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Fakulta sociálních studií

Rozvoj a rozvojová pomoc: Historické, teoretické a empirické štúdie

**Habilitačná práca
(súbor uverejnených vedeckých prác doplnený komentárom)**

Brno, 2023

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14.11.2023

Contents

Part A: Commentary.....	2
Part B: Previously published scholarly works.....	16
1. Profant, Tomáš. 2021. “Koloniálny rozvoj: počiatky, príčiny, diskurz, prax, kontinuita a následky”. <i>HISTORICKÁ SOCIOLOGIE</i> 13(1): 25–48.	
2. Profant, Tomáš. 2013. “„Rozvoj“ a moc. Sociologické analýzy moci v „rozvojovej“ spolupráci”. <i>Sociologický časopis</i> 49(1): 291–317.	
3. Profant, Tomáš. 2013. “Debata o postrozvoji a jej vplyv na prax”. <i>Mezinárodní vztahy</i> 48(1): 70–89.	
4. Profant, Tomáš. 2015. “Slovenské mimovládne ‘rozvojové’ organizácie ako politickí aktéri”. <i>Sociológia</i> 47(1): 113–38.	
5. Profant, Tomáš. 2018. “The Social Construction of Slovakia as a Donor and its Power Effects”. <i>Europe-Asia Studies</i> 70(3): 365–87.	

Part A: Commentary

1. Introduction

The question of development preoccupied people long before the term acquired its modern name. Already the Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian cosmologies dealt with the way society moved in time. However, unlike our own concept of development, these cosmologies were cyclical as was the understanding of development in ancient Greece. Still, their cyclical understanding of development contained an idea of progress and also an idea of stages. Homer's *Odyssey* follows the Greek hero Odysseus' visit to Cyclopes who are represented by Homer as living in a clan society without agriculture in other words at a lower development level than the Greeks at the time. Plato created stages that started with a pastoral society, continued with an agricultural society and then a society with individual enterprise to culminate in a society with a government as a basis of civilization.

The Christian philosophy during the Middle Ages was also based on an idea of a cycle, but there was only one cycle that would not repeat itself. After the end of the cycle an eternal bliss follows.

The formation of the current understanding of development began with the discovery of the linear perspective which enabled the idea of a never-ending journey towards and beyond the horizon – the idea of infinity. If that, which lied before the horizon was measurable and knowable, it must have been possible to apply it also on the space and time beyond the horizon. Thereby the infinite world (and space) as an idea has been conquered in both its spatial as well as temporal form. The humanity could now begin a path that would go forever onward and would not know decay.

The never-ending progress became first articulated in the field of knowledge and the possibility for its cumulation. Later on this idea would be applied to the whole society and then to all societies who thus all move on the same path. Some of them are more ahead than others. Eventually, this idea of linear progress was complemented with an idea that those who were behind others would be helped by those who were ahead to move forward on the developmental path. The first developer of this kind was Condorcet.

The presented set of articles represents a complex analysis of development in its various forms. The analyses are historical, theoretical and empirical and together offer a critical insight into several aspects of international development.

This commentary begins with the presentation of theoretical approaches used in the articles together with the current state of the art of the small subfields from within the development studies. After that I present the aims of these works, the methods used and eventually I will elaborate on the findings.

2. Theoretical approach

There are two main theoretical perspectives that are employed in this thesis. The most basic one is poststructuralism, which perceives the world as socially constructed. Such a postpositivist perspective goes back to at least the German *Methodenstreit*. On the one side there is the positivist stance according to which a researcher can acquire an objective knowledge about a society as s/he studies the society from the outside. Positivism “holds that science should be concerned only with observable entities that are known directly to experience” (Giddens 2009: 13). Positivism also presupposes that one can separate facts from values, in other words that such a thing as neutral facts can actually exist, because they exist independently of the researcher.

On the other hand poststructuralism as an approach from within postpositivism differs from positivism in perceiving the society as a subject. That means that society is understood as capable of imagining itself. Therefore a society creates knowledge about itself and one cannot explain such an entity, but can only try to understand it, ie one needs to study the construction of the reality.

