

# **Development Theory and its Threatening Other**

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## **Introduction**

The 'other' of development is usually taken to be the developing world. Underdeveloped societies are portrayed as somehow deficient compared to the West, and the need to remedy these deficiencies legitimises Western intervention in the world of the underdeveloped Other. Be that as it may, it does not explain the existence of a field called development studies. To do so, the present paper deals with another aspect of the identity of 'development,' namely, how the existence of development studies as a discipline is justified. Development theory must be able to differentiate itself from other possible fields which could name and describe the Third World. This is no idle question: in the 1980s the academic position of development theory was severely undermined during the so-called 'impasse' (Schuurman, 1993). The field's reclaiming of lost ground since the 1990s is, this paper argues, closely linked to the 'othering' critique aimed at neoliberal development. That 'othering' – by which an alternative is turned into an opposite – has proceeded on the basis of same rhetoric utilised by post-war modernisation theorists to differentiate their fledgling field from alternative conceptualisations of social change. In this paper it shall be argued that as a consequence our image of 'neoliberal' development has ceased to represent anything that has ever been a consensus at the World Bank or IMF, its supposed bastions. Rather, it has been given the pre-existing characteristics of development theory's 'threatening Other.' The first section of the paper will provide an overview of these characteristics through the work of J.M. Keynes and some post-war modernisation theorists. It then looks at how the critique of neoliberalism has constructed that approach in this manner, focussing on the Washington Consensus. Thus while many have analysed neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse that excludes alternative, this paper looks at it from the opposite perspective; that is, how neoliberalism itself, as a particular form of development, has been pushed out of the development discourse.

## **The Threatening Other**

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault was concerned with how concepts we regard as natural – such as economics or politics – come into being; that is, how they become differentiated from other concepts. For Foucault, concepts such as 'development' are not based on something objectively definable. The discourse on madness, for example, is not based on the existence of an object called 'madness'. Rather, the concept is defined by the collection of statements that are accepted

as being about madness and those that are not. The question for Foucault is how and why certain statements emerge and are associated with the subject of madness, and others either do not emerge or are not accepted as part of the discourse. The conditions of existence, coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance Foucault calls the “rules of formation” of a discourse (1972: 38). There are three aspects of the rules of formation of which the most relevant to the present paper is the “field of initial differentiation” where the discourse “finds a way of limiting its domain, of defining what it is talking about, of giving it the status of an object – and therefore of making it manifest, nameable, and describable.” (1972: 41)

Many radical critiques of development (Said, 1978; Escobar, 1996) have been based on the idea that the object of development theory is the Third World. Through development theory the West creates and defines the underdeveloped world as an object upon which it can act. However, although it may be a useful rhetorical device, it is clear to all development *theorists* that there are no developed countries. Developed and underdeveloped are ideal types with no counterparts in reality: everyone is in a process of development (Deutsch et al, 1981). Consequently, development theory is *not* merely concerned with recreating Western society in the non-Western world. As Lerner put it: “[t]here is no uniform Tomorrow just as there was no single Yesterday.” (1958[1966]: 74). Even Rostow's famous “stages of growth theory” does not end with his book's 'final' stage. It was not capitalist mass consumption that was the ultimate aim. Development would find its fulfilment only in a later stage; for even in the West, “[t]he problem of choice and allocation – the problem of scarcity – has not yet been lifted...” (Rostow, 1960[1977]:81). The object of development theory – what it is talking about – is social change itself. 'Development' is a particular form of social change, and development theory is the body of knowledge that conceptualises and describes it. The *telos* of social-change-as-development consists not in replicating Western capitalist society but in overcoming the problem of scarcity, of freeing mankind from the burdens of the struggle for mere existence. In Rostow's 'Anti-Communist Manifesto,' Marx was conceded to be correct on one point: “the end of all this [development] is not compound interest forever; it is in the adventure of seeing what man can and will do when the pressure of scarcity is substantially lifted from him.” (1960[1977]: 166) Development theory sees itself as the guide and guardian of a cooperative endeavour of striving toward a developed world for all – a striving that both the popularly-called developed and underdeveloped countries are part of (Rostow, 1971: 360). Thus when development theorists define their field they must therefore do so by differentiating it from alternative ways of conceptualising social change, and for the 'guardian' identity to be meaningful one requires a threat. That threat is a world where social change is unguided and unlimited by development policies. This world is given four primary characteristics: it is selfish/materialistic, Darwinian, Eurocentric, and

