

## REFERENCE

### Citation

Della Faille, Dimitri (2011) "Discourse analysis in international development studies: Mapping some contemporary contributions", Journal of Multicultural Discourses, vol. 6, n. 3, pp. 215-235.

### RIS (EndNote)

TY - JOUR

AU - Della Faille, Dimitri

PY - 2011

TI - Discourse analysis in international development studies: Mapping some contemporary contributions

JO - Journal of Multicultural Discourses

SP - 215

EP - 235

VL - 6

IS - 3

ER -

## Discourse analysis in international development studies: Mapping some contemporary contributions

Dimitri della Faille

*Sciences sociales, Université du Québec en Outaouais, Québec, Canada*

*(Received 2 July 2010; final version received 6 January 2011)*

This paper critically examines work conducted by discourse analysts working in international development studies (IDS). During the 1990s, a number of authors introduced the study of speech, text and image as new paths toward understanding the causes of underdevelopment. This article highlights the authors who have worked on discourses on development and underdevelopment expressed by national and international governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, scientific disciplines and specialized knowledge fields (including IDS). We focus in particular on the work of Chandra Mohanty, Arturo Escobar, James C. Scott, James Ferguson, Gilbert Rist and a selection of gender studies scholars. Beyond their differences, these discourse analysts in IDS share a rejection of mainstream analysis of underdevelopment. However, these authors remain marginalized in their own field of study and their work ought to be circulated in general discourse analysis circles.

**Keywords:** international development studies; discourse analysis; criticism; theory; Marxism; liberalism

### Introduction

There is no doubt that discourse analysts have successfully studied and criticized gender, cultural or class discrimination in speech, text and images at almost all levels of social cohabitation, harmonious or not. Yet, a reading of the scientific literature in discourse analysis seems to indicate that a crucial domain of social life has been left almost untouched. Indeed, the study of discourses about underdevelopment appears to have been neglected by discourse analysts. Discourses on underdevelopment certainly provide more than abundant material to be investigated; in fact, they constitute a field of inquiry where the stakes are of the utmost importance.

Today, there is no question that development policies have generated a vast array of thorough transformations in most, if not all, of the world's societies since the end of World War II. To some, the idea of development has produced the "most powerful global designs that arise out of the local history of the modern West" (Escobar 2008: 170). The assumption that some societies are underdeveloped is based on a variety of ethnocentric social, political and economic criteria. These societies are deemed to be at an inferior level of achievement, a situation that can be improved by applying a few one-size-fits-all recipes that would be beneficial not only for the populations of the societies in question, but for global peace. This representation of the world, this discourse about social and cultural differences, or this creation of the mind, some would say, has been central to the combined efforts expended by national and

international governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. Never in the history of humankind has an idea as simple as this provoked such all-encompassing transformations around the globe, transcending almost all political and cultural divides. This creation of the European and North American twentieth century, an almost unchallenged precept, has succeeded in bringing together states that had been fighting each other for centuries.

The motivation of this article comes from two observations. First, we recognize that if discourses about underdevelopment seem to be *terra incognita* to most discourse analysts, there are in fact concerns for speech, text and images in international development studies (IDS) that are waiting to be charted on the map of the larger field of discourse analysis. In this article, we argue that within the specialized field of international development studies, concerns related to language and discourse as explanations for the causes of underdevelopment have been brought forward by several scholars since the 1980s even if they are marginalized in their own field. This article aims at mapping contemporary work carried out with perspectives that very closely resemble the way we (political or critical discourse analysts) investigate discourse and power. This article hopes, therefore, to modestly contribute to bridging work done by IDS scholars from a discourse analysis perspective and the larger discourse analysis community. Secondly, we assert that analysis that examines dynamics of power through the study of speech, text and images has not broken through into mainstream development studies and remains a marginal field of analysis in critical IDS. Based on our several years of experience sharing our research grounded in discourse analysis with colleagues, forums and journals in international development studies, we assert that there is a general epistemological resistance to discourse analysis in international development studies. There are many reasons that explain this resistance. Some of these reasons might be a misunderstanding of the role of speech, text and images in dynamics of coercion, contention and self-determination, the prevalent impression that discourse is a mere by-product of material conditions or, more simply, the widespread suggestion that discourse is just a chain of utterances with no relation to social processes and political action. Considering its scope, this article will not attempt to talk mainstream IDS scholars into adopting a discourse analytical perspective. This is a considerable challenge already undertaken by the authors presented here. However, this article hopes to inspire interest for those in IDS who, motivated by epistemological curiosity, seek tools to deconstruct, criticize and undermine European and North American discourses that make global societal designs possible and effective. This article should be read as praise for discourse analysis and a call for the strengthening of this perspective for countering universalistic and ethnocentric discourses active in global attempts to transform societies.

In this article, we have chosen to highlight the works of scholars who have an interest in analyzing discourses about development and underdevelopment as expressed by national and international governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, scientific disciplines and specialized knowledge (including international development studies themselves). The work presented in this article was chosen according to the following criteria. Work by these scholars should have circulated in IDS journals with evident response from the field, authors should have attended or given keynote speeches at IDS conferences, and they must have worked in IDS related academic departments or institutions. Overall, their ideas must have also been debated (if only to be criticized) by the IDS community, which must consider these

scholars as part of the field. But, as we contend, this circulation of ideas is not to be confused with endorsement.

We have chosen to label these selected authors under a classification which might not reflect their own perception of their work. In fact, these authors rarely present themselves as discourse analysts but rather as critical development scholars. Because some of the scholars presented in this article are said to reject many aspects of international development, they are being classified under the umbrella label of anti-, after- or post-development (which is the case for Arturo Escobar, James C. Scott, James Ferguson or Gilbert Rist presented in this article). But it must be stressed that even if some scholars might view these labels as fit for their work, this article stresses the importance of the characteristics of individual work rather than attempting to inaccurately group them under a school of thought to which these scholars relate only loosely if at all. It should also be noted that the work of scholars presented in this article does not represent all scholarly material produced about international development from a discourse analysis perspective, nor does it represent all scholarly work in discourse analysis relevant for IDS. This article is not about the possible contributions discourse analysis could bring to IDS, but rather about concerns related to discourse as they have materialized in IDS. In fact, the educated reader might notice the absence of certain scholars, schools of thought or theoretical currents that have produced fascinating works about discourses of global domination. This is, for instance, the case of post-colonial studies which, unfortunately, currently have close to no following in mainstream nor even in critical IDS other than the work of Chandra Mohanty and Arturo Escobar presented in this article. If, in this article, we do not review the work of contemporary scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha, it is because they are not considered part of IDS and their work has not circulated as much as Mohanty's and Escobar's did in IDS. We contend that IDS remains very hermetic to counter-discourses and cultural studies, and the scholars presented in this article represent the only breakthrough. IDS remains very European and North American-centered. Currently, there seems to be no real room for culturally different models of development in IDS. By their European and North American-centered activities, some discourse analysts presented in this article have reproduced the domination of these regions over the world. But, this article asserts that they are the Trojan horse that has brought from within significant attempts to challenge many of the assumptions of IDS.

