

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: DEVELOPMENT AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF MODERNITY

There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of caste, creed and race have to burst; and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of economic progress.

—United Nations,
Department of Social and Economic Affairs,
*Measures for the Economic Development of
Underdeveloped Countries*, 1951

IN HIS inaugural address as president of the United States on January 20, 1949, Harry Truman announced his concept of a “fair deal” for the entire world. An essential component of this concept was his appeal to the United States and the world to solve the problems of the “underdeveloped areas” of the globe.

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate, they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people. . . . I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. . . . What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing. . . . Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge. (Truman [1949] 1964)

The Truman doctrine initiated a new era in the understanding and management of world affairs, particularly those concerning the less economically accomplished countries of the world. The intent was quite ambitious: to

bring about the conditions necessary to replicating the world over the features that characterized the “advanced” societies of the time—high levels of industrialization and urbanization, technicalization of agriculture, rapid growth of material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values. In Truman’s vision, capital, science, and technology were the main ingredients that would make this massive revolution possible. Only in this way could the American dream of peace and abundance be extended to all the peoples of the planet.

This dream was not solely the creation of the United States but the result of the specific historical conjuncture at the end of the Second World War. Within a few years, the dream was universally embraced by those in power. The dream was not seen as an easy process, however; predictably perhaps, the obstacles perceived ahead contributed to consolidating the mission. One of the most influential documents of the period, prepared by a group of experts convened by the United Nations with the objective of designing concrete policies and measures “for the economic development of underdeveloped countries,” put it thus:

There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of cast, creed and race have to burst; and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of economic progress. (United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs [1951], 15)¹

The report suggested no less than a total restructuring of “underdeveloped” societies. The statement quoted earlier might seem to us today amazingly ethnocentric and arrogant, at best naive; yet what has to be explained is precisely the fact that it was uttered and that it made perfect sense. The statement exemplified a growing will to transform drastically two-thirds of the world in the pursuit of the goal of material prosperity and economic progress. By the early 1950s, such a will had become hegemonic at the level of the circles of power.

This book tells the story of this dream and how it progressively turned into a nightmare. For instead of the kingdom of abundance promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression. The debt crisis, the Sahelian famine, increasing poverty, malnutrition, and violence are only the most pathetic signs of the failure of forty years of development. In this way, this book can be read as the history of the loss of an illusion, in which many genuinely believed. Above all, however, it is about how the “Third World” has been produced by the discourses and practices of development since their inception in the early post–World War II period.

ORIENTALISM, AFRICANISM, AND DEVELOPMENTALISM

Until the late 1970s, the central stake in discussions on Asia, Africa, and Latin America was the nature of development. As we will see, from the economic development theories of the 1950s to the “basic human needs approach” of the 1970s—which emphasized not only economic growth *per se* as in earlier decades but also the distribution of the benefits of growth—the main preoccupation of theorists and politicians was the kinds of development that needed to be pursued to solve the social and economic problems of these parts of the world. Even those who opposed the prevailing capitalist strategies were obliged to couch their critique in terms of the need for development, through concepts such as “another development,” “participatory development,” “socialist development,” and the like. In short, one could criticize a given approach and propose modifications or improvements accordingly, but the fact of development itself, and the need for it, could not be doubted. Development had achieved the status of a certainty in the social imaginary.

Indeed, it seemed impossible to conceptualize social reality in other terms. Wherever one looked, one found the repetitive and omnipresent reality of development: governments designing and implementing ambitious development plans, institutions carrying out development programs in city and countryside alike, experts of all kinds studying underdevelopment and producing theories *ad nauseam*. The fact that most people’s conditions not only did not improve but deteriorated with the passing of time did not seem to bother most experts. Reality, in sum, had been colonized by the development discourse, and those who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it, in the hope that in the process a different reality could be constructed.²

More recently, however, the development of new tools of analysis, in gestation since the late 1960s but the application of which became widespread only during the 1980s, has made possible analyses of this type of “colonization of reality” which seek to account for this very fact: how certain representations become dominant and shape indelibly the ways in which reality is imagined and acted upon. Foucault’s work on the dynamics of discourse and power in the representation of social reality, in particular, has been instrumental in unveiling the mechanisms by which a certain order of discourse produces permissible modes of being and thinking while disqualifying and even making others impossible. Extensions of Foucault’s insights to colonial and postcolonial situations by authors such as Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, Chandra Mohanty, and Homi Bhabha, among others, have opened up new ways of thinking about representations of the Third World. Anthropology’s self-critique and renewal during the 1980s have also been important in this regard.

