

Rocks and hard places: development research between neoliberal globalism and global neoliberalism

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Rocks and hard places: introduction

'It was always a bit of a lie that universities were self-governing institutions. Nevertheless, what universities suffered during the 1980s and 1990s was pretty shameful, as under threat of having their funding cut they allowed themselves to be turned into business enterprises, in which professors who had previously carried on their enquiries in sovereign freedom were transformed into harried employees required to fulfil quotas under the scrutiny of professional managers..... If the spirit of the university is to survive...the real university may have to move into people's homes and grant degrees for which the sole backing will be the names of the scholars who sign the certificates' (J.M. Coetzee in Diary of a Bad Year, 2007).

At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s development studies in several European universities was established in the form of new academic institutes. Through time these institutes evolved from a highly differentiated amalgam consisting of leftist students and lecturers towards representatives of an established academic discipline. Lately, a number of these institutes are celebrating or are preparing to celebrate their 35 or 40 years of existence (like the IDS in the UK in 2006 and CIDIN in the Netherlands in 2008). It is interesting to notice that these celebrations are specifically dedicated to a critical introspection which in the case of the IDS resulted in a conference entitled *Reinventing Development Studies*. Also the Dutch CIDIN will use the celebration of its 35 years of existence to critically reflect upon the current status and future perspectives of development research in general and that of development studies in specific.

There are reasons enough for these introspective exercises because the academic and political space wherein development studies moves is fraught with rocks and hard places.

Firstly, there is an undeniable trend that academic institutes in general have to increasingly operate according to a market logic. Input and output in terms of the number of students, the amount of publications in peer-refereed top of the bill journals, the yearly count of large-scale research projects, quotation indexes, ratings indicating the academic prestige of universities, etc. are nowadays grudgingly accepted as part of academic survival.

Secondly, this trend seems to stand in contradistinction to the original critical contents of the mission and scientific object of development studies. For example, it is increasingly difficult to find funds for development research which are either not directly related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or which try to critically assess the whole MDG-related media circus.

As such, thirdly, there is an increasing influence of neo-liberal thinking on determining the research agenda of development studies, making it increasingly difficult to maintain a critical research tradition.

Fourthly, although on the one hand the geographical scale of development studies research nowadays incorporates Eastern and Central European countries, and also Western European countries for that matter, on the other hand with respect to research in the traditional development countries the geographical focus seems to be reduced to Africa (also a consequence of the focus on the MDG-issues; if this trend continues we better might rename development studies into Africanism).

Fifthly, globalization (whether as an ontological phenomenon and/or as a discourse) has significantly challenged development studies in many respects (cf. Schuurman, 2001). Well, there are some reasons to suppose that globalization, theoretically that is, has currently turned from a challenge to critical development studies into a liability.

Lastly, interdisciplinarity which always was a hallmark of development studies' approach, has increasingly become under pressure and currently is increasingly being substituted by a multidisciplinary which is quite another sort of animal.

In short, there are enough reasons to indeed critically reflect upon the current status of development studies and to specify some of the most threatening rocks and hard places.

Rocks and hard places I: market logic in academia and critical theory

In his contribution to a Festschrift of the *Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik* Henry Bernstein (2007:20) vividly illustrates the tension between critical theory and the policy-orientedness of development studies. He quotes from an advertisement for Research Fellows at the University of Manchester's new Brooks World Poverty Institute of which Joseph Stiglitz is Chair: '*Successful applicants will have a demonstrated capacity to conduct innovative and rigorous research that refines and extends our understanding of poverty, while also identifying plausible and politically supportable options for what might be done to reduce it*' (Bernstein's emphasis).

What does it mean for a development studies institute to be functioning in an academic setting which is increasingly being invaded by a market logic? As mentioned before, in the current academic climate what is considered as important is: size (number of PhDs and staff, number of publications, amount of students), large-scale research projects (preferably in combination with large quantitative data-banks) in combination with outside funding (an indication apparently of the relevance of the research activities and at the same time thankfully appreciated by the financial bureaucracy of the university), and the amount of evaluation missions (in behalf of the Ministry of International Development Cooperation and/or Non-Governmental Development Organizations in the Northern countries). In practice this means for development studies institutes that in order to survive concessions have to be made. Original mission statements, which were strongly normatively inspired, increasingly

