Anthropology, Development and the Post-modern Challenge
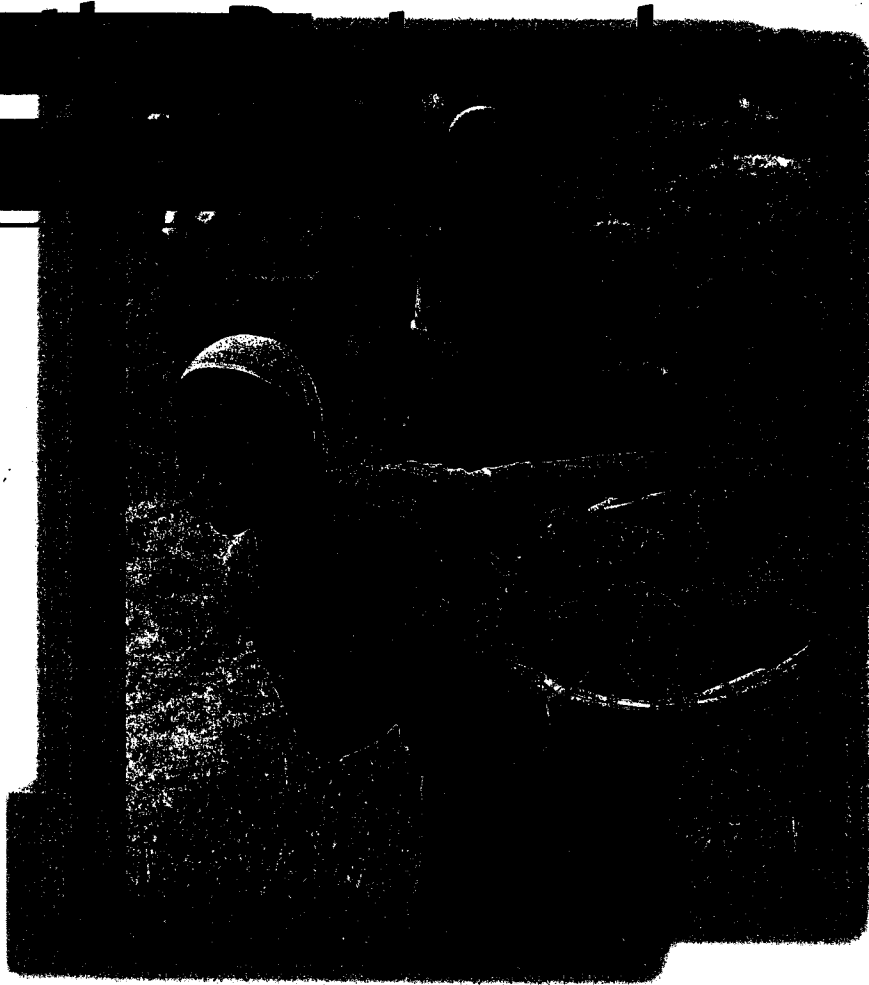
Katy Gardner and David Lewis

Anthropology, Development and the Post-modern Challenge

Anthropology and development in many ways share the same setting, yet their relationship has always been uneasy; their practitioners often separated by vast expanses of mutually incompatible premises, methods and objectives.

This text bridges the gap, providing readers with the basics of development studies and what an involvement in development might mean for anthropologists. At its heart is an anthropological critique of conventional development practice which probes the relationship of the two subjects. The authors argue that a two way dialogue is possible between the disciplines and raise important questions about the interface between the global and the local, state and society, poverty and power. Through detailed case studies and the issues raised by them, Gardner and Lewis outline key social issues and problems of development, and conclude that anthropological perspectives can contribute positively to development policy and practice.

'[R]ecommended to students, researchers and teachers of anthropology and related disciplines and to all practitioners, policy scientists and planners engaged in the field of human development.' *Journal of Social Sciences*, India

'It is clear and well-written and guides the reader easily through some quite complex arguments.' *Social Development Newsletter*

'[A] well-crafted, sensitive, reflective and constructive book. It is highly recommended.' *Development Policy Review*

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GLOSSARY

Development jargon

accountability making development interventions more responsive to the people they seek to assist; also used by donors to mean making sure that money is used for the purpose for which it was intended

applied anthropology the application of anthropological research to solving practical problems in development, public health, administration, industry, etc.

appropriate technology the idea of viewing technology in the context of people's needs, drawn originally from the work of E.F. Schumacher in the 1970s, in reaction to Western 'hi-tech' solutions to problems of poverty

basic needs a development strategy devised in the 1970s by governments and UN agencies in reaction to disillusionment with 'trickle down'

beneficiaries those people whom a development project is intended to assist

bottom-up interventions which come from the grassroots as opposed to government planners or development agencies

community development the attempt to strengthen the institutions of local communities in order that they will sustain the gains brought about by a development project

conditionality the imposition of terms by an aid giver upon a government or an organisation receiving the assistance (e.g. a bilateral donor gives a loan to an NGO provided it is used to support particular activities)

donor usually refers to government agencies such as the UK Overseas Development Administration (ODA) or United States Agency for International Development (USAID), or to multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, but also includes NGOs

such as Oxfam who fund partner organisations in the countries where they work

empowerment the transformative potential of people to achieve positive changes in their lives by asserting their rights as women, citizens, etc., usually by group action, and thereby gaining greater power to solve problems

evaluation the task of assessing whether or not a development project has been successful in meeting its objectives

non-governmental organisation there are many types: international, national and local; large and small; specialised (e.g. health, agriculture) or general (combining many sectors of activity); membership or non-membership. NGOs are non-profit development organisations, many of which depend on donations from members, the public or development agencies. In the US, NGOs are often known as private voluntary organisations (PVOs)

the North along with 'the South', the term originated recently as less pejorative alternatives to 'First World' and 'Third World'. But both terms continue to cause problems by insisting that poverty can be geographically specified

participation used to describe greater involvement by 'beneficiaries' in deciding the type of development projects they need, and how they are run. The degree of this involvement can, however, vary greatly

project an intervention aimed at promoting social change usually by, or with the support of, an outside agency for a finite period (anything from a few years to several decades)

social development a new term used in the UK to describe the 'softer' elements of the development process as distinct from economic and technical issues – education, health-care, human rights, etc.

social movements groups around the world taking issue-based action in a variety of areas (human rights, environment, access to land, gender rights, peace, etc.) usually local, without outside assistance at least in the first instance

the South see entry for 'the North'

structural adjustment policies which became common during the 1980s, introduced by the World Bank, as conditionality on loans, aimed at improving efficiency by reducing public spending, cutting state subsidies and rationalising bureaucracy

sustainability the desire by planners and agencies to avoid creating projects which depend on their continued support for success; also used in its environmental sense to ensure renewal of natural resources

targeting the attempt to ensure that the benefits of a project reach a particular section of the population – women, farmers with no land, squatters, etc.

