Power after Lukes:
An overview of theories of power since Lukes and their application to development

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Introduction

This briefing note looks at recent theories of power within social theory and how they have been or can be applied to assessing power within development. I attempt to give a very basic introduction to key concepts and ideas, with particular attention to themes such as agency, structure, false consciousness and resistance, as well as possibilities for application. This paper is divided into three main sections: the first looks at major theorists of power, beginning with Foucault and extending to Laclau and Mouffe, Hardt and Negri, Giddens, Bourdieu, actor-network theorists, De Certeau and Scott. The second section is a general note about how power is conceived of and employed within development, and includes suggestions about how this can be improved. The final section looks at and evaluates case studies that employ specific frameworks for analysing power. Included with this document is an annotated bibliography with suggestions for further reading.

Strands of power in social theory

Foucault

Michel Foucault is, in my view, *the* most influential theorist of power of the late 20th century, spawning a whole new genre of analysis as well as nearly endless reviews, summaries and critiques. His work marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them.

A note of caution: Foucault is probably the most frequently misunderstood or misapplied theorist of our times, so I would recommend reading at least one text by him and one about him before citing or using his ideas. There are too many token references to his work that fail to fully engage with it or to understand its implications. This can be partially explained by the fact that Foucault has a reputation for being difficult, dense or obscure. While I don't fully agree with this (e.g. *Discipline and Punish* is almost gripping enough to take on holiday), the difficulty with reading Foucault is that his theory and methods tend to be implicit within his work on other subjects (disclipline, sexuality, madness), rather than presented formally and logically in the style of English classical sociology (including Giddens). Where Foucault does explain his work directly (e.g. in 'The Order of Discourse'), he tends towards hyperbole and abstraction of near poetic intensity.

Key ideas and keywords

First off, it is important to understand Foucault's **view of agency and subjecthood**. Unlike previous versions of power, for Foucault power is neither wielded by individuals nor by classes nor institutions – in fact, power is not 'wielded' at all. Instead, it is seen as dispersed and subject-less, as elements of broad 'strategies' but without individual authors. Rather than wielding power, subjects are discursively constituted through power; their actions may contribute to the operation of power

Secondly, power is ubiquitous, and appears in every moment of social relations – hence, the operations of power are not departures from the norm, but rather is constantly present:

> **Power is everywhere**: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. … Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society. (Foucault *History of Sexuality* p.93)

Third, power is not necessarily repressive, prohibitive, negative or exclusionary (although it can be all of these things): it is also **positive**:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (*Discipline and Punish* p. 194)

Bio-power refers to the type of power dispersed throughout society that is productive in this fashion. It operates through techniques of disciplining, ordering, ranking, making visible, and subjecting to knowledge. In *Discipline and Punish*, this disciplinary form of power is contrasted to the **sovereign power** of previous eras, whereby the power of the state and monarch was inscribed through torture or execution onto the bodies of those that dared resist.

Power, in Foucault's view, is inseparable from knowledge, hence another Foucauldian catchphrase: **power/knowledge** (or, occasionally, knowledge/power):

> No body of knowledge can be formed without a system of communications, records, accumulation and displacement which is in itself a form of power and which is linked, in its existence and functioning, to the other forms of power. Conversely, no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge. On this level, there is not knowledge on one side and society on the other, or science and the state, but only the fundamental forms of knowledge/power. (Foucault, quoted in Sheridan 1980: 283)

Discourse is also essential to the operation of power, as it is the vehicle through which knowledge and subjects are constituted. But it is also essential to **resistance**:

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it… We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart. (History of Sexuality p.100-1)

Just as discourses are diffused throughout society and power is everywhere, so too can resistance be encountered at every point, in attempts to evade, subvert or contest strategies of power.

Another key word you might encounter is ***dispositif***. This term basically refers to the disparate collection of institutions, discourses, etc. that serve an overall strategic function (e.g. normalisation) although the individual elements may seem contradictory.

It is also important to understand that **power is not intentional** – individual intentions have little bearing on this theory of power. Indeed, although institutions/individuals may fail in terms of their own stated intentions, they may still be part of a wider, successful strategy.

Foucault gives prisons as the example here – they fail to prevent crime, but are useful for creating delinquency (a more malleable and less threatening form of crime). James Ferguson's study of Lesotho takes a similar analysis: although development fails to alleviate poverty, it is successful in other respects, such as depoliticising interventions and extending the reach of the technocratic state.