started to act as barriers in the survival strategy. For example, when the current Centre for International Development Issues (CIDIN) of the Radboud University in Nijmegen (the Netherlands) started functioning in 1973 as the Third World Centre, one of the first publications concerned the negative role of multinationals in maintaining poverty-related issues in the Third World. The name of Third World Centre was changed into CIDIN in the year 2000 as the term Third World was considered outdated and in the Dutch academic collective memory too much connected to 'ThirdWorldism'. Currently one of the research projects of CIDIN concerns the measurement of the efficiency and impact of development projects (in collaboration with a Dutch NGO which is financing this research). The purpose of this project is to deliver academically sound advice to NGOs to improve their project efficiency and impact.

In the 1970s, a common view in development studies circles was that development projects were an extension of Northern based imperialism (a basic view of 'ThirdWorldists' or 'TierMondistas') or at the most a way to evade more fundamental changes in North-South trade relations and political regimes in underdeveloped countries themselves. There is in fact little reason to believe that currently development cooperation has changed dramatically in its implicit intentions. Maybe this is an extreme example, yet it shows a number of dramatic shifts that the development studies went through in terms of its explanandum (object), explanans (explanatory framework) and subject (methodology). In terms of its object development studies (at least in this example but I venture that it is a general characteristic) went from a structural analysis of the mechanics of underdevelopment to studying the efficiency of development projects. In this shift an approach inspired by critical theory was entirely lost. In fact, in general the adjective 'critical' lost its original meaning. Many development studies students nowadays interpret 'critical' only in the dictionary sense of the word. In addition, the example also shows that there is an historic shift (not only in development studies but also in social sciences in general) from structural analysis to actor-oriented analysis. Studying c.q. evaluating development projects in terms of efficiency and impact means a shift from macro- to micro-level analysis. Now, there is nothing wrong with actor-oriented analysis as long as the structural context is not lost from sight. But this is exactly the point, the broader context in project-based evaluation studies remains often outside the analytical framework (partly also because it falls outside the sphere of influence of the NGOs which finance these studies in the first place). Another example of the shift within development studies from structural to actor-oriented analysis is the way that concepts like poverty and inequality are looked at. We see here a historic shift in the level of analysis from macro to meso to micro. Poverty in the Third World used to be conceptualized in terms of differences between rich and poor countries. Admittedly, the definition of poverty has been much improved through the years (from a purely income-oriented definition to a much broader set of indicators) but poverty is now often brought down to an individual characteristic with individual solutions (e.g. through micro-credit schemes). This trend is also reflected in analytical frameworks like for example the currently much favoured livelihood approaches where individual actors are plotted into a matrix according to their access (or lack thereof) to assets or different forms of capital (financial, social, human, etc.). Now, the livelihood framework is very useful to point out the heterogeneity existing within a particular local space,

something which has always been a notoriously weak point in critical theory. But this can hardly compensate for the lack of an analysis of more structural components. In other words, the shift within development studies from research inspired by critical theory to research according to a neoliberal agenda is accompanied by dramatic shifts in object, subject and explanatory framework.

Now the above probably are nothing more than the grumblings of an old development studies dinosaur. So let me turn to these issues from the student's point of view (i.e. more precisely: my perspective on their perspective). Development studies still attracts a sufficient number of students. The reasons for studying development studies have not changed over the years. It is a genuine concern for the plight of the poor in the Third World, indignation about the unequal distribution of resources on a global scale and the urge to do something about this. Students also are still very active outside the university although the characteristics of their activities have changed somewhat. In the 'old days' students joined anti-imperialism working groups and as such were well equipped with theoretical knowledge which enabled them to discuss Marx's 18th Brumaire on the same level with their professors. Nowadays students join United Nations Youth Forums and travel to Washington to meet their peers from other countries to discuss good governance. So, extra curricula activities still are there and still express a basic concern with the 'Other' which goes beyond studying at the university. In fact, these activities could be more appreciated than in the old days because a lot of students are working about 20 hours per week to earn their livelihood. The job market for development studies students is still largely composed of employment in the domain of international development cooperation although significantly less than before this means being sent overseas. Only a small percentage manages to proceed in writing a PhD-thesis. Although I mentioned earlier that development studies should not be reduced to development management and policy the reality is that a lot of the students end up in Ministries of Development Cooperation, NGOs, embassies or international development organizations which do nothing else than development management and policy-making. Here we have another reason why critical theory came increasingly under pressure, i.e. not only as a framework for research but also because of the knowledge required by future employers of development studies students. Of course the job market wants critical students but more in a generalized academic sense of the word. There is a need for students who know how to prepare, manage and evaluate development projects, who know how to measure efficiency and increase the impact of projects. The job market does not need students who think that the Millennium Development Goals are the latest example to depoliticize the development debate. All this does not mean the students are ignorant of what critical theory is but it seems to be more considered as something of the past than of any immediate use in research projects or in future jobs. Besides, by now every European university has implemented the Bologna Treaty which means that officially the academic period for students consists of a 3-year BA followed by a 1-year MA. Time for fieldwork is limited which means that students need a pragmatic 'toolkit' for local level research. Critical theory is rather abstract and needs a lot of operationalization to be used in short term micro-level MA-research projects. It can be considered as a major challenge for development studies to try to reincorporate critical theory into that pragmatic toolkit.