Thinking of development in terms of discourse makes it possible to main-

tain the focus on domination—as earlier Marxist analyses, for instance, did—and at the same time to explore more fruitfully the conditions of possibility and the most pervasive effects of development. Discourse analysis creates the possibility of “stand[ing] detached from [the development discourse], bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated” (Foucault 1986, 3). It gives us the possibility of singling out “development” as an encompassing cultural space and at the same time of separating ourselves from it by perceiving it in a totally new form. This is the task the present book sets out to accomplish.

To see development as a historically produced discourse entails an examination of why so many countries started to see themselves as underdeveloped in the early post–World War II period, how “to develop” became a fundamental problem for them, and how, finally, they embarked upon the task of “un-underdeveloping” themselves by subjecting their societies to increasingly systematic, detailed, and comprehensive interventions. As Western experts and politicians started to see certain conditions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as a problem—mostly what was perceived as poverty and backwardness—a new domain of thought and experience, namely, development, came into being, resulting in a new strategy for dealing with the alleged problems. Initiated in the United States and Western Europe, this strategy became in a few years a powerful force in the Third World.

The study of development as discourse is akin to Said’s study of the discourses on the Orient. “Orientalism,” writes Said,

can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. . . . My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse we cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (1979, 3)

Since its publication, *Orientalism* has sparked a number of creative studies and inquiries about representations of the Third World in various contexts, although few have dealt explicitly with the question of development. Nevertheless, the general questions some of these works raised serve as markers for the analysis of development as a regime of representation. In his excellent book *The Invention of Africa*, the African philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe, for example, states his objective thus: “To study the theme of the foundations of discourse about Africa . . . [how] African worlds have been established as realities for knowledge” (1988, xi) in Western discourse. His con-

cern, moreover, goes beyond “the ‘invention’ of Africanism as a scientific discipline” (9), particularly in anthropology and philosophy, in order to investigate the “amplification” by African scholars of the work of critical European thinkers, particularly Foucault and Lévi-Strauss. Although Mudimbe finds that even in the most Afrocentric perspectives the Western epistemological order continues to be both context and referent, he nevertheless finds some works in which critical European insights are being carried even further than those works themselves anticipated. What is at stake for these latter works, Mudimbe explains, is a critical reinterpretation of African history as it has been seen from Africa’s (epistemological, historical, and geographical) exteriority, indeed, a weakening of the very notion of Africa. This, for Mudimbe, implies a radical break in African anthropology, history, and ideology.

Critical work of this kind, Mudimbe believes, may open the way for “the process of refounding and reassuming an interrupted historicity within representations” (183), in other words, the process by which Africans can have greater autonomy over how they are represented and how they can construct their own social and cultural models in ways not so mediated by a Western episteme and historicity—albeit in an increasingly transnational context. This notion can be extended to the Third World as a whole, for what is at stake is the process by which, in the history of the modern West, non-European areas have been systematically organized into, and transformed according to, European constructs. Representations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America as Third World and underdeveloped are the heirs of an illustrious genealogy of Western conceptions about those parts of the world.³

Timothy Mitchell unveils another important mechanism at work in European representations of other societies. Like Mudimbe, Mitchell’s goal is to explore “the peculiar methods of order and truth that characterise the modern West” (1988, ix) and their impact on nineteenth-century Egypt. The setting up of the world as a picture, in the model of the world exhibitions of the last century, Mitchell suggests, is at the core of these methods and their political expediency. For the modern (European) subject, this entailed that s/he would experience life as if s/he were set apart from the physical world, as if s/he were a visitor at an exhibition. The observer inevitably “enframed” external reality in order to make sense of it; this enframing took place according to European categories. What emerged was a regime of objectivism in which Europeans were subjected to a double demand: to be detached and objective, and yet to immerse themselves in local life.