Finally, **genealogy** is a term used to describe Foucault's method, which uses radical disjunctures of the past to destabilise the certainties of the present, rather than look for the 'truth' of histories.

In this interpretation of power, the diffuse nature of power effectively transcends the bi-polar power/powerlessness division. I see this positively: power does not only affect the powerless, but should be seen as a broader concept.

The split between structure and agency is also effaced: both structures and agents are constituted by and through power. While I can see the benefit of understanding how agents' epistemes, discourses and even bodies are shaped through power, this agent-less conception leads to difficulties in the practical application of this theory in assessing power. In situations of clear oppression or domination, an easier way of assessing 'power over' would be more useful than deconstructing notions of agency.

The question of 'false consciousness' also does not play a major role: all consciousness is effectively 'false' insofar as it is structured by power; but notions of 'truth' or 'true consciousness' are also effects of power. However, as discussed below, the bi-power that produces agents and identities can be connected to ideas of hegemony and domination.

There have been a number of attempts to apply this view of power to development: the whole sub-genre of 'post-development' or 'development discourse' critiques draw directly or indirectly on Foucault. I summarise these in the third section

Post-Marx; Post-Foucault: reuniting micro-power and hegemony

Foucault's contributions to theorizing power was initially dismissed by the Marxists, but new 'post-Marxist' approaches pick up on his ideas of 'bio-power' and 'power/knowledge' and integrate them into a neo-Gramscian framework of 'hegemony'.

Laclau and Mouffe

Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe see themselves as 'post-Marxist' in the sense of both drawing upon and going beyond Marx's work. One main departure is that they move away from viewing politics and domination as class struggle, but is instead a struggle that includes the creation of social and class identities: 'Politics, we argue, does not consist in simply registering already existing interests, but plays a crucial role in shaping political subjects' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: xvii). Gledhill explains:

> Laclau's main argument is … that social identities are always discursive constructions in Foucault's sense: social subjects and their practices are constructed through discourses, on ethnicity, gender and, indeed, politics. In Laclau's view, 'hegemony' rests on those constructions. (2000: 191)

Hegemony, in this view, is no longer an exclusive hegemony of class, but can also operate through constructions of gender, ethnicity and other aspects of identity.

However, with this hegemony comes the possibility for resistance and for building counter-hegemonies. In Laclau and Mouffe's analysis, 'even the most "totalising" hegemonic discourses provoke microstrategies of resistance' (ibid). Against the authoritarianism, bureaucratisation and commoditisation of social life brought about by post-industrial capitalism are a disparate set of small demands linked to specific social problems that, collectively, constitute a movement for a more open and democratic society. Even though hegemony is extensive to the point of constituting social identity, it is always contested. Laclau and Mouffe conclude: 'Our motto is: "back to the hegemonic struggle"'.

Laclau and Mouffe's main work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (second edition: 2001) is not an easy book to read. Their work, could, however, have some application to development, especially in theorising new social movements and community action.

While Laclau and Mouffe integrate Foucauldian insights into an overall Marxist/Gramscian framework, their work has been criticised for departing too far from theories of class. Artz (1997), for example, argues that their theories cannot be applied to the Nicaraguan revolution, which occurred on the basis of class (not discursive) mobilisation. I don't see these critiques as being particularly convincing, especially as Artz relies on sarcasm and deliberate misreading in order to emphasise his points.

Hardt and Negri

With the publication of *Empire*, Hardt and Negri show that the reported death of grand theory has been greatly exaggerated. In this expansive, weighty book Hardt and Negri explore the idea of sovereignty in the era of globalisation. They argue that sovereignty has become supranational and no longer based within nation-states. Instead, a new global 'Empire' has emerged, based around international institutions, treaties, capital flows, military interventions, media, and even NGOs (as 'the charitable campaigns and mendicant orders of Empire'). They employ Foucault's notion of 'bio-power' to conceive of Empire as a 'diffuse, anonymous network' of power that produces as well as constrains, and is vulnerable at every point to resistance by what they term 'the global multitude'.

Empire is lengthy and hard going (definitely not for the theory-weary), but Balakrishnan's article in *New Left Review* provides a sufficient introduction.

