an aspect of social reality is imagined and acted upon. As Escobar (1995) argues, thinking about development in terms of discourse enables us to maintain a focus on power and domination, while at the same time exploring the discourse's conditions of possibility as well as its effects. It allows us to 'stand detached from [development], bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyse the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated' (Foucault, 1986: 3). In other words, development emerges as culturally and historically contingent, and the focus shifts from 'what is' to *how* subjects are formed within this discourse as developed and underdeveloped. This conception of the relationship between power and knowledge enables us to expose the political and strategic nature of discourse previously regarded as existing independently of power relations by virtue of their presumed scientific nature, and to ask instead 'whom does discourse serve?' (Foucault, 1980: 115).

The study of development as a discourse is a relatively new field, inspired in part by Said's *Orientalism*. Orientalism, Said writes, is a '*systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period*' (1979: 3). This definition is instructive also for the study of development as a representational practice. By substituting the Third World for the Orient and the West for Europe, the definition illustrates the productive power of

development discourse. The Third World and development are historical constructs, a particular way of seeing and acting upon the world that has Jess to do with the conditions it describes than with the constellation of social and political forces at the time of the emergence of the discourse. It does not indicate the discovery of something new or hitherto unknown, as the conditions of poverty (or underdevelopment) described in the new discourses have always been a feature of human history. Why then did development emerge? And what were its effects? The ensuing analysis aims to throw some light on these questions" and in the process, to show how such representational practices are an intrinsic part of hegemonic politics.

Development first emerged as a domain of knowledge and intervention in the early post Second World War period, with President Harry Truman's inaugural address in January 1949 frequently 'identified as a landmark event'². This speech introduced the term 'underdeveloped areas' and marks the launch of the global effort to develop the world and eradicate poverty.

It should, however, be mentioned that the notion of development has far deeper roots in Western civilization and intellectual history than this interpretation may suggest. The modern idea of development is intrinsically bound up with notions of progress and evolution, which have had a marked effect on Western culture ever since the Renaissance (Rist, 1997). With the growth of science and the rise of capitalism and industrialisation, the belief in progress, I gradually came to replace providence, and the perception that the future could be controlled and mastered through the advance of human knowledge became inseparable from Western culture. Thus, by the time Marx was writing his critiques of capitalist society, the belief in progress was so deeply ingrained in European culture that he regarded it as a law of history (Norgaard, 1994). But although the idea of development is intimately bound up with the rise of capitalism and modernity in nineteenth-century Europe, the institutionalisation of development really only started after the Second World War. This was the period that saw the birth of the development organization, the development expert, the national

development plan, and numerous university courses in development. The post-war period can therefore justifiably be termed and treated as *'the era of development'*.

President Truman's inaugural address provides a revealing outline of the main development problems and the means of solution to them, and although over fifty years have since Truman launched his quest to eradicate poverty the central tropes of development remain largely unchanged. The famous 'Point Four' of Truman's speech called for a 'bold industrial progress' available for 'underdeveloped areas'. The president described the situation in these areas in the following manner:

It may be our lot to experience, and in large measure to bring about, a major turning point in the long history of the human race. The first half of this century has been marked by unprecedented and brutal attacks on the rights of man, and by the two most frightful wars in history. The supreme need of our time is for men to learn to live together in peace and harmony. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate, they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their- poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. (Truman, 1949).

But according to the American President, there was now hope: 'For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people... I believe that we should. make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life... What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing... Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge (ibid.). Thus, the hope stemmed from primarily from the USA, which was 'pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques'. While the material resources available for 'underdeveloped areas' were limited, the 'technical knowledge' of the USA was, according to Truman, not only 'constantly growing', but also 'inexhaustible'. By making this technological

expertise available, the USA could help the 'underdeveloped areas' to 'produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens (ibid.).

The order of discourse is telling. 'Underdeveloped areas' are portrayed as passive, as victims of diseases, poverty and stagnation. Their inertia stands in sharp contrast to the dynamism and vitality of the 'developed areas', and the USA in particular. These areas can embark upon 'bold programmes', and their technical knowledge and scientific advances are constantly expanding, always reaching new highs. This in turn enables them to rescue the 'underdeveloped areas' from their 'misery', to deliver them from their primitiveness to modernity; to the era of 'technical knowledge', 'scientific advances', 'greater production', and 'personal freedom and happiness for all mankind'.