Third World originally designated the poorest areas of the world after the Second World War (as distinct from the capitalist First World and the communist Second World)

top-down interventions imposed on local people by those in authority – the opposite of bottom-up

trickle down the assumption, which comes from neo-classical economics, that if economic growth is achieved then benefits will eventually 'trickle down' from the 'wealth producers' to the poorer sections of the population

Anthropological jargon

acculturation originally used to refer to changes in cultures as they came into contact wth each other, the term later became synonymous among US anthropologists with the idea that non-Western or 'indigenous' cultures went into decline after contact with industrialised ones

applied anthropology the application of anthropological knowledge and research methodologies to practical issues, born out of anthropologists' involvement in colonial administration and development policy in the 1930s and 1940s

cultural relativism derived from the work of Franz Boas (1858–1942), this concept encouraged anthropologists to understand each culture on its own terms, instead of making evolutionary or ethnocentric generalisations

diffusionism a term associated with E.B. Tylor (1832–1917), used to explain the transmission of cultural traits across space, through culture contact or migration

discourse based on the ideas of Michel Foucault, discourse theory refers to the idea that the terms in which we speak, write and think about the world are a reflection of wider relations of power and, since they are also linked to practice, are themselves important in maintaining that power structure

ethnocentricity the idea that a tendency exists to interpret other cultures according to the values of one's own, a term first used by William Sumner (1840–1910)

ethnography a term which means both the study of a community or ethnic group at close quarters and the text (usually known as a monograph) which results

evolutionism in contrast to diffusionists (see above), evolutionists believe that universal human psychological characteristics eventually produce similar cultural traits all over the world, although these evolve at different rates in different places

functionalism a theory which tries to explain social and cultural institutions and relations in terms of the functions they perform within the system; heavily criticised because it fails to take account of historical factors such as change, conflict and disintegration

indigenous used instead of the more pejorative 'native' to refer to the original inhabitants of an area which has been occupied by migrants; but still brings problems in many situations by implying that there are somehow 'legitimate' inhabitants of land with greater rights than newcomers

participant observation the foundation of anthropological field research since the pioneering work of Malinowski (1884–1942), in which the anthropologist seeks to immerse herself as fully and as unobtrusively as possible in the life of a community under study

post-modernism the wider cultural and epistimological rejection of modernity in favour of a broader pluri-cultural range of styles, techniques and voices, including the rejection of unitary theories of progress and scientific rationality. In anthropology in particular, post-modernism has led to the questioning of the authority of the ethnographic text and in part to a crisis of representation

structural-functionalism a theoretical perspective associated with the British anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955), which stressed the importance of social relations and institutions in forming the framework of society, while at the same time functioning to preserve society as a stable whole

structuralism following from the work in linguistics of Saussure and Jakobson, the anthropologist Levi Strauss (1908–) argued that that culture is a superficial manifestation of deeper structural principles, based on the universal human imperative to classify experience and phenomena

ACRONYMS

BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
ECLA	Economic Commission of Latin America
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisations
FSR	farming systems research
GAD	gender and development
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITDG	Intermediate Technology and Development Group
NGO	non-governmental organisation
ODA	Overseas Development Administration
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
SDA	social development advisor
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WID	women in development

1 ANTHROPOLOGY, DEVELOPMENT AND THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY

Development in ruins

Like a towering lighthouse guiding sailors towards the coast, 'development' stood as THE idea which oriented emerging nations in their journey through post-war history ... Today, the lighthouse shows cracks and is starting to crumble. The idea of development stands like a ruin on the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. (Sachs, 1992: 1)

Within some intellectual circles, the concept of development has been declared dead. It has become a non-word, to be used only with the inverted commas of the deconstructed 1990s. 'Development', the argument goes, represents the world as in a state of linear progression and change in which the North is 'advanced', and the South locked into static traditionalism which only modern technology and capitalist relations of production can transform. We now know that these understandings of the globe's shared history and shared future are deeply flawed. By the mid-1990s it has become clear that the supposed benefits of modernisation are largely an illusion: over much of the globe the progressive benefits of economic growth, technological change and scientific-rationality have failed to materialise. Combined with this, it has been suggested that the concept is embedded in neo-colonial constructions of the world and is a key ideological tool in global power relations (Escobar, 1988; 1995). Sachs, for example, talks of development's 'ethnocentric and even violent nature' (1992: 5). In this view, it is a construct rather than an objective state, a dream perhaps, but one which many people assert has justified a starkly political project of continued Northern dominance over the South.

And yet, so persuasive is development as a concept that many people discussing global poverty continue to use the term as a working tool, even if deriding it philosophically. This is not simply because notions of development are deeply interwoven with our understandings of the world – although in many post-industrial societies this is certainly true. As well as being a series of interlinked concepts and ideals, it is also a set of practices and relationships. Development agencies are actual institutions, which affect the world around them and spend billions of dollars a year. Likewise, development plans, workers and policies are all objective entities. We cannot simply will them into non-existence by insisting that they are constructs, however questionable the premisses on which they rest may be. In what follows, we therefore assume that development is an enormously powerful set of ideas which has guided thought and action across the world over the second part of the twentieth century; it involves deliberately planned change, and continues to affect the lives of many millions of people across the world. In speaking of development we take its highly problematic nature as a given, using the term to describe a set of activities, relationships and exchanges as well as ideas.

This book is concerned with anthropology's relationship with these interconnected and problematic domains. In the chapters that follow we shall argue that both development and anthropology have been recently facing what are often referred to as 'post-modern' crises. Rather than throwing up our hands in horror, however, we suggest that both have much to offer each other in overcoming the problems which they face and in moving forward. Anthropological insights can provide a dynamic critique of development and help push thought and practice away from oversystemic models and dualities (traditional as opposed to modern; formal as opposed to informal; developed versus undeveloped) and in more creative directions. Likewise, critical engagement with processes of planned and non-planned change offers considerable potential for anthropologists interested in understanding the workings of discourse, knowledge and power, and in social transformation. It is a domain for 'studying up' instead of the discipline's traditional focus on the less powerful. Lastly, it suggests one way forward for a more politically engaged anthropology. In sum, as anthropologists, activists and radical development workers approach the era of 'post-development' there are many ways in which they can work together to transform the existing status quo. The different roles may even be performed by the same individual.

In the rest of this chapter we shall briefly trace the trajectories of the contemporary intellectual quagmires facing both development and anthropology. We shall outline and critique conventional theories of development, discuss recent challenges facing anthropology and begin to set the questions which throughout the rest of the book we shall be attempting to answer.

Development: history and meanings

Arturo Escobar argues that as a set of ideas and practices 'development' has historically functioned over the twentieth century as a mechanism for the colonial and neo-colonial domination of the South by the North[1]. Its emergence was contingent upon particular historical conjunctions. Some of the most important of these are shifting global relations after the Second World War, the decline of colonialism, the Cold War, the need for capitalism to find new markets, and the Northern nations' faith in science and technology (Escobar, 1995: 26–39). Those using the term and working within development institutions are therefore helping to reproduce neo-colonial power relations even while many believe themselves to be engaged in processes of empowerment or the redistribution of the world's riches. To appreciate this more fully, let us examine the roots of the term.

In virtually all its usages, development implies positive change or progress. It also evokes natural metaphors of organic growth and evolution. The *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* defines it as 'stage of growth or advancement' (1988: 200). As a verb it refers to activities required to bring these changes about, while as an adjective it is inherently judgemental, for it involves a standard against which things are compared. While 'they' in the South are undeveloped, or in the process of being developed, we in the North (it is implied) have already reached that coveted state. When the term was first officially used by President Truman in 1949, vast areas of the world were therefore suddenly labelled 'underdeveloped' (Esteva, 1993: 7). A new problem was created, and with it the solutions; all of which depended upon the rational-scientific knowledge of the so-called developed powers (Hobart, 1993: 2).