This experience as participant observer was made possible by a curious trick, that of eliminating from the picture the presence of the European observer (see also Clifford 1988, 145); in more concrete terms, observing the (colonial) world as object “from a position that is invisible and set apart” (Mitchell 1988, 28). The West had come to live “as though the world were

divided in this way into two: into a realm of mere representations and a realm of the 'real'; into exhibitions and an external reality; into an order of mere models, descriptions or copies, and an order of the original" (32). This regime of order and truth is a quintessential aspect of modernity and has been deepened by economics and development. It is reflected in an objectivist and empiricist stand that dictates that the Third World and its peoples exist "out there," to be known through theories and intervened upon from the outside.

The consequences of this feature of modernity have been enormous. Chandra Mohanty, for example, refers to the same feature when raising the questions of who produces knowledge about Third World women and from what spaces; she discovered that women in the Third World are represented in most feminist literature on development as having "needs" and "problems" but few choices and no freedom to act. What emerges from such modes of analysis is the image of an average Third World woman, constructed through the use of statistics and certain categories:

This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being "third world" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions. (1991b, 56)

These representations implicitly assume Western standards as the benchmark against which to measure the situation of Third World women. The result, Mohanty believes, is a paternalistic attitude on the part of Western women toward their Third World counterparts and, more generally, the perpetuation of the hegemonic idea of the West's superiority. Within this discursive regime, works about Third World women develop a certain coherence of effects that reinforces that hegemony. "It is in this process of discursive homogenization and systematization of the oppression of women in the third world," Mohanty concludes, "that power is exercised in much of recent Western feminist discourse, and this power needs to be defined and named" (54).⁴

Needless to say, Mohanty's critique applies with greater pertinence to mainstream development literature, in which there exists a veritable underdeveloped subjectivity endowed with features such as powerlessness, passivity, poverty, and ignorance, usually dark and lacking in historical agency, as if waiting for the (white) Western hand to help subjects along and not infrequently hungry, illiterate, needy, and oppressed by its own stubbornness, lack of initiative, and traditions. This image also universalizes and homogenizes Third World cultures in an ahistorical fashion. Only from a certain Western perspective does this description make sense; that it exists at

all is more a sign of power over the Third World than a truth about it. It is important to highlight for now that the deployment of this discourse in a world system in which the West has a certain dominance over the Third World has profound political, economic, and cultural effects that have to be explored.

The production of discourse under conditions of unequal power is what Mohanty and others refer to as “the colonialist move.” This move entails specific constructions of the colonial / Third World subject in/through discourse in ways that allow the exercise of power over it. Colonial discourse, although “the most theoretically underdeveloped form of discourse,” according to Homi Bhabha, is “crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization” (1990, 72). Bhabha’s definition of colonial discourse, although complex, is illuminating:

[Colonial discourse] is an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a “subject peoples” through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited. . . . The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. . . . I am referring to a form of governmentality that in marking out a “subject nation,” appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity. (1990, 75)

Although some of the terms of this definition might be more applicable to the colonial context strictly speaking, the development discourse is governed by the same principles; it has created an extremely efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over, the Third World. This apparatus came into existence roughly in the period 1945 to 1955 and has not since ceased to produce new arrangements of knowledge and power, new practices, theories, strategies, and so on. In sum, it has successfully deployed a regime of government over the Third World, a “space for ‘subject peoples’” that ensures certain control over it.

This space is also a geopolitical space, a series of imaginative geographies, to use Said’s (1979) term. The development discourse inevitably contained a geopolitical imagination that has shaped the meaning of development for more than four decades. For some, this will to spatial power is one of the most essential features of development (Slater 1993). It is implicit in expressions such as First and Third World, North and South, center and periphery. The social production of space implicit in these terms is bound with the production of differences, subjectivities, and social orders. Despite the correctives introduced to this geopolitics—the decentering of the world, the

demise of the Second World, the emergence of a network of world cities, the globalization of cultural production, and so on—they continue to function imaginatively in powerful ways. There is a relation among history, geography, and modernity that resists disintegration as far as the Third World is concerned, despite the important changes that have given rise to postmodern geographies (Soja 1989).