Rocks and hard places II: from inter- to multidisciplinary

Through time the interdisciplinarity of development studies has become one of its most important trademarks which, besides the obvious advantages, also has its drawbacks. The big advantage is that the object of development studies is a major social problem (let's keep it simple for the moment: widespread poverty in the Third World) and social problems in general can only be studied adequately from an interdisciplinary perspective. These problems always have economic, political and socio-cultural aspects and ditto contextual influencing factors which are interrelated among them. It is specifically the attempt to take into account the interrelations between these aspects which makes development studies interdisciplinary.

For example, if we study the developmental role of civil society organizations (which is one of the hot topics nowadays) and one does not take into account the influence on the characteristics of civil society of 1) the type of the political regime (e.g. whether it is a weak or a strong state) and 2) the influence of modes of production (the relative importance of and the interrelation between a capitalist and a non-capitalist mode of production), then only a small part of the total picture can be captured. Just looking at a social problem from different disciplinary angles would make it multi- but not interdisciplinary.

The disadvantage of interdisciplinarity is that the training of students in the academic field of each of the major sciences which are reflected in the corner points of the interdisciplinary triangle (i.e. political science, economy and sociology) is sometimes considered insufficient as development studies tries to keep various balls in the air at the same time. Development studies students are not economists, sociologists or political scientists *pur sang* yet they compensate this lack of specific disciplinary knowledge with a better insight in the complexity of developmental problems. Yet, it is not uncommon, although mistaken, that development studies is seen as an applied science narrowed down to development policy and management. Looking at development studies from the outside, specifically given its problem-oriented object definition, it is to be expected that its focus seems to be on policy-oriented research, contributing to further developmental processes in the Third World. As such, development studies is sometimes looked at by the other branches of social sciences as lacking in academic status, also because of its interdisciplinary character as discussed above. It is, however, a common mistake to reduce development studies to development policy and management, thereby emphasizing an empiricist and solution-oriented approach to the problem of underdevelopment. The object of development studies is much broader, i.e. it takes as its explanandum the structural causes of the lack of emancipation of people in the South as well as in transitional economies elsewhere and the strategies (at a local, national and international scale) which are employed to solve this lack of emancipation. A lack of emancipation refers to an inadequate access to material (e.g. income) and immaterial (e.g. education) resources which leads to widespread poverty, exploitation, inequality and injustice. The emphasis on structural causes does not imply just a structuralist approach but combines this with actor-oriented perspectives in order not to lose sight of the actors' views. Strategies to solve the lack of emancipation involve various actors in the South as well as in the North: social movements, NGOs, and national and international governmental

organizations. Of course, this is a subjective definition of development studies but one which I feel does more justice to what development studies is all about without reducing it to development policy and management.

A recent addition to the geographical scale of development studies shows that besides countries in the South and transitional economies in for example former Eastern Europe, also the emancipatory problems in multicultural societies in the North are increasingly incorporated into the object of development studies. Students of development studies are very much interested in the emancipatory problems related to multiculturalism in their own societies. Also in this case, an interdisciplinary approach is the most awarding.