Capitalism and colonialism: 1700–1949

The notion of development goes back further than 1949, however. Larrain has argued that while there has always been economic and social change throughout history, consciousness of 'progress', and

the belief that this should be promoted, arose only within specific historical circumstances in northern Europe. Such ideas were first generated during what he terms the 'age of competitive capitalism' (1700–1860): an era of radical social and political struggles in which feudalism was increasingly undermined (Larrain, 1989: 1).

Concurrent with the profound economic and political changes which characterised these years was the emergence of what is often referred to as the 'Enlightenment'. This social and cultural movement, which was arguably to dominate Western thought[2] until the late twentieth century, stressed tolerance, reason and common sense. These sentiments were accompanied by the rise of technology and science, which were heralded as ushering in a new age of rationality and enlightenment for humankind, as opposed to what were now increasingly viewed as the superstitious and ignorant 'Dark Ages'. Rational knowledge, based on empirical information, was deemed to be the way forward (Jordanova, 1980: 45). During this era polarities between 'primitive' and 'civilised', 'backward' and 'advanced', 'superstitious' and 'scientific', 'nature' and 'culture' became commonplace (Bloch and Bloch, 1980: 27). Such dichotomies have their contemporary equivalents in notions of undeveloped and developed.

Larrain links particular types of development theory with different phases in capitalism. While the period 1700–1860 was characterised by the classical political economy of Smith and Ricardo and the historical materialism of Marx and Engels, the age of imperialism (1860–1945) spawned neo-classical political economy and classical theories of imperialism. Meanwhile, the subsequent expansionary age of late capitalism (1945–66) was marked by theories of modernisation, and the crises of 1966–80 by neo-Marxist theories of unequal exchange and dependency (Larrain, 1989: 4). We shall elaborate on these later theories further on in this chapter.

While capitalist expansion and crisis are clearly crucial to the history of development theory, the latter is also related to rapid leaps in scientific knowledge and social theory over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A key moment in this was the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. This was to have a huge influence on the social and political sciences in the West. Inspired by Darwin's arguments about the evolution of biological species, many political economists now theorised social change in similar terms. In *The Division of Labour* (originally published in 1893), for instance, Durkheim – who is now widely considered one of the founding fathers of sociology – compared 'primitive' and 'modern' society, basing his models on organic analogies. The former, he suggested, is

characterised by 'mechanical solidarity', in which there is a low division of labour, a segmentary structure and strong collective consciousness. In contrast, modern societies exhibit 'organic solidarity'. This involves a greater interdependence between component parts and a highly specialised division of labour: production involves many different tasks, performed by different people; social structure is differentiated, and there is a high level of individual consciousness.

Although their work was quite different from Durkheim's, Marx and Engels also acknowledged a debt to Darwin (Giddens, 1971: 66). Marx argued that societies were transformed through changes in the mode of production. This was assumed to evolve in a series of stages, or modes of production, which Marx believed all societies would eventually pass through. Nineteenth-century Britain, for example, had already experienced the transformation from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production. When capitalism was sufficiently developed, Marx argued, the system would break down and the next stage – of socialism – would be reached. We shall discuss below the influence of Marxism on theories of development.

Closely associated with the history of capitalism is of course that of colonialism. Particularly over later colonial periods (say, 1850–1950), notions of progress and enlightenment were key to colonial discourses, where the 'natives' were constructed as backward or childlike, and the colonisers as rational agents of progress (Said, 1978: 40). Thus while economic gain was the main motivation for imperial conquest, colonial rule in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also involved attempts to change local society with the introduction of European-style education, Christianity and new political and bureaucratic systems. Notions of moral duty were central to this, often expressed in terms of the relationship between a trustee and a minor (Mair, 1984: 2). While rarely phrased in such racist terms, development discourse in the 1990s often involves similar themes: 'good government', institution building and gender training are just three currently fashionable concerns which promote 'desirable' social and political change. From these dubious beginnings, it is hardly surprising that many people today regard such concepts with suspicion.

By the early twentieth century the relationship between colonial practice, planned change and welfarism became more direct. In 1939 the British government changed its Law of Development of the Colonies to the Law of Development and Welfare of the Colonies, insisting that the colonial power should maintain a minimum level of health, education and nutrition for its subjects. Colonial authorities were now to be responsible for the economic development of a

conquered territory, as well as the well-being of its inhabitants (Esteva, 1993: 10).

The post-colonial era: 1949 onwards

Notions of development are clearly linked to the history of capitalism, colonialism and the emergence of particular European epistimologies from the eighteenth century onwards. In the latter part of the twentieth century, however, the term has taken on a range of specific, although often contested, meanings. Escobar argues that it has become a discourse: a particular mode of thinking, and a source of practice designed to instil in 'underdeveloped' countries the desire to strive towards industrial and economic growth (1988; 1995). It has also become professionalised, with a range of concepts, categories and techniques through which the generation and diffusion of particular forms of knowledge are organised, managed and controlled (ibid.). We shall be returning to Escobar's views of development as a form of discourse, and thus of power, later on in this book. For now, let us examine what these more contemporary post-Second World War meanings of development involved.

When President Truman referred in 1949 to his 'bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas' (cited in Esteva, 1993: 6) he was keen to distance his project from old-style imperialism. Instead, this new project was located in terms of economic growth and modernity. During a mission of the newly formed International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to Colombia, for example, integrated strategies to improve and reform the economy were called for, rather than social or political changes.

Defining development as economic growth is still common today. Indeed, after the debt crises of the 1980s and subsequent structural adjustment programmes,[3] economic reform and growth are very much at the top of the 1990s agenda for organisations such as the World Bank. Behind these aims is the assumption that growth involves technological sophistication, urbanisation, high levels of consumption and a range of social and cultural changes. For many governments and experts the route to this state was, and is, industrialisation. As we shall shortly see, this is closely linked to theories of modernisation. Successful development is measured by economic indices such as the Gross National Product (GNP) or per capita income. It is usually assumed that this will automatically lead to

positive changes in other indices, such as rates of infant mortality, illiteracy, malnourishment and so on. Even if not everyone benefits directly from growth, the 'trickle down effect' will ensure that the riches of those at the top of the economic scale will eventually benefit the rest of society through increased production and thus employment. In this understanding of development, if people become better fed, better educated, better housed and healthier, this is the indirect result of policies aimed at stimulating higher rates of productivity and consumption, rather than of policies directly tackling the problems of poverty. Development is quantifiable, and reducible to economics.[4]

One major drawback to defining development as economic growth is that in reality the 'trickle-down effect' rarely takes place; growth does not necessarily lead to enhanced standards of living. As societies in the affluent North demonstrate, the increased use of highly sophisticated technology or a fast-growing GNP does not necessarily eradicate poverty, illiteracy or homelessness, although it may well alter the ways these ills are experienced. In contrast, neo-Marxist theory, which was increasingly to dominate academic debates surrounding development in the 1970s, understands capitalism as inherently inegalitarian. Economic growth thus by definition means that some parts of the world, and some social groups, are actively underdeveloped. Viewed in these terms, development is an essentially political process; when we talk of 'underdevelopment' we are referring to unequal global power relations.