Oublier Foucault? Agency theories of power

'Post-structuralism is not easily amenable to concerns that center on a strongly articulated "agency" perspective' (Clegg 1989: xvi). Recent theories that see actors as autonomous agents capable of wielding or being dominated by power have tended to 'forget' or gloss over Foucault, and are instead closer inheritors of the tradition of Dahl, Lukes, et al. Key theorists focusing on agency include Anthony Giddens, who dismisses Foucault entirely, and Pierre Bourdieu, who employs a somewhat similar approach. A third strand of theory concentrating on agency can be broadly described as 'actor-network theory', and succeeds in

incorporating a Foucauldian 'microsociology' approach with a concern for actors and relationships between them.

Giddens and structuration theory

Anthony Giddens's structuration theory, outlined in (among other works) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (1984) is an attempt to integrate structural analyses (in the Marxist tradition) and more agency-centred traditions of sociology (e.g. ethnomethodology, Goffman, Garfinkel). He introduces the notion of 'the duality of structure' to indicate that 'structures, as rules and resources, are both the precondition and the unintended outcome of people's agency' (Baert 1998: 104). People are free to act, but draw upon and replicate structures of power through their own actions.

Giddens views power 'both as transformative capacity (the characteristic view held by those treating power in terms of the conduct of agents), and as domination (the main focus of those concentrating upon power as a structural quality)' (*Central Problems of Social Theory:* 91) Transformative capacity refers to the power of an individual to 'intervene causally in a series of events' (Baert 1998: 101); in this sense all action depends on exercising power:

> Action depends on the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference', that is, to exercise some sort of power. (Giddens 1984: 14).

Yet the social rules by which people act and the resources that actors draw upon to exercise power are not equal or evenly distributed, and thus enabled deeper systems of domination. The notion of 'resources' is used in a very specific fashion here:

> Resources (focused via signification and legitimation) are structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction. … Resources are media through which power is exercised, as a routine element of the instantiation of conduct in social reproduction (ibid: 15-6)

Giddens's 'agency' approach also implies the possibility of resistance, as power appears through action instead of inevitable historical relations. Giddens refers to this as 'the "dialectic of control" in social systems':

> We should not conceive of the structures of domination built into social institutions as in some way grinding out 'docile bodies' who behave like automata suggested by objectivist social science. Power within social systems … presumes regularized relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities in contexts of social interation. But all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors. (ibid: 16)

Part of this theory derives from a critique of Lukes and the rejection of the idea that power and interests are linked:

> People are not always inclined to act in accordance with their own interests. … The concept of interest … has nothing logically to do with that of power; although substantively, in the actual enactment of social life, the phenomena to which they refer have a great deal to do with one another. (1979: 90)

However, following Lukes, Giddens advocates 'attempting to overcome the traditional division between 'voluntaristic' and 'structural' notions of power' (ibid: 91). This can only be

achieved, Giddens argues, through his notion of 'the duality of structure': 'if the resouces which the existence of domination implies and the exercise of power draws upon, are seen to be at the same tune structural components of social systems' (ibid).

Although I have not found very many articles specifically employing structuration theory in development, there are a number of positive aspects to applying this approach to development:

- The definitions of power as 'capability' or 'transformative capacity' fit in well with Amartya Sen's capability approach to development
- Giddens argues that people have 'tacit' or 'practical' knowledge about rules; this recognises the implicit knowledge people already have about power and social realities
- The 'reflexive approach' means that in 'discursively formulating' analyses of rules/power/structures/institutions one can change them
- The framework is broad enough to look both at local, particular forms of power and broader societal structures
- Giddens attempts to integrate a concern for agency with a recognition of deeper structures of power

However, there are also a number of problems with using Giddens:

- Giddens is the major social theorist of the discredited 'third way' of Clinton, Blair and (in Brazil) Cardoso. If structuration theory can be incorporated in such a project aimed at preserving power and structures of domination rather than challenging them, then it may not be radical enough.
- Giddens fails to engage effectively with the challenge to such theories of power laid down by Foucault, and although he recognises that power can be positive, he offers no theoretical framework for looking at diffuse, productive, agent-less power nor at the power of discourse. Boyne (1991) points to the 'systematic misreprestation of contemporary French theory in the work of Anthony Giddens'.
- Related to this, power still seems to be 'overascribed' to agents, and the structure-agency divide is not transcended as effectively as Giddens suggests.

Bourdieu and capital

Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' predates Giddens' structuration theory, but there are a number of similarities, including conceptions of agency and structure and concern for reflexivity. However, Bourdieu has criticised Giddens as being 'scholastic' in his approach and removed from critical and grounded sociology.

Bourdieu has produced a large body of work that would be impossible to compress. I will try to outline here a few of the key concepts in relation to power.

