



# Paradigms lost, paradigms regained? Development studies in the twenty-first century

FRANS J SCHUURMAN

*ABSTRACT* Until the mid-1980s post-World War II development thinking shared three basic paradigms, ie essentialising the Third World and its inhabitants as homogeneous entities, an unconditional belief in progress and in the makeability of society, and the importance of the (nation)state in realising that progress. Development theories (from modernisation to dependencia) as well as the international development aid industry all shared these paradigms. From the mid-1980s onwards these three paradigms increasingly lost their hegemonic status and are currently, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, being replaced by a loose set of partly descriptive, partly heuristic notions like civil society, social capital, diversity and risk. This article is an attempt to analyse the most important reasons for the loss of the central paradigms in development thinking. It tries to assess the importance for development studies of several postmodern, post-development and globalisation-inspired notions and insights.

Development studies has made it to the 21st century, barely. At the same time its object of study, ie social, economic and political inequality with respect to the Third World, has made it to this century rather effortlessly. A combination of those two statements requires some explanation, which is the purpose of this article.

The impasse in development studies which revealed itself in the second half of the 1980s seemed serious enough at the time but there were already signs indicating the way towards theoretical renewal (the Regulation School, developments within the domain of gender and environmental studies). Soon it appeared, however, that the factors leading to this impasse were of a more structural nature and that other events were changing, on a global scale, the trusted points of reference (like the leading role of the nation-state) which formed part of development studies' theoretical frameworks. All this led in the 1990s to a rash of state-of-the-art publications in development studies (Sklair, 1991; Sachs, 1992; Schuurman, 1993; Norgaard, 1994; Booth, 1994; Escobar, 1995; Crush, 1995; Brohman, 1996; Preston, 1996; Cowen & Shenton, 1996; Leys, 1996; Rahnema, 1997). Every imaginable paradigmatic position with respect to the question of development and underdevelopment was reviewed and awarded its own label, which varied from 'anti-modernist nondevelopment' (Sachs) via

*Frans J Schuurman is at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nijmegen, PO Box 9104, Nijmegen 6500 HE, The Netherlands.*

‘alternative development and post-development’ (Rahnema) to ‘reflexive development’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 1998).

The character of the debates within development studies seemed to have shifted from theory to paradigm. Formerly, for example, modernisation theorists, Marxists and neo-Marxists discussed the specific role the state should play in the development process. They disagreed on that but were in agreement that the state should at least play an important role, ie on a paradigmatic level they agreed that the state was an important developmental actor. Nowadays, discussions have shifted to whether the state should play a role after all in development. At the same time, civil society supposedly seems to have evolved from a rather indeterminate conglomerate of individual households and an inarticulate societal container of economic classes and disparate social movements to a fully-fledged, articulate actor with synergetic developmental potential. Thanks to what might be called a paradigmatic disorientation, development studies started to lag behind critically involving itself in these discussions. I intend to review below the loss of the three most important paradigms in postwar development thinking and the ensuing paradigmatic disorientation within development studies.

### **Fifty years of development thinking: paradigms lost**

After the World War II developmental paradigms shared at least three characteristics:

1. The essentialisation of the Third World and its inhabitants as homogeneous entities.
2. The unconditional belief in the concept of progress and in the makeability of society.
3. The importance of the (nation)state as an analytical frame of reference and a political and scientific confidence in the role of the state to realise progress.

The first two characteristics of postwar development thinking (the Third World as a homogeneous entity and the unconditional belief in progress) form the core of so-called developmentalism: a kind of evolutionary development thinking directed at the Third World that was unilinear and teleological, and as such could harbour two apparently contradictory clusters of development theories, ie modernisation theories and Marxist development theories.

The third characteristic of postwar development thinking, the central role of the state in the development process, was a reflection of how, starting in the 19th century, the modern state increasingly took the initiative in the development process. This initiative reached its zenith in the post-World War II phase of constructing the welfare state in the Western industrial world, an idea which was subsequently exported to the Third World.

History moves on though. Social, economic and political developments change the *Zeitgeist*. Thomas Kuhn had already noted that paradigms have a natural resistance to change, though some more than others. As such, the three paradigmatic characteristics of postwar development thinking have in time come one by one under attack.