To sum up, I propose to speak of development as a historically singular experience, the creation of a domain of thought and action, by analyzing the characteristics and interrelations of the three axes that define it: the forms of knowledge that refer to it and through which it comes into being and is elaborated into objects, concepts, theories, and the like; the system of power that regulates its practice; and the forms of subjectivity fostered by this discourse, those through which people come to recognize themselves as developed or underdeveloped. The ensemble of forms found along these axes constitutes development as a discursive formation, giving rise to an efficient apparatus that systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of power.⁵

The analysis will thus be couched in terms of regimes of discourse and representation. Regimes of representation can be analyzed as places of encounter where identities are constructed and also where violence is originated, symbolized, and managed. This useful hypothesis, developed by a Colombian scholar to explain nineteenth-century violence in her country, building particularly on the works of Bakhtin, Foucault, and Girard, conceives of regimes of representation as places of encounter of languages of the past and languages of the present (such as the languages of “civilization” and “barbarism” in postindependence Latin America), internal and external languages, and languages of self and other (Rojas de Ferro 1994). A similar encounter of regimes of representation took place in the late 1940s with the emergence of development, also accompanied by specific forms of modernized violence.⁶

The notion of regimes of representation is a final theoretical and methodological principle for examining the mechanisms for, and consequences of, the construction of the Third World in/through representation. Charting regimes of representation of the Third World brought about by the development discourse represents an attempt to draw the “cartographies” (Deleuze 1988) or maps of the configurations of knowledge and power that define the post-World War II period. These are also cartographies of struggle, as Mohanty (1991a) adds. Although they are geared toward an understanding of the conceptual maps that are used to locate and chart Third World people’s experience, they also reveal—even if indirectly at times—the categories with which people have to struggle. This book provides a general map for orienting oneself in the discourses and practices that account for today’s

dominant forms of sociocultural and economic production of the Third World.

The goals of this book are precisely to examine the establishment and consolidation of this discourse and apparatus from the early post–World War II period to the present (chapter 2); analyze the construction of a notion of underdevelopment in post–World War II economic development theories (chapter 3); and demonstrate the way in which the apparatus functions through the systematic production of knowledge and power in specific fields—such as rural development, sustainable development, and women and development (chapters 4 and 5). Finally, the conclusion deals with the important question of how to imagine a postdevelopment regime of representation and how to investigate and pursue alternative practices in the context of today’s social movements in the Third World.

This, one might say, is a study of developmentalism as a discursive field. Unlike Said’s study of *Orientalism*, however, I pay closer attention to the deployment of the discourse through practices. I want to show that this discourse results in concrete practices of thinking and acting through which the Third World is produced. The example I chose for this closer investigation is the implementation of rural development, health, and nutrition programs in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. Another difference in relation to *Orientalism* originates in Homi Bhabha’s caution that “there is always, in Said, the suggestion that colonial power is possessed entirely by the colonizer, given its intentionality and unidirectionality” (1990, 77). This is a danger I seek to avoid by considering the variety of forms with which Third World people resist development interventions and how they struggle to create alternative ways of being and doing.

Like Mudimbe’s study of Africanism, I also want to unveil the foundations of an order of knowledge and a discourse about the Third World as underdeveloped. I want to map, so to say, the invention of development. Instead of focusing on anthropology and philosophy, however, I contextualize the era of development within the overall space of modernity, particularly modern economic practices. From this perspective, development can be seen as a chapter of what can be called an anthropology of modernity, that is, a general investigation of Western modernity as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon. If it is true that there is an “anthropological structure” (Foucault 1975, 198) that sustains the modern order and its human sciences, it must be investigated to what extent this structure has also given rise to the regime of development, perhaps as a specific mutation of modernity. A general direction for this anthropology of modernity has already been suggested, in the sense of rendering “exotic” the West’s cultural products in order to see them for what they are: “We need to anthropologize the West: show how exotic its constitution of reality has been; emphasize those domains most taken for granted as universal (this includes epistemology and

economics); make them seem as historically peculiar as possible; show how their claims to truth are linked to social practices and have hence become effective forces in the social world" (Rabinow 1986, 241).

The anthropology of modernity would rely on ethnographic approaches that look at social forms as produced by historical practices combining knowledge and power; it would seek to examine how truth claims are related to practices and symbols that produce and regulate social life. As we will see, the production of the Third World through the articulation of knowledge and power is essential to the development discourse. This does not preclude the fact that from many Third World spaces, even the most reasonable among the West's social and cultural practices might look quite peculiar, even strange. Nevertheless, even today most people in the West (and many parts of the Third World) have great difficulty thinking about Third World situations and people in terms other than those provided by the development discourse. These terms—such as overpopulation, the permanent threat of famine, poverty, illiteracy, and the like—operate as the most common signifiers, already stereotyped and burdened with development signifieds. Media images of the Third World are the clearest example of developmentalist representations. These images just do not seem to go away. This is why it is necessary to examine development in relation to the modern experiences of knowing, seeing, counting, economizing, and the like.