The first of these is the notion of the **habitus**, which refers to the set of dispositions and meanings that people gain through socialisation. Bourdieu variously defines it as 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed towards acting as structuring structres' and 'the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations'. Gledhill explains by way of analogy:

Social agents are imbued with dispositions to think and act in certain ways by the action of historical social forces. They are like musicians whose improvisation are neither predictable in advance, a product of conscious intent, nor simply a realisation of a structure which already exists in the unconscious. …

According to this theory, systems of domination will be reproduced over time because the way the actors understand their world, the cognitive and meaning structures of the habitus, has been shaped by the relations of domination which produce those 'structured structures'. The collective practices produced by the habitus in turn reproduce the historical conditions which shaped those cognitive and meaning structures in the first place. (p.139)

Somewhat related to the notion of the habitus is the notion of the *doxa*, which refers to the combined field of both orthodox and heterodox discourses. The doxa is what both sets of discourses share, 'the taken-for-granted domain of social thought on which orthodox and heterodox discourses are equally silent' (ibid). Doxa, in the form of unchallenged, taken-for-granted assumptions, is a source and a manifestation of power.

Bourdieu introduces the concept of the **field** to denote the social arena in which power struggles and conflict take place, in which specific kinds of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic, etc) are at stake and certain forms of habitus or dispositions are fitted for success. This helps us to understand how certain actors can be powerful in some 'fields' but much less so in others, even though capital can sometimes translate between fields.

In the field of art and culture, **cultural capital** provides the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy, as classes distinguish themselves through taste. Similar forms of 'capital' operate in other fields.

Bourdieu defines **symbolic power** as

The ability to conserve or transform social reality by shaping its representations, i.e., by inculcating cognitive instruments of construction of reality that hide or highlight its inherent arbitrariness. (Wacquant 2002: 553-4).

This is closely related to Bourdieu's theory of '**symbolic violence**'.

Gledhill writes that 'symbolic power is based upon 'social taxonomies' which subaltern groups 'misrecognise' as legitimate by failing to see them as arbitrary constructions serving dominant class interests' (p.144). This '**misrecognition**' is roughly equivalent, in many ways, to what was known at one point as 'false consciousness'.

The success of this theory is that it effectively incorporates notions of both structure and agency, yet continues to be critical and challenging. In his own work, Bourdieu concentrated on analyses of the media and academia, however, so it would be difficult to apply these insights directly to the development 'field'.

Actor-network theory

A third perspective on agency takes a micro-sociological perspective on actors, structures and discourses. 'Actor-network theory' describes the body of work that addresses the

connections and networks in social interaction, including attention to how interpretations and meanings arise during and through action. Murdoch and Marsden (1995: 371-2) give a comprehensible summary of structure and power within actor-network theory, so I will quote at length:

> The problem is to understand how structures are continually (re)producded through the process of interaction. Similarly, power must also be seen as an outcome of situated social processes. We must, therefore, look carefully at the processes that give rise to power as an *effect*.

They cite 'Latour's paradox':

> When you simply *have* power – in potentia – nothing happens and you are powerless; when you exert power – in actu – others are performing the action and not you. (Latour 1986)

> The difference between power in potentia and power in actu is quite simple; it is the power of others. Power is a 'composition' made by many people but attributed to one of them. The amount of power exercised is not related to how much someone 'has' but to the numbers of actors involved in its composition. So power is an outcome of collective action. Therefore, to 'explain' power (and trace power geometry) we need to examine how collective action comes about, or how actors come to be associated, and how they work in unison. And to understand what binds actors together, again, we cannot privilege the structural. If we adopt a micro-sociological perspective, then the structural (or the 'social')
>> Is not what holds us together, it is what is held together. Social scientists have mistaken the effect for the cause, the passive for the active, what is glued for the glue. (Latour 1986: 276)

> Within this perspective the analysis of power becomes the study of associations.

> Society, structure and power are outcomes as actors are associated. Those who are powerful are not those who 'hold' power but those who are able to enrol, convince and enlist others into associations on terms which allow these initial actors to 'represent' all the others:
>> They speak for the others that have been deprived of a voice, that have been transformed from objects that spoke for themselves into mere shadows of their former selves. (Law and Whittaker 1988: 179)

> If power 'lies' anywhere it is in the resources used to strengthen the bonds … and we need to analyse how these resources are defined and linked and how actors impose definitions and linkages upon others. To be successful, an actor must 'colonise' the worlds of others. Thus actor worlds (or situations) are not independent but are tied together in associations which may result in the domination of some by others.