Although the modernisation paradigm continued to dominate mainstream thought, this definition of development – as resulting from macro and micro inequality – was increasingly promoted during the 1970s and, within some quarters, throughout the 1980s. It can be linked to what became termed the 'basic needs' movement, which stressed the importance of combating poverty rather than promoting industrialisation and modernisation. Development work, it was argued, should aim first and foremost at satisfying people's basic needs; it should be poverty-focused. For some, this did not involve challenging wider notions of the ultimate importance of economic growth, but instead involved an amended agenda in which vulnerable groups such as 'small farmers' or 'women-headed households' were targeted for aid.[5] Many of these projects were strongly welfare-orientated and did not challenge existing political structures (Mosley, 1987: 29–31).

In the 1990s, the desirability of technological progress is being further questioned. Environmental destruction is an increasingly

pressing issue. Cases where technological change has been matched by growing inequality and the breakdown of traditional networks of support are now so well documented as to be standard reading on most undergraduate courses on development. It is becoming clear that mechanisation and industrialisation are mixed blessings, to say the least. Combined with this, the optimism of the 1960s and early 1970s, when many newly independent states were striving for rapid economic growth, was replaced by increasing pessimism during the 1980s. Faced by debt, the inequality of international trading relations and in many cases political insecurity, many governments, particularly those in Africa and Latin America, have been forced to accept the rigorous structural adjustment programmes insisted upon by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Development in the post-war period has of course involved the construction not only of particular ideas, but also of a set of specific practices and institutions. Before turning to the various theories which have been offered since 1949 to explain development and underdevelopment, let us therefore briefly turn to what is often referred to as 'the aid industry'.

The 'aid industry'

As we have already indicated, aid from the North to the South was without doubt a continuation of colonial relations, rather than a radical break from them (Mosley, 1987: 21). Donors today tend to give most aid to countries which they previously colonised: British aid is concentrated mostly upon South Asia and Africa, while the Dutch are heavily involved in South East Asia, for example. Although planning is a basic human activity, the roots of planned development were planted during colonial times, through the establishment of bodies such as the Empire Marketing Board in 1926 and the setting up of Development Boards in colonies such as Uganda (Robertson, 1984: 16). The concept of aid transfers being made for the sake of development first appeared in the 1930s, however. Notions of mutual benefit, still prevalent today, were key, for the aim was primarily to stimulate markets in the colonies, thus boosting the economy at home (Mosley, 1987: 21).

Despite these initial beginnings, the real start of the main processes of aid transfer is usually taken to be the end of the Second World War, when the major multilateral agencies were established. The IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (later to become the World Bank) were set up during the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, while the Food and Agricultural

Organisation (FAO) was created as a branch of the United Nations in 1945. In contrast to what became known as 'bilateral aid', which was a transfer from one government to another, 'multilateral aid' came to involve a number of different donors acting in combination, none of whom (supposedly) directly controls policy. However, from the outset donors such as the World Bank were heavily influenced by the US and tended to encourage centralised, democratic governments with a strong bias towards the free market (Robertson, 1984: 23). Meanwhile, various bilateral agencies were also established by the wealthier nations. These are the governmental organisations, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID; set up in 1961) or the British Overseas Development Administration (the ODA; established as the Overseas Development Ministry in 1964), both of which are involved in project and programme aid with partner countries. Figure 1.1 shows the inter-relationships and resource flows between these different actors.
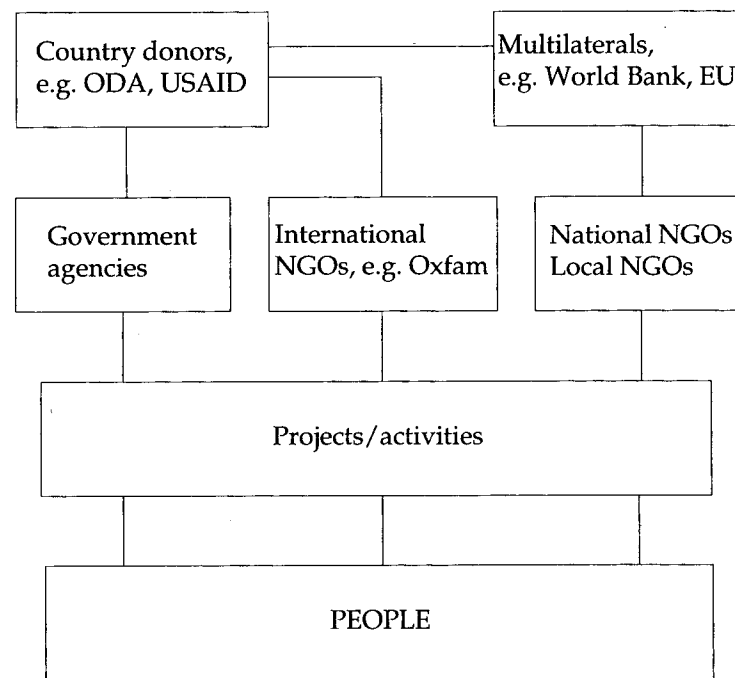

Figure 1.1: Resource flows and potential partnership links between different types of development agencies

Considerable amounts of aid were initially directed at areas in Europe which were devastated after the Second World War. By the early 1950s the Cold War made aid politically attractive for governments anxious to stem the flow of communism in the South. During this period the World Bank changed its focus from reconstruction to development. By the late 1960s, after many previously French and British colonies had gained independence, aid programmes expanded rapidly. Indeed, rich donor countries actually began to come into competition with each other in their efforts to provide assistance to poor countries, a clear sign of the economic and political benefits which accompanied aid. Keen to improve their product, many now stressed development, instigating grandiose and prestigious schemes. The 1960s also saw the first UN Decade for Development, with a stated aim of 5 per cent growth rates, and 0.7 per cent of donor countries' GNP being given in aid. Today few countries give this much: in 1984–5 the US gave 0.24 per cent, the UK 0.34 per cent, and Norway 1.04 per cent (Cassen et al., 1986: 8).

Since the earliest days of the aid industry, there have been significant shifts in those countries giving and receiving the most aid. Increasingly, for example, sub-Saharan Africa is receiving the largest proportion of aid, whereas earlier India was the largest recipient. Likewise, some countries have been so successful that they are now becoming influential donors: Japan and Saudi Arabia are examples. In the 1990s, new countries have also entered the aid arena, especially those which were previously considered to be communist, such as China and Vietnam.

While the individual players may have changed, aid continues to play a major role in the economies of many countries of the South, accounting for one third of all capital in-flows to the Third World in 1980–83 and worth approximately US$35 billion (Mosley, 1987). In 1988 the 18 Northern nations who belong to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) gave US$48.1 billion (Madeley, 1991: 1). One quarter of this is multilateral aid; the rest is direct, government-to-government assistance.

Whether or not aid is a form of 'neo-imperialism' has been a moot point in development studies. Some writers argue that aid is simply another way in which the political and economic power of the North continues to be asserted over the South, developing only the dependency of recipients on their donors (for example, Hayter, 1971; Sobhan, 1989); but others stress that while there are undoubted benefits to donors (political influence perhaps, or the creation of markets for domestically produced products), aid cannot simply be

understood as exploitative.[6] Most aid, for example, is aimed at the neediest countries, rather than the biggest potential markets and allies, and many projects and programmes are planned with good intentions and genuine aims to promote desirable change (Mosley, 1987). Indeed, rather than the wholly negative picture presented by polemicists such as Hancock in his attack on the aid industry (1989), some writers have argued that most aid is successful in terms of its own objectives (Cassen et al., 1986). Others maintain a middle line, pointing out the complex reasons why aid projects fail and constructively suggesting how they could help, rather than accusing them all of being neo-imperial façades, and thus all 'bad' (Mosley, 1987; Madeley, 1991).