DECONSTRUCTING DEVELOPMENT

The discursive analysis of development started in the late 1980s and will most likely continue into the 1990s, coupled with attempts at articulating alternative regimes of representation and practice. Few works, however, have undertaken the deconstruction of the development discourse.⁷ James Ferguson's recent book on development in Lesotho (1990) is a sophisticated example of the deconstructionist approach. Ferguson provides an in-depth analysis of rural development programs implemented in the country under World Bank sponsorship. Further entrenchment of the state, the restructuring of rural social relations, the deepening of Western modernizing influences, and the depoliticization of problems are among the most important effects of the deployment of rural development in Lesotho, despite the apparent failure of the programs in terms of their stated objectives. It is at the level of these effects, Ferguson concludes, that the productivity of the apparatus has to be assessed.

Another deconstructionist approach (Sachs 1992) analyzes the central constructs or key words of the development discourse, such as market, planning, population, environment, production, equality, participation, needs, poverty, and the like. After briefly tracing the origin of each concept in European civilization, each chapter examines the uses and transformation of

the concept in the development discourse from the 1950s to the present. The intent of the book is to expose the arbitrary character of the concepts, their cultural and historical specificity, and the dangers that their use represents in the context of the Third World.⁸ A related, group project is conceived in terms of a “systems of knowledge” approach. Cultures, this group believes, are characterized not only by rules and values but also by ways of knowing. Development has relied exclusively on one knowledge system, namely, the modern Western one. The dominance of this knowledge system has dictated the marginalization and disqualification of non-Western knowledge systems. In these latter knowledge systems, the authors conclude, researchers and activists might find alternative rationalities to guide social action away from economic and reductionistic ways of thinking.⁹

In the 1970s, women were discovered to have been “bypassed” by development interventions. This “discovery” resulted in the growth during the late 1970s and 1980s of a whole new field, women in development (WID), which has been analyzed by several feminist researchers as a regime of representation, most notably Adele Mueller (1986, 1987a, 1991) and Chandra Mohanty. At the core of these works is an insightful analysis of the practices of dominant development institutions in creating and managing their client populations. Similar analyses of particular development subfields—such as economics and the environment, for example—are a needed contribution to the understanding of the function of development as a discourse and will continue to appear.¹⁰

A group of Swedish anthropologists focus their work on how the concepts of development and modernity are used, interpreted, questioned, and reproduced in various social contexts in different parts of the world. An entire constellation of usages, modes of operation, and effects associated with these terms, which are profoundly local, is beginning to surface. Whether in a Papua New Guinean village or in a small town of Kenya or Ethiopia, local versions of development and modernity are formulated according to complex processes that include traditional cultural practices, histories of colonialism, and contemporary location within the global economy of goods and symbols (Dahl and Rabo 1992). These much-needed local ethnographies of development and modernity are also being pioneered by Pigg (1992) in her work on the introduction of health practices in Nepal. More on these works in the next chapter.

Finally, it is important to mention a few works that focus on the role of conventional disciplines within the development discourse. Irene Gendzier (1985) examines the role political science played in the conformation of theories of modernization, particularly in the 1950s, and its relation to issues of the moment such as national security and economic imperatives. Also within political science, Kathryn Sikkink (1991) has more recently taken on the emergence of developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina in the 1950s and

1960s. Her chief interest is the role of ideas in the adoption, implementation, and consolidation of developmentalism as an economic development model.¹¹ The Chilean Pedro Morandé (1984) analyzes how the adoption and dominance of North American sociology in the 1950s and 1960s in Latin America set the stage for a purely functional conception of development, conceived of as the transformation of “traditional” into a “modern” society and devoid of any cultural considerations. Kate Manzo (1991) makes a somewhat similar case in her analysis of the shortcomings of modernist approaches to development, such as dependency theory, and in her call for paying attention to “countermodernist” alternatives that are grounded in the practices of Third World grassroots actors. The call for a return of culture in the critical analysis of development, particularly local cultures, is also central to this book.