Murdoch and Marsden go on to address questions of scale and how locally situated actors can be drawn into associations imposed from a national or global level, and how 'other local actors seek to draw distant actors into locally constituted sets of relations' (373). They also give a useful definition of 'locality':

Localities should be seen as constituted by various networks operating at different scales … Through use of political, economic and cultural resources, the local is differentially constructed and represented within these networks' (368).

Upon reading this article, I was excited to have finally found an entirely new and critical version of power that recognises both actors and discourses and the differential scale on which power operates. There were also two case studies in which the beginnings of a methodology can be found: Murdoch and Marsden look at mineral extraction in Buckinghamshire and how it came to be constructed as a national issue; while Davies looks at power in environmental partnerships in Huntingdonshire. I was disappointed, then, to come across the book *Actor-Network Theory and After*, in which the major figures in actor-network theory recant, and seek their distance from the theory. Bruno Latour goes as far as saying 'there are four things that do not work with actor-network theory: the word actor, the word network, the word theory, and the hyphen!'. The main issue seems to be that actor-network theory began as an approach to avoid totalising theories of power and structure, but as it has become 'fixed' as a theory (and even ascribed an acronym – ANT) it has itself become in some way 'totalising' as a method. It may be possible, then, to salvage certain elements of the theory without falling into the trap of totalisation.

Perspectives on resistance

The two theorists addressed here are not theorists of power as much as of resistance: their conception of power seems to arise out of their work on how resistance to that power is possible.

De Certeau

Michel de Certeau can be read as an important corrective to Foucault. While Foucault states that resistance meets power at every point, he does not often go into detail. This is what de Certeau sets out to do:

> If it is true that the grid of 'discipline' is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also 'miniscule' and quotidian) manupulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only to evade them, and finally, what 'ways of operating' form the counterpart, on the consumer's (or dominee's) side, of the mute processes that organise the establishment of socio-economic order. (*The Practice of Everyday Life*: xiv)

De Certeau draws a distinction between strategies and tactics. Strategies are those forces of power that seek to make 'proper', to discipline, to organise, or to make rational. Tactics are modes of resistance to strategies, and methods to evade them. Among the tactics discussed is '*la perruque*', which can generally be described as time-wasting. Other elements of everyday life that resist strategies include walking in the city and shopping: in both, you find yourself in places conscribed through the grid of streets or shopping aisles (both created through strategies of rationality), but still create your own 'trajectories' that prevent these strategies from determining your course or behaviour. Hence, 'the weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them' (ibid: xix)

Scott

James Scott's most recent work, *Seeing Like A State*, has some similarities with this. He looks at what Foucault calls 'governmentality', or 'governmental rationality' – the strategies used by states to make places and people visible and rational, therefore governable. However, in the examples he gives he looks at how everywhere that this rationality is deployed it is also resisted, transformed or reclaimed. One such example is Brasilia, where the modernist city planners attempted to create new, efficient forms of living, but the rationality of their plans was inverted and transformed by the way people actually live and conduct themselves. Power here seems to be two-fold – that of governmental strategies, including rationality and making visible, and that of the weak, which includes tactics of non-compliance and everyday acts of resistance.

The Poverty of Power: Traps not to fall into

In searching for case studies of power in development, it has become clear that although there are a great number of books and articles that purport to be about power, very few of them use the concept in a critical or enlightening fashion. I could find very few works that both explicitly stated an approach to power and gave a case study showing how the approach can be applied. I could find even fewer 'toolkits' for assessing power in development. Instead, most works fell into one of the following 'traps':

Most commonly, power is often assumed, rather than defined or addressed or used in a coherent manner. Often, the word 'power' appears in the title but nowhere in the text, leading the reader to guess about what power relationships are being alluded to. The assumed version tends to imply blame or agency, but again without making this explicit. One is left with questions: what form of power exists? What are its effects? How does it operate? Who, if anyone, possesses it? Can it be challenged, changed or resisted?

Where power is addressed in methodological terms, token references are made to theorists of power (especially Foucault) often entirely misunderstanding the theories that are being used. For example, while Cheater's book *The Anthropology of Power* includes a long section discussing power, Cheater calls for a 'post-Foucauldian approach' that would incorporate the idea of resistance, even though resistance was key to Foucault's theory.