An interesting twist to these debates is given by Ferguson (1990) in his account of the development regime in Lesotho, part of which we discuss below in Chapter 3. Ferguson argues that, rather than deliberately setting out to perpetuate neo-colonial relationships between the North and South (for example, by bringing peasants into the global market under unfavourable terms of exchange, as some political economists have argued, or by securing markets for goods produced in the donor country), the role of aid projects is actually far more subtle:

> Whatever interests may be at work, and whatever they may think they are doing, they can only operate through a complex set of social and cultural structures so deeply embedded and so ill-perceived that the outcome may be only a baroque and unrecognisable tranformation of the original intention. The approach adopted here treats such an outcome as neither an inexplicable mistake, nor the trace of a yet-undiscovered intention, but as a riddle, a problem to be solved, an anthropological puzzle. (Ferguson, 1990: 17)

Ferguson's contribution is therefore to distinguish between the *intentions* of those working in the aid industry and the *effects* of their work. As such it provides a very useful way of moving beyond the simple rhetoric of the 'aid as imperialism' school of thought.

Following on from Ferguson's approach, we do not think it worthwhile to spend too much time considering whether aid is or is not a 'good' thing.[7] Instead, we assume that it exists and shall continue to exist for some time. Rather than simply condemning aid and development work, what we are concerned with is how anthropology might be used to critique, improve and suggest alternatives to it. How this might be done is a central theme of this book. Before exploring these issues further, let us turn to a brief summary of the different theoretical perspectives informing developmental work.

Theories of development

Conventionally, development theory is described in terms of two oppositional paradigms, both of which involve a range of different measures. These have been discussed in detail elsewhere.[8] Like most 'grand theories', neither has stood up well to the onslaught of 1990s post-modernism. Today, there is no single theoretical model which is commonly used to explain development, nor is there any one 'solution' to the problems of underdevelopment. Indeed, contemporary understandings tend to draw from a variety of theoretical sources and suggest a variety of strategies.

Modernisation

What can be labelled 'modernisation theory' is a collection of perspectives which, while at their most intellectually influential in the 1950s and 1960s, continues to dominate development practice today. Many of the technicians and administrators involved in project planning are still essentially modernisers, even if their jargon is more sophisticated than that of their predecessors in the 1960s. Likewise, many development economists today still pin their hopes to the promises of modernisation. As Norman Long puts it, modernisation 'visualises development in terms of a progressive movement towards technologically more complex and integrated forms of "modern" society' (Long and Long, 1992: 18).

Industrialisation, the transition from subsistence agriculture to cash-cropping, and urbanisation are all keys to this process. Modernisation is essentially evolutionary; countries are envisaged as being at different stages of a linear path which leads ultimately to an industrialised, urban and ordered society. Much emphasis is put upon rationality, in both its economic and moral senses. While modern, developed societies are seen as secular, universalistic and profit-motivated, undeveloped societies are understood as steeped in tradition, particularistic and unmotivated to profit, a view exemplified by G. Foster's work on the 'peasant's image of the limited good' (1962).

As we have already seen, these ideas have roots in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century political economy, much of which sought to theorise the sweeping social and economic changes associated with industrialisation. Durkheim's model of an industrialised 'organic' society, Simmel's thoughts on the money economy and Weber's discussion of the relationship between Protestantism and industrial capitalism are all examples. More recently, the work

of economist W.W. Rostow illustrates the concept of modernisation par excellence. In his works on economic growth (Rostow, 1960a; 1960b), the forms of growth already experienced in the North are taken as a model for the rest of the world. While economies are situated at different stages of development, all are assumed to be moving in the same direction. Traditional society is poor, irrational and rural. The 'take-off' stage requires a leap forward, based on technology and high levels of investment; preconditions for this are the development of infrastructure, manufacturing and effective government. After this societies reach a stage of 'self-sustaining' growth; in its 'mature' stage, technology pervades the whole economy, leading to 'the age of high mass consumption', high productivity and high levels of urbanisation (Robertson, 1984: 25).

Some writers have attached particular social characteristics to the different stages, often with evolutionary overtones. For example, Talcott Parsons has argued that nuclear families are best suited to the highly mobile, industrialised world (Parsons, 1949). Others associate industrial society with (again) rational political systems, realism and the death of ideology (Kerr et al., 1973; cited in Robertson, 1984: 33). Interestingly, early feminist work on the relationship between capitalist growth and gender, while usually critical of development, also sometimes implied that stages in the development process were associated with particular forms of gender relations, most notably to do with changes in the division of labour (for example, Boserup, 1970; Sacks, 1975).

If one believes that life is generally better in the Northern countries than in their poorer neighbours in the South (which in terms of material standards of living cannot easily be denied), modernisation is an inherently optimistic concept, for it assumes that all countries will eventually experience economic growth. This optimism must be understood in the historical context of post-war prosperity and growth in the North, and independence for many Southern colonies in the 1950s and 1960s. The governments of many newly independent countries, like their ex-colonisers, often believed that – with a little help – development would come swiftly, and many launched ambitious five-year plans to this effect (for example, India's First Five-Year Plan in 1951, and Tanzania's First Five-Year Plan in 1964). Truman's speech embodies this initial optimism.

Another reason why modernisation can be described as optimistic is that it presents development as a relatively easy process. Enduring underdevelopment is explained in terms of 'obstacles'. These are internal to the countries concerned, ideologically neutral, and can generally be dealt with pragmatically.

Inadequate infrastructure is a good example. Factors conventionally used to explain this are lack of capital, weak or corrupt management and lack of local expertise (both of which might cause roads and bridges not to get built, or to be badly maintained) and, perhaps, difficult environmental conditions (mountainous terrain, continuous flooding). The solutions to these problems are straight-forward: roads and bridges can be built with external capital and expertise in the form of aid donated by the developed North; local technicians and bureaucrats can be trained, and 'good government' supported (an explicit policy of the British Overseas Development Administration since the late 1980s). Another strategy to improve infrastructure might be the introduction of information technology to local institutions, or the training of personnel to use new technology. In both scenarios, various changes are understood as necessary for a country or region to 'take-off'. With more efficient infrastructure, economic growth is encouraged and, it is hoped barring other obstacles, the country will move on to the next stage. Development agencies and practitioners are thus cast in the role of trouble-shooters, creating a range of policies aimed at 'improve-ment' (Long, 1977).

By the late 1960s it was becoming obvious that despite attempts to remove obstacles to development, often involving considerable foreign capital investment, economic growth rates in developing countries were disappointing; in some cases there were even signs that poverty was increasing. The failure of several large-scale devel-opment projects, which should have prompted 'take-off', increasingly indicated that simplistic notions of modernisation were inadequate. One now notorious case is the Groundnut Scheme of southern Tanzania.[9] This latter project received £20 million in 1946–52 (the total British aid budget in 1946–56 was £120 million) and had a return of zero (Mosley, 1987: 22). Unquestioning faith in the desirability of cash crops on behalf of planners, together with inadequate research into local farmers' needs and into the appropri-ateness of different crops to the local environment, was central to the scheme's failure.

