

Accounting for the silences

Critical development theory after the MDGs

Su-ming Khoo, School of Political Science & Sociology,
NUI, Galway, Ireland

s.khoo@nuigalway.ie

Synopsis

- This paper discusses critical development theory in the context of the incipient global development consensus 'after' the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000-2015). It interrogates deep ambivalences within dominant development discourses towards constitutive and collective political dimensions of development, and considers the silences when surveying the core concerns and potential contribution of critical development studies.

MDGs at twilight



UN High Level Panel
12 'illustrative goals'
Country-set targets

5 transformative shifts
Leave no one behind
sustainable development
jobs
peace, effective institutions
a new global partnership

7 cross cutting issues
6 assumptions

UN Task Team on the post 2015 Development Agenda

Trade
Trade
Global Governance
Disaster resilience
Thematic consultations
Universal Coverage
'Think Pieces'
Population and Migration
"A renewed global partnership for development"
New actors and formats
Global Health
Science Technology and Innovation
Learning from MDG8
Financing for SD
'The World We Want' global conversation

Development studies twilight zone(s)

*Impossibility of DS (Corbridge 2007) - 'reinvention' = maturity /weakness
Market logic; MDG-related 'media circus'
'Africa' –a limited, aid industry focus.
Depoliticised (Schuurman 2009)*

a twilight zone between neoliberal globalism
and global neoliberalism (Schuurman 2009, 832)

*Critical development theory is in a twilight zone too
...obscure historical materialism, outdated socialist utopias
and post-developmental nihilism:*

'Development' in ruins....

Michigan Grand Central Station, 2011

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2011/jan/02/photography-detroit>



"...the idea of development stands today like a ruin in the intellectual landscape...."

·
..."It is a concept full of emptiness"

(Sachs, 1999, 3; 7)

Zombie economics

boom/bust
solved –
spread risk

DSGE

Privatize!

Efficient
markets

A haiku!

Olivier Blanchard
IMF chief economist

Beauty
is
Truth!

benefits *will*
trickle
down



Development as zombie economics

- 'New development economics' captured development economics, then extended to subject matter of other social sciences ('economics imperialism' - Fine 2009)
 - Economists may claim to 'take social science seriously', but on their own methodological terms
 - Eg Post-Washington 'Comprehensive Development Framework' identifies market / institutional 'imperfections' but reinforces market principles
- A predatory form of transdisciplinarity
- Inter-disciplinary development studies should challenge 'the dull and universal compulsion of zombieconomics' (Fine 2009, 85).

Depoliticisation of DS

- Neoliberalism accompanied by dramatic shifts in object, subject and explanatory framework of DS
- From structural analysis of macro under-development to project efficiency and actor-oriented micro analysis (Schuurman 2009)
- Poverty analysis shifts from macro to meso to micro poverty characteristics and solutions.
- DS job market focuses on efficiency and impact (Schuurman 2009). Donor agencies operate 'anti-politics machines' (Hout 2012)

The rise of the South

- 'Global rebalancing' reflecting more diversity in voice; power
 - 'Balance has no precedent... Actual global rebalancing means dynamic imbalance or transition from one type of imbalance to another' (Pieterse 2011, 30-31)
- Is a 'developmental' view (against austerity/for determined state action) a recalibration or 're-set' of the world order?
- Current crisis is a trigger, not the cause (*ibid.*)
- Compare narratives of crisis and politics of rebalancing, to understand developmental state, global market power, 'determined social policy innovation' (UNDP 2013)
- 'Enter politics, exit economism', - impossible to take politics out of the equation, but with politics in the equation, the outcomes are unpredictable (Pieterse 2011,44)
- We speak of 'China' but what matters are classes, strata, regions

Humanitarianism as unpolitics

- Un-politics of neoliberal globalism
 - reverses Sen's argument for 'agents not patients' (1999, 18)
- Impartiality and neutrality - principles make humanitarianism apolitical (Barnett 2011)
- Humanitarianism has expanded hugely in scope and scale since 1990s (\$18 Bn industry,) driven by a 'marketplace' (*op cit* 5)
- Fullblown area of global governance, focused on technocratic efficiency
 - "The movement to become more rule governed and professional had a depoliticising effect, removing from the equation the history and the power that had produced the suffering" (2011, 213)
- Western history and imperial nostalgia - tension between desire for narratives of constructive imperialism and move to construct a truly 'global' history (Davey et al 2013)

Inclusion under neoliberal globalism

- Critical readings of 'inclusive development', 'developmental state', social policies
- Complexities of inclusion/exclusion.
- Intermediaries ('civil society') represent the politically excluded, reorganising 'bare life' as morally deserving humanity (Ong 2006)
- India – 'selective hegemony' and mediated assistance (Smith 2011; Chatterjee 2008; 2004) vs deepening democracy, agency and citizenship? (Corbridge 2007; Mohanty et al 2011)
- 'Development' entails not only poverty elimination, but also the construction of a more equitable and participatory world system (Kay 1993, 697)

Exiting the twilight

- Uvin (1998) dangers of well-intentioned 'development' that ignores power, social exclusion, inequality
- Addressing worsening inequalities should be a goal for the post-2015 development agenda (UNRISD 2012)
 - Income
 - Gender
 - Health
- Corbridge (2007) the responsibilities of critique - raising inconvenient facts, questioning received truths, but also commending empowering forms of government
 - How to relate economic growth to poverty alleviation?
 - Is civil society deepening and political society becoming more inclusive?