Another version of this is to theorise power through cherry-picking from different (and often incompatible) versions of power. White (1999), for example, lifts the methodology and pluralist conception of power from Dahl, but then quotes Foucault to say that resistance is always possible.

Finally, 'case studies' are often used to prove or disprove theories of power, but the case studies often consist of broad categorisations instead of detailed analysis. Artz (1997) attempts to refute Laclau and Mouffe through rough mentions of the Nicaraguan Revolution; while in an otherwise convincing article, Brigg (2002) invokes 'the World Bank' as a 'case study' of Foucault's *dispositif*.

The way to avoid these traps seems relatively simple: when writing about power, think about what is meant by power and how, specifically, it applies to the case study in question.

The Power of Poverty: Current approaches to power within development

While, as mentioned above, approaches to power are rarely explicitly mapped out, there is a growing body of work that addresses issues of power within development. In the past ten years, there has been an explosion of works on the power of discourse in development; but works addressing the non-discursive power of individual actors in development situations are also common. This section will review some of these approaches, including the (few) practical tools for analysing power that I have come across.

Post-development and discourse approaches

The most significant area for case studies on power in development is what can be broadly termed 'development discourse critique' or 'post-development theory'. These works, which largely draw upon Foucault, tend to conceive of power in development as discursive. The following is a condensed summary of the literature, adapted from my dissertation:

Although the subjects for critique vary, the literature falls into three general strands. The first (following *Orientalism*) criticises representation of the poor:

> The North is constituted vis-à-vis the South as modern, efficient, competent. The South is constituted as its lack, its other. The incapacity to exercise agency in the same manner as the Western 'self' is repeatedly inscribed in the identity of the non-Western 'other'. The civilisation of the other requires intervention. (Doty 1996: 162)

Representations of people in the South as underdeveloped, traditional, poor and vulnerable sustain 'the reality that feeds such an image' (Parpart 1995: 262); static categorisations that are both 'overdeterminate and underdescriptive' (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996: 7) turn 'the poor' into an 'abnormality to be treated' and assign the cause of the 'problem' to factors internal to the poor (Escobar 1991: 667); while presentation of people in the South as homogenous 'ultimately robs them of their historical and political *agency*' (Mohanty 1991: 72).

The second strand proceeds by way of analogy. Just as Foucault (1977, 1980, 1981) documented how the mad, sick, criminal and sexually deviant became subjects of an expert body of knowledge and thus subjected to normalising techniques, development amasses expert knowledge about the poor, simultaneously organising and normalising them. Development knowledge and techniques become incorporated into a logic of 'governmentality' that make populations 'legible' and therefore governable (Scott 1998: 2). Escobar, Doty, Abrahamsen and Sachs are major contributors to this strand.

The third strand of critique claims that development operates through translating essentially political situations into technical problems to be solved. Ferguson's (1994) seminal work explores how the 'development machine' in Lesotho depoliticises and hides its own power while justifying an unending series of (unsuccessful) 'technical interventions' and furthering a particular form of state power.

There are several problems with these critiques. Abrahamsen argues, 'almost any analysis of this nature runs the risk of representing discourse as monolithic, unchanging and

unchallenged, of constructing consensus where diversity, discord and flexibility exist' (2000: x). Others criticise the way that this literature can appear moralising (Lehmann 1997: 576), ethnocentric (Grillo 1997: 15), or over-generalised (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996: 4).

The concept of power within these critiques is heavily based on Foucault. However, as Brigg (2002) points out, in conceiving of development as a 'neo-colonisation' or a method for the north to retain power over the south, they often retain notions of agency and domination not present in Foucault's work. Brigg revisits Foucault's notion of *dispositif* to find a context for ascribing power to institutions or individuals without departing too far from Foucault's approach. He writes:

> The World Bank is only able to exercise power within the context of the development dispositif, and only because lines of force flow through it at a high level of density. As Foucault argues, while the pyramidal organisation of relations of power gives a dispositif a 'head', it is the apparatus as a whole that produces 'power'. (2002: 432-3)

Another case study, this time of development in Indonesia, provides an interesting 'corrective' to the development discourse approach: Li argues that such analyses apply in general, but not microsociological contexts:

> My argument is that a Foucauldian understanding of governmentality (the attempt to constitute governable subjects) is an accurate guide to development as a *project* of rule, but that the actual accomplishment of rule owes as much to the understandings and practices worked out in the contingent and compromised space of cultural intimacy as it does to the imposition of development schemes and related forms of disciplinary power. (1995: 295)

This points to the possibility for multiple ways of understanding power to exist simultaneously.