Modernisation, as both a theory and a set of strategies, is open to criticism on virtually every front. Its assumption that all change inevitably follows the Western model is both breathtakingly ethno-centric and empirically incorrect, a fact which anthropologists should have little difficulty in spotting. Indeed, anthropological research has continually shown that economic development comes in many shapes and forms; we cannot generalise about transitions from one 'type' of society to another. Religious revivalism is just one

example of this, and has been interpreted as a reaction to modernity (see, for example, Ahmed, 1992). Combined with this, while theories of modernisation assume that local cultures and 'peasant' tradition-alism are obstacles to development, what Norman Long calls 'actor-oriented research' (1992) has consistently found that, far from being 'irrational', people in poor countries are open to change if they perceive it to be in their interest. They often know far better than development planners how to strategise to get the best from difficult circumstances, yet modernisation strategies rarely, if ever, pay heed to local knowledge. Indeed, local culture is generally either ignored by planners or treated as a 'constraint'. This is a grave failing, for anthropologists such as Mair (1984) and Hill (1986) have shown in detail how an understanding of local culture is vital for more appro-priate development projects. We shall spend much of this book discussing such insights.

Modernisation also ignores the political implications of growth on the micro level. Premissed on the notion of 'trickle down', it assumes that once economic growth has been attained, the whole population will reap the rewards. Again, anthropologists and soci-ologists have repeatedly shown that life is not so simple. Even in regions of substantial economic growth, poverty levels often remain the same, or even deteriorate further (Mosley, 1987: 155). Evidence from areas which have experienced the so-called Green Revolution illustrates how even when many of the signs of economic develop-ment are present, localised poverty and inequality can persist (see Pearse, 1980). Disastrously (for the poorest or for some minorities), modernisation theory does not distinguish between different groups within societies, either because it assumes these to be homo-geneous (the 'mass poor') or because it believes that eventually the benefits of growth are enjoyed by all. The communities which are at the receiving end of development plans are, however, composed of a mixture of people, all with different amounts of power, access to resources and interests (Hill, 1986: 16–29). Heterogeneity exists not only between households, but also within them. The marginalisa-tion of women by development projects which treat households as equal and homogeneous units is a case in point (Whitehead, 1981; Rogers, 1980; Ostergaard, 1992).

The most fundamental criticism of theories of modernisation, however, is that they fail to understand the real causes of underde-velopment and poverty. By presenting all countries as being on the same linear path, they completely neglect historical and political factors which have made the playing field very far from level. Europe during the Industrial Revolution and Africa or South Asia in

the second half of the twentieth century are not, therefore, comparable. These points have been forcibly made by what is generally referred to as dependency, or neo-Marxist, theory. This school of thought was radically to affect development studies during the 1970s.

Dependency Theory

One of the first groups to explain development in terms of political and historical structures was the Economic Commission of Latin America (ECLA). Established in 1948 by the United Nations, by the 1950s this had become a group of radical scholars whose outlook was deeply influenced by Marxism. The work of the ECLA drew attention to the structure of underdevelopment: unequal relations between the North and South, especially in terms of trade, the protectionism of many Northern economies and the dependency on export markets of many countries within Latin America. These notions of dependency and underdevelopment (as opposed to undevelopment) gained widespread recognition with the work of A.G. Frank (1969).[10]

Drawing from Marxist concepts of capitalism as inherently exploitative, dependency theorists argue that development is an essentially unequalising process: while rich nations get richer, the rest inevitably get poorer. Like most Marxist analysis, their work is primarily historical and tends to focus upon the political structures which shape the world. Rather than being undeveloped, they argue, countries in the South have been underdeveloped by the processes of imperial and post-imperial exploitation. One model which is used to describe this process is that of the centre and periphery (Wallerstein, 1974). This presents the North as the centre, or 'core' of capitalism, and the South as its periphery. Through imperial conquest, it is argued, peripheral economies were integrated into capitalism, but on an inherently unequal basis. Supplying raw materials, which fed manufacturing industries in the core, peripheral regions became dependent upon foreign markets and failed to develop their own manufacturing bases. The infrastructure provided by colonial powers is wholly geared towards export; in many cases an economy might be dependent upon a single product. Dependency is thus

a continuing situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others. A relationship of interdependence between two or more economies or between such economies and the world trading system becomes a dependent relationship

when some countries can expand through self-impulsion while others, being in a dependent position, can only expand as a reflection of the expansion of the dominant countries, which may have positive or negative effects on their immediate position. (Dos Santos, 1973)

Closely related to theories of dependency are those presenting the globe as a single interrelated system in which each country is understood in terms of its relationship to the whole. Immanuel Wallerstein's 'world system' (1974) and Worsley's notion of 'one world' (1984) are central to these ideas. It is from this context that notions of 'Third World' and 'First World' have developed; these terms explicitly recognise the way in which the world is divided into different and yet interdependent parts. The Third World, it suggests, is not natural, but created through economic and political processes.

Structures of dependency, the argument goes, are also repeated internally. Just as on an international level the centre exploits the periphery, within peripheral regions metropolitan areas attract the bulk of scarce local resources and services. They are occupied by the local elite, who, through their links with the centre, spend considerable time taking profit out of the country (by investing, for example, in costly education abroad). Like international relations between centre and periphery, they also exploit surrounding rural areas, through unequal exchange, for example in terms of trade between rural farmers and urban markets. Capital accumulation in the periphery is therefore unlikely to occur, both because of processes which suck it into the metropolitan centre, and because of wider international processes which take it outside the country.

Dependency theory therefore understands underdevelopment as embedded within particular political structures. In this view the improvement policies advocated by modernisation theory can never work, for they do not tackle the root causes of the problem. Rather than development projects which ease the short-term miseries of underdevelopment, or support the status quo, dependency theory suggests that the only solution possible is radical, structural change. There are of course examples of this solution being followed. The radical internal restructuring of countries embracing socialism (China and Cuba are key examples) and the subsequent problems faced by them demonstrate that this is a route fraught with difficulty, however. Not only is state socialism often associated with extreme political repression, but by the 1990s, with the breakdown of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the new openness of China to world trade, aid and other

manifestations of capitalism, and the economic crisis facing Cuba, its long-term viability appears limited.

The international political backlash against state socialism which gathered force during the 1980s has been matched by similarly forceful revocation of neo-Marxist analysis within academia. The generalisations of Marxist analysis, its inability to deal with empirical variation and its insistence on pushing all human experience into the narrow strictures of a single theory are funda-mental problems. Analytically, it appears to be of limited help, for its explanatory framework is too simplistic. It is also attacked from within orthodox Marxism. Bill Warren has argued that dependency theory failed to understand the nature of imperialism and capitalist development in the previously colonised South. Rather than remaining stagnant and perpetually underdeveloped, the ex-colonies are moving forward in a way largely in keeping with Marx's original ideas about the progressive (though destructive and contradictory) force of captalism within his theory of historical materialism (Warren, 1980).

One of the main problems with dependency theory is that it tends to treat peripheral states and populations as passive, being blind to everything but their exploitation. While it is certainly important to analyse the structures which perpetuate underdevelopment, however, we must also recognise the ways in which individuals and societies strategise to maximise opportunities, how they resist structures which subordinate them and, in some cases, how they successfully embrace capitalist development.