This article is divided into two sections. Given our aim to acquaint discourse analysts with a little-known field of study, suggest new angles of investigation and introduce reference works in an unfamiliar domain, the first section is dedicated to both defining and providing a general introduction to international development and international development studies. The second section of the article is dedicated to presenting a selection of significant contemporary works and their authors, all of whom are still actively publishing. It will introduce the work of scholars specialized in the study of gender dynamics in international development and their relevance for discourse analysis. The rest of the second section of this article will be dedicated to presenting the diverse body of work of scholars whose concerns about discourse have circulated the most predominately in IDS. In conclusion, we will reflect on the limitations of the works presented and their possible benefits.

### **Defining international development**

Defining international development is a rather knotty issue, since both of the terms “international” and “development” have ambiguous meanings. In the 1950s, development had a very straightforward meaning. It meant achieving global stability by creating the material and cultural conditions for steady economic growth. Development policies aimed to modernize infrastructure and minds. But once put in practice, this “idea of development” proved perilous. Far from achieving its goals, it created poverty and exclusion where there had been scarcity. It exacerbated or created conflict where it sought peace (Andersen 2000).

By the mid-1960s, the definition of development had shifted to include new goals such as the pursuit of improved standards of living (education, health, food) and political democracy. But critics showed the shortcomings of the new policies implemented and their underlying ideas (Lautier 1994, Robinson 1996). More recently, definitions of development have increasingly included non-quantitative or monetary goals such as respect and inclusion of social and economic diversities, enhancement of autonomy and self-determination. Today, development is an amorphous idea (Black 2002: 11) that has lost any precise meaning (Haynes 2005: 5). The current concept of development is increasingly being replaced by more specific objectives such as the less controversial, but nonetheless ideologically charged, idea of the fight against extreme poverty. An attempt at producing a definition of development that would encompass such disparate goals has been reduced to a pointless exercise or a mere public relations stunt. For the purposes of this article, we do not define development by attempting to establish a comprehensive list of its goals. Such a list is bound to be controversial, incomplete and quickly invalid. Rather, we understand development as the ensemble of strategies, ideas, policies and institutions put in place since the end of World War II that recognize development, whichever meaning is attached to it (economic growth, poverty reduction, global peace, etc.), as a central motivation for the actions they undertake. From the point of view of discourse analysts, we can further define development as a field of political, social and cultural struggles between worldviews and ethical ideals where inequality and differences are organized into problems, solutions are debated, policies designed and programs dispensed. As this almost “circular definition” testifies, we understand development in its ideational, material and social dimensions.

What differentiates local, regional or national from international development is subject to debate. Strictly speaking, the term “international” describes relations between nations, in particular nation-states that have formal political structures and authority over an acknowledged and sovereign territory. However, we contend that the general understanding of “international” in the mainstream literature is conceptually imprecise for three reasons. First, international relations are thought to be interstate relations, where state and nation are synonymous. In reality, this apparent conceptual vagueness evinces nineteenth century European political philosophy. The confusion between state and nation is in fact intentional. This concept furthers state-centered efforts to homogenize culture and equate the state-controlled territory with the artificial cultural environment of an imagined nation these states claim to represent. It is conceptually more appropriate to speak of interstate development policies than international development policies. Secondly, thinking of international development as a domain where states or nations prevail is misleading. It is a field where a broad diversity of actors is active. In fact, private

investments, interpersonal money transfers (remittances) and initiatives by non-governmental agencies contribute much more to defining the current situation of international development than interstate policies. Thirdly, the simple collaboration of two or more states or actors to achieve one of the aforementioned goals does not suffice to qualify development as international. As understood by IDS, development is international when it involves actors from two or more regions in different parts of the globe that have divergent access to natural, economic, political and military resources and global decision-making processes. This differential access is thought to be unequal (or unfair) and to benefit one region to the detriment of another. In this article, we use the common appellation “international development” not for its conceptual precision but because the term is used widely and has been imposed by powerful actors. Given the specific goals of this article, attempting to find a more appropriate appellation would introduce more confusion about the object than clarity to the conceptualization. Now that we have defined international development, let us characterize international development studies, which, as we will see, share a close relationship with the policies put in place in the name of development.

### **Defining international development studies**

International development studies is a multidisciplinary and heterogeneous field of knowledge and practice which participates in the study and transformation of so-called “underdeveloped regions”. In the 1950s, IDS emerged mostly as a specialized sub-field of economics and political science. In addition to economics and political science, other disciplines played a notable role in the institutionalization of IDS. Very early on, sociological theory contributed to shaping questionings and determining general orientations. Human geography and anthropology also supplied a great wealth of substance to early IDS. But, it took the mid-1960s for IDS to become the multidisciplinary field of knowledge and investigation we know today. This list of disciplines may, however, be somewhat misleading. In fact, it must be stressed that IDS is currently a long way from being an entirely interdisciplinary field. Even if, as a common effort of the field, IDS covers domains from most social sciences and humanities, most individual research in IDS remains rather limited in its effort to combine concepts, empirical data and inquiry from two or more disciplines. IDS should therefore be characterized as a loose aggregate of multiple disciplines rather than a field of knowledge that transcends disciplinary divide.

International development studies is heterogeneous in its objectives, methods and relation to social praxis. The IDS community has embraced as scholars individuals from a broad diversity of profiles and backgrounds as well as institutions with a variety of goals, levels of institutionalization and distance from the academia. These legitimate individual actors range from university scholars to independent researchers, from governmental agency advisors to non-governmental organization activists, from community workers to political attachés, and from corporate economists to independent film makers. In addition, the profiles of legitimate institutional actors are as diverse as those of these individuals. Given that their discourses are disseminated through communication channels that are common in the field (i.e. specialized journals and press), that these individual actors sit on the same panels at IDS conferences and have established networks of intercommunication and collaboration, we can state that actors from such diverse profiles and backgrounds are legitimized by the IDS community. This heterogeneity of individual and

institutional actors is also reflected in the quasi-schizophrenic appearance of conflicting aims within the field.

Studies in IDS have different and very often opposite goals. Studies that pursue social change may have wildly divergent intentions. Some aim at very specific change in social customs (i.e. raising awareness for hand washing in a small-holder agriculture community of South East Asia), some aspire to all-encompassing reforms (i.e. achieving global gender equality in access to education in Western Africa), and yet others seek even more radical transformation in international relations and global economic exchanges (i.e. thorough restructured terms of global trade). In another manner, some studies in international development do not pursue direct social intervention in underdeveloped regions. For instance, IDS has its share of rather descriptive studies whose idea of social praxis is nonexistent. Some other studies aim at theoretical reflections about the nature of underdevelopment, while still others examine the actors of development and advocate for changes in the way international development is conceived and delivered.