Mapping the 'topographies' and 'global-local networks of power'

Some works on power have concentrated less specifically on 'discourse', but instead see discourse as one of many forms of power that cut across local and global contexts. I have found two works of particular note here: one is the more recent work by James Ferguson and the other an edited volume entitled *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power.*

In the latter book, the contributors call for a reconsideration of the levels and means by which power operates. They suggest a multi-modal approach, without privileging structures, networks, discourses or actors:

> Structures such as states and empires, networks such as commodity chains and transnational human rights mobilising efforts, and discourses such as free labor ideology and human rights doctrines shape each other. Over time … these intersections have consequences which cannot be understood by an analysis that limits itself to one of these dimensions. But these relationships are complex. How do mobilizations create networks and shape discourses that in turn redefine norms, perceptions of commonality and difference, and visions of what is politically possible? How to discourses give cohesion to networks and how do networks

influence institutions that can make and enforce policy? Whose voices influence discourse and are supported by networks? How do networks establish inclusions and exclusions and what sorts of discourses influence these patterns? (Cooper 2001: 23-4)

The book analyses these intersections in a number of different contexts, from oil in the Niger delta to the management of refugee camps. One of its most interesting aspects is in analysing how actors deploy diverse forms of power, and how these link to other contexts:

A "local" actor can make use of particularistic authority and at the same time find resonance between his/her mobilizing ideology and moral discourse that claims to be "universal". And organisations that come to Africa with universalistic ideals in mind will likely find people to whom those ideals are relevant and useful in obtaining support and in associating one cause with a more widely shared one. One need not fall into a dichotomy of global and local, between allegedly universal principles and supposedly particular communities, for the historical record is filled with networking and discursive formations situated in between. The analyst needs to follow these linkages and their limits, and that is not easy. Networks operate in different ways in different places – a subtle understanding of one end of the system (links of an NGO to community activists) does not necessarily help understand what happens at another end (lobbying in Paris). (Cooper 2001: 46)

A chapter by Latham attempts to identify and categorise some of these spaces and linkages, and introduces concepts such as 'transterritorial deployments' (which join 'global and local forces around the exercise of power'); 'convocation', 'transmission', 'deployment' (three types of international encounters); and 'situational power' (power exercised only within bounded spaces, such as refugee camps).

James Ferguson's 'Mapping Transnational Topographies of Power' is somewhat similar in addressing global-local configurations of power. In particular, he challenges spatial representations of national, global and local, arguing that these designations themselves are manifestations of power, and that the power of states is as present on an everyday level as it is 'nationally' (cf. Foucault on micro-power).

Revisiting Faces of Power

While some applications of power such as those described above attempt to integrate recent theories of discourse into methodologies of power analysis, a number of recent studies continue to use older conceptions, including power as 'power over' and decision-making, and power as the ability to set agendas.

White's 'Unstately Power', for example, uses an explicitly Dahlian approach to analyse local causes for national change in China and frames local power as 'A over B'. She also, however, introduces a somewhat unconvincing appropriation of Foucault's concept of resistance into the mix.

A *Development and Change* article by Williams, Veron, Corbridge and Srivastava also looks at the power of local elites in India's Employment Assurance Scheme. The authors argue that power to make decisions, set local agendas and influence the course of events lies more with

specific local elites such as shopkeepers and panchayat members than those with more formal power, such as District Magistrates.

While much work on agenda setting has begun to use the discourse of 'discourse', a recent study by Mawdsley, Townshend, Porter and Oakley on 'Knowledge, Power and Development Agendas' avoids this terminology. The book is based on in-depth interviews, and questions why:

> Despite diverse social, cultural, political and economic settings, we find that NGOs working in very different environments around the world are frequently talking the same language and following similar development agendas. (Mawdsley et al 2002: 3)

While power is not explicitly defined, it appears to refer to the power to shape global/local development agendas. The book posits a global knowledge economy. Power is the power to influence agendas within this, but may not always be deliberate: e.g. many southern NGOs will tell donors what they think they want to hear, rather than putting forward their own agendas.

Political Economy approach

One practical approach to power has been developed by the Humanitarian Policy Group of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) for use in conflict situations. The 'Political Economy Approach' sees power as the ability to command control over resources, and may be especially useful for conceptualising 'powerlessness', as well as power.