As this short review shows, there are already a small but relatively coherent number of works that contribute to articulating a discursive critique of development. The present work makes the most general case in this regard; it seeks to provide a general view of the historical construction of development and the Third World as a whole and exemplifies the way the discourse functions in one particular case. The goal of the analysis is to contribute to the liberation of the discursive field so that the task of imagining alternatives can be commenced (or perceived by researchers in a new light) in those spaces where the production of scholarly and expert knowledge for development purposes continues to take place. The local-level ethnographies of development mentioned earlier provide useful elements toward this end. In the conclusion, I extend the insights these works afford and attempt to elaborate a view of “the alternative” as a research question and a social practice.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE DEVELOPMENT ENCOUNTER

In the introduction to his well-known collection on anthropology’s relation to colonialism, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (1973), Talal Asad raised the question of whether there was not still “a strange reluctance on the part of most professional anthropologists to consider seriously the power structure within which their discipline has taken shape” (5), namely, the whole problematic of colonialism and neocolonialism, their political economy and institutions. Does not development today, as colonialism did in a former epoch, make possible “the kind of human intimacy on which anthropological fieldwork is based, but insure[s] that intimacy should be one-sided and provisional” (17), even if the contemporary subjects move and talk back? In addition, if during the colonial period “the general drift of anthropological understanding did not constitute a basic challenge to the unequal world represented by the colonial system” (18), is this not also the case with the

development system? In sum, can we not speak with equal pertinence of “anthropology and the development encounter”?

It is generally true that anthropology as a whole has not dealt explicitly with the fact that it takes place within the post–World War II encounter between rich and poor nations established by the development discourse. Although a number of anthropologists have opposed development interventions, particularly on behalf of indigenous people,¹² large numbers of anthropologists have been involved with development organizations such as the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (U.S. AID). This problematic involvement was particularly noticeable in the decade 1975–1985 and has been analyzed elsewhere (Escobar 1991). As Stacy Leigh Pigg (1992) rightly points out, anthropologists have been for the most part either inside development, as applied anthropologists, or outside development, as the champions of the authentically indigenous and “the native’s point of view.” Thus they overlook the ways in which development operates as an arena of cultural contestation and identity construction. A small number of anthropologists, however, have studied forms and processes of resistance to development interventions (Taussig 1980; Fals Borda 1984; Scott 1985; Ong 1987; see also Comaroff 1985 and Comaroff and Comaroff 1991 for resistance in the colonial context).

The absence of anthropologists from discussions of development as a regime of representation is regrettable because, if it is true that many aspects of colonialism have been superseded, representations of the Third World through development are no less pervasive and effective than their colonial counterparts. Perhaps even more so. It is also disturbing, as Said has pointed out, that in recent anthropological literature “there is an almost total absence of any reference to American imperial intervention as a factor affecting the theoretical discussion” (1989, 214; see also Friedman 1987; Ulin 1991). This imperial intervention takes place at many levels—economic, military, political, and cultural—which are woven together by development representations. Also disturbing, as Said proceeds to argue, is the lack of attention on the part of Western scholars to the sizable and impassioned critical literature by Third World intellectuals on colonialism, history, tradition, and domination—and, one might add, development. The number of Third World voices calling for a dismantling of the entire discourse of development is fast increasing.

The deep changes experienced in anthropology during the 1980s opened the way for examining how anthropology is bound up with “Western ways of creating the world,” as Strathern (1988, 4) advises, and potentially with other possible ways of representing the interests of Third World peoples. This critical examination of anthropology’s practices led to the realization that “no one can write about others any longer as if they were discrete ob-

jects or texts.” A new task thus insinuated itself: that of coming up with “more subtle, concrete ways of writing and reading . . . new conceptions of culture as interactive and historical” (Clifford 1986, 25). Innovation in anthropological writing within this context was seen as “moving [ethnography] toward an unprecedentedly acute political and historical sensibility that is transforming the way cultural diversity is portrayed” (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 16).