*The essentialisation of the Third World*

First of all there was a mounting critique of the idea of a homogeneous Third World. This critique was an extension of the critique of dependency theory which in its most popular version could not explain the diversity of development experiences among Third World countries. The role of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the oil crisis at the beginning of the 1970s, the economic success of the Asian Tigers in relation to the continuation of extreme poverty in Africa, and the return to military dictatorships in several Latin American countries (which was seen as a sort of political regression) all, it was felt, made clear that the Third World was too heterogeneous a category to be covered by only one development theory itself deduced from a highly questionable dependency paradigm.

Towards the end of the 1980s this critique of the alleged homogeneity of the Third World as a concept was strengthened by the postmodern critique of the essentialism of many concepts of the modernist discourse, which was brought forward by postmodernist writers such as Foucault and Derrida in particular. The ultimate consequence of their exercise, which they labelled 'deconstruction', was that social research is no longer possible. In order to carry out social research the scientist needs abstract concepts but, according to the postmodernist critique, these are either projections springing from the subjective mind of the scientist in question or based upon so-called shared experiences of a group of respondents and were deemed unreal and manipulated.

This led to a situation where, within the realm of development studies, many researchers became hesitant about specifying their domain of activities (studying the inequality in the Third World) in order to avoid being accused of essentialism, or else they turned to the vague, but relatively safe, notion of 'diversity within Third World development experiences'. In turn, this led to the awkward situation that at a paradigmatic level there was a sort of change from an emphasis on inequality to one on 'diversity', but this never experienced either a further paradigmatic elaboration or the necessary translation towards the level of testable, workable development theories.

*The end of the belief in progress*

In the 1990s the vanishing of the belief in progress became translated in to the growth of various versions of postmodern (non)development thinking, on the one hand, and, on the other, the idea of the risk society. In the 1980s development pessimism had already set in because it was realised that the gap between poor and rich countries continued to widen, that where economic growth had occurred it had a catastrophic effect on the environment and that the end of real-existing socialism had removed socialist-inspired development trajectories from the academic and political agendas.

An early version of postmodern, in fact anti-modernist, (non)development thinking was introduced by Wolfgang Sachs (1992) as follows: '... development talk still pervades not only official declarations but *even the language of*

*grassroots movements*. It is time to dismantle this mental structure' (p 1; emphasis added).

If grassroots movements wielded a discourse in which they exercised their right to have access to the development process, they were warned off by the authors of *The Development Dictionary* and implicitly accused of having a false consciousness (instilled by constant bombardment with the 'wrong images' provided by Western-controlled media). The label of underdevelopment, which the authors trace back to President Truman in 1949, led to 'arrogant interventionism from the North and pathetic self-pity in the South' (Sachs, 1992: 2). In his introduction, Sachs finds the concept of development outdated, because:

1. Belief in technology led, and will increasingly lead, to ecological disasters.
2. The concept of development was an ideological weapon in an East–West conflict which is no longer there. There is no more need to find ideological allies in the South on the basis of a project wherein the US provided the role model.
3. The welfare gap between North and South is growing and not diminishing in spite of the promise of the development discourse.
4. Development leads to a loss of diversity, which is boring.

In spite of the fact that, with the exception of the last one, these points make sense, it is still a long way from getting rid of the concepts of development and progress. Sachs' introduction continues by naming concepts, related to the development discourse, such as poverty, production, equality, standard of living etc, which in his various chapters are chopped down as reinforcing the occidental world view and leading to violence. Lastly, the introduction promises the reader a 'window of other ways of looking at the world and to get a glimpse of the richness and blessings which survive in non-western cultures in spite of development' (Sachs, 1992: 4).

Later versions of postmodern thinking also reflected similar anti-modernist ideas (eg Rahnama, 1997), relegating progress and development to the dustbin of twentieth century concepts which were better left behind upon entering the third millennium. The Western notion of progress would only cause environmental pollution because it meant industrialisation, it would sever indigenous peoples from their cultural roots and expose them as helpless victims of a global, exploitative capitalism that, through manipulation in the media, urged them to consume the wrong things for the wrong reasons with money they did not have. However, alternatives put forward by post-development thinkers have a high New Age-like content clad in Third World clothes.