conservative/cynical. This 'threatening Other' recurs frequently in the history of development theory, from the field's initial differentiation from the idea of progress to the revitalisation of economic growth theory by J.M. Keynes and the post-war emergence of development studies as we know it, and the post-impasse period. The remainder of this section looks at these characteristics through the work of J.M. Keynes and post-war modernisation theorists.

### **1. Selfish and materialistic**

The primary and overriding characteristic of the conceptualisation of social change from which development is attempting to distinguish itself is its selfish and materialistic impulses. In all periods in which this process of 'othering' was dominant, the then existing form of social change was presented by development theorists as being solely motivated by selfishness and materialism. Keynes saw selfishness and materialism at the heart of social change as it existed. He argued that the ruling passion in the individualistic, capitalist society in which he lived was the 'money motive', which he described as a 'somewhat disgusting morbidity' and a 'semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensity' which should be handed over to 'the specialists in mental disease.' He believed that the 'game' of capitalism ought to be played for lower stakes than at present – that true social progress would require society to overcome all that condoned and encouraged self-seeking activity (1936[1960]: 374). Keynes described the moral problems of present society as: love of money; the dominance of the money motive; individual economic security as the highest good; the 'hoarding instinct' as the means of providing for one's family. He saw in Soviet Russia the “first confused stirrings” of a non-supernatural social religion which would finally condemn these immoralities, a social experiment which “tries to construct a framework of society in which pecuniary motives as influencing action shall have a changed relative importance, in which social approbations shall be differently distributed, and where behaviour which was previously normal and respectable ceases to be either one or the other.” (1925b: 305, 302).

In the post-war era, too, one finds that the argument for 'development' rests in part on a portrayal of social change as otherwise being based on selfishness and materialism. David Apter, for example, warned that an unplanned social change by private entrepreneurs would result in mounting “social dysfunctionalities”. This is because people would be concerned with their own interests rather than the wider social consequences of their activities. It would be “at best a gambler's environment in which planning for the game takes second place to the overall consideration of winning.” (1971: 197) Arthur Lewis, one of the few modernisation theorists to write an explicitly normative justification of economic growth, counted increased 'economism' and 'individualism' among its costs, arguing that

both would have to be limited if the desired benefits were to materialise (1955: Appendix). More recently, a UNESCO report on citizenship education argued that a deliberate inculcation of civic virtues was necessary because existing society is characterised by “a lack of cohesive spiritual and social values, and unrestricted acquisitiveness ... ; this ruling social passion is tied to a peculiar conception of 'freedom,' one shaped by highly individualist perceptions and impulses around crass indifference and materialism.” (Howe and Marshall, 1999)

## **2. Darwinian**

The second characteristic of the threatening Other is a societal-level consequence of the selfish individual-level motivations guiding social change: it is Darwinian, in the sense that the weak are left to the mercy of the strong who are set free to act on these selfish and materialistic impulses. This “old-fashioned individualism and laissez-faire” was characterised as a system of “economic anarchy” (Keynes, 1925a: 329). Keynes identified the uncertainty and lack of direction inherent in the present system as the source of the problem, and proposed instead the economic activity ought to be guided by considerations of social justice rather than individual whim, which would only perpetuate the present inequalities. For this the world needed a “new wisdom for a new age.” (1925a: 337; 1926) The new wisdom was necessary because the old way had served to benefit the rich without providing them with an incentive to help the poor out of their vicious circle of poverty.