Nevertheless, the (short) history of development studies reflects a dialectical relationship between the advantage and disadvantage of an interdisciplinary approach. In the first place, climbing over the fence of the neighbouring sciences can lead to muddy feet. The paradigms and theories which are 'imported' from the three major social science disciplines (economy, political science and sociology) could for a long time only be fruitfully combined by development studies because of their common denominator which is the linch-pin behind the interdisciplinarity, i.e. the role of the (nation)state. The bulk of the paradigms and theories from these three major domains of the social sciences has its roots in the 19th century with an emphasis on the role of the (nation)state in, respectively, the establishment of national markets and international trade relations, the establishment of democratic governments, and the aim of these governments to create a national identity (thereby suppressing other forms of identity based, for example, on regional or religious affiliations). In short, development studies' interdisciplinarity reflected right from the start the 19th century roots of other social sciences with the nation-state as the main actor in development processes and as the main geographical referent. These paradigmatic views on the role of the (nation)state have changed as we move closer to the so-called global era. Globalisation challenges the interdisciplinary character of development studies. Many globalisation authors agree on the decreasing, or at least changing, economic, political and cultural importance of (nation)states. A shift in analytical perspective from the nation-state to transnational social space does not make it any easier for the interdisciplinary approach of development studies. On the other hand, the 'global-local' as the new binary has surplus value above the established dichotomies of core-periphery and developed-underdeveloped exactly because it is less spatial and allows for inequality within the binary code. Leo Ching (2000) speculates that under globalisation traditional binary models of social analysis and political struggle (colonizer-colonized, First World-Third World, centre-periphery) are inapplicable to a spatial economy of power irreducible to geographical dichotomies. In the same line Appadurai is in favour of a 'process' geographies instead of a 'trait' geographies which considers areas as relatively immobile aggregates of traits (values, languages, material practices, ecological adaptations, marriage patterns, etc.) with more or less durable boundaries. A process geography sees areas as precipitates of various kinds of action, interaction and motion (trade, travel, warfare, colonization, exile, etc.). Current area studies, says Appadurai, consider areas as permanent associations between space, territory and cultural organization. It is not only that the globalisation debate gives reason to suppose that the role of the (nation)state has been and still is

declining but also that, as a consequence, the former conjunctive dynamic (i.e. following the same spatial and time paths) of economy, polity and culture - upon which the interdisciplinary character of many a development theory was based - has been replaced by a disjunctive dynamic (Appadurai, 1990). In a deterritorialized world the nation-state would have lost its role as a connecting linch-pin between the economic, political and cultural domains which now largely follow their own disjunctive dynamics which are only partly interrelated. The traditional interdisciplinary approach of development theories which, for example, used to draw upon the interrelation between national economic growth and processes of democratisation through the role of the (nation)state is now confronted with domains which follow different logics that are not necessarily interrelated as they form part of different transnational scopes. For the time being development studies seems obliged to withdraw towards a multidisciplinary approach (i.e. without a clear theoretical view on the interrelations between the economic, political and cultural domains).

Rocks and hard places III: glob-talk

'It is time to tear of the neutral mask of globalization and make visible the raw imperialism beneath it' (David Harvey).

Allow me to give the basic argument in this short paragraph in the following (perhaps overly simplified) proposition: *'by following the culturalist turn in globalization discourses (shortly: glob-talk) development studies has allowed itself to be manoeuvred away from critical theory.'*

Development studies has wholeheartedly embraced concepts like interconnectedness, network of networks, cosmopolitanism, hybridity, syncretism, deterritorialization, reterritorialization, glocalization, civil society, etc. Political economy seems to have disappeared almost completely in this culturalist turn; 'culture matters' a la Harrison and Huntington (2000), certainly, but not by substituting culture for political economy (cf. Rowbotham). Development studies has allowed itself to embrace the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) approach to poverty in absolute terms instead of in relative terms of power inequality. It has been seduced to accept research projects meant to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of MDG-related development efforts without questioning too much the depoliticizing nature of the MDG-circus. Samir Amin has condemned the MDG-project in no uncertain terms as an imperialist project: extreme privatization, opening up new fields for the expansion of capital within a context of maximum deregulation, and, above all, no state interference in economic affairs. In fact, the way that development research has been involved with the MDGs is a fine example of what can be called *academic governmentality* in Foucauldian terms, i.e. the MDGs are used to discipline development research.

In the previous paragraphs I have attempted to explain a number of reasons why development studies finds itself in this non-critical *cul de sac*. In the last paragraph I will discuss the question whether the concept of neo-imperialism offers a way out of this *cul de sac*.