Two other variants of the loss in the belief of progress with a more *fin-de-siècle* characteristic are embodied in the concept of the risk society, and in the suddenly popular appearance of 'apocalypse' authors. Allow me briefly to treat both in order to complete the picture of the lost paradigm of progress.

Moving towards the twenty-first century and, more importantly, towards the next millennium led to an array of philosophical treatises about the 'moral consciousness' with which humankind entered the twentieth century. These are not merry publications; some even carry the notions of 'apocalypse' (Bull, 1995)

or ‘betrayal’ (Norgaard, 1994) in their title. Samuel Huntington, Eric Hobsbawm and Robert Kaplan are well known current authors embodying—in varying degrees and for very different reasons—a *fin-de-siècle* pessimism. Already in his 1993 article ‘The clash of civilizations?’ (later published as a book) Huntington was urging the West to give up its universal illusions and not to meddle in regional conflicts elsewhere in the world. If the West, and more particularly the US, does not adhere to the principle of cultural relativism in international politics then a ‘clash of civilizations’ will inevitably occur. Hobsbawm (1994) finds an explanation for the *fin-de-siècle* moral crisis in the ultimate victory of individual materialism which led to the degradation of traditional networks of human solidarity. This moral vacuum results in a chaos which is completed by the onslaught of a global economy which leaves nation-states virtually defenceless. Huntington and Hobsbawm, however, are mildly optimistic in comparison to Robert Kaplan. In his 1994 article ‘The coming anarchy’ (elaborated on and later published as a book) Kaplan takes the reader on a journey through West Africa, painting a picture of total political and social chaos. Paramilitary warlords and organised bandits fight each other for scarce resources while the urban centres are ruled by corruption, crime, disease, overpopulation and a gigantic pollution. This regional criminal anarchy will eventually reach global levels. According to Kaplan, the end of the Cold War did not lead to ‘the end of history’ but, on the contrary, it ushered in a period where international relations will be dominated by chaos.

The *fin-de-siècle* studies of these authors are perhaps somewhat extreme but I do not have the feeling that they are atypical. In any case, the recent *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere was decidedly more pessimistic in comparison to the turn from the 19th to the twentieth century. Of course, at the end of the 19th century there were also doubts about what the twentieth century would bring but optimism, especially faith in the wonders of technological progress, prevailed. At the end of the twentieth century and still nowadays, it is precisely fear of the unintended consequences of technological progress which had and still has such a paralysing effect on imagining positive future scenarios.

In 1986 the German sociologist Ulrich Beck (later joined by Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash) introduced the term ‘risk society’. This term seems to imply a generalised feeling of *fin-de-siècle* pessimism, the feeling that it is useless to look ahead, to plan, because of the increasing influence of unintended consequences which the technological growth machinery bestows upon us (Beck, 1994). As a result, human agency—in spite of the reflexive modernity which would enable human actors to cope with global risks—is apparently undervalued by this approach, with concepts like progress and emancipation virtually dismissed. Also, the notion of global risk society seems a typical example of European ethnocentric thinking, because many in the Third World have never known any society other than a risk society; I will return to this later in the article.

So, in the past two decades of the twentieth century, progress as one of the most central and continually present notions of modernity finally met with heavy, albeit separated, opposition from anti-modernist, post-development quarters, from the *fin-de-siècle* ‘riders of the apocalypse’ and from the Anglo-

German axis of the reflexive modernisation theorists introducing the notion of risk society.

*The end of the belief in the role of the state*

It didn't take long for the critique of the third common characteristic of postwar development thinking (the central role of the state in development theories) to take form. Postmodernism enjoyed its near hegemonic popularity only for a relatively short time because of the appearance on the stage of that other *fin-de-siècle* buzzword: globalization. In order to understand the impact that the concept of globalization had on development studies it is important, first, to realise the importance of the concept of the (nation)state for social science theories in general. Many of those theories refer directly or indirectly to the state and the nation-state. As such, this is not surprising. The construction of nation-states in the West and the coming of age of the social sciences were simultaneous, even interrelated processes. Economic theories focused on the workings of the national market or on economic relations between nations. In political science the role of the state and the process of nation-building became central objects of study. In cultural studies the notion of a national identity was crucial in understanding differences between cultures.