A discourse is the basic concept that is useful for the understanding of the social construction of a society. Defined as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 2002a: 54) one may argue that every element of a society is perceived through a discourse. “An object that is not assigned any meaning is not an object. It is totally nondescript, invisible, even nonexistent. I don’t see it, because I overlook it” (Jäger – Maier 2009: 44). Without discourse there would be no reality for us. In other words: “[d]iscourses can thus be understood as material reality *sui generis*” (ibid.: 36). They are not some kind of a distorted or truthful representation of the reality, but a mere membrane between us and the world out there through which we see that world.

Poststructuralism deals with another dichotomy in the theoretical conundrums of social science: the agency-structure issue. On the one hand the world around us can be created by the acts of individuals, on the other this can be done through the force of structures. Unlike structuralism, which posits that structures rule this world, poststructuralism assumes that a subject plays a role in the unfolding of events. Even though poststructuralism is unable to explain from where could an independent act of freedom emerge, it is clear that structures change throughout history and this change has to be enacted by something or someone. Therefore it makes sense to assume the position of poststructuralism that subjects somehow interact with structures and in an inexplicable way change them. ‘When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others ... one includes an important element: freedom’ (Foucault 1982: 221).

Finally, the question of power is crucial for poststructuralism. The way the abovementioned discourses operate is connected to the way society is structured in terms of power. Discourses are not randomly organized orders of meaning, but very well structured formations according to their

rules of formation (Foucault 2002). Power operates in such a way that it leads to the emergence of a discourse as part of an apparatus. Apparatus is “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid.” (Foucault 1980: 194). Apparatus ‘has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need’ (ibid.: 195). In other words, power operates in such a way that it gives shape to the way society is ordered. This ordering is happening on a continual basis, but one may reconstruct particular moments in history when an urgent need occurs that requires an emergence of an apparatus of power to serve the powerful actors.

Development apparatus is one such apparatus that emerged at a particular historical conjuncture as a response to a particular urgent need and still exists today fulfilling its original function – ordering society in terms of power.

This poststructuralist theoretical perspective is complemented with a postcolonial one. The postcolonial approach can be characterized by its focus on not both the colonial as well as the postcolonial period with its dominant colonial features, furthermore, it can be characterized by a focus on the way knowledge about the Other is produced, but at the same time the aim of postcolonialism is very material as it aims to transform the exploitative conditions in which the poor live. Finally, postcolonialism shares with poststructuralism the rejection of the positivist ontological and epistemological assumption, which have been the basis of many previous theories of imperialism, dependency or the world-system. Simply put, “postcolonial studies examine the colonial character of representations and identities as well as their relation to material practices, both before and after formal decolonization, while at the same time postcolonial studies question the positivist assumptions and theoretical dichotomies” (Ziai 2012: 395).

3. The state of the art

The state of the art section in this commentary is concerned with several subfields and therefore can only offer a glimpse into the state of the art in the respective areas. The first one is historical and focuses on colonial development. This field includes various approaches, which can be divided into an attempt to trace the origins of development, focusing on trusteeship (Cowen – Shenton 1996, 1999, Williams – Young 2009) or a history of the colonial development period (Hodge 2007; Cooper 1996, 1997, 2010; Hodge – Hödl – Kopf 2014; van Beusekom – Hodgson 2000; Cooke 2003; Kothari 2005; Duffield – Hewitt 2009b; Bonneuil 2001; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1976a, 1976b) or a more particular discursive history within this period (Schlauß – Schicho 2014, Bendix 2016,

see also Hodge – Hödl – Kopf 2014). Altogether these works enabled me to seek an answer to my research question in the first article: When can one speak of development as we know it?

The theoretical paper on development and power spoke to the subfield within development studies that focus on the way power is entangled with development from various angles (see, eg, Hinton - Groves 2004), which I divide into the first dimension of power (Hayter 1971, Mosley et al. 1991) and Foucauldian understanding of power, which includes disciplinary power, discursive power and governmentality (Abrahamsen 2004, Ferguson 1994, Watts 2003, Dubois 1991, Escobar 1995, Crewe – Harrison 2002, Crush 1999).