Beyond rocks and hard places: the neo-imperialist route?

In terms of the old imperialist theories, development originally was about core states monopolizing accumulation opportunities. In order to do this, these states used to establish at home a social order conducive to capitalist development, but at the same time established exploitative relations with colonies and if need be to engage in inter-imperialist wars with other core states which tried to protect their accumulation opportunities.

After the WWII the concept of development became used in the aftermath of a speech of the US president Harry Truman as a discourse in the context of the Cold War to lure nation-states in the Third World into the Western camp. No matter the degree of anti-democratic, exploitative, brutal and corrupt characteristics of a particular regime it was welcomed with open arms into the Western bloc and the development discourse was used to mystify the imperialist nature of these relations. The East should be contained with a cordon of countries not only to prevent Russia and China to export the communist ideology to the Third World but also to ensure access to vital resources and to bloc access to these same resources for the communist core countries. Development assistance was an important instrument in this imperialist strategy. So, we could add, in terms of motives to engage in development assistance, geopolitical arguments next to humane or humanist and economic arguments.

The wars in Korea in the 1950s and in Vietnam in the 1960s (in the latter case first by the French and then by the Americans) were essentially geopolitical wars. The current involvement of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan is a mixture of economic (securing access to oil, in the case of Afghanistan to secure the oil pipe-line from Turkmenistan to the Arabian Sea) and geopolitical causes. During the so-called Developmentalist Era (which in McMichael's 2000 interpretation extends from the 1940s to the 1970s) the most abhorrent African and Latin American dictatorships were thusly welcomed with open arms into the Western bloc. Also the famous US development aid program in the beginning of the 1960s *Alliance for Progress* (where the development discourse played an important role) under president Kennedy was meant to prevent socialist revolutions in Latin America in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution in 1959.

The decolonization period of the 1960s changed the scene somewhat but not enough to change the imperialist relations between North and South. The difference being that some European countries lost a privileged entrance to their former colonies which further established the hegemony of the US (something which led the US to support the decolonization process in order to diminish the competitive edge that European economies had based on their cheap access to labor and resources in their former colonies).

Although McMichael divides the post-WW II era into the period of Developmentalism (the 1940s-1970s) and the period of Globalism (the 1970s and beyond) there are at least two remarkable commonalities which apparently escape McMichael. The first one is that Developmentalism as well as Globalism are intimately linked to the dynamics of capitalism based as it is on the extraction of surplus value from workers (in Marxist jargon called exploitation of labour value), on accumulation and class conflict but always within the context of a firm belief in endless growth.

The second commonality is that these basic characteristics of capitalism lead to different institutional arrangements which, however, do not change the basic characteristics though and that what binds these institutional arrangements is the imperialist relations between core capitalist countries and the periphery. So, imperialist relations continued to exist (starting as they did in the 19th century, and before that period we had of course colonialism with its own dynamics also tied to an incipient capitalist system basically constituted by plunder and at a somewhat later stage by unequal exchange) and as such continued to characterize in the developmentalist as well as in the globalist era the relations between rich and poor countries.

However, the specific characteristics of these imperialist relations changed through time as part of the changing dynamic of capitalism, i.e. from Fordism to Post-Fordism. Seen from this perspective Developmentalism as well as Globalism are both legitimizing discourses for the imperialist character of globalizing capitalism which currently is among other things characterized by the subordination of social reproduction to the reproduction of capital (the end of the welfare state in the West), the deregulation of the labor market (and we do not have to look specifically at developing countries to see how that functions: take the latest initiative of the Dutch Cabinet to ease the conditions for laying off workers), the globalization of liquid capital, the outsourcing of production to cheap labor markets, and the transfer of local capital intended for social services into finance capital for global investment (leading to disinvestment in health and education).