As mentioned earlier, the international dimension of international development is rather imprecise. The same issue is reflected in international development studies. Currently, the international dimension of development studied by IDS has a wider-ranging meaning than relations between states. International development is in fact more than any strategy, idea or institution that attempts to achieve goals of economic growth, global peace or poverty alleviation by linking state actors. Although the proclivity of international development studies to focus solely on nations as elements of analysis, both politically and territorially, has been criticized in the past as a major theoretical and methodological shortcoming (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), IDS has essentially moved beyond nation-states in its analysis. Indeed, studies in international development now examine relationships between groups whose political and territorial identity is smaller or of a different nature (i.e. transnational or global) than nation-states. Furthermore, although it is true that most work in IDS focuses on global dimensions; many scholars have only a loose understanding of the “international” dimension of their studies of development. Some scholars are very often acknowledged as such by the IDS community in Europe and North America based solely on the fact that the major regions of interest for these scholars is culturally different than the societies from which they research, teach and suggest social change. For instance, scholars specializing in studies of the social effects of expanded transportation methods on the *ādivāsī* people of India would be associated with sociology, anthropology or human geography departments and scientific journals in India. However, it would not be uncommon to find scholars with the same interests associated with IDS departments or research centres in the UK, USA or Canada where IDS had been established. It is therefore inaccurate to interpret international development studies based on its strict definition as a field of knowledge interested in or advocating the role of international dynamics or global relations in the achievement of development goals. IDS also forms a loose aggregation of studies of social, political and economic dimensions characterizing the so-called underdevelopment of societies geographically distant and culturally distinct from European and North American metropolises.

A further look at the importance of culture for IDS reveals that this field is, in fact, an examination of the diversity of the development experience among disparate cultures. Since its emergence, international development studies has considered the centrality of the idea of culture. Modernization theory, which emerged in the United

States after World War II and maintained a hegemonic grip over IDS until the early 1970s, has consistently problematized culture; more specifically, traditional culture. That is, culture and the “traditional mind” have been envisaged as one of the main obstacles to development (Lerner 1958). For the proponents of this theory, achieving the goals of development required, of course, transforming a world made of dirt and concrete but also one shaped by the intangible elements that are culture and mind (Eisenstadt 1974). This view of culture as an explanation for underdevelopment is transversal to the work of Samuel Huntington, a US political scientist who was a key figure in IDS from the 1960s until his death in 2008. For Huntington, underdevelopment resides in the culture of corruption, the affection for populist regimes and the lack of interest in a decent work ethic in underdeveloped countries (Huntington 1971). Underdevelopment is therefore a direct consequence of faulty cultures. Some scholars contend that Modernization theorists have used negative assumptions about other cultures in order to disseminate a Western model of development in which developed nations have cultures that are superior to those of underdeveloped societies (Blaut 1992, Tipps 1973).

In a diametrically opposed approach, some contemporary IDS scholars have embraced the idea that culture provides leverage to development. Dutch critical sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse calls this cultural turn in development, “a new brick in the wall of clichés” (Nederveen Pieterse 2010: 64). This optimistic and somewhat naïve view of the relationship between culture and development combines the notion that cultural products must be accounted for in economic growth and that culture is both a vehicle for development and an essential component of sustainable development. It is not uncommon today to encounter debates in IDS that praise culture-sensitive policymaking as a hotbed for efficient development (Radcliffe 2006), where culture is envisaged as “a repository of knowledge, meanings and values that permeate all aspects of our lives” and “a powerful contributor to economic development, social stability and environmental protection” (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization 2010: 2). Beyond the fact that some studies have problematized or promoted culture, IDS should be seen as a series of discourses about cultures. As stated above in this paper, IDS is a field of knowledge production and policymaking that specializes in the production of literature about worldviews, marginalization, exclusion and beliefs in cultural contexts generally different than that of the authors’. And, according to Swedish political economist Björn Hettne, IDS, unlike any other specialized social science field, has collected an incomparable wealth of empirical data from a multitude of cultures (Hettne 2009: 133). International development studies must consequently be understood as discourses about cultural differences and discourses about a wide variety of cultures.

### **Beyond traditional analysis**

In order to fully comprehend how discourse analysis is contributing to moving the study of underdevelopment onto a new path, it is necessary to understand how IDS has traditionally attempted to explain the reasons for underdevelopment, or failure to achieve the goals of development. Such explanations are traditionally structured along two main axes of concern. On the one hand, IDS scholars have attributed underdevelopment to causes internal to underdeveloped societies such as mentality, lack of infrastructure, geographical determinants, the detrimental effects of political

corruption and class struggles or the absence of modern institutions and democracy. On the other hand, IDS scholars have also attributed underdevelopment to causes external to these societies such as insufficient international aid, the distorted structure of global trade, inequities in the international division of labour or the destructive consequences of imperialism and colonialism. These focuses of concern are not mutually exclusive. To illustrate this construct, let us exemplify the case of two very different theoretical frameworks, Modernization and Dependency theories.

As previously stated, Modernization theory has long occupied a hegemonic position and has influenced most of studies in mainstream IDS. The proponents of this theory have mainly focused on the analysis of internal origins for underdevelopment, in general blaming the societies for their own condition, and holding mentality and lack of infrastructure responsible for failure to develop. Yet Modernization scholars have not been totally blind to the external dimensions of development. For instance, they perceive international aid and technical assistance from Western countries as a largely beneficial tool for progressing out of underdevelopment. For its part, Dependency theory, which emerged in Latin America, North America, Europe and North Africa at the end of the 1960s, has directly challenged the liberal views of Modernization theory (Chilcote 1974). It represents the second attempt to account for the relationship between internal and external causes for underdevelopment. Planned as a rejection of Modernization theory, Dependency theory introduced into IDS an opposing analysis, frequently inspired by Marxist literature. Dependency theoreticians have blamed colonialism, capitalism and global trade as reasons for the “emergence” of underdevelopment (Friedmann and Wayne 1977). Beyond their divergences, proponents of this theory have mainly focused on the analysis of the external origin of underdevelopment, in general blaming foreign powers and imperialism for having created underdevelopment. However, some Dependency scholars, or *dependentistas*, have also looked at social and economic features internal to underdeveloped countries such as class struggles and ethnic warfare, but as they relate to the detrimental aspects of expanded global trade and capitalism. Today’s critical studies in IDS remain largely influenced by the views of Dependency theory. The confrontation of Modernization and Dependency theories and their offspring (to name but a few, respectively Transition to Democracy and Women and Development) have shaped most influential debates in IDS for the past 40 years. However, critics emerging in the 1990s have sought a way out of this confrontation. Using discourse analysis, some of the scholars presented in this article have opened another path in the examination of causes of underdevelopment. As illustrated in this article, discourse analysis has demonstrated that the problem of underdevelopment might indeed also reside in ideas, categories and strategies as they materialize in speech, text and images.

As stated before, this paper aims at presenting some examples of analysis which feature discourse as a central issue and demonstrate how such analysis has been a factor in the movement beyond inquiry into internal and external causes of underdevelopment operated by IDS since the 1990s. A look into mainstream and critical IDS literature reveals that this movement is still very modest, and its path lightly trodden. The implications for the understanding of the causes of underdevelopment are nevertheless invaluable. Given the constraints of concision, this article presents only the contributions of discourse scholars whose work directly relates to the study of development and who have received conspicuous attention from IDS scholars. While post-colonial, ecocriticism or subaltern studies, and

authors such as Michel Foucault, Edward Said and Stuart Hall, have certainly left their mark on the research of some critical scholars in development studies, they have not spoken from within the community of international development studies. Unlike Foucault, Said or Hall, the authors presented in this article have published extensively in IDS journals, attended IDS conferences and worked in IDS-related academic departments and research centres or international development-related governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations or private institutes. Their ideas have also been debated and circulated within the IDS community. This circulation is, however, limited.