Related to the question of power is the postdevelopment approach which is another subfield of (critical) development studies. The article engages in the debate between postdevelopment and its critics and on the postdevelopment side builds upon the original works of Escobar (1995), Sachs (1992) and Rahnema with Bawtree (1997). These and other already mentioned works are discussed from various positions (see, eg, Kiely 1999, Nederveen Pietersen 2001). More recent contributions to the postdevelopment debate include Asher – Wainwright 2019, Beck 2021, Orbie 2022 or the special issue in the Third World Quarterly (Ziai 2017). Postdevelopment has been to a certain extent replaced by works identified as postcolonial or decolonial approaches to development (McEwan 2009).

Another quite a large subfield of development studies is concerned with the non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs). The currently inactive NGO Knowledge Collective Data Portal contains over 4 000 articles on NGDOs. Apart from most often quoted critiques of NGDOs, which are still too close to the government (Edwards – Hulme 1996, Banks et al. 2015) one may engage with the whole field through metareviews with varied perspectives mostly ignoring NGDOs from Eastern European countries (see, eg, Brass et al 2018, Clarke 1998, McLoughlin 2011, Schofer – Lomghofer 2011, Kareithi – Lund 2012, Watkins et al. 2012). Eastern European NGDOs were mostly addressed as part of the subfield on the so called new donors (see, eg, Szent-Iványi – Lightfoot 2015, Horký-Hlucháň – Lightfoot 2015), but occasionally studies focused to a greater extent on NGDOs emerged as well (see, eg, Drązkiewicz 2020, Chimiak 2016, Profant 2019).

4. Aim of the habilitation thesis

There are several interconnected aims in the papers submitted at a habilitation thesis. These aims can be broadly divided into theoretical, historical and empirical.

The theoretical aims are twofold: provide a theoretical conceptualization of power within development cooperation and offer a theoretical debate between postdevelopment and its critics.

The first aim included an attempt to create a theoretical framework, which would use existing typologies of power and adapt them to the practice of development cooperation. The framework revolves around the question of subject, which could be either sovereign as in the first dimension of power or a product of various structures such as the discursive structure or disciplinary practices. The aim of the framework is to use these perspectives as complementary to each other as both can be found within international development.

The second theoretical aim is to discuss the arguments from within the postdevelopment debate and engage with the critics of postdevelopment. The aim is not only to present the debate but also to answer to some of the criticism in a way that offers a theoretically novel insights. The paper thus engages in a debate that is conducted not only between postdevelopment and its critics, but also within the postdevelopment field.

The historical aim of this thesis is to find the beginning of what is today called development cooperation. As already suggested in the introduction, the idea of development aid goes back to Condorcet in the 18th century, but my aim focuses on a much more recent period, which begins at the end of the 19th century. Building on the theoretical opposition between authoritarian and liberal governmentality, the thesis traces the origins in the movement from an immanent to intentional development and from ideas about improving the welfare of the local population to an actual practice that resulted in liberal biopolitics being incorporated into colonial governmentality.

Finally the empirical aims concern Slovak NGDOs and the discursive effects of the social construction of Slovakia as a donor. The thesis tries to find out how Slovaks are constructed as willing to help through surveys on development cooperation, how the successful transition discourse legitimizes the current regime with its unequal relations of power and how this discourse contributes to the differentiation of the so called old from the so called new donors. Finally, the aim of this thesis is to analyze how Slovakia can be constructed at the same time as an egoistic, an altruistic and an effective donor through surveys and research and what kind of power effects do these constructions create.

With regard to the NGDOs, the aim is to define what kind of NGOs are Slovak NGDOs on the basis of various typologies of the third sector, NGOs and activism and to analyze the political nature of the Slovak NGDOs

5. Methodology

The methods used in this habilitation thesis vary. Theoretical and historical articles focused on the colonial origins of development, development and power and on the debate between postdevelopment and its critics engage in contributing to theoretical debates and our understanding

of history and are not papers that would collect new empirical data and engage in an analysis according to a predefined method. They use existing literature and offer novel arguments to build new concepts and discuss or improve the old ones. Such concepts can be used in future research by more particular empirical analysis. These concepts include governmentality as a complex way of understanding power. It goes beyond the simple understanding of power in its first dimension, but at the same time complements the non-subjective understanding of power as a strategic situation by perceiving governmentality as an intentional governmental policy that is applied on somehow free subjects. This perspective enables a more nuanced analysis of power in development cooperation.