Now, what are the characteristics of the imperialist structure of globalizing capitalism which make some authors (cf. Biel 2000 and Harvey 2005, 2006) label this as New Imperialism. Before I come to that it is important to demystify at least one so-called globalization myth which is that nation-states have lost their erstwhile priority status. This is important because talking about new imperialism begs the question about the units of analysis. All the old imperialist theories referred to the relations between states or nation-states for that matter. If, however, globalization discourses are correct in pointing out the demise of the state as a component of neoliberalism and that to understand global capitalism it is the market as an institutional arrangement and not the relations between nation-states as actors then the imperialist perspective would lose its spatial and geopolitical connotations which still belong to its core definition. Mind you, this is a tricky issue even among authors which adhere to notions of imperialism such as Negri and Hardt (2000) in their best-seller *Empire* which represents in their view a globalized imperialist capitalism without a clear geopolitical center. Permit me to dwell not too long in an attempt to demystify this particular globalization myth about the demise of the role of nation-states in global capitalism by referring to Leo Panitch (2001, p. 10): *'...globalisation is a process that is authored by active states; states that are not victims of the process but active agents of making globalisation happen, and are increasingly responsible, I would argue, for sustaining it, and even burdened with the increasing responsibility of managing its contradictions and crises.'*

Panitch adds the following (and we're now already moving into one of the characteristics of new imperialism):

'... there was certainly a restructuring of states (but not a bypassing of states) in relation to: the rapid movement of capital; the changing balance of class forces transnationally towards financial capital; the increasing orientation of each of the

world's nation-states to external trade.' [What was taking place in that context was]... a shift in the hierarchy of state apparatus, whereby those state departments that were more closely associated with the forces of international capital – treasuries, central banks, and so forth – were increasing their status at the cabinet table, if you like, vis-à-vis departments of labour or departments of welfare that were more closely associated with domestic subordinated class forces.' (Panitch 2001, p. 10)

This remark of Panitch makes you think by the way about what this meant for the status in the Dutch cabinet of a department like International Development Cooperation. Recently, Minister Koenders was invited to give a short talk in Nijmegen to shed some light on the outlines of his thoughts on how to structure international development cooperation in the new cabinet. What struck me was that he cast Dutch international development cooperation primarily in terms of tasks which belong to other Ministries: humanitarian aid by sending troops to conflict areas (Ministry of Defence), to actively engage in diplomatic missions in order to convince the warring parties to gather around a conference table and to solve their differences there instead of shooting each other to Kingdom come (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and to establish trade relations with developing countries (Ministry of Economic Affairs). What is left for a Ministry of International Development Cooperation one wonders.

Another defining characteristic of new imperialism (in reference to older variants of imperialism) is that we have to take a new perspective on inter-imperialist rivalries which in the past has led to military conflicts between imperial powers (such as the first and second World Wars). In spite of the inter-imperialist economic rivalries between European, American and Japanese capital this did not result (as in 'the old days') in military conflicts between the imperialist powers. What is interesting concerning this particular issue is that imperialist powers have joined forces in some military operations in developing countries (although not always wholeheartedly) and that, what is considered as a specific characteristic of new imperialism, the US has taken the lead in many of these military campaigns. Columnist Thomas Friedman approvingly wrote in the New York Times in 1999 (March 28) the following: '*... The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist . . . and the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.*' The increasing unilateral political ideology in the US (to go for it alone, so to speak, to boycott international treaties to regulate environmental pollution, to boycott the International Court of Justice in the Hague, etc.) is seen as an important characteristic of the new imperialism. According to Michael Peters Europe and the US not necessarily join a common strategic culture any more. He quotes neo-conservative Robert Kagan (senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) who stipulates that:

'... Americans generally see the world divided between good and evil, between friends and enemies... They favour coercion over persuasion, tending towards unilateralism. They are less inclined to act through the United Nations or other international institutions and more skeptical of international law. By contrast, Europeans see a more complex picture. .. They are both more tolerant of failure and more patient, preferring peaceful solutions, 'negotiation, diplomacy, and persuasion to coercion.' (Peters, 2008, p. 9)

At the same time Kagan points out that the EU with the new members from Eastern Europe and possibly Turkey could become involved in a process of a changing identity, the importance of national priorities and changing international agenda's.

Let me move on to another characteristic of the new imperialism and that is that spreading the gospel of democracy and good governance should be interpreted as an ideological instrument meant to detain the poor, marginalized, exploited masses in the Third World from engaging in political upheavals. Political transformations through revolutionary changes do not form part of the game anymore once a so-called democracy is in place. Once the people are convinced that democracy is a sine qua non for progress, and once the political elites are convinced that by at least accepting the good governance discourse, they are assured of acceptance by the international community, then circumstances continue to exist through which surplus value keeps being transferred from the periphery to the center either through the production process, unequal exchange or consumption of marketed goods. Once the idea is established that economic progress can only take place through access to the market (also at the individual level, an ideology pushed forward for example by micro-credit projects) and that democracy is the best political institutional arrangement to guarantee that progress, imperialism has created the necessary conditions to solve the ever continuing threat of social conflicts as a result of the continuing threats of overaccumulation and falling rates of profit.