No wonder that, at least at a paradigmatic level, the (nation)state also plays a central role within development studies, being an interdisciplinary social science. The importance of the state became visible in modernisation theories, dependency theories, and even in world-system theories.

Now, globalisation has changed all that. I will not tire the reader with an exposé of the many positions taken within the globalisation debate. Elsewhere (Schuurman, 1997) I have distinguished at least nine positions in the globalisation debate which go from 'globalisation indicates a new historical period, we don't know exactly how to describe it because we don't have the right vocabulary yet as our concepts are still remnants of the previous period of modernity' to the other extreme that 'if there ever has been something like globalisation then that is over and gone because we have now entered a period of increasing fragmentation and de-globalisation'.

At any rate, many participants in the globalisation debate seem to agree on the decreasing economic, political and cultural importance of (nation)states. The central role of the state, it is said, is being hollowed out from above as well as from below. In a political sense one notices the increasing importance of international political organisations which interfere politically and also militarily in particular states. In this way they relegate to the past the written and unwritten rules about the sovereignty of (nation)states and their monopoly on the use of institutionalised violence within their borders (which has always been the central element in the definition of states). The national state is hollowed out from below by the growing phenomenon of local government, which seems to have become *the* example of what good governance should be about. Economically, the state is seen as disappearing as an economic actor through privatisation supported by deregulation. Also there is the growing importance of the global financial markets where daily about US\$1500 billion is shifted around the globe.

Culturally, the idea of a national identity as the central element in identity formation for individuals or groups is quickly eroding, in favour of cosmopolitanism on the one hand and/or the fortification of ethnic, regional and religious identities on the other hand.

As the state has always played a central role, in development theories it is not hard to imagine the impact the globalisation debate has had on development studies. The impasse in development theories which was signalled in the mid-1980s took on paradigmatic dimensions in the 1990s. Most likely, however, the so-called impasse in development theories was a paradigmatic crisis right from the start. Within development studies it was always difficult to separate theories from paradigms because of its strong normative orientation.

### **Paradigms regained?**

Three paradigms of post-WWII development thinking have lost their hegemonic status within development studies. Is this something we should regret? Should we regret that development studies has moved from a theoretical crisis to a paradigmatic crisis which has prodded some to replace development studies by something called 'global studies'? The answer depends to a large extent on whether the criticisms were justified in the first place, and if so, whether postmodernism, post-development and globalisation are capable of offering new exciting paradigms which cater to the explication of development studies. Let me briefly address this question for each one of the lost paradigms.

#### *Diversity vs inequality*

The same discussion about the dangers of essentialising the object of study took place within gender studies. It is rather enlightening for development studies to trace that discussion. Gender studies is a branch of the social sciences which is akin to development studies basically for two reasons. First, the explication of gender studies shares with development studies a normative preoccupation with the lack of emancipation of large groups of people. Second, gender studies shared with development studies some of the Marxist and neo-Marxist metatheories which subsequently became heavily criticised.

According to Martin (1994: 631) what happened in gender studies was that:

in attempting to steer clear of the traps of essentialism, ahistoricity, and false generalizations, feminist theories fell into opposite but equally dangerous ones. In overcompensating for our failure to acknowledge the differences of race, class, and ethnicity, we tended a priori to give privileged status to a predetermined set of analytic categories and to affirm the existence of nothing but difference. In other words, in trying to avoid the pitfall of false unity, we walked straight into the trap of false difference.

During the 1980s feminist researchers increasingly realised (in response to consistent criticism in this respect from feminists in the South) that talk about 'women' masked difference and hence that more attention must be dedicated to the differences in the position and experiences of black women, white women,

lesbians, etc. However, as Martin notes, the problem then is that substantial differences within, for example, the category of black women (eg in the Caribbean) are not taken into account. But then, if following this line of reasoning, you end up with a near endless degree of differentiation between women. Martin concludes her lucid article by emphasising that a differentiation and categorisation of the 'target group' should be in harmony with the practical and theoretical purposes of the research in question. As such, she emphasises, however, that social categories used in the research should be sensitive to time, place, context and purpose of the research.