At the same time, the concept of governmentality enables one to trace the origins of colonial development as the authoritarian colonial rule adopts elements of liberal colonial governmentality. This change requires broader analysis of discourses as well as material flows and the historical research of the actual practice of colonial rule. Such a complex analysis then makes it possible to fill the concept of governmentality with empirical data and seek an answer to the question of the origin of development during the colonial period.

More empirical papers apply the following methods: NGDOs are analyzed on the basis of the conceptualization of activism and subsequently this typology is filled with quantitative data as well as a qualitative analysis of NGDOs. This analysis focuses on their public activities, relation with the government and other actors from within the public arena, financial resources, goals and also their historical record. The paper is to a small extent based also on semi-structured interviews with the representatives of NGDOs as well as a textual analysis of the texts the NGDOs' employees produce.

Another method used in this analysis is a discourse analysis based on the Foucauldian understanding of power. This analysis focuses on the identity produced by the social construction of Slovakia as a donor. Furthermore, it focuses on the 'points of diffraction' (Foucault 2002: 73) as part of the rules of formation formulated in Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*. The method includes an analysis of discourse found in the surveys related to development cooperation and in the graphs presenting the Slovak Official Development Aid financial flows.

6. Results

Within the theoretical realm, it became clear that power in development can be analyzed from several perspectives and such a multifocal analysis can be useful. The first dimension of power seems to be present in the international economic relations especially those between debtors and creditors. However, a more detailed view on this relation shows that the interaction is not a straightforward one and a strategic relation emerges out of a deal on debt (Mosley, Harrigan, Toye

1991). Within this relation there is a space for negotiation, promises, deceit, pressure, simply put a game involving power. Still, the actors are clearly identified and it is also easily decipherable what a victory for either side means. Such a clarity is lacking in the discursive power, which operates in a much more dispersed manner. The development discourse is based on the emphasized visibility of abnormalities that emerge from within a logocentric framework and include illiterates, malnourished or the landless. All these categories denote a lack which creates space for intervention that should then come from actors who embody the opposite of these abnormalities, who are in other words “normal”, ie, developed. Next to the discursive power, there is a disciplinary power which disciplines not only the bodies of the poor, but also their minds through the hierarchization of cultures. Furthermore, state and their governments can be disciplined in preempting the wishes of the donors. There is no need for the first dimension of power to operate, governments act as if that power was clearly present. Finally, power in development operates also through governmentality, which extends the role of services to the role of channels of power as central administration reaches further to local municipalities and development thereby results in greater etatization. All of this can be happening without this being the will of anyone. In sum, the forms of power in development are numerous and the analysis of power should reflect this variety.

Another result of this habilitation thesis was the engagement in the postdevelopment debate. The outcome of this engagement was a thorough defense of the radically democratic postdevelopment position. It criticized the romanticization and essentialization of the global South in the works of some of the postdevelopment authors as well as the complete rejection of modernity and modern technologies, while at the same showing that a radically democratic position of other postdevelopment authors is capable of criticizing the Other for authoritarian or violent tendencies and pointing to the impossibility of an essence within an identity and at the same time showing the usefulness of strategic essentialization. The support of hybridity escapes the problem of a complete rejection of modernity and radically democratic postdevelopment argues in favor of the politicization instead of automatic adoption of modern technologies. The habilitation thesis argues for an incoherent culturally relativist position based on a constructivist rather than a static understanding of culture, which enables one to pick non-oppressive positions from within the culture of the Other. This perspective rejects solipsism, but should be complemented with the assumption of the impossibility of fixed cultures in favor of Bhabhian hybridity remaining opposed to universalism. The thesis further argues that whereas the homogenization of development discourse may be problematic, there are rules of formation of development discourse, which remain the same in its various incarnations. Finally, the thesis argues that there is an affinity with neoliberalism with regard to the state, but not with regard to the market as postdevelopment is

critical of both that statistics can be useful, but also a dangerous technology of power and that the political normativity of postdevelopment should be based on radical democracy.