Rather than offering solutions to societies in the capitalist world, dependency theory is in danger of creating despondency in its insistence that without radical structural change, underdevelop-ment is unavoidable. This does not mean that it has not had pervasive and continuing influence on developmental practice. It has contributed to the politicisation of development, which can no longer be presented as neutral. Internationally, this politicisation is expressed by the formation of alliances of Third World countries against the North, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, which since its inception following the Bandung Conference in 1955 has acted as a kind of international pressure group for Third World countries. Out of this emerged the Group of 77 countries (G77) which functions as a counterbalance to the influence of the Northern industrial nations within the UN and its associated agencies (McGrew, 1992).

Notions of dependency have also contributed to, and reflect, the increasing politicisation of 'development' in the South at both grassroots and state levels. As an intellectual movement, its

proponents were mostly situated in the South, in particular Latin America. Most fundamentally, neo-Marxist analysis raises a question largely ignored by theories of modernisation, but of crucial importance: who gets what from development? By focusing upon the ways in which profit for some is connected to loss for others, neo-Marxist analysis remains an important contribution to the understanding of development, even if as an analytical tool it is sometimes a little blunt.

While modernisation and dependency theory are politically polar opposites (one liberal and the other radical), they have a surprising amount in common. Both are essentially evolutionary, assuming that countries progress in a linear fashion and that it is capitalism which propels them from one stage to the next. Both assume that change comes 'top-down' from the state; they ignore the ways in which people negotiate these changes and, indeed, initiate their own. Both are fundamentally deterministic and are based upon the same fundamental rationalist epistimology (Hobart, 1993: 5; Long and Long, 1992: 20). Most crucially for those at the receiving end of underdevelopment, neither offers a realistic solution. Modernisa-tion's improvement policies, which wrongly assume 'trickle down' from profit-making elites to the rest, often do little to help the poorest and most vulnerable. Meanwhile the radical change suggested by dependency theory is often impossible to achieve.

In the mid-1990s, we can discern the influence of both moderni-sation and dependency theory in current practice and thinking. Notions of modernisation survive in much contemporary develop-mental thought. As we have already mentioned, agencies such as the World Bank remain committed first and foremost to promoting economic growth. Meanwhile statements such as the following, from a Food and Agriculture Organisation report on the sociocul-tural aspects of a multimillion dollar aquaculture project, are still surprisingly common:

It may be that attempting to inculcate 'modern' values and practices may be easier with villagers who are already more 'modernised' ... However, this principle, if carried too far, could lead to concentration of effort on the 'best prospects' and neglect of those with manifestly better need of assistance. (FAO, 1987)

The only thing which differentiates this from earlier statements of modernisation is the rather self-conscious use of inverted commas.

Dependency theory also continues to influence thought and practice. It can be located, for example, alongside notions of empow-erment which reject aid as a form of neo-imperialism and argue that

postive change can only come from within Southern societies. Paolo Friere's work on functional education, which has had a huge influence on some areas of developmental practice, in particular upon non-governmental organisations (NGOs), is an example of the practical application of neo-Marxist theory; first and foremost, he suggests, people need to develop political consciousness, and the route to this is through pedagogic techniques of empowerment (Friere, 1968). Debates on gender and development have also increasingly involved awareness of the structural influences of global inequality and colonialism on gender relations, and of the need for women in the South to empower themselves rather than be recipients of Northern benevolence (Sen and Grown, 1987).

The demise of development theory

Despite these lingering influences, it was increasingly argued during the 1980s that the age of the 'grand narrative'[11] was largely over. By the 1990s, neither modernisation nor dependency theory have survived intact as a viable paradigm for understanding change and transformation, or processes of poverty and inequality. There are various interconnected reasons for this. We have already suggested that neither theory can realistically explain the problems of global inequality and poverty. The strategies they offer for redressing such problems are also flawed. But there are wider factors operating too.

Politically, as since the late 1980s the old polarities of the Cold War have become obsolete, there is much talk of a 'New Global Order'. Although this concept is contested,[12] the global and polarised struggle between the two opposing socioeconomic systems of capitalism and communism is clearly at an end. It is no longer so easy to speak of the 'Third World', for the boundaries between the First and the Second have largely collapsed. Within the . New Global Order there is also no easy division between states on the periphery and those in the centre; the economic dynamism of Eastern Asia, for example, which is overtaking traditional centres of capitalism in North America and Europe, appears wholly to disprove dependency theory. Combined with this, religious and ethnic revivalism, and the conflict with which both are often associated, have vividly indicated that understanding modernity is not nearly so simple a matter as was once assumed.

The 1990s: the age of post-modernity?

Arguably then, in the 1990s we have entered the age of post-modernism. While this term has various meanings, it is most simply

explained as a cultural and intellectual rejection of modernity. Culturally, post-modern tendencies in the North can be traced back to the 1940s and 1950s, wherein the arts have increasingly moved beyond modernism to a broader, more pluralistic range of styles and techniques; eclecticism, parody and multimedia forms are now common. Likewise, the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture are increasingly broken down: in some quarters the works of Madonna or television soap operas are considered to be as valid subjects for critical analysis and attention as Shakespeare or classical opera. Intellectually, post-modernism involves the end of the dominance of unitary theories of progress and belief in scientific rationality. Objective 'truth' has been replaced by emphasis on signs, images and the plurality of viewpoints: there is no single, objective account of reality, for everyone experiences things differently. Post-modernism is thus characterised by a multiplicity of voices.

Post-modernism involves both conservative and subversive political tendencies. By insisting upon diversity and cultural relativity, it disregards the possibility of common problems and thus common solutions. So revolutionary movements which advocate blanket remedies for social ills such as state socialism are not on the agenda. In its insistence upon locating particular voices and deconstructing what they say, however, it is inherently subversive. Edward Said's brilliant analysis of *Orientalism* (1978), for example, deconstructs Northern writings on the 'orient' to show how they homogenise and exoticise the 'East' and by doing this function as the ideological backbone of imperialism. Following Foucault, since the late 1970s and 1980s there has been an increasing awareness of the relationship between discourse (fields of knowledge, statements and practice, such as development) and power. From this, all categories which lump peoples or experiences together become politically suspect. One sign of the increasing acceptance of such views is that the 'Third World', 'women' or the 'poor' are more often than not accompanied by inverted commas to show our awareness of the problematic nature of such categories. These arguments have had a radical effect on the authority of 'experts', fundamentally undermining many of the earlier assumptions which came out of the colonial, and post-colonial, North.

The influence of such arguments should not of course be exaggerated. The majority of people working within development are largely unaware of post-modernism and are certainly not interested in problematising the discourses within which they work. We suggest, however, that development theory has reached a profound impasse, and that this is partly a result of post-modern tendencies.

Emphasis on diversity, the primacy of localised experience and the colonial roots of discourses of progress, or the problems of the Third World, have radically undermined any attempt at generalisation. To a degree, this is reflected in practice. Over recent decades there have been many different approaches, which rather than being based upon one single theoretical creed, promising all-encompassing solutions in a single package, attempt to deal with specific problems. It is best to discuss these as strategies rather than theories, for many draw on several theoretical sources. The new trends also relate more directly to practice and policy rather than theory.