Stanley & Wise (1990) develop a similar argument and point out that the fear of academic and political ghettoisation and marginalisation induced feminist studies to replace the study of women with the study of gender. According to these authors gender studies is a poor second and 'a de-politicized version of feminism akin to studying race relations rather than racism and colonialism'.

I think that the messages which Martin, and Stanley and Wise put across is very relevant for anyone struggling to recover a meaningful domain for development studies. Development studies, like gender studies, has to avoid false generalisations caused by essentialist fallacies, but the answer is not to be found in burying ourselves in the trap of nonessentialism. The latter only leads to a depoliticised and a non- or even anti-emancipatory analysis of sheer endless differences between or within Third World countries.

Although I am sensitive to claims that in the past voices from within the Third World have been silenced by a Eurocentric approach to the development problem, I do not have the impression that studying the endless diversity within the South contributes anything to alleviating the poverty which is experienced (and voiced for that matter) by so many people in the Third World. In that sense I am not particularly sensitive to criticisms raised against the concept of emancipation because it happens to be a so-called Enlightenment notion discredited by postmodernism. A universal, yet context-sensitive notion of justice is still far more attractive to reclaiming a normative and political progressive domain for development studies than any postmodernist-inspired attempt in that direction.

The very essence of development studies is a normative preoccupation with the poor, marginalised and exploited people in the South. In this sense, *inequality* rather than *diversity* or *difference* should be the main focus of development studies: inequality of access to power, to resources, to a human existence—in short, inequality of emancipation. There is no doubt that there is a diversity in forms, experiences and strategies for coping with inequality which deserves to be an integral part of the domain of development studies. There is also no doubt that globalisation will contribute to new forms of inequality and new forms of resistance. Nevertheless, it is inequality as such which should constitute the main focus within the explication of development studies.

It is claimed that more attention to diversity and, therefore, a less essentialist approach to reality leads to more tolerance. That might be so, but tolerance is not necessarily the same as (international) solidarity. Tolerance is something else than the Humanist tradition within development studies, with its deep roots in the Enlightenment. There is only a very thin line between tolerance (in the sense



of accepting diversity) and cultural relativism where we tolerate each other but have nothing to say to each other any more. If the shift from the emphasis on inequality to the emphasis on difference and diversity were to the end of international solidarity, that would be something deeply to be regretted.

### *Progress vs risk management*

The solution to underdevelopment as proposed by many of the authors in the postmodern/anti-modernist tradition is often astonishingly naive in its simplicity, ie let the poor in the Third World forget about needs which resemble our own needs. Let them forget about wanting a standard of living which the North has, let them forget about wanting a decent house, access to health care, employment, etc. Because these needs draw them into the development process with all its implied negative connotations. Taking this to its ultimate conclusion, visions arise of former development workers who, after first having been deprogrammed and then reprogrammed with the proper attitude, re-enter the field in order to help the poor in the Third World to forget about 'First World' needs.

At the very moment that the scarcity of nature as a resource is being internationally accepted (albeit slowly), the circle of anti-modernist, post- and nondevelopment authors advises us to forget about the whole notion of scarcity because it forms part of a strategy to impose capitalist logic on those who do not need it. More concretely the Third World's poor are advised to disengage from the market and to try to trade through other channels, to organise their own education, not to use Western medicines, no more artificial fertilisers or pesticides (just intercropping), and not to set unlimited goals if you have limited means.

I have the strong impression though, judging from the messages conveyed by many a social movement in the Third World, that peasants and indigenous people in the South are often strongly interested in getting the prices right for their products, and having access to bilingual education, electricity, transportation and adequate health care. In fact, many social movements and grassroots organisations in the South demand from their governments to be included in the development process and not treated anymore as second-class citizens. Many NGOs in the South as well as in the North support these groups in their justified claims for full citizenship and political participation. Hunger and high morbidity and mortality rates in the Third World do not just disappear merely by changing the subjective perspective of the people involved.

