DEVELOPMENTALISM AND THE POSTWAR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT:
A FOUCAULTIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL CHANGE AND
THE OPERATION OF POWER THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes two principal tasks in relation to postwar efforts to develop the Third World. The first of these is to explore "developmentalism" as a historically and culturally contingent conceptualisation of social change in order to map the location of development efforts. By drawing primarily on the work of Michel Foucault, I argue that developmentalism emerges in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century through intertwined relations of knowledge, power, governing and the constitution of the Western subject. This cultural-historical approach demonstrates that considerations of development efforts should not accord developmentalism, nor the economic relations and concepts which are central to it, their widely-held a priori status. Following from this requirement, the second major task taken up in this thesis involves extending current critical approaches by elaborating a Foucaultian framework for analysis of the emergence and operation of the postwar development project. This methodological approach, based on Foucault's notion of dispositif and his analytic of power, foregrounds relations of power without eliding complexity, resorting to an aggregated view of power, or reducing relations of power to economic relations. Through a macro-level application of Foucault's notion of normalisation, I show that, in the early decades of the development project, the Third World is "normalised" to the standard of economic growth and development embodied by the United States. In considering the current neoliberal conjuncture and the reconfiguration of development efforts in approximately the past two decades, the analytical framework of the dispositif enables analysis of the rise of notions of autonomy and empowerment, the emergence of the microcredit movement and the shift to sustainable development without pre-judging the power effects of these changes. My analysis of participation, empowerment and self-regulation, and the accompanying reconfiguration of development, reveals a shifting operation of power in which subjectification and developmentalist conceptualisations are central. This thesis advances an alternative interpretive framework for the study of development efforts and identifies key contemporary political sites for consideration by development practitioners and scholars.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature ...............................  

Date .................................
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ACRONYMS

Acronyms used in this thesis are introduced throughout, but I also include the full list here as a single point of reference for the reader.

CSD  Commission for Sustainable Development
EDs  Executive Directors (of the World Bank)
EDI  Economic Development Institute
EPZ  Export Processing Zone
GNP  Gross National Product
IMF  International Monetary Fund
IISD International Institute for Sustainable Development
IUCN The World Conservation Union (orig. International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources)
MCS Microcredit Summit Secretariat
NGOs Non-Government Organisations
NICs Newly-Industrialising Countries
SRT State Railways of Thailand
TNC Trans-National Corporation
UN United Nations
UNEP United Nations Environment Programme
US United States
WCED World Commission on Environment and Development
WWF World Wide Fund for Nature
A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

My use of the terms "Third World", "First World", and "the West" throughout this thesis requires explanation. I am acutely aware of the shortcomings of these terms, including their unwarranted homogenisation and aggregation of difference, the accompanying reification of conceptually flawed categories and their role in a popular understanding that the people who live in the "Third World" and outside "the West" or "First World" are somehow lesser. There are two reasons for my decision to continue to make use of them in this thesis. First, I am concerned that while the substitution of more politically appropriate terms, such as "Majority World" and "Minority World" instead of "Third World" and "First World", may reverse the aforementioned hierarchal implications, this move away from convention would soon become tedious for the reader without enhancing clarity. Second, the exploratory nature of this thesis requires that I make use of such aggregations. The problems associated with these terms are mitigated by my mindfulness of their inadequacies and my intention that the approach adopted here be a basis for my pursuit of less aggregated research in the future.
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