Clearly it would not do for those who saw themselves as helping the poorer nations out of their present economic misery. Paul Rosenstein-Rodan (1943), in what is often considered the founding text of modernisation theory, noted that the “social conscience” could no longer accept the miseries that accompanied social change in the “Darwinist nineteenth century.” Post-war development theorists were particularly suspicious of the operation of the international economic system, where the economic anarchy that was being overcome within Western societies still reigned. Some had argued in the post-war era that the task of US foreign policy ought to be to recreate the world of nineteenth century Europe, but most modernisation theorists set themselves explicitly against the free trade liberalism of that era. It was believed that “the working of capitalism would maintain the same unequal world division of labour as has previously been enforced by imperial might” (Toye, 2006). Although some scholars, such as P.T. Bauer, were conceded to genuinely believe that liberal economic policies would benefit Third World development, this argument was more often seen as hiding a lack of empathy regarding developing nations (Rostow, 1984). According to Balogh (1966[1974]) such an approach “decried the motives of deliberately helping the poor” and would leave them to their fate as the plaything of powerful market forces. David Apter (1971: 204n, 46) saw

it as a “hit and miss, private and public pattern of manipulative and exploitative aid” which, despite the best efforts of multilateral agencies, rendered the international system “essentially hostile” He described it as “the repugnant purveyor of anti-humanism.” It was not 'development'. True development policies would have to protect the poor from the selfish and materialistic impulses that still existed.

### 3. Eurocentric

A third characteristic of the threatening Other is that it is Eurocentric. It is presented as being derived from the Western experience and imposed as a template for the non-Western world to follow. Post-war development theorists argued that people like P.T. Bauer were promoting “a projection for the whole world of a conception of change that was believed, erroneously, to be true of the societies of Western Europe.” (Black, 1966:7) Today, we are quite used to hearing that the old approaches to and theories of development – from colonialism to post-war modernisation to neoliberalism – were Eurocentric. Yet the unquestioned acceptance of this account obscures the fact that those development theorists saw themselves as providing a bulwark *against* Eurocentrism. Thus Daniel Lerner wrote his *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958[1966]), which marked the beginning of the 'golden decade' of the political modernisation school, in opposition to existing methods of development which he believed sought to impose Western models on non-Western societies. Despite the title of his book, Lerner did not believe that development was a process of the traditional gradually coming to accept the ideals and institutions of the modern, Westernised elites. He takes issue with those who suggest it might be so, asserting that “[t]here is no uniform Tomorrow just as there was no single Yesterday.” (1958[1966]: 74). Rather, developing societies must “have the wisdom to distinguish between the generally applicable functions of modernity and the institutional forms derived from alien traditions...” (Black, 1966:97)

Modernisation theorists were in far greater agreement about which aspects of the West ought to be rejected than which ought to be adapted or adopted by the developing nations. The latter were largely at the discretion of the particular developing nation; the former were threatening to social-change-as-development wherever it occurred. To be rejected were the values and practices associated with non-developmental social change – represented again by selfishness and materialism – which are presented as constant dangers to the development process. Modernisation theorists argued that this threatening Other would, if it wasn't for the protection afforded by the development industry, sweep away all locally valued patterns of life that were not conducive to growth (e.g. Apter, 1971). Development theorists have always seen it as part of their task to protect indigenous peoples and

cultures from destruction by the pernicious influence of Western ways of life, which led young people to abandon their fragile traditional villages and cultures to seek white-collar jobs in the cities (Thompson, 1981). This educated urban minority was regarded as self-seeking and materialistic, and disruptive of attempts to promote community and national development. Disconnected from their traditions, these displaced persons could not hope to be the engine of true development (UNESCO, 1961). If set free, as they would be without proper development policies, a country's 'valued patterns of life' would be threatened from within, by an internal Eurocentrism.