> According to a political economy approach, vulnerability should be understood in terms of powerlessness rather than simply material need or the failure of basic 'entitlements'. Power and powerlessness determine the distribution of access to food and other key commodities and assets among and within different groups. Those who lack power cannot safeguard their basic political, economic and social rights, and may not be able to protect themselves from violence. Vulnerability and power are therefore analysed as a political and economic process, in terms, for instance, of neglect, exclusion or exploitation, in which a variety of groups and actors play a part. (Collinson 2003: 10)

This approach could thus fit in well with a 'rights-based approach' to development, as well as an actor-oriented approach to power. It seems to be particularly persuasive because it introduces an economic aspect to power without reducing power to economics:

> Political Economy analysis is therefore essentially concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society. It focuses on the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and other processes that create, transform and sustain these processes over time. When applied to situations of conflict and crisis, political economy analysis seeks to understand both the political and economic aspects on conflict, and how these combine to affect patterns of power and vulnerability. (ibid)

Whereas Amartya Sen famously argued that famines were not caused by a lack of food, but rather a breakdown in economic distribution, Collinson argues that this economic breakdown is more often than not also related to particular economies of power: actors may gain, as well as lose, from conflict and crisis situations. She also calls for a longitudinal perspective:

> A political economy approach should incorporate a wide historical and geographical perspective, explain why the relative power and vulnerability of different groups

change over time, and explain how the fortunes and activities of one group in society affect others. The view that it encourages is thus dynamic, broad, longitudinal and explanatory. (Collinson 2003: 3).

Power Tools

On occasion, I encountered d.i.y. practical 'tools' for mapping out and understanding power in the development context: the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)'s 'Power Tools' are specifically designed for community organisations to map out power configurations in a series of practical exercises.

IIED has developed what it calls 'Power Tools': 'tools for working on policies and institutions' in the context of forestry and land management (www.iied.org/forestry/tools). These tools contain a specifically actor-oriented approach:

> In any one context, various people will have a bearing on policy and institutions. These actors and the power structures involved in decision-making need to be identified. The actors involved in policies and institutions typically play a 'cast of characters'. Familiar characters in any policy/institutional play include: the crafty coordinator, the wise old-timer, the spark/enthusiast, the godparent, the donor, the faithful team worker, the maverick, the political obstacle and the saboteur. Once actors have been identified, the range of influences on them can begin to be unpacked. These influences include:
>
> ❑   Group/organisational factors, such as mandates, rules, norms, functions and institutional culture
>
> ❑   Individual motivation factors, such as ideological predispositions, pursuit of political objectives, position and control of resources, professional expertise and experience, institutional loyalties, enhancing the standing of own agencies, and personal attributes and goals, such as rent seeking

Power in this context is thus also based on 'actors':

> By **power** we mean the ability to make decisions and put them into practice - to be in control. Power is the vital ingredient needed to make policies and institutions work. Of course power in the wrong hands, or badly used, is the reason why some policies and institutions don't work and why others cause increased poverty and inequality. Tools are needed to put power in the right hands – in those best placed to improve the lives of poor people.

The most relevant of the tools listed is 'Stakeholder Power Analysis'. It is a form of addressing who has power and where that power originates:

> *Power* to influence policies or institutions stems from the control of decisions with positive or negative effects. Stakeholder power can be understood as the extent to which stakeholders are able to persuade or coerce others into making decisions, and following certain courses of action. Power may derive from the nature of a stakeholder's organisation, or their position in relation to other stakeholders (for example, line ministries which control budgets and other departments). Other forms of power may be more informal (for example, personal connections to ruling politicians).

Conclusions: towards developing new approaches

As this review of recent theories of power and practical ways of assessing it, power is a complex and varied phenomenon that shifts in form according to perspective. It is, in Lukes's phrase, 'essentially contested'. Such conflicts and the relative difficulty and abstraction of theoretical conceptions of power has no doubt contributed to the dearth of practical tools for analysing power. There remains, however, much scope for such tools to be developed. These tools, I believe, should be multi-modal: they need to acknowledge not only the power of discourses to shape actors and local situations but also the ability of actors to strategically deploy discourses to their own ends or link with other actors around such discourses in complex networks. At times, it should be remembered, discourse is not a necessary concept for analysing power: in looking at institutions and local elites, theories of discourse might apply but may not be needed. Tools for analysing power should also account for the spatial dimensions of power: attention should be paid, I believe, to the connections and differences between 'global-local configurations of power'. Finally, especially where tools for power analysis are used to transform power relations, concepts of resistance are not only applicable; they are necessary.