What is specifically interesting here is the role that civil society is supposed to play in this whole setup. Much has been said and can be said about the role of civil society, specifically in the context of the support it receives through international development assistance. Supposedly *strengthening civil society* forms part of good governance (empowering the powerless through participation in national or local forms of governance). In the context of a perspective from new imperialism the notion of civil society is created and supported by international donors, and functions (if it functions) as a means to keep a check on the state becoming too independent from the international community. Through supporting civil society imperialist powers can indirectly influence how government policies are shaped. According to Henry Veltmeyer (2005, p.91):

'Radical political economists ... tend to view NGOs as instruments [Trojan horses], oftentimes unwitting and unknowing, of outside interests and regard both economic development and democracy as masks for an otherwise hidden agenda: to impose the policy and institutional framework of the new world order.'

Let me try to sum up the most important characteristics of the new imperialism perspective as follows:

1. There is no reason to agree with one of Ankie Hoogvelts (1997, p. xii) notions that *'The familiar pyramid of the core-periphery hierarchy is no longer a geographical but a social division of the world economy.'* There

definitely still is a clear geopolitical spatiality attached to the core-periphery hierarchy.

2. At the same time it is true is that the units within the triangular power hierarchy are not just nation-states but consist of an amalgam of actors among which supranational institutions, multi national corporations, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and social movements. However, nation-states can still be regarded as major actors.
3. The US take up a primordial position in the globalized power triangle. There has been an increasing unilateralism in how the US manifests itself based upon its military hegemony.
4. The dynamics in this power triangle are based upon changing characteristics of the capitalist mode of production which produces imperialist, exploitative relations between North and South and increasing worldwide inequality between and within countries. Imperialism by necessity was and still is closely attached to the survival strategy of the capitalist mode of production.
5. These imperialist relations are sustained on the one hand through an ideological legitimation in the form of Globalism and on the other hand through direct military intervention, specifically in a unilateral way by the US.
6. Methods of absolute surplus appropriation seem to have returned: intensifying work regimes, reducing real wages, and restructuring employment away from full-time and secure employment into part-time and insecure work, something which David Harvey (2005, ch. 4) has labelled as accumulation by dispossession which relies on ‘... *power, with the use of numerous techniques, ranging from stock market manipulation, through debt crises, to the commodification of nature, and open military conquest.*’
7. Development assistance, currently with the emphasis on good governance, democracy and the involvement of civil society depoliticizes the development debate and prevents the rise of alternative forms of social order with an emancipatory potential for the world’s poor.

So, does new imperialism offer interesting perspectives to development studies, wedged as it is between global neoliberalism and neoliberal globalism? From the point of view of critical theory the answer is potentially affirmative. However, there are a number of drawbacks attached to adopt new imperialism as a paradigm for development studies in the 21st century. To conclude this chapter let me mention these drawbacks in arbitrary order:

1. In building up a scientific paradigmatic perspective based on the concept of new imperialism one has to take care not to be dragged into conspiracy-like theories which are often fascinating but cannot form the basis of a reconstruction of critical development studies. However, the same, can often be said about globalization theories which have been labelled by Justin Rosenberg (2000) as complete *follies*.
2. The second drawback is that the new imperialist perspective in order to lead to empirical research, has to be operationalized. In other words, if new imperialism exists at a paradigmatic level it should be connected to middle-range critical theories to enable research ‘on the ground’. There are some examples of how to do that but it needs more systematic attention. An

analysis of power relations is undoubtedly a central element in such an exercise. For example, research focussed on local government and the participation of the local community through participatory budgets could be organized by using concepts of Gramsci and Foucault where power relations within the local community and between the local community and local and or national governments is central instead of using a frame of analysis inspired by the likes of Robert Putnam who focus on social capital.

3. If new imperialism, together with radical political economy and critical theory, is incorporated into the academic curriculum of development studies there will be issues of strategy and tactics involved. Rocks and Hard Places mentioned in the previous paragraphs make a cautious routing necessary.

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