#### **4. Conservative and cynical**

Finally, development's Other is conservative of the existing system, with all its inequalities and miseries, and cynical of the possibility of promoting change. According to Keynes, the watchwords of the British government in his day remained “Negation, Restriction, Inactivity. ... Under their leadership we have been forced to button up our waistcoats and compress our lungs. Fears and doubts and hypochondriac precautions are keeping us muffled up indoors.” Keynes' new wisdom required a more optimistic outlook: “There is no reason why we should not feel ourselves free to be bold, to be open, to experiment, to take action, to try the possibilities of things.” (1929) Modernisation theorists similarly argued that the old way was too “slow and halting” and “unlikely to be satisfying” (Pearson, 1970; cf. Singer, 1949). Like Keynes they presented themselves as occupying a middle-ground between the unguided social change envisaged by liberals and the revolutionary social change advocated by socialists. The former would maintain the *status quo*, the latter would not produce lasting, stable change. Thus according to Rostow: “The central task of an effective political leader consists in narrowing the gap between the status quo and the theoretical optimum dynamic political equilibrium position, without destroying the leader's underlying basis of political support or the constitutional system itself...” (1971: 25).

In conclusion, development theory defines itself in opposition to an alternative form of social change to which it ascribes threatening and undesirable characteristics: selfishness, materialism, individualism, Eurocentrism, social Darwinism, cynicism. This form of social change is presented as what would exist without the protection of the development industry. As Rostow (1984: 258) put it: “in an inherently divisive world ... institutionalised development aid has been perhaps the strongest tempering force, quietly at work, giving some operational meaning to the notion of a human community with serious elements of common interest.” Development is, of course, the opposite of its Other: a form of social change that is motivated by altruism, not selfishness; community spirit, not individualism; normative values, not crass materialism; concern for the poor, not social Darwinism;

it respects traditional cultures, rather than simply imposing Western ways; and it is optimistic, not cynical. In sum, it helps people rather than leaving them to their fate.

### **Neoliberalism as a threatening Other**

While it is ever-present in development thinking this image of a threatening Other, like any other self-other dichotomy, is explicitly invoked at times when there is a felt need for the Self to be strengthened. It serves to reinforce the necessity of development theory as a distinct area of concern by presenting us with a threatening world that had existed before and would exist again were it not for correct development policies. The 'impasse' in development theory (Schuurman, 1993) was such a time, and this final section argues that 'neoliberal' development was then constructed as the threatening Other. Rather than being interpreted as an alternative approach to development it was given the characteristics described in the previous section and thus portrayed as entirely 'other' to true development.

#### **1. The threatening Other is social change motivated by selfishness and materialism**

Neoliberalism, according to Peet and Hartwick (2009: 99), is based on little more than an assumption about people as “rational, freedom-loving, and self-interested” beings who have no moral relationships, nor a sense of trust, fairness, or responsibility. Harrison has said that it sees *homo economicus*, the selfish utility maximiser of economic theory, as the “ordinary state of the human being”; that it sees people as individualised, utilitarian, and egoistic, and that society is constituted by this “classic image of the self created by European liberal political economy.” (2010: 3, 22) For Rist (1997[2008]: 248). Neoliberalism “places on stage egoistical, atomised individuals devoid of social and moral obligations, who are interested only in the exchange of goods and not at all in their fellow-beings.” Neoliberals rest their hopes for development solely on market exchange; “the only form of exchange that excludes all sociability as a matter of principle.” (Rist, 1997[2008]: 249) It is, say Peet and Hartwick (2009), a vision of unplanned development through the “selfish choices” of these maximising individuals, harmonised by the market. Neoliberalism's glorification of selfishness “now fuel[s] the common sense of the age and shape[s] a certain way of seeing and behaving in the world.” (Rist, 1997[2008]: 246; cf Mintzberg et al, 2002), and has led to a generation of adults that is “all too inclined to focus on their own problems” (UNESCO 1996).