In the abandonment of generalised and deterministic theory, there is an increasing tendency to focus upon specific groups and issues ('women', 'the landless'),[13] a more reflexive attitude towards aid and development and a new stress upon 'bottom-up', grassroots initiatives. These perspectives were already emerging in the 1970s, when stress upon 'basic needs', rather than macro level policy aimed at industrialisation, was increasingly fashionable within aid circles. Instead of being radical, these strategies are inherently populist. As part of a general trend which places people more directly on the developmental stage, they are closer to liberal ideologies of individualism, self-reliance and participation than Marxist ones of revolution or socialism. Other trends include human development,[14] the use of cost-benefit analysis and the concept of 'good government', or institution building. We shall return to some of these new directions in Chapter 5. For now, we need only note that they do not comprise a body of homogeneous thought and practice. Indeed, we suggest that development, both as theory and as practice, is increasingly polarised. While multilateral agencies such as the World Bank or United Nations agencies embrace neo-liberal agendas of structural adjustment, free trade and 'human development', others stress empowerment and the primacy of indigenous social movements. As the notion of development loses credibility, development practice is becoming increasingly eclectic. This can be both confusing and directionless, and liberating: a source of potential creativity.

Post-modernism and anthropology

Just as post-modernist approaches have problematised concepts and theories of development, they are also associated with a crisis in anthropology (Grimshaw and Hart, 1993). While the degree of this is contested, there can be little doubt that since the mid-1980s many conventional tenets of the discipline have been rigorously queried,

both within and outside the professional establishment. To a degree, anthropology has always had some post-modern tendencies. Cultural relativism, one of the discipline's central tenets, insists upon recognising the inner logic of different societies. The world is thus presented as culturally diverse and composed of many different realities. What anthropologists have not tended to question till recently, however, is the status of the knowledge that they gather. Ahistorical generalisations, based upon the observations of the 'objective' anthropologist, have been made in many 'classic' ethnographies which disguise heterogeneity within local culture. Theoretical frameworks such as functionalism and structuralism (which continued to influence some branches of anthropology up until the late 1970s)[15] tend to reduce societies to a series of commonalities, whether these be the notion of interdependent institutions which function to maintain the workings of the overall social system, as in functionalism, or the idea of common binary oppositions which underlie all social forms and to which all cultures can be reduced, as in structuralism.

In many ways then, anthropology's claim to represent and understand the diverse societies of the world is an easy target for post-modern critiques. One area in which it has been attacked is the claim of so-called objective generalisation, or what Jonathan Spencer calls 'ethnographic naturalism' (1989: 153–4). This confers authority on the anthropologist by suppressing the historical specificity of the ethnographic experience. Given post-modern emphasis on local and diverse voices, the intellectual authority of the anthropologist who is supposedly providing an 'objective' account of exotic peoples is easily criticised.

Unease about the quasi-scientific paradigms of anthropology, and textual conventions which construct anthropologist-authors as experts, was expressed by a series of publications over the 1980s, such as Clifford and Marcus's *Writing Culture* (1986), Marcus and Fischer's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986) and Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture* (1988). Writing conventions are not, however, the only problem. Growing reflexivity about the colonial heritage of anthropology[16] and its contribution to imperialist discourses about the Southern 'other' have contributed to increasing introspection concerning the subject's assumptions. Objectification of other peoples, we now realise, is linked to political hierarchy (Grimshaw and Hart, 1993: 8). Anthropological representations are not neutral, but embedded in power relations between North and South. This has led to what in feminist theory has been termed the 'politics of location' (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994: 44–5) – the notion that

one has no right to 'speak' for other groups, and the ascribing of legitimacy only to 'authentic' voices.

These arguments have led to various reactions. Some anthropologists have moved away from ethnography and retreated into the analysis and deconstruction of text; others have experimented with different styles of writing. A considerable number have retained their interest in ethnography, but turned their attention to their own societies, or to others in the North. Rabinow (1986: 259) has argued that one solution to the 'crisis of representation' facing anthropology is to 'study up' and research the powerful rather than the powerless. This might involve studying colonial authorities, planners, government – and development agencies too. Connected to this is the call to 'anthropologise the West' (ibid.: 241). Anthropologists, it is suggested, need to turn their attention away from the exotic 'other' and focus instead upon the assumptions of their own societies. While suffering considerable self-doubt and anxiety, since the late 1980s anthropology has therefore moved in various new directions.

Anthropology and post-development: moving on

Arturo Escobar has attacked anthropologists working in development for failing to react to changes taking place within anthropology, for questionable methodological practices and – most damningly – for reproducing discourses of modernisation and development (1991: 677). In a later work he suggests that development makes anthropological encounters with Third World others possible – just as colonialism once did. Rather than challenging it, anthropologists 'overlook the ways in which development operates as an arena of cultural contestation and identity construction' (1995: 15). There are indeed grave problems facing anthropologists engaged with development. If we accept that it functions as a hegemonic discourse, in which the world is represented, ordered and controlled in particular ways, how can those working within it not be ethically compromised?

In the rest of this book we hope to show that while the relationship between development and anthropology is highly problematic, anthropologists should not simply retreat. Discourses are not static but can be changed, both by those working within them (who can help to challenge and unpick central assumptions and practices) and by those working outside (by revealing alternative understandings of the world and alternative processes of change). We shall suggest that these processes are already underway, and have been for some time. While it is undeniably true that anthropologists in develop-

ment are often compromised, their insights coopted and neutralised by the dominant discourse, their work practices changed and their critical faculties numbed, this need not necessarily be the case.

If both anthropology and development are facing crisis in the 1990s, both too contain the possibilities for positive engagement and change. Anthropology can contribute to more positive forms of developmental thought and practice, both by working *in* development and also by providing a critical account *of* development. As we shall argue, this distinction is often blurred: those that produce critiques of development often influence development practice, even if unintentionally. Meanwhile the study of development is a fertile area for anthropologists wishing to answer Rabinow's call to 'study up'. It is also a way in which we can move beyond the silencing of identity politics to a more politically engaged anthropology. Some feminists have argued that there must be post-modern 'stopping points' rather than endless cultural relativism (Nicholson, 1990: 8), and that one such point is gender. We suggest that another is the politics of poverty.

What, then, do we mean by development? We use the term here to refer to processes of social and economic change which have been precipitated by economic growth, and/or specific policies and plans, whether at the level of the state, donor agencies or indigenous social movements. These can have either positive or negative effects on the people who experience them. Development is a series of events and actions, as well as a particular discourse and ideological construct. We assume that these are inherently problematic; indeed, some aspects of development are actively destructive and disempowering.

Rather than promoting development per se, what we are interested in is challenging the social and political relations of poverty, through generating and applying anthropological insights. We define poverty as a state in which people are denied access to the material, social and emotional necessities of life. While there are 'basic needs' (water, sufficient calorific intake for survival and shelter), many of these necessities are culturally determined. Poverty is first and foremost a social relationship, the result of inequality, marginalisation and disempowerment. It occurs in the North as well as the South (although much of our attention in this book will be confined to the South). We suggest that while we need to move beyond the language and assumptions of development, the application of anthropology in attempting to construct a better world is as vital as ever in the post-modern, and post-development, era. Before discussing how this might be done, let us turn to the history of applied anthropology.