Some scientific journals specialized in the critical study of underdevelopment have created a space for discussing issues related to speech, text and images. Among the few journals allowing for discussions in IDS related to discourse, *Third World Quarterly* has the widest circulation and is indisputably the most cited. The journal was founded in 1979 with the goal of offering a forum for scholarly criticism which aims to “influence policymaking in governments, international organizations, academic communities, trade unions and mass media” (*Third World Quarterly* 1979: vi). Although critical IDS acknowledges the existence of discourse analysis, with the exception of authors presented here, critical studies in IDS remain largely influenced by the assumptions of political economy and historical materialism. The very idea of examining the causes for underdevelopment by looking at speech, text and image remains very marginal, if not ostracized, in scientific conferences and in circles of policymaking that have access to coveted resources such as funding, prestige, means of communication and access to the political world. An analysis of the content of syllabi of IDS courses taught in European and North American universities is most likely to reveal that the same phenomenon also holds true for the vast majority of programmes in international development.

### **Which discourse analysis?**

As discourse analysts, we know that there are abundant ways of conducting discourse analysis, numerous methods to investigate discourse, countless types of empirical material to be investigated and several ethical positions. As the British discourse analyst Sara Mills stated, discourse “has perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory” (Mills 2004: 1). Defining discourse and settling on characteristics of discourse analysis is an enterprise as difficult as finding a definition for development. The complexity of defining the characteristics of discourse analysis in international development studies is even more intricate, since the authors presented in this article do not necessarily belong to any of the schools generally acknowledged by discourse analysts. In fact, discourse analysts active in IDS very seldom, if at all, refer to the concepts and body of work of the schools of speech act theory, conversation analysis, discursive psychology, interactional sociolinguistics or critical discourse analysis. We think this a serious shortcoming in the work of most scholars presented in this article. But they do share with us discourse analysts an interest in speech, text and images. Accordingly, most work by the authors presented in this article must be viewed as efforts in discourse analysis when the theoretical reflections and empirical research it contains examine social determinants and the implications of the production of meaning. It is also true that these authors are discourse analysts when they observe the materialization of conflicts, struggles and worldviews in the production of

meaning. In fact, they share the concerns we have for the analysis of “the activity of subjects inscribed in determined contexts producing utterances” (Maingueneau 2009: 44). Their analysis makes use of the study of rules, strategies, semantic categories and argumentation. As the works presented in this article illustrate, these scholars also see speech, text and images as elements of social practice and tools used to communicate values and meaning (Fairclough 1993, Van Dijk 1997). They study the circulation and the imposition of values through an organized, socially constructed and maintained system of domination. They are concerned about issues of knowledge, truth and power (Mills 2004: 24). Most works presented in this paper also see in speech, text and images strategies to reinforce the legitimacy of one group and to impede the dissemination of the viewpoints of others (Pêcheux 1975). As discourse analysts, we should therefore consider these works and their authors as our own.

Now that we have introduced such notions as international development, international development studies and discourse analysis, let us move into the second section of this article. It presents some contemporary contributions of discourse analysis in international development. With the exception of some works in gender studies presented as a group, the following section highlights authors rather than the topics they investigate. These authors are, consecutively, Chandra Mohanty, Arturo Escobar, James C. Scott, James Ferguson and Gilbert Rist.

### **Gender studies, discourse analysis and international development**

In the 1970s, the general assumption was that women were excluded from development. In the 1970s and 1980s, this supposed exclusion had sparked numerous studies around the work of Ester Boserup, a Danish agricultural economist who worked at the United Nations. Subsequently, a debate between the proponents of Boserup, who adopted a liberal or Modernization framework, and her opponents, adopting for the most part Marxist-inspired Dependency analysis, structured inquiry into the role of women in development (Rathgeber 1990). That debate marked a clear opening of international development studies for gender issues. But, we assert that there is an unfortunate tendency in IDS to pigeonhole scholars studying relations of power, inequality and domination from the viewpoint of gender. We contend that IDS has not allowed for the contributions of investigations into gender relations beyond the restrictive labels of women or gender studies. Mainstream IDS does not fully consider the potential of these investigations for understanding international development. The contribution of scholars studying gender has not been considered to the same extent as any other major field of investigation in IDS. Their potential contribution to the understanding of relations of power in international development has been undervalued. If it could be argued that if the introduction of gender considerations into IDS has been a rather difficult process, discourse analysis applied to gender relations in international development has an even rougher road ahead. Work presented here could valuably be included in several fields of IDS such as critical studies of expertise or political participation. By grouping several authors together instead of using the individual model of the other sections, this section thus reflects the reality of the organization of knowledge in IDS rather than the viewpoint of the author of the current article.

Discourse analysts that have been grouped under the label “Gender studies” have largely contributed to contesting gender bias and opened new ways to comprehend

social problems. The same is true in international development studies. Since the 1980s, researchers have attempted to uncover power dynamics in discourse and their relevance to understanding dimensions of gender in international development. Thanks to the introduction of notions emerging from radical feminism, discourse analysis made its way into the study of gender dynamics in development (Peet and Hartwick 2009). With the exception of Mohanty, no work rooted in feminist epistemology or gender studies analysis has been allowed to significantly contribute to bringing discourse analysis forward into IDS to the same extent as the work of the authors covered below. Out of the multitude of relevant articles and books, we have chosen to present only but a few that we feel effectively represent the diverse efforts deployed in IDS at the empirical level to link the study of discourse and gender.

Canadian IDS scholar Adele Mueller showed, in a 1986 article, how development discourse helps to perpetuate First World domination over the Third World (Mueller 1986). Analyzing the implementation of new gender-sensitive policies in the Third World, Mueller concludes that the problems of underdevelopment were framed in language derived from technical criteria requiring First World expertise, thereby reinforcing the domination of centralized big projects. The Canadian historian Jane Parpart, a former professor at Dalhousie University who specializes in African labour movements, also shares an interest in technical expertise (Parpart 1995). She has contributed to articulating a subtle understanding of gender dynamics and production of meaning in international development. For her, the concept of empowering women in development “requires attention to the role of language and meanings, identities and cultural practices as well as the forces that enhance power to act with others to construct and carry out effective change” (Parpart 2002: 341). Her work on empowerment, grounded in Michel Foucault’s analysis of power, has made its way into more mainstream IDS (Parpart, Rai and Staudt 2002). Another contribution to understanding the gender and language dynamic in international development that has circulated in IDS circles comes from British scholars Andrea Cornwall and Karen Brock who, in an article published in 2005, show the importance of buzzwords for framing possible solutions to the problems of underdevelopment. For Cornwall and Brock, the concept of empowering women has become nothing more than a buzzword washed out of its original political signification as it “often appears in a diluted form, neutralising its original emphasis on building personal and collective power in the struggle for a more just and equitable world” (Cornwall and Brock 2005: 1046). Another excellent article co-written by Cornwall summarizes how discourse analysis may help to move beyond the limited feminist perspective and mainstream gender studies in IDS (Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007).