Three aspects of this order of discourse deserve further elaboration here, primarily because they have continued to inform and underpin development discourse. These three can be summed up under the captions fear, absences, and hierarchies, and in one way or another they can be seen to have performed crucial functions in development ever since its inception. Fear may seem an odd category in this context. Development is always presented as a humanitarian and moral concern, an ethical obligation on behalf of the rich to help and care for those less fortunate. But behind this aura of humanitarianism lurks a certain fear of poverty and the poor. In the words of President Truman, 'Their poverty is ... a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas'. The association of poverty with danger can be traced back at least to the eighteenth century, when rapid industrial improvements made the existence of widespread poverty appear as a threat to the wealth and 'civilised' way of life of the upper sections of the population. The 'dangerous classes' (Gordon, 1991) therefore needed to be controlled, and in the West, the poor gradually appeared as a social problem, requiring new forms of intervention and management. 'Assisting the poor', Proccacci reminds us, 'is a means of government, a potent way of containing the most difficult sections of the population and improving all other sections' (1991: 151). This observation can be explained to

include not only domestic welfare arrangements, but also international development aid. In the post-war period, poor countries were associated with unrest and instability, and increasingly appeared as a threat to the liberal world order. This was particularly the case after the rise of Communism, as material deprivation was perceived to make people prone to irrational and extremist politics that could potentially upset the global balance of power. Poverty, at both the domestic and international levels, therefore needed to be managed. In the words of Proccacci, poverty 'constitutes a development area for techniques designed to structure an organic social order which, whatever the concrete localization of the human subjects it deals with, is hitherto remained formless' (1991: 164). Through the various techniques to combat poverty, the poor become observed and classified, managed and surveilled they become visible objects of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991). In relations between North and South, development has facilitated such control and management of the 'third world' and its 'formless' population of poor and destitute (Doty, 1996). Development allowed the North to gather 'facts' in order to define and improve the situation of the poor peoples of the South, and the third world became a category of poor peoples of the South, and the third world became a category of intervention, a place to be managed and reformed. New forms of power and control that could be justified with reference to a humanitarian concern for development came into being, and in the process 'poor people's ability to define and take care of their own lives was eroded in a deeper manner than perhaps ever before (Escobar, 1995: 39).

Another central feature of development discourse, visible already in President Truman's speech, is the narration of underdevelopment as a series of absences. The third world is defined primarily by what it is *not*, rather than by what it is. Its central characteristics become what it lacks, not what it possesses. The essence of the third world is accordingly its lack of development, the absence of 'technical knowledge', 'scientific advances', prosperity, progress and so on. As development discourse has changed and adapted to the changing

circumstances of both donor and recipient countries, the specific nature of these absences has varied. Underdevelopment has been variously described as the absence of 'growth', 'basic needs', 'integrated rural development', 'structural adjustment', 'sustainable development' and so forth, but the focus has remained firmly on what is wanting.

The effect of this representation is twofold. First, it serves to erase differences within the third world. The essential characteristic of all third world countries is their lack of development; they are all poor, illiterate, primitive, and so forth. In this way, the street vendor in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the South African miner, the Landak family in the Himalayas, the Kikuyu in Kenya become one and the same: poor and underdeveloped. The third world emerges as a homogeneous whole, in need of the same development to be administered by development experts. Second, the structuring of discourse around a series of absences legitimises actions and interventions in the third world. Absences appear as deficiencies, or abnormalities, to be remedied and rectified through development. The third-world-consists of deficiencies, waiting to be improved, reformed and eradicated. Development becomes a means of rescuing the third world, a legitimate and necessary form of intervention to remedy the misery and suffering associated with underdevelopment. In this way, development promises not only an end to the deficiencies of the third world, but also the third world itself as it becomes more like the first.

Notions of absences and deficiencies in turn establish a very clear hierarchy, where the first or developed world is placed above the third or underdeveloped world. There is a very strong evolutionary streak in development discourse, most clearly articulated in the early development models of the 1950s and 1960s. Rostow's (1960) well-known '*stages of economic growth*', where all countries would eventually reach the stage of 'high mass-consumption', is only one articulation of the normative expectation that the third world will follow in the footsteps of the first. Although the Eurocentric and teleological nature of

development discourse has been much toned down since the 1960s, there can be little doubt that the industrialised countries of the West remain the model for the third world development. At every turn, this discourse reinforces hierarchies. The very notion of development' always invokes images of change for the better, from stagnation to dynamism, from simplicity to complexity, from scarcity to abundance. Before development, there is noting but deficiencies. Underdeveloped areas have no history of their own, hardly any past worth development can be abandoned, and third world countries emerges as empty vessels waiting to be filled with the development received from the first world. The superiority and dominance of the first world over the third is thus continually reinforced through this discourse.

The problematization of development did not occur as a result of any natural progression of science, nor was underdeveloped suddenly discovered. Instead development is a historical construct, and its emergence must be seen in the context of the historical conjunction at which it emerged. The invention of development in the early post-war period was set against the background of rising nationalism in Latin America and growing demand for independence in Asia and Africa, which made it necessary to think in terms of new ways of managing and relating to these areas. But most importantly, development emerged at a time when Cold War hostilities came to, define international relations. The conflict between East and West was largely played out in the third world, and Western fear of Communism was one of the prime motivating forces behind the development effort. In the 1950s poverty was widely regarded as a breeding-ground for Communism, and Western policy-makers feared that the persistence of material deprivation would drive third world countries into the hands of Moscow. Development became a means of containing the spread of Communism, as is clearly evident in most early texts on development. A telling example is Pakenham's observation that when American aid officials in the mid-1960s were asked what they understood by development, 'one of the most common responses was, in effect, that political development is anticommunist, pro-American stability' (1966: 213). The Cold

War then provided the main rationale for the war on poverty and legitimised the spending of vast resources on peoples in far-away places.