Further, the concept of risk society is not uncontested with respect to its value for developed countries in the North, let alone its relevance to the poor in the South. Frank Füreidi of the University of Kent is one of the concerned, progressive scholars who takes the concepts of reflexive modernisation and risk-consciousness to task (Füreidi, 1996). Firstly, Füreidi criticises the idea that global risk is something new, that it is one of the side-effects or perhaps even one of the constitutive characteristics of the post-Fordist globalisation phase. Füreidi denounces this as a pretty ethnocentric and ahistorical view as he points out the risks which colonised people forcefully had to undergo because of the expansion of Western capitalism. As far as these indigenous peoples are

concerned theirs has been a risk society ever since the penetration of colonialism.

Second, it seems very opportunistic to Füredi to come up with a concept like global risk society just at the moment when the risks which the North has always been able to export to the South now also threaten the industrialised nation-states. Füredi's third objection is that the concept of risk society invokes the image of risks being evenly spread. Pointing towards the global dimensions of risks does not take away the fact that certain nations—or more specifically certain categories of people—are more risk prone than others. Risk is unequally distributed geographically and sociologically, and thinking otherwise draws away attention from the necessity of emancipatory projects directed at the global underclasses.

Finally, the concept of risk society underrates the power of human agency and overrates the (apparent) autonomous dynamic of technology which would lead us all unequivocally towards the apocalypse. In relation to the previous objection, this means that collective social action to fight the unequal distribution of risk could be considered useless because social change can only be a consequence of technological developments. So, in a risk society we are doomed to keep on running from one panic to the next. Collective emancipatory projects are relegated to the margin of the broader, global picture.

A new morality based on self-restraint is put forward by the adherents of the risk society. However, it does not seem likely that risk management through self-restraint is a more powerful beckoning perspective for the poor in the Third World than the notion of progress.

Having entered the twenty-first century the notion of progress seems to have lost much of its hegemonic status within development studies. Alternative views, however, have not been able to reconstruct the paradigm–theory–practice chain in a broadly accepted way in the same manner as the concept of progress did, nor have they incorporated it within development studies.

### *State vs civil society*

The central role of the (nation)state has become de-emphasised in favour of civil society, local government, or a combination of both. Where national states in Third World countries have failed to institutionalise democracy and a start a decent economic development, local government is now supposed to be able to do just that in a synergetic collaboration with actors from within civil society and with representatives of national and international capital. 'Good governance' nowadays is no longer associated with the old image of a welfare state but with new forms of local synergy between economic, political and cultural actors.

It is highly interesting to observe how developments within the economic, political and cultural sciences reflect the move away from the central role of the nation-state. In the economic science we see the rapidly increasing interest in economic sociology, ie the idea that economic logic has more sociocultural roots than thought of. In the political sciences emphasis is increasingly placed on local government, and cultural studies concentrates on new, hybrid forms of identity construction. Many of these new developments come together in the study of

civil society. Also, national and international development projects tend to concentrate ever more on fortifying the role of civil society.

I would like to comment briefly on three issues: the notion implied by globalisation concerning the retreat of the state, the potential emancipatory role of local government, and the significance of civil society.

In a lucid article about the historical phases of globalisation Deepak Nayyar (1997) finds it naive to write off nation-states as important players in the globalisation game despite the fact that, in the imperial phase of globalisation, nation-states played a more important (economic and political) role than currently. Nation-states, says Nayyar, still remain important in political and strategic terms. In his view it was the military strength of the imperial powers at the time which used to set the rules of the game, in contrast to the present day where it is the political clout of nation-states ('to back up the rules imposed by the transnational corporations, the banks, etc.'). Here Nayyar stands in contrast to someone like Martin Shaw (1996) who thinks that military strength still defines the relations between states and 'hence the parameters of the world system of power, and that the notion of undermining of (nation)states in an age of globalization has focussed too much on the economic/cultural definitions of nation-states'.

Rajni Kothari takes up a position in the middle when he puts forward the idea that

the new framework of capitalism is based on a transition from the politicomilitary model of international management and domination (the phase of 'imperialism') to a technofinancial system of global (as distinct from international) integration into one overarching world market ... [This leads to] the erosion of a state-based structure of national and international interactions. (Kothari, 1997:234)

It does not seem logical to Kothari to see the shift of a power base from the politico-military to the techno-financial as an indication of the weakness of the state. On the contrary, he sees it as a more subtle form of control. In other words the definition of the state should be updated.