Unfortunately, the selection of works presented above has not received the attention it deserves from mainstream IDS scholars, and more often than not their reception has been limited to gender studies. Our overview of some of the contributions of discourse analysis to the study of gender relations in international development is regrettably very partial. It would take at least a complete book to cover most of the relevant empirical studies in the field.

### **The contributions of Chandra Mohanty**

Let us continue our presentation of the work of the most significant discourse analysts who have received attention (without necessarily receiving endorsement) in mainstream and critical IDS literature. As we shall see, the contribution of most of

these authors lies at the theoretical level. The work of Chandra Mohanty has generated debates in gender and post-colonial studies. It is therefore appropriate to present her work in continuity with the previous section. But Mohanty has also contributed at the theoretical levels to the study of dynamic between text, speech and images and power that have now permeated debates in mainstream development studies even if she remains largely pigeonholed in gender studies sections of IDS.

Mohanty is originally from India, but works at Syracuse University in the United States. In a 1984 article entitled *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, Chandra Mohanty criticizes the production of the image of the “Third World Woman” by Western feminist literature. Based on her analysis of a corpus of feminist literature about development issues, Mohanty points out that “Third World Women” are represented in “terms of their object status”, being a “homogeneous ‘powerless’ group”, more often than not victimized (Mohanty 1984: 338). For Mohanty, feminist literature in IDS has created a fictional object of study or a category of analysis that is based on uncritical monolithic and ahistorical assumptions and cultural clichés that artificially negate any of the characteristics commonly attributed to Western women (Mohanty 1984: 353). Mohanty then concludes that the fictional object of the “Third World Woman” in feminist literature has much more to say about the power of Western women than the problems of women in so-called underdeveloped regions. A well-circulated 1991 volume entitled *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, edited, among others, by Chandra Mohanty, resumes some of these same ideas about feminist discourses.

Beyond the study of gender relations, the work of Mohanty reflects on logics of compliance of the so-called Third World to the First World through means of science and technology. Mohanty has exposed dimensions of colonial discourse in international development studies. She has warned IDS scholars of their tendency to reproduce the unequal relations of power existing at the global level in their research and investigation.

### **The contributions of Arturo Escobar**

Of all the IDS scholars reviewed in this article, Arturo Escobar figures prominently. The Columbian anthropologist, who works with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the United States, started a career in his native country as a biochemist specialized in nutrition at the end of the 1970s. Drawing from his own experience and utter curiosity, he started to study development projects in Columbia from the perspective of critical humanities. In the 1980s and early 1990s, he published a series of articles on the subject; including a seminal paper published in 1984 while he was still a PhD student at University of California at Berkeley. Entitled *Discourse and Power in Development: Michel Foucault and the Relevance of his Work to the Third World*, this article detailed his forthcoming research program investigating notions of power in international development (Escobar 1984). In this paper, Escobar attempts to open Foucault’s notion of power and discourse to other social settings and new geographical horizons. Escobar demonstrates how Foucault’s discourse analysis is particularly relevant to the study of international development projects in the Third World. Unfortunately, this paper did not receive the circulation it deserved and is still relatively difficult to find. It took Escobar 250 more pages to successfully unfold his arguments to their full potential and strengthen his controversial position. His 1995 book entitled *Encountering Development: The*

*Making and Unmaking of the Third World* marked a major milestone in the critical assessment of international development and the use of discourse analysis for IDS. This was the first time a post-modern critique of development issues had received such attention from across-the-board IDS scholars. Escobar's book is loved or hated. It borrows heavily on a reading of Michel Foucault's early work and seeking ideas from contemporary post-modern theorists (i.e. Baudrillard, Deleuze, Guatari, Laclau, Latour, Mouffe) and cultural studies (i.e. Hall, Said, Williams, Willis).

As Escobar acknowledges, the central place of discourse in this book "stems from the recognition of the importance of the dynamics of discourse and power" (Escobar 1995: vii). For Escobar, studying development discourse is the only way to maintain the focus of analysis on dynamics of domination and the best way to understand "why so many countries started to see themselves as underdeveloped" (Escobar 1995: 6). Escobar, like Gilbert Rist, Majid Rahnema and others (see below), sees the post-World War II era of development as a new way to ensure the domination of the Western world over territories and the minds of peoples worldwide. Discourse is, for Escobar, the best material to understand how ideas of Western domination have permeated through the use of coercive concepts and practices and gained wide acceptance. Through the production of images, speech and text, Western nations achieved a hegemonic domination that did not require enslavement, weapons or physical coercion. This domination was made possible by the invention of the concept of underdevelopment, which in turn (once policies and development strategies were applied) generated poverty, despair and destruction. Fighting underdevelopment became a much more subtle way to justify intervention in many parts of the globe in new ways that were perceived as more legitimate than colonialism (Escobar 1995: 9). In his study of development economics literature, development planning projects, and scientific and technical expertise, Escobar reveals the ways in which Third World countries started to believe the discourse about their purported problems. According to Escobar, following the internalization of this fraudulent affliction, Third World countries wanted to become like Westerners, and started to fight their illiteracy, cultural inferiority and poverty, and, ultimately, willingly accepted coercive interventions. The images of this demeaning discourse of underdevelopment were so powerful that "Third World elites accepted the price of massive impoverishment, of selling Third World resources to the most convenient bidder, of degrading their physical and human ecologies, of killing and torturing, of condemning their indigenous populations to near extinction" (Escobar 1995: 52).

Since the publication of this very important book, Arturo Escobar has contributed to debates on development, indigenous knowledge, political ecology, critical geography and epistemology. Although concerns about discourse remain present in his work to this day, no other aspect of the body of work by Escobar has surpassed the reception in IDS of his *Encountering Development*. More than 15 years after publication, it remains his *magnum opus* and probably the most cited critical analysis of development discourse.

### **The contributions of James C. Scott**

Since the 1970s, James C. Scott, a US political scientist and anthropologist from Yale University, has contributed to the study of peasant resistance and social control in East Asia with his unique critical imagination. Scott, a self-described anarchist, is

also one of the most prominent discourse analysts in IDS. Although none of his books have circulated to the extent of Escobar's, Scott has consistently produced work of high quality and intellectual relevance during his career spanning over 40 years. He has examined governmental development projects, top-to-bottom initiatives and, in a macro-historical manner, logics of social control and centralization of power and knowledge in the periphery of the centuries-old kingdoms of East Asia. Scott is motivated by the rejection of the common social science perception that peasant culture is simple and subordinate and that peasants are irrational and essentially apolitical. His work consistently refers to Michel Foucault, but refuses the Gramscian dimension in the work of the French philosopher. For Scott, there is no instance of pure hegemonic domination in the peasant societies he studied. In one of his early books, he showed suspicion of "the assumption that the peasantry accepts the elite vision of the social order" (Scott 1976: 231). According to Scott, the fact that peasants may not take to the streets to confront their lords, kings, sovereigns or landowning elite does not mean they have accepted or internalized the domination. Nor does it mean that they do not comprehend what is happening to them because of the supposed strength of cultural hegemony.