#### **2. The threatening Other is a Darwinist social change in which the strong thrive**

Neoliberalism, according to Harrison (2010: 17), is “based on an economistic core belief in the free market and (near) perfect competition” through which global poverty and inequality are perpetuated (Cammack, 2002: 160) When they speak of the 'free individual,' neoliberals do not mean the workers, or women, or the poor but “the entrepreneur, the capitalist, the boss. And they mean, by freedom, the opportunity to make money... .These theorists are against the state because it may limit the freedom of the rich to make more money, and it might redistribute existing wealth. These theorists disguise their support for rich people to become even richer, using the lofty terms of 'freedom' and 'democracy'.” (Peet and Hartwick, 2009: 100) The law of competition is, according to Rist (1997[2008]: 251), “invoked only to push down wages.” For Leys (1996: v), neoliberalism is an approach to development that “assigns all initiative to the market,” that sets capital free to seek profit on whatever terms it can impose, and that subordinates everything to global market forces. It elevates the “competitive selfishness” of the few to “a higher order of the common interest.” (Peet and Hartwick, 2009: 99) Moreover, “the 'common interest' defined in this selfish way becomes an alienated social force, controlling individuals rather than being controlled by them, so that they are compelled by ruthless competition to do things they know to be socially and environmentally destructive.” (2009: 99-100) Markets are “irrational and dictatorial” whereas, by way of contrast, “the democratic state can signal a higher order of rationality by deliberately increasing prices by adding sales taxes” (2009: 100).

### **3. The threatening Other is social change modelled on the Western experience**

Neoliberalism is “an attempt to impose Western models of society on the diversity of forms throughout the rest of the world.” It seeks “not to make a model that is more adequate to the real world, but to make the real world more adequate to its model.” (Clarke, 2005: 58) The neoliberal Washington Consensus is a set of policies that the IFIs have “compelled” developing states to adopt, a new imperialism which projects a vision of the political good from the West to the rest of the world. It is social change pursued not by developing states themselves but through “the interventions of Western states and IGOs in African development policy making.” (Harrison, 2010: 47, 18) Neoliberal interventions aim “to destabilise existing habits ... and to produce notions of conduct based on efficiency, transparency and utility.” (Harrison, 2010: 75) Ultimately, according to Cammack (2002: 159), neoliberalism “virtually abolishes the idea of development as a specific concern, in favour of a universal set of prescriptions applied to developing and developed countries alike.”

### **4. The threatening Other is a conservative social change, cynical of attempts to help the poor**

Neoliberalism “demobilised” development by dismissing its political and social ideals in favour of

economic ones, “subordinating everything to the arbitration of 'global market forces.'” It denies that people and societies can have any positive influence on the development process, assigning instead “all initiative to 'the market' (i.e. to capital).” (Leys, 1996: vi) It advocates a ‘nightwatchman’ state unconcerned with welfare policies and income redistribution. Consequently, neoliberalism “reinvented [development], not as a form of resistance to the logic of capitalism, but as a programme for surrendering to it.” (Cammack, 2002). As Leys (1996: vi) concludes, a return to a world of development will require a rejection of neoliberal principles: “If development theory is to be useful and interesting again it must focus carefully on these decisions [to set capital free etc.] and consider ways and means to re-create a world in which it is once again possible to pursue social goals through the collective efforts of the societies and communities to which people belong.”

In that final citation from Leys the political function of the ‘othering’ critique of neoliberalism becomes evident. The critique, rather than being the observations of a neutral academic bravely undermining the hegemonies produced by Western capitalist society, is in fact vital to the reproduction of the identity of development theory as altruistic, sympathetic, and pro-poor: in constructing neoliberalism as a threatening Other, as an approach that would set the beast of competition free to run its wayward course, the beleaguered field of development theory once again rediscovered its purpose and reaffirmed its right to existence. However, this view of neoliberal development as ideological and fundamentalist has little if any correspondence with reality. The Washington Consensus (Williamson, 1990) and the Berg Report (World Bank, 1981), two key documents of the neoliberal development model, were both concerned with particular areas of the world considered within their particular historical contexts: Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa respectively. In neither is there any claim to the universal applicability or timeless validity of the reforms advocated, nor do they purport to offer anything beyond broad recommendations which must be adapted to the particular conditions in which they are eventually applied (World Bank, 1981: v). Far from a set of policies to impose upon the Third World, the Washington Consensus was not even a list of policy prescriptions (Williamson, 2004b): it was a snapshot of policies that the IFIs and the US government generally regarded as desirable for Latin American countries at the time. It was not an unchanging, rigid ideology to be imposed upon all but a shifting consensus that evolved with changes, successes, crises, and opportunities and with new approaches and concerns. Nor was either in any way seen as an exhaustive development agenda. The Berg Report deferred to the Organisation for African Unity’s Lagos Plan of Action (1978) on the vision for development – it accepted the long-term political-economic objectives set out in the Plan – and on key policy areas such as science and technology (World Bank, 1981: v), and Williamson's Washington Consensus list did not include (as the name ought to imply) policies that did not command a consensus in Washington.