Critical Development Studies

- Brohman's critique of 'economism' - 3 critical silences
 - Sociocultural and political relations
 - Intersubjective meanings and values
 - Environment and sustainability
- Schuurman (2009) defines CDS as
 - Reflexive – more than one possible form of society
 - Decentring – considers perspectives from the margins
 - Anti-empiricist - questions distinction of facts and values
 - Attentive to uncovering and explaining historical processes
 - Transdisciplinary, learning from other critical approaches
 - Subversive, challenging accepted ideas, ideologies, policies – knowledge is power
- Recent CDS connects analyses of structural violence and exclusion with practical and normative commitments to spaces of political possibility (Silvey and Rankin, 2010 696; Glassman 2010)
- Disciplines/ interdisciplinarity - a salient problematique
- Less salient/ missing dimensions – bodies and ecology

Developing in the ruins - from the ground up



References

- Biccum, April (2011) Marketing Development: celebrity politics and the 'new' development advocacy *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 7, 2011, pp 1331–1346
- Brohman, John (1995) Economism and critical silences in development studies: a theoretical critique of neoliberalism *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 16, No 2, 298-318
- Corbridge, Stuart (2007) The (im)possibility of development studies, *Economy and Society*, 36:2, 179-211
- Davey, Eleanor, Borton, J and Foley, M (2013) A history of the humanitarian system: Western origins and foundations ODI Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper, June 2013
- de Souza, Pedro H. G. Ferreira (2012) Poverty, Inequality And Social Policies In Brazil, 1995-2009 Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) Working Paper No. 87, February, 2012
- Fine, Ben (2009) Development as Zombieconomics in the Age of Neoliberalism. *Third World Quarterly*, 30,(5): 885–904
- Fine, Ben (2008) 'Zombieconomics: the living death of the dismal science in the age of neo-liberalism', paper for ESRC Neoliberalism Seminar, 1 April 2008, at <http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/cf.cfm?id=1262011/zombiecon.pdf>
- Glassman Jim, (2010) **Critical geography III: Critical development geography** *Prog Hum Geography*, 35: 705-711
- Hout, Wil (2012) The Anti-Politics of Development: donor agencies and the political economy of governance. *Third World Quarterly*, 33, (3): 405–422
- Kamruzzaman, Palash (2013) Civil society or 'comprador class', participation or parroting? *Progress in Development Studies* 13, 1 , pp. 31–49
- Kay, Cristóbal 1993 For a Renewal of Development Studies: Latin American Theories and Neoliberalism in the Era of Structural Adjustment, *Third World Quarterly*, 14(4), pp. 691-702
- Mohanty, R, Thompson L and Schattan Coelho, V (2011) Mobilising the State? Social Mobilisation and State Interaction in India, Brazil and South Africa IDS Working Paper 359
- Moncrieffe, Joy (2011) Relational accountability -Complexities of structural injustice. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen (2011) Global Rebalancing: Crisis and the East–South Turn *Development and Change* 42(1): 22–48.
- Quiggin, John (2010a) *Zombie Economics: How Dead Ideas Still Walk among Us*. Princeton University Press
- Quiggin, John (2010b) Five Zombie Economic Ideas that Refuse to Die Foreign Policy, October 15, 2010 http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/10/15/five_zombie_economic_ideas_that_refuse_to_die
- Sachs, Wolfgang (1999) 'The Archaeology of the Development Idea: A guide to the Ruins' in *Planet Dialectics*. London: Zed Press
- Schuurman, Frans (2009) Critical Development Theory: moving out of the twilight zone. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 5, 2009, pp 831–848
- Severino, Jean-Michel and Ray, Olivier (2009) The End of ODA: Death and Rebirth of a Global Public Policy. Center for Global Development Working Paper Number 167
- Silvey Rachel ,and Rankin, Katharine (2011) Development geography: Critical development studies and political geographic imaginaries *Prog Hum Geogr* 35 (5): 696-704
- Smith, Gavin A. (2011): Selective Hegemony and Beyond-Populations with "No Productive Function": A Framework for Enquiry, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 18:1, 2-38
- Soares, F V (2011) Brazil's Bolsa Família: A Review, *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46 (21), 55-60
- UNDP (2013) Human Development Report 2013 The Rise of the South. New York: Ocford University Press
- UNRISD (2012) Inequalities and the Post-2015 Development Agenda UNRISD Policy Brief 15, October 2012
- United Nations (2013a) Partnerships for development: Perspectives from global health Thematic Think Piece OHCHR, UNEP, UNFPA, WHO. New York: United Nations http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/ohchrteam.html#thinkpieces-25_thinkpiece_health.pdf
- United Nations (2013b) A renewed global partnership for development, Report of the UN System Task Team on the post 2015 Development Agenda New York: United Nations http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/ohchrteam.html#global_dev_rpt_2013.pdf
- United Nations (2013c) A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform Economies through sustainable Development: The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. New York: United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/ohchrteam.html#highlevelpanelreport.pdf>