Using the methods and perspective of discourse analysis, Scott reveals that in their speech or language, subordinate groups persistently use subtle forms of resistance to centralized power. According to Scott, peasants have indeed used tactics such as refusal to work and theft to resist structural domination, but there are also elements of class war and politics in language. In *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott 1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (Scott 1990), Scott fully revealed his skilled analysis of forms of resistance to power residing in language and the symbolic dimensions of political, social and economic life. In *Weapons of the Weak*, the US political scientist and anthropologist let the Malay farming community where he resided speak for itself and describe how they dealt with imposed social change in their lives. During Scott's stay in the country (1978–1980), the Malaysian government was endorsing the Green revolution, a social engineering idea advocated by many leaders of Third World countries as a path out of underdevelopment. The Green revolution operated radical social changes by favouring centralized efforts to introduce monoculture, mechanization of agriculture and land irrigation. This idea led to the destruction of traditional crops as well as the abandonment of long-established tools and agronomic knowledge that were then deemed unproductive. Scott has successfully shown the shortcomings of the Marxist theory of political action and conflict, which focuses narrowly on the more spectacular and remarkable elements of struggle. In his study of language, Scott reveals complex day-to-day resistance, what he coined a "war of words". This war is at least as much an act of resistance to domination as the more impressive or visible planting of bombs or destruction of infrastructure. Scott did acknowledge that arson, sabotage, boycotts and strikes were used by peasants to fight the Green revolution, the Malaysian government and the landlords. But he also revealed the safest and most readily available weapon in the arsenal of subordinates for resisting imposed social change: the day-to-day resistance occurring in language. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott calls the craft of using metaphors, folktales and symbolic inversions (turning the world upside down) to contest domination, an "art of political disguise". According to Scott, this strategy of disguising their thoughts is much needed because "subordinate groups must find ways of getting their message across, while staying somehow within the law" (Scott 1990: 138).

In his more recent work, James C. Scott has reduced his emphasis on the dynamics of language and speech. For instance, his most famous *Seeing like a State* (Scott 1998) contains only a small number of elements directly relevant to the analysis of text, speech, images and power in IDS. His more recent book *The Art of Not Being Governed* (Scott 2009) contains a few elements worth mentioning. Scott explains how various kings, rulers or elite classes in the state formations of the valleys of East Asia have created the idea of “hill peoples”. In order to facilitate the imposition of their rule, the states-in-the-making needed to disseminate the carefully calculated notion that hill peoples (in fact, all the non-state peoples) were barbarians that needed civilization. Such a misleading narrative that portrays the hill peoples as barbarians featured in both official documents and literature. According to Scott, during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AC) peoples of the hills of Southern China and Eastern India were portrayed as guilty of the most serious cultural offences such as having no written language, no names, no cities and no fixed agriculture (Scott 2009: 116). These distortions allowed for the “civilizing mission” of the state, which is “still alive and well in twentieth-century mainland Southeast Asia” (Scott 2009: 118). According to Scott, underdevelopment is in fact the state’s method of characterizing peoples who have retreated to the hills as a means to resist the registration of their names, the teaching of the state language and the culture of the valley’s elite. Underdevelopment is thus a carefully calculated move away from state oppression which allowed these peoples to evade the state and freely follow their own ways. For Scott, what is described as the cultural inferiority of hill peoples is far from an essential characteristic or an initial condition; it is in fact the affirmation of cultural differences and a conscious resistance to the expansion of states-in-formation.

### **The contributions of James Ferguson**

Although James Ferguson has not achieved the level of recognition and the readership of Escobar and Scott, the publication of *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* in 1994 marked another milestone in the introduction of discourse analysis to IDS. This book by James Ferguson, an anthropologist with the University of California at Irvine and renowned specialist on Southern Africa, is an original and refreshing study of development projects put in place between the mid-1970s and 1980s in the small landlocked country of Lesotho. An autonomous country embedded in South Africa, Lesotho had been the recipient of many large and smaller development projects planned by North American and European agencies; what Ferguson calls the “development industry” or the “development apparatus”. Ferguson attempts to move beyond critics who consider development planning inherently bad, a view shared by the Marxists, consistent with Dependency theory, or a good thing that can be further improved, a view shared by liberals, consistent with Modernization theory (Ferguson 1994: 14–16). Ferguson rather looks at development as an intricate structure, which he dubs an “anti-politics machine”, composed of agencies with contradictory functions. Like the fictional anti-gravity machines from science-fiction B movies of the 1960s, the “development apparatus” operates like a vacuum, removing all political aspects of development. Caught in a fantasy world, the “development apparatus” pretends that its decisions are motivated by technical and administrative stakes rather than political considerations.

Unlike Marxist scholars interested in uncovering ideological bias, Ferguson eschews any focus on the intentions of development projects. To him, focusing on intentions does not make much sense, because development projects take on “lives of their own that soon enough overtake intentional practices” whose “outcome may be only a baroque and unrecognizable transformation of the original intention” (Ferguson 1994: 17). Inspired by Michel Foucault, Ferguson refuses to evaluate claims based on whether or not they tell the truth. In a very thorough examination of a report by the World Bank, Ferguson concludes that development literature belongs to a genre of its own. It has the appearance of scientific research, written by highly trained specialists, using graphs and statistics, quoting other research, making use of complex concepts, yet has no connection to reality, which it does not attempt to represent truthfully. Like fables, development literature is composed of exotic stories. Lesotho, for instance, is a fantasy country comprised of cattle farmers isolated from the global economy.

The aim of this creative writing is to find ways to spend money received from governments and justify the perpetuation of development agencies and the jobs of their employees. Ferguson is interested in the links between this creative writing and either failed projects or success stories. For Ferguson, it is clear that the intended effects of development will never be achieved if they were postulated on the premise of an imaginary society. He then concludes that the “development apparatus”, this machine with a life of its own, is “reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which incidentally takes ‘poverty’ as its point of entry – launching an intervention that may have no effect on the poverty but does in fact have other concrete effects” (Ferguson 1994: 255–256). Ferguson agrees that agricultural development projects in Lesotho have other material effects (including building roads and post offices) and political effects. But he does not think highly of the supposed planning capacity of bureaucrats and administrators. For him, these consequences are totally unintended and not part of any larger conspiracy. Thus, in contrast to the liberal and the Marxist views on development, intentions are only one part of the picture, only one cog in a complex machine (Ferguson 1994: 276). And Ferguson suggests “that it may even be because development projects turn out to have such uses, even if they are in some sense unforeseen, that they continue to attract so much interest and support” (Ferguson 1994: 256). Ferguson’s analysis of development discourse is actually side-lined to a degree by his structural analysis of the political development apparatus, but he succeeds in linking organizational, behavioural and discursive analysis together on a scale that no study of development had done before this book was published. His discussion was well received among critical IDS scholars and heard by the more established development circles; consequently, he certainly contributed to bringing discourse analysis to the fore of international development. Among his articles and books, *The Anti-Politics Machine* is without a doubt the most relevant element of discourse analysis and his most widely-consulted research.