Although the Cold War was by far the most important single factor contributing to the problematization of development, other conditions also facilitated its emergence. Development was, for example, an efficient way of securing access to the primary products and the new markets of the third world. The USA in particular, which had emerged pre-eminent in the international economy after the Second World War, sought to expand its markets for goods and investment. By keeping third world countries within the Western sphere of influence, development ensured that access to their resources would not pass to the Communist enemy. Another factor that influenced the war on poverty was the increasing attention to the 'population problem' in this period. Bound up with profoundly racist views and attitudes, the expansion of the population in the South was feared to be spiralling out of control and hence threatening order and stability. In the industrialised countries, economic growth had reduced population growth and based on this experience development became a means of controlling the population explosion in the third world. Furthermore, an optimistic belief in science and technology fuelled the mission to develop the world. As articulated by President Truman, the technological capacity of the West was regarded as 'inexhaustible', capable of conquering poverty and solving the problems of underdevelopment. Progress was accordingly expected to follow more or less automatically from the transfer of technology, and development became largely a question of the right technology and the right form of intervention.

It was against this background, then, that President Truman launched the attack on poverty. On that day two billion people became underdeveloped. In a real sense, from that time on, they ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others' reality (Esteve, 1992: 7). Within a short space of time social reality was ordered

into new categories such as underdeveloped, the third world, malnourished, illiterate etc., and in this way, development discourse established the third world as an object of intervention. Whole areas of the globe became constructed as objects to be reformed, rather than as subjects with a history and with their own power to transform the world and react to changing circumstances. This constitution of the third world as a subject of development legitimised intervention to remodel it according to Western norms of progress, growth and efficiency, and led to the emergence of a huge, global institutional apparatus seeking to manage these areas according to the dictates of development. The post-war period was a spectacular proliferation of international, governmental and private development organizations and institutions - for example, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and the World Bank, which soon had thousands of development experts on their payrolls. These organizations constantly update and refine knowledge about how best to achieve development, and it is also through these myriad organizations that the decrees of development filter down from the various expert offices to the local settings in African, Asia and Latin America. Through these organizations knowledge about the third world becomes an active force, formulated in policy statements, implemented as rural and urban reforms, operationalised as growth strategies, and thus gradually reshaping the social world of underdevelopment.

Over the years development discourse has achieved the status of 'truth', effectively shaping and restricting the ways in which developing countries can be spoken about the acted upon. It is by now extremely difficult to speak or think about the third world in any other terms, as the words of development are the only ones available to us to describe these countries. Conditioned to look for the third world and underdeveloped, the images and hierarchies of development discourse are constantly reproduced and reaffirmed in the North's representations of the South. We see this almost on a daily basis in the media, where pictures of starving children and toiling peasants overshadow any alternative representation of Southern countries. So strong is this hegemony

of development discourse that, as Escobar (1995: 5) points out, even those who are opposed to development as conventionally defined remained until recently trapped within its language and imagery.

Unable to escape the terms of the hegemonic discourse, critiques often identified alternative forms of development, such as non-capitalist development or participatory development and thus reproduced aspects of the discourse they sought to reject. The power of development discourse to define the social world and create a 'regime of truth' is also evident in that the governments and peoples of underdeveloped countries have on occasions and in certain contexts come to see themselves in these terms. On the one hand, these identities may at times have given underdeveloped countries a degree of leverage vis-a-vis developed countries, in that they provided the tools to argue for more assistance, more development experts, more rural extensions schemes, and so on. The Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement can be seen as examples of such collective demand by the .third world vis-a-vis the North.

On the other hand, the identities of development have instilled a degree of inferiority, a longing to escape the underdeveloped state of affairs, a hierarchy where underdeveloped countries and peoples are the perpetual losers, to be endlessly reformed, reshaped and improved. This is not to suggest that the production of subjectivities and identities by hegemonic discourse such as development is unmediated by or passively accepted by people in the South. Development, for all its power to control the manner in which the third world is spoken about and acted upon, is not immune to challenges and resistance. The objects of development are not passive receivers, wholly oppressed by power; they are active agents who may and frequently do contest, resist, divert and manipulate the activities carried out in the name of development. In this way, development can be seen as a contested field. Its constitution of subjects as underdeveloped, poor and illiterate enables the continuation of Western domination in the third world, while simultaneously opening up new avenues and strategies of resistance.

Notes

1. To most people, the *Third World* consists of Africa, the Middle East including Muslim North Africa, Asia minus Japan and China, and Latin America. This group is clearly distinguished from the *First World* which consists of Western Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, and Japan and the, *Second World*, which consists of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China. Despite the demise of the second World, some apply the term *Fourth World* to the oil-rich Middle Eastern countries. others namely, the UN agencies use it to refer to the poorest countries (Subramaniam, 1990: 2). However, this confusing usage will not concern us here.
2. Truman's speech on 20 January 1949 is given as the date of birth of development by Escobar (1995), Rist (1997), as well as the contributors to Sachs (1992).

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