This reimagining of anthropology, launched in the mid-1980s, has become the object of various critiques, qualifications, and extensions from within its own ranks and by feminists, political economists, Third World scholars, Third World feminists, and anti-postmodernists. Some of these critiques are more or less pointed and constructive than others, and it is not necessary to analyze them in this introduction.¹³ To this extent, “the experimental moment” of the 1980s has been very fruitful and relatively rich in applications. The process of reimagining anthropology, however, is clearly still under way and will have to be deepened, perhaps by taking the debates to other arenas and in other directions. Anthropology, it is now argued, has to “reenter” the real world, after the moment of textualist critique. To do this, it has to rehistoricize its own practice and acknowledge that this practice is shaped by many forces that are well beyond the control of the ethnographer. Moreover, it must be willing to subject its most cherished notions, such as ethnography, culture, and science, to a more radical scrutiny (Fox 1991).

Strathern’s call that this questioning be advanced in the context of Western social science practices and their “endorsement of certain interests in the description of social life” is of fundamental importance. At the core of this recentering of the debates within the disciplines are the limits that exist to the Western project of deconstruction and self-critique. It is becoming increasingly evident, at least for those who are struggling for different ways of having a voice, that the process of deconstructing and dismantling has to be accompanied by that of constructing new ways of seeing and acting. Needless to say, this aspect is crucial in discussions about development, because people’s survival is at stake. As Mohanty (1991a) insists, both projects—deconstruction and reconstruction—have to be carried out simultaneously. As I discuss in the final chapter, this simultaneous project could focus strategically on the collective action of social movements: they struggle not only for goods and services but also for the very definition of life, economy, nature, and society. They are, in short, cultural struggles.

As Bhabha wants us to acknowledge, deconstruction and other types of critiques do not lead automatically to “an unproblematic reading of other cultural and discursive systems.” They might be necessary to combat ethnocentrism, “but they cannot, of themselves, unreconstructed, represent that

otherness" (Bhabha 1990, 75). Moreover, there is the tendency in these critiques to discuss otherness principally in terms of the limits of Western logocentricity, thus denying that cultural otherness is "implicated in specific historical and discursive conditions, requiring constructions in different practices of reading" (Bhabha 1990, 73). There is a similar insistence in Latin America that the proposals of postmodernism, to be fruitful there, have to make clear their commitment to justice and to the construction of alternative social orders.¹⁴ These Third World correctives indicate the need for alternative questions and strategies for the construction of anticolonialist discourses (and the reconstruction of Third World societies in/through representations that can develop into alternative practices). Calling into question the limitations of the West's self-critique, as currently practiced in much of contemporary theory, they make it possible to visualize the "discursive insurrection" by Third World people proposed by Mudimbe in relation to the "sovereignty of the very European thought from which we wish to disentangle ourselves" (quoted in Diawara 1990, 79).

The needed liberation of anthropology from the space mapped by the development encounter (and, more generally, modernity), to be achieved through a close examination of the ways in which it has been implicated in it, is an important step in the direction of more autonomous regimes of representation; this is so to the extent that it might motivate anthropologists and others to delve into the strategies people in the Third World pursue to resignify and transform their reality through their collective political practice. This challenge may provide paths toward the radicalization of the discipline's reimagining started with enthusiasm during the 1980s.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The following chapter studies the emergence and consolidation of the discourse and strategy of development in the early post-World War II period, as a result of the problematization of poverty that took place during those years. It presents the major historical conditions that made such a process possible and identifies the principal mechanisms through which development has been deployed, namely, the professionalization of development knowledge and the institutionalization of development practices. An important aspect of this chapter is to illustrate the nature and dynamics of the discourse, its archaeology, and its modes of operation. Central to this aspect is the identification of the basic set of elements and relations that hold together the discourse. To speak development, one must adhere to certain rules of statement that go back to the basic system of categories and relations. This system defines the hegemonic worldview of development, a worldview that increasingly permeates and transforms the economic, social,

and cultural fabric of Third World cities and villages, even if the languages of development are always adapted and reworked significantly at the local level.