### **The contributions of Gilbert Rist**

Since the mid-1980s, Gilbert Rist, a Swiss political scientist and sociologist from the Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva (one of the most prestigious graduate institutions in the field of IDS), has contributed to the critical epistemology of development and to focusing attention on discourse analysis in development studies. But, until the appearance of the English translation of his 1996

book *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, Gilbert Rist's work was little known outside of France and French-speaking countries. Once translated, this book dramatically increased its impact in IDS circles. Although *The History of Development* borrows from other preceding texts by Rist, it really is this book that allowed his thesis to transcend the already receptive circles of critical IDS and ultimately contribute to "the disappearance of a notion whose promises had never been kept in spite of the fantasies it aroused and the significant resources that had been made available to apply it" (Rist 2010: 348). Without a doubt, it is one of the most important books in critical IDS of the past 20 years, figuring alongside those of Escobar and Ferguson.

In order to establish how and why the idea of development emerged, Rist "examines the sequence of discourses and practices which led to the 'development era'" (Rist 2002a: 47). Although the discursive analysis methodology of this book is not explicitly defined, Rist adopts a stance that is very familiar to critical discourse analysts. He is particularly interested in outlining the interplay between language, ideology and politics as they relate to social transformation. The Swiss scholar examines categories used in international development by linking the emergence of ideas and concepts with their political and historical contexts. Rist demonstrates the fallacies and ideological deficiencies of most concepts behind the strategies that mobilize material resources and structure the necessary response to social, economic and cultural conditions that are deemed unacceptable. Rist has, for instance, carefully deconstructed the implied metaphors of development, both religious and biological, and showed how they have oriented social practice and public policies. According to Rist, practitioners are motivated by a religious-like faith in development, essentially a Western invention. There is no substantial proof that what is idealistically described as development has ever existed, even for the Western world. Likewise, there is no further reason to consider the possibility of development. But development discourse operates as religious-like belief in which all failure to meet expected outcomes is explained in inventive ways. The objective of this discursive innovation is to protect the core dogma.

Rist was not the only scholar advancing such ideas. In fact, he shares many of his ideas with Majid Rahnema and Serge Latouche, two important scholars who are close to him. The mutual influence of Rahnema and Latouche on Rist is felt throughout *The History of Development*. In order to expose the ideas of the latter book, we need to mention briefly some elements of Gilbert Rist's thought that are shared with the two scholars. Majid Rahnema, a collaborator of Rist's, is an Iranian diplomat and economist who is very critical of the concept of poverty in development policies. Rahnema sees anti-poverty policies as coercive elements used against societies that do not comply with the market economy. Given that he sees development as shorthand for economic growth, Rahnema, as well as Rist, for that matter, holds the attendant view that policies have problematized non-compliant societies by finding evil in traditions, in constrained use of natural resources and in the refusal to be exploited by salaried labour. Rahnema contends that the conditions of poverty continue to endure as a result of this discursive creation of the category "poor countries" in development policies that have produced unbearable images making any resistance to market economy difficult.

Another close collaborator of Gilbert Rist is Serge Latouche, a French economist and philosopher. He sees development as an economic war whose ultimate goal is the Westernization and destruction of the world. For instance, Latouche is famous for

having showed that “sustainable development” is a creative misnomer and inherently antonymic. In the name of economic growth, development needs to destroy natural resources as well as human habitats and traditions. Latouche views this destruction as unsustainable.

Well before this book, Gilbert Rist had applied discourse analysis to a corpus of documents dealing with development as his doctoral dissertation (completed in 1978). But his dissertation was not widely disseminated; it was published in French only by a small circulation press. From the 1980s to recent times, Rist has conducted extensive analysis on documents produced by various international organizations. Many aspects of this research have been published in journal articles in which Rist has implemented an explicit methodology of corpus-based discourse analysis of official documents. A volume edited by Rist in 2002 entitled *Les mots du pouvoir: sens et non-sens de la rhétorique internationale* (*Words of Power: Meaning and Non-sense in International Rhetoric* not available in English) demonstrates the scope of Rist’s methodology and criticism. Benefiting from the wide circulation of *The History of Development*, this edited volume has without a doubt introduced elements of discourse analysis such as theoretical framework, corpus constitution and analytical methodology to new audiences, and it belongs to the thriving field that analyzes the ideological features of content produced by international and non-governmental organizations. In his contributions to this volume, Rist focuses on the conditions of production and the rules of expert discourses, in particular those of international organizations specialized in development policies (such as the United Nations and the World Bank). Rist outlines the “ruses of the discourse” (Rist 2002b: 17), attempting to illustrate how these official discourses seek to establish their power and maintain their strongholds rather than circulate ideas. He declares that the emptiness of many formulas used by the World Bank and the United Nations, which he calls “langue de bois” (loosely translated as doublespeak) is a strategy designed to dominate a competitive field where the ritual production of text is more important than the contribution of ideas via rational arguments (Rist 2002b: 39–40).

### Critical reflections and thoughts for research openings

Throughout this article, we have insisted on circulation and acceptance as criteria for the selection of the works presented; it should be stressed once again that the mere fact that discourse analysts are being heard does not mean their work has been thoroughly accepted. Some of the ideas presented in this article have found their way into mainstream international development circles, but overall, international development as it is practiced by government agencies and private organizations has not internalized these criticisms.

We have learned from these contributions of discourse analysis to international development studies that determining the source of the problems of underdevelopment is never an easy task. What these authors have in common is their rejection of mainstream analysis of underdevelopment. We can see in the emergence of discourse analysis in IDS a direct and indisputable consequence of the depletion of Liberal and Marxist explanations. While the arguments of Liberal or Marxist perspectives have focused on internal and external causes, discourse analysts have shown that the problems may in fact lie in the very framing or representation of the identified issues. Discourse analysts in IDS have shown that the framing of problems is biased by notions that are culturally insensitive or even that these notions carry insidious

preferences for class or gender. Some will reject altogether the very idea that the identified problems existed in the first place. They propose to solve the problems of underdevelopment by abandoning development policies as they currently exist. Whether or not one agrees with this radical rejection of development, something is to be learnt from these views. They help us to better comprehend the complexity of international development. They force us to think about the implications of the concepts behind the policies that have transformed most, if not all, of the world's societies since the end of World War II. To conclude this article, let us critically appraise the work presented and propose some openings for research at the methodological, theoretical, conceptual and practical levels.

At the methodological and theoretical levels, we contend that discourse analysts in IDS have a limited grasp of the general literature on discourse analysis. Their conception of discourse is based, for the most part, on a partial interpretation of the work of Michel Foucault. The methodology of the works presented here (mostly, the critical interpretation of texts) is very basic, if not outdated by the standards of experienced discourse analysts. In fact, we believe that many of the authors presented here should be seen more as polemicists than researchers whose ideas come from strongly empirically-grounded methodology. The value of some of their work lies more in the strength and novelty of their ideas or the incisiveness of their criticism than in their empirical demonstrations. In all regards, it certainly does not constitute a valid reason for discarding such analysis in international development studies. However, we are anticipating that discourse analysis will remain marginalized in IDS if it is not strengthened at the theoretical and methodological levels. Only a discourse analysis based on strong empirical methodology and intimate knowledge of the variety of theoretical and epistemological debates in the critical study of discourse will be able to break through and generate beneficial discussions beyond already receptive circles.