Nayyar, Shaw and Kothari took a line of reasoning which positioned the (nation)state above all as a result of the spatial spread or concentration of trade and investment. Jan-Aart Scholte (1995) takes a different point of view. He defines globalisation as the supraterritorial dimension of social life and subsequently discusses globalisation in terms of the nature of collective identity, because, for Scholte at least, identity is crucial in social relations. According to Scholte then:

before the onslaught of the nation-state in the 19th century the social relations were heavily focussed on the immediate territorial place. However, after the mid-19th century the nationality principle became dominant in the identity construction. This, at the same time, meant the suppression of all those alternative forms of identities which were based on different dimensions (eg regional, religious etc.), suppressed dimensions which now in the global era start 'blossoming' again with sometimes disastrous consequences (ethnic strife in Africa, nationalist secessions in the Balkans, religious fundamentalism in northern Africa/Algeria): in fact 'pre-modern' forms of identity rising in a global era.

The important question which Scholte brings up is whether these ‘pre-modern’ forms of identity are a temporary anachronism emerging in an era where global capitalism and modernity are reconstructing themselves and temporarily creating ideological vacuums (because of the end of the Cold War, the usual *fin-de-siècle* insecurity, etc) or whether they are the heralds of a new type or strategy of emancipation in a global era.

According to Scholte, much of present-day capitalism is still bound up with national firms, national currencies and national markets. Also, ethnic strife and indigenous movements tend to reproduce nationhood at a smaller scale. So, as Scholte concludes ‘globalisation also goes hand in hand with renationalisation’. Globalisation is not about eliminating nations, only about complicating the construction of collective identities, leading to hybridisation and, as such, Scholte proclaims globalisation a core feature of late modernity.

So, all in all there is little reason to suppose that the role of the state came to an end because of globalisation. By the same token, the issue of local government must be handled with care. It must be realised that the idea of local government is a decidedly Western notion which is intimately tied to the history of capitalism in the West, reaching its post-Fordist phase from the middle of the 1970s onwards, during which the role of the state was increasingly seen as a hindrance to economic development. Now that many Third World countries are currently in a transition phase to democracy, the notions of local government and local autonomy are fed into the national political rhetoric and often used as such in façade politics. It is often conveniently forgotten, for example, that ideas like local government or local autonomy presuppose a phase of nation-building first where a civil society is firmly constructed. Also there was a phase of welfare capitalism during which the state provided a safety net for those who threatened to fall outside the boat. Now, local governments in the Third World run the risk of falling prey to globally organised capitalism because their economic and political safety nets have not yet been constructed and their civil societies are weak, not having been preceded by a process of nation-building nor by a phase of welfare capitalism. It is tragic that, at the moment that many Third World countries are finally starting to get rid of undemocratic regimes, the national state is robbed of its importance.

Can the responsibility for human emancipation be moved from the state towards civil society? Can the paradigmatic role of the state be replaced by that of civil society? Communitarians like Amitai Etzioni (1997) certainly seem to think so, for the developed world in any case. An important point to be made is that the notion of civil society is highly reified. It is presented as a kind of actor with enough agency to engage itself in a synergetic relation with local government. I do not at this point want to draw the reader into a discussion about the ins and outs of the the concept of civil society. What is important to note is that, in the context of development studies, the concept of civil society is already politically translated into projects to support the transition to democracy in former wartorn countries like Guatemala, former non-democratic regimes like South Africa, and former Communist countries like Croatia.

However, the enthusiasm with which civil society has been embraced as a new paradigm has not been matched by an elaboration of its theoretical dimensions.

A focal point in the attempts to give civil society ‘hands and feet’ seems to be the notion of social capital. According to Robert Putnam (1993) and Francis Fukuyama (1996) the construction of a civil society with the ‘right’ kind (ie leading to democracy and economic development) of social capital is a highly (historic) path-dependent process. If these authors are correct, we can question current attempts to help Third World countries construct a civil society with the right kind of social capital. In any case, it would be highly premature for development studies to replace the paradigmatic importance of the state by that of civil society.