The thesis was also concerned with the question of the beginning of development and development cooperation. The result of this analysis can be divided into rhetorical and material beginnings. The introduction to this commentary already mentioned the philosophical evolution within the Western tradition, which contains the idea of development already in the Greek mythology and finds its modern embodiment in Condorcet's perspective which unites the idea that there is one developmental path, that some societies are ahead of others on this path and that those ahead should help those behind. 19th century saw the change in transitivity of the word development as development transformed from being a synonym of an evolution to becoming an intentional practice of (not only) state institutions. The term also moved from being subordinated to civilization to becoming equal in the 1920s and 1930s to eventually overcoming its close connection to civilization in the 1940s. Materially, the first developmental effort can be traced back to the end of the 19th century attempts to deal with the unemployed colonized population in the West Indies caused by the crisis in the sugar industry. Attempts to improve the lot of the workers including education and healthcare then followed, but more material resources started to flow into the colonies in the 1940s. What is considered the beginning of the development era – the Truman inaugural speech in 1949 – is thus an important date, but it is academically more thorough to contextualize the date and set the beginning on the basis of events, which led to among other things the content of the inaugural speech.

The thesis also brought an answer to the questions: what kind of actors are Slovak NGDOs and if they are political actors what kind of political actors are they? Using various typologies of the third sector, the analysis concluded that Slovak NGDOs belong as service organizations to the private sector (rather than a public or a membership sector) even though they are non-profit, they are closest to being transactive activists capable of promoting their goals without broader societal support and that they are close to being QUANGOs (quasinongovernmental organisations) or GONGOs (governmental nongovernmental organisations) as they often work for the government and at the same time do not engage in adversarial activities against the government. An analysis showed that governmental grants are a crucial element in the financial income of many Slovak NGDOs. In terms of politics of the Slovak NGDOs, a continuity with their political activities against the regime of the semiautocratic government of Vladimír Mečiar in 1998 could be shown. Furthermore, Slovak NGDOs engage in promoting development cooperation instead of being critical towards the government, they further engage in Global Education which contains many

political elements. Occasionally they corrupt local governments and finally their visual representation may reproduce orientalist stereotypes, but there are exceptions.

Finally, the thesis shows how Slovakia is constructed as a donor through among other things surveys on development cooperation, which represent Slovakia as willing to help, while at the same time it seems to be a common sense that Slovaks actually are unwilling to send money abroad. Furthermore, the discourse of a successful Slovak transition from an authoritarian to democratic regime legitimizes the current regime and thereby backgrounds the problems of the current regime. This discourse also enables the construction of a distinction from the so called traditional donors as the so called new donors gain a specificity to buttress their difference. They thereby become subordinated on the basis of age as old age is connected with wisdom and young age with its lack. The Slovak discourse of development cooperation enables the construction of Slovakia as an altruistic, egoistic and effective donor. These possibilities are at the disposal to different actors who can thereby legitimize the promotion of their interests.

7. Conclusion

This habilitation thesis offers a set of articles, which together form a complex critical approach to development and development cooperation. The thesis presents historical, theoretical as well as empirical studies and thereby enables an insight into the origins of development a debate on the critical end of development studies a preoccupation with the penultimate question of political science – power – and a practical view on the Slovak development cooperation from a constructivist perspective as well as a practical view on Slovak nongovernmental development organisations. This thesis shows that a variety of methods can bring fruitful results to the critical study of development and that a poststructuralist perspective can very well complement more traditional methodologies employed within the field of development studies and political science. Finally, this thesis shows that there remain many avenues for the research ahead: empirical analyses of power in international development, detailed historical analyses focused on the continuities and discontinuities between colonial development and the current neocolonial regime as well as the importance of civil society on the common sense that keeps together the incomplete hegemony we live in.

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Part B: Previously published scholarly works