At the conceptual level, we should criticize some of the authors presented for their selective understanding of international development. In general, criticism of development discourse is applied to big top-down projects, in technical and ideological continuity with colonial efforts. But these projects are only one part of international development. In order to offer a complete perspective of power dynamics in international development, discourse analysis should, for instance, examine bottom-up participative approaches and South-South cooperation initiatives. Discourse analysis is required in the examination of what has been, for the past 20 years, an alternative *modus operandi* of initiatives in empowering people and giving them better access to food, shelter and health. There should be no exception to discourse analysis; it should apply to any aspect of international development regardless of what analysts disapprove of or acclaim.

At the practical level, we may contend that the criticism presented here is too radical and requires important structural changes to be implemented; that the authors rejecting development have an idealized vision of a world without capitalism or state-sponsored, large-scale development projects. Proposing such all-encompassing changes to power relations is bound to meet resistance. So, while we agree with this criticism, we believe it should not prevent discourse analysis from pursuing all perspectives (including the most radical ones) and ultimately proposing changes, even if these changes require fundamental adjustments. It is our opinion that international development studies have more to gain than to lose from integrating discourse analysis, the wealth of its research on international development and the implications of its

theoretical advances. This includes, for instance, criticism of literature produced by international development agencies, prejudicial categories and essentialist representations. On the other hand, many discourse analysts in IDS judge that international development as we currently know it will never achieve global cultural, gender and environmentally respectful sound practices. This appreciation results in a lack of direct engagement with those who ought to be criticized. But, in this tendency, there is a high risk for missing opportunities to actually change the flawed practices. We personally know this is not a restful task, but we enjoin discourse analysts to engage more with mainstream development circles. In the long run, the uncovering of dynamics of power probably means the end of international development as we know it. Discourse analysis must contribute to building alternative practices for increased autonomy in decision-making, more inclusive social fabrics and global respect of cultural differences.

### Notes on contributor

Dimitri della Faille is a professor of social sciences and international development at Université du Québec en Outaouais (Ottawa region, Canada). Dimitri received his PhD in Sociology and was educated in Belgium, Canada, Argentina and the United States. Before becoming a professor he conducted his post-doctoral research at Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana (Mexico) and McMaster University (Canada) on matters relevant to knowledge, discourse and underdevelopment. He has field experience in Latin America, Asia and Africa (email: dimitri.dellafaille@uqo.ca).

### References

- Andersen, R. 2000. How multilateral development assistance triggered the conflict in Rwanda. *Third World Quarterly* 21: 441–56.
- Black, M. 2002. *The no-nonsense guide to international development*. Toronto: New Internationalist Publications.
- Blaut, J.M. 1992. The theory of cultural racism. *Antipode* 24: 289–99.
- Chilcote, R.H. 1974. Dependency: A critical synthesis of the literature. *Latin American Perspectives* 1: 4–29.
- Cornwall, A., & K. Brock. 2005. What do buzzwords do for development policy? *Third World Quarterly* 26: 1043–60.
- Cornwall, A., E. Harrison & A. Whitehead. 2007. Gender myths and feminist fables: The struggle for interpretive power in gender and development. *Development and Change* 38: 1–20.
- Eisenstadt, S.N. 1974. Studies of modernization and sociological theory. *History and Theory* 13: 225–52.
- Escobar, A. 1984. Discourse and power in development: Michel Foucault and the relevance of his work to the Third World. *Alternatives* 10: 377–400.
- Escobar, A. 1995. *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Escobar, A. 2008. *Territories of difference: Place, movements, life, redes*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books.
- Fairclough, N. 1993. *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ferguson, J. 1994. *The anti-politics machine: "Development," depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Friedmann, H., and J. Wayne. 1977. Dependency theory: A critique. *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 2: 399–416.
- Haynes, J. 2005. *Development studies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hettne, B. 2009. *Thinking about development*. London: Zed Books.
- Huntington, S.P. 1971. The change to change: Modernization, development, and politics. *Comparative Politics* 3: 283–322.
- Lautier, B. 1994. *L'économie informelle dans le tiers monde*. Paris: La Découverte.

- Lerner, D. 1958. *The passing of traditional society: Modernizing the Middle East*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Maingueneau, D. 2009. *Les termes clés de l'analyse du discours*. Paris: Seuil.
- Mills, S. 2004. *Discourse*. London; Routledge.
- Mohanty, C.T. 1984. Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *boundary 2* 12/13: 333–58.
- Mohanty, C.T., A. Russo & L. Torres. 1991. *Third World women and the politics of feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Mueller, A. 1986. The bureaucratization of feminist knowledge: The case of women in development. *Resources for Feminist Research* 15: 36–8.
- Nederveen Pieterse, J. 2010. *Development theory*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Parnpart, J.L. 1995. Deconstructing the development “expert”: Gender, development and the “vulnerable groups”. In *Feminism postmodernism development*, ed. M.H. Marchand and J.L. Parnpart, 221–43. New York City: Routledge.
- Parnpart, J. 2002. Gender and empowerment: New thoughts, new approaches. In *The companion to development studies*, ed. V. Desai and R. Potter, 338–42. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Parnpart, J., S. Rai & K. Staudt. eds. 2002. *Rethinking empowerment: Gender and development in a global/local world*. London: Routledge.
- Pêcheux, M. 1975. *Les vérités de la palice: Linguistique, sémantique, philosophie*. Paris: François Maspero.
- Peet, R., & E.R. Hartwick. 2009. *Theories of development: Contentions, arguments, alternatives*. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford Press.
- Radcliffe, S.A., ed. 2006. *Culture and development in a globalising world: Geographies, actors, and paradigms*. New York: Routledge.
- Rathgeber, E. 1990. WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in research and practice. *The Journal of Developing Areas* 24: 489–502.
- Rist, G. 2002a. *The history of development: From Western origins to global faith*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, New York: Zed Books.
- Rist, G. 2002b. *Les mots du pouvoir: Sens et non-sens de la rhétorique internationale. Nouveaux cahiers de l'institut universitaire d'études du développement*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Rist, G. 2010. Is “development” a panacea? How to think beyond obsolete categories. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 30: 345–54.
- Robinson, W.I. 1996. Globalization, the world system, and “democracy promotion” in US foreign policy. *Theory and Society* 25: 615–65.
- Scott, J.C. 1976. *The moral economy of the peasant: Rebellion and subsistence in southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.C. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.C. 1990. *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.C. 1998. *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.C. 2009. *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Third World Quarterly. 1979. Editor's note. *Third World Quarterly* 1: v–vi.
- Tipps, D.C. 1973. Modernization theory and the comparative study of societies: A critical perspective. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15: 199–226.
- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2010. *The power of culture for development*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Van Dijk, T.A. 1997. *Discourse as social interaction*. London: Sage.
- Wimmer, A., and N. Glick Schiller. 2002. Methodological nationalism and beyond: Nationstate building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 2: 301–34.