### Conclusion

All in all, development studies as a typical post-WWII branch of social science has experienced its share of criticisms of its central paradigms: better put, it received more than its share because of its normative and interdisciplinary character. Some of these paradigms seemed to have been lost for good and from the mid-1980s onwards the contours of what became known as an impasse in development studies became clearly visible. When in the following decade the concept of globalisation swept through academia and policy-making institutions it became clear that development studies would probably not make it as such to the next century. Its proposed replacement, global studies, was already beckoning. Still, development studies has crossed the millennium threshold though, admittedly, not with a gracious jump. I hope that this article has shown where the criticisms of the central paradigms of development studies came from, and that alternative paradigms are either absent or less attractive from the point of view of emancipation as I have used it in this text. This does not imply that development studies should totally cast aside these criticisms. The challenge for development studies is to re-establish its continued relevance to study and to understand processes of exclusion, emancipation and development—not particularly by clinging to its once treasured paradigms but by incorporating creatively the new *Zeitgeist* without giving up on its normative basis, ie the awareness that only with a universal morality of justice is there is a future for humanity.

### References

- Beck, U *et al* (1994) *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Booth, D (ed) (1994) *Rethinking Social Development* (Harlow: Longman).
- Brohman, J (1996) *Popular Development. Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Development* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Bull, M (1995) *Apocalypse Theory and the Ends of the World* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Cowen, M & R Shenton (1996) *Doctrines of Development* (London: Routledge).
- Crush, J (1995) *Power of Development* (London: Routledge).
- Escobar, A (1995) *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Etzioni, Amitai (1997) The end of cross-cultural relativism, *Alternatives*, 22, pp 177–189.
- Fukuyama, F (1996) *Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press).
- Füredi, F (1996) ‘Risk-consciousness: the escape from the social’, lecture at the Conference on The Direction of Contemporary Socialism, University of Sussex, 26–28 April.

- Hobsbawm, E (1994) *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph).
- Huntington, S (1993) The clash of civilizations?, *Foreign Affairs*, 73, pp 22–49.
- Kaplan, R (1994) The coming anarchy: how scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet, *Atlantic Monthly*, 273 (2), pp 44–76.
- Kothari, Rajni (1997) Globalization: a world adrift, *Alternatives*, 22, pp 227–267.
- Leys, C (1996) *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (London: James Currey).
- Martin, J (1994) Methodological essentialism, false difference, and other dangerous traps, in signs, *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 19 (3), pp 630–657.
- Nayyar, Deepak (1997) Globalization: the past in our present, *Third World Economics*, 168, pp 7–15.
- Nederveen Pieterse, J (1998) My paradigm or yours? Alternative development, post development, reflexive development, *Development and Change*, 29, pp 343–373.
- Norgaard, R (1994) *Development Betrayed. The End of Progress and a Coevolutionary Revisioning of the Future* (London: Routledge).
- Preston, P (1996) *Development Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Putnam, R (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Rahnema, M (ed) (1997) *The Post-Development Reader* (London: Zed Books).
- Sachs, W (ed) (1992) *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (London: Zed Books).
- Scholte, Jan-Aart (1995) ‘Constructions of collective identity,’ Paper presented at the conference on The Organization Dimensions of Global Change: No Limits to Co-operation, University of Cleveland, OH.
- Schuurman, F (ed) (1993) *Beyond the Impasse. New Directions in Development Theory*, (London: Zed Books).
- Schuurman, F (1997) ‘Emancipatory spaces in the global era’, Paper presented at the Wolfsberg conference, Nijmegen 30 October–1 November.
- Shaw, Martin (1996) The global revolution in the social sciences: the globalization of state power as a defining issue’, paper presented at the conference on The Direction of Contemporary Socialism, University of Sussex, 26–28, April.
- Sklair, L (1991) *Sociology of the Global System* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Stanley, L & S Wise (1990) Method, methodology and epistemology in Feminist Research Processes, in: L Stanley (ed) *Feminist Praxis* (London: Routledge), pp 20–60.