The size of government was one such policy area. Both Africa and Latin America were at this time suffering the effects of decades of state planning, and thus the critique of the state-centric modernisation approach was relevant in both cases. The 'nightwatchman' state, however, is nowhere to be found. Indeed, the proper size of government is not even hinted at: Williamson (2004a) later made clear that there was no consensus whatever on this point. Nor did he think there ever would or should be. Although fiscal discipline was recommended, this was to be achieved by cutting non-merit subsidies and raising tax receipts. This would allow for greater expenditure on pro-growth and pro-poor areas, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Similarly in the case of deregulation: there was a consensus on the need to ease barriers to entry and exit, but no mention of abolishing regulations in areas such as safety, the environment, and pricing in non-competitive industries (such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure). Thus while the role of government would recede, it is clear from the Washington Consensus list that fiscal discipline – which is not the same as balanced budgets – was not to be achieved (solely) by cutting expenditures. Government expenditure was to be re-purposed from unproductive and distorting subsidises toward productive investment and pro-poor programmes. On this, IFI policy followed squarely in the footsteps of the Lagos Plan, which acknowledged that excessive subsidisation had significantly distorted African economies to the particular detriment of the agricultural sector.

Nor was government to step out of the development process. The recommendation from neoliberal development was not no planning, but an alternative form of planning which would supplement rather than supplant the market. According to Deepak Lal, a prominent critic of the modernisation approach, “neo-classical economics ... has provided the justification for rational *dirigisme*, by showing that there are methods of 'planning' through the price mechanism which may be both feasible and desirable.” (Lal, 1983[1997]: 175; cf. Lal, 1980; World Bank, 1981: ch. 4). This is little different from Peet and Hartwick's call, cited above, for the state to “signal a higher order of rationality by deliberately increasing prices by adding sales taxes” (2009: 100). Nevertheless, perhaps knowing how their approach would be interpreted, both Lal and the World Bank took care to explicitly distance themselves from *laissez-faire*:

“Nor ... am I arguing for *laissez-faire*. That doctrine ... has been under attack by orthodox economics since John Stuart Mill.” (Lal, 1983[1997]: 40)

“The report suggests that African governments should not only examine ways in which the public sector organizations can be operated more efficiently, but should also examine the possibility of placing greater reliance on the private sector. The report emphasises that this is not a recommendation which derives from any preconceived philosophy of ownership. It derives from considerations of

efficiency [in the achievement of government's] social and development goals.” (World Bank, 1981: v)

Clearly their protestations were in vain. Yet it is revealing that in all the anti-neoliberal passages cited above direct quotations from neoliberal texts are sparse. Occasionally a word such as 'self-interest' is taken out of context to back up the analysis, but ultimately critics tend to take a caricature of a set of policies that a particular group of people at a particular point in time thought desirable for a particular part of the world, and speak of it as if it is the 'true' neoliberal development model, universal and eternal. Neoliberal development *is* market fundamentalism, *homo economicus* unleashed, surrender to the whims of capital. Supposed neo-liberals are interpreted according to this pre-existing notion of what neoliberalism is. For example, when Peet and Hartwick (2009) cover the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises they pick out some choice sentences on egoism and self-interest but did not, in a discussion of his economic thought, feel the need to consult his economic treatise, *Human Action*, where they would have found something quite different to the mainstream positivist economics they associate him with. They already know what he, as a 'neoliberal,' is thinking.