Chapter 3 is intended to articulate a cultural critique of economics by taking on the single most influential force shaping the development field: the discourse of development economics. To understand this discourse, one has to analyze the conditions of its coming into being: how it emerged, building upon the already existing Western economy and the economic doctrine generated by it (classical, neoclassical, Keynesian, and growth economic theories); how development economists constructed “the underdeveloped economy,” embodying in their theories features of the advanced capitalist societies and culture; the political economy of the capitalist world economy linked to this construction; and finally, the planning practices that inevitably came with development economics and that became a powerful force in the production and management of development. From this privileged space, economics pervaded the entire practice of development. As the last part of the chapter shows, there is no indication that economists might consider a redefinition of their tenets and forms of analysis, although some hopeful insights for this redefinition can be found in recent works in economic anthropology. The notion of “communities of modellers” (Gudeman and Rivera 1990) is examined as a possible method to construct a cultural politics for engaging critically, and I hope neutralizing partly, the dominant economic discourse.

Chapters 4 and 5 are intended to show in detail how development works. The goal of chapter 4 is to show how a corpus of rational techniques—planning, methods of measurement and assessment, professional knowledges, institutional practices, and the like—organizes both forms of knowledge and types of power, relating one to the other, in the construction and treatment of one specific problem: malnutrition and hunger. The chapter examines the birth, rise, and decline of a set of disciplines (forms of knowledge) and strategies in nutrition, health, and rural development. Outlined initially in the early 1970s by a handful of experts in North American and British universities, the World Bank, and the United Nations, the strategy of national planning for nutrition and rural development resulted in the implementation of massive programs in Third World countries throughout the 1970s and 1980s, funded primarily by the World Bank and Third World governments. A case study of these plans in Colombia, based on my fieldwork with a group of government planners in charge of their design and implementation, is presented as an illustration of the functioning of the development apparatus. By paying close attention to the political economy of food and hunger and the discursive constructions linked to it, this chapter and the next contribute to the development of a poststructuralist-oriented political economy.

Chapter 5 extends the analysis of chapter 4 by focusing on the regimes of representation that underlie constructions of peasants, women, and the environment. In particular, the chapter exposes the links between representation and power at work in the practices of the World Bank. This institution is presented as an exemplar of development discourse, a blueprint of development. Particular attention is paid to representations of peasants, women, and the environment in recent development literature, and the contradictions and possibilities inherent in the tasks of integrated rural development, incorporating women into development, and sustainable development. The mapping of visibilities by development through the representations planners and experts utilize as they design and carry out their programs is analyzed in detail in order to show the connection between the creation of visibility in discourse, particularly through modern techniques of visibility, and the exercise of power. This chapter also contributes to theorizing the question of discursive change and transformation by explaining how discourses on peasants, women, and the environment emerge and function in similar ways within the overall space of development.

The concluding chapter tackles the question of the transformation of the development regime of representation and the articulation of alternatives. The call by a growing number of Third and First World voices to signal the end of development is reviewed and assessed. Similarly, recent work in Latin American social science, on “hybrid cultures” as a mode of cultural affirmation in the face of modernity’s crisis, is used as a basis for theorizing the formulation of alternatives as a research question and a social practice. I argue that instead of searching for grand alternative models or strategies, what is needed is the investigation of alternative representations and practices in concrete local settings, particularly as they exist in contexts of hybridization, collective action, and political mobilization. This proposal is developed in the context of the ecological phase of capital and the struggles over the world’s biological diversity. These struggles—between global capital and biotechnology interests, on the one hand, and local communities and organizations, on the other—constitute the most advanced stage in which the meanings of development and postdevelopment are being fought over. The fact that the struggles usually involve minority cultures in the tropical regions of the world raises unprecedented questions concerning the cultural politics around the design of social orders, technology, nature, and life itself.

The fact that the analysis, finally, is conducted in terms of tales is not meant to indicate that the said tales are mere fictions. As Donna Haraway says in her analysis of the narratives of biology (1989a, 1991), narratives are neither fictions nor opposed to “facts.” Narratives are, indeed, historical textures woven of fact and fiction. Even the most neutral scientific domains are narratives in this sense. To treat science as narrative, Haraway insists, is not

to be dismissive. On the contrary, it is to treat it in the most serious way, without succumbing to its mystification as “the truth” or to the ironic skepticism common to many critiques. Science and expert discourses such as development produce powerful truths, ways of creating and intervening in the world, including ourselves; they are instances “where possible worlds are constantly reinvented in the contest for very real, present worlds” (Haraway 1989a, 5). Narratives, such as the tales in this book, are always immersed in history and never innocent. Whether we can unmake development and perhaps even bid farewell to the Third World will equally depend on the social invention of new narratives, new ways of thinking and doing.¹⁵