Similarly, changes in IFI policy – such as 'adjustment with a human face', good governance, participation, and the increased emphasis on pro-poor growth in the early 1990s – are interpreted as little more than masks hiding the true nature of neoliberal development. At best they have created an 'augmented' Washington Consensus, but only to make implementation of the original list more palatable and efficient. Writes Cammack (2002: 157): “The World Bank and its allies [have established] a new neoliberal orthodoxy that is faithful to the discipline required for capitalist accumulation on a global scale, and [have created] a legitimising ideology that obscures the presence of those disciplines at its core.” This ideology “disguises [neoliberalism's] logic, and promotes it as a solution for the very conditions – poverty and inequality on a global scale – that it itself produces. ... The effect is to present a set of policies infused with the disciplines and class logic of capitalism as if they were of universal benefit.” (Cammack, 160, 178) No attempt is made to demonstrate that this model is or has ever been advocated or pursued by the IFIs, much less that it is or has ever been a consensus position there. This image of neoliberalism is a foundational assumption of the analysis rather than the analysis itself and therefore does not appear to require the same standard of evidence.

The point here is not to defend neoliberalism. Yet at the same time it is important that policy options such as (partial) privatisation, (cautious) deregulation, free(er) trade and so on are not discredited simply by association with the distorted and 'othered' image of that approach. Williamson (2004a) reminds us that “[o]ne does not have to be some sort of market fundamentalist who believes that less

government is better government and that externalities can safely be disregarded in order to recognise the benefits of using market forces to coordinate activity and motivate effort.” It is surely not conducive to healthy debate for one who advocates deregulation or free trade to be portrayed as one who cares only for the well-being of the employer over the employee (Peet and Hartwich, 2009: 100), or as a fundamentalist whose sole aim is to 'set capital free' to seek profits at any cost (Leys, 1996: vi). As it is, calling someone a neoliberal is essentially to accuse them of engaging in a sinister conspiracy against the Third World, the poor, minorities, and so forth. The term has become an academic swearword, almost entirely disconnected from anything advocated by the institutions with which it is associated – the World Bank and the IMF. The 'othering' critique has done its work: neoliberalism is no longer an alternative approach to development: it isn't development at all. It is not something to be engaged with; it is something to be resisted. It has become a threat from which we need protection – and development studies once again casts itself in the role of protector.

## **Conclusion**

The present paper has argued that the Self of development has been constructed in opposition to a threatening Other. This self-other distinction is not between developed and underdeveloped but between the altruistic and just society development will lead us to and the self-seeking and Darwinian social change that is presented as its only alternative. The paper went on to argue that the image of the threatening Other has, since the impasse, been transposed onto neoliberal development. Neoliberalism has been portrayed not as an alternative to existing development approaches, but as an ideology that 'abolishes' or 'demobilises' development. As we move into the post-2015 development era, this critique of the neoliberal approach is taken for granted. Writes Nederveen Pieterse (2012): “Now the long drawn out critiques of Western economic, institutional, ideological and cultural hegemonies are gradually becoming superfluous. The major target of criticism of the previous period has become a background issue, still pertinent, but on the backburner. With American capitalism unravelling, who needs critiquing American ideologies?” As this paper has tried to show, however, the critique is not neutral: it forms an important part of the identity of the field of development studies, constructing an 'Other' to its 'Self.' Like all 'othering' critiques, the critique of neoliberalism serves to push it out of acceptable discourse. The judgement that excluding alternatives in this manner is normatively bad should not be suspended simply because one finds the neoliberal approach distasteful. Rather, we must not lose sight of the fact that “[a]ll participants share the same aim of eliminating poverty and raising living standards. None has a monopoly of morality.” (Wassel, in Lal, 1983[1997]: 14)

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