

Introduction

While I was sitting in the Grande Salle de Conference of one of the European Union buildings in Brussels, during the first plenary forum of the Non Government Forum for the Third United Nations (UN) Conference for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in May 2001, an exchange occurred between a delegate from the Maldives and the plenary session chair, a representative of a Washington-based American Non-Government Organization (NGO). As the chair was outlining the structure of the three-day NGO Forum, and the focus of various sessions, the delegate from the Maldives asked the question ‘When will we be discussing the criteria for the LDCs?’ The Maldives had been identified as being at the point of graduation from the category, and the delegate expressed concern about who would be making this important decision, and the potential negative impacts on his country. A delegate from Vanuatu immediately supported his intervention with the following words about her country’s people: ‘other people define us to be poor’. Subsequently the delegate from Cape Verde expressed grave concerns about the impact on his country of leaving the group and being classified as ‘more developed’.

As a number of other participants from NGOs in LDCs began to request speaking rights in response to this, the chair briskly brought the discussion to a close by stating that there was no time for that discussion; the purpose of this NGO Forum would be and had to be the discussion of the draft document for the Third UN strategy for the LDCs which would be the exclusive focus of deliberations at the UN conference over the coming days. This comment was then reinforced by the British co-chair of the session who stated that he couldn’t imagine why such an issue was even raised when the entire purpose of everyone present was to ensure that countries left the LDC grouping, an achievement which should be a cause for celebration. The delegate from the Maldives tried to reply, but the chairs of the session quickly moved discussion onto another topic and he fell and stayed silent.

Later during the UN Conference itself I was with representatives of the NGO Gender Caucus, which included women from Togo, Benin and Uganda, as we advocated for stronger references to women in the text. When we sought a meeting with the female head of the European Union delegation she refused to engage in any discussion. Her response was ‘Gender issues? No. You just can’t get everything into this document.’

This conference, held in Brussels in May 2001, was open to representatives of all national governments, and NGOs. My attendance and participation in the Third UN Conference on the LDCs and the associated NGO Forum was a critical starting point for the research for this thesis. I attended as a delegate from the World Young Women’s Christian Association, an organization with consultative status at the United Nations that provides services and support to women in over 100 countries world wide, including in many of the LDCs. Together with other NGO

representatives I worked to form the Conference's Gender Caucus and advocated for the inclusion of references to women and gendered poverty in the LDC strategies. This conflict about priority topics for discussion outlined in the anecdote above remained unresolved and despite this incident, the criteria for determining LDCs status were never listed on the agenda of the meeting at the NGO Forum. These two incidents not only highlighted a significant difference of views and perspectives between these NGO conference delegates and session chairs, the gender caucus representatives and official government delegations. It also highlighted the inequitable power relationships between those who set and those who attempted to challenge these meetings agendas, and the different cultural, economic and social locations of those divergent perspectives.

The conference produced a document to guide UN policy and international assistance to the LDCs over the coming ten years. The LDCs are a grouping of countries identified by the UN as the poorest of the poor in the so-called Third World, which by virtue of this status require specific focused attention and development assistance. Normally such UN documents circulate through various international communities with great authority as if carved in stone. Attending this conference provided a privileged insight into the contested power dynamics engaged in the construction of international UN development policy. The experience highlighted the stark difference in position and power between those individuals, such as myself, who have the privilege of participating in these events, and those whose lives are being described. These incidents highlighted the inequitable power dynamics in the creation of these development texts. Witnessing this process opened the door for readings of these texts that saw them not as carved in stone but as fragile as eggshells, able to be cracked open with the simple question: where are the women?

The worldliness of texts

What becomes clear through these incidents of challenge and rebuff is that these UN policy documents are worldly, to use Edward Said's term, not only because they perform a worldly task of guiding policy and decision-making, or because they are about poverty – fundamentally worldly matters – but because of the way they function as a product of development discourse. These UN policy documents are a way of knowing in development discourse. It is through repeatedly asking questions, such as “where are the women?” that the productive nature of development discourse becomes visible. Said's arguments about the worldliness of texts, the materiality of their creation and interpretation, provide new insights into literary and cultural texts in ways useful for understanding development as discourse. In identifying and invoking the network of material and cultural affiliations within texts, the socio-political and economic context of their creation, their readers, their critics and their modes of interpretations, Said challenges the academic disciplinary tendency to isolate and confine the interpretation of literary and other texts (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 1999). In *Culture and Imperialism* (Said [1993] 1994), Said responds to the dominant literary readings of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* that focus on her use of wit and her social observations of the intrigues that surrounded the engagements and marriages of women of a certain social class in England in the early 1800s. Said challenges the authority of the

dominant critical readings of this text by identifying the network of multiple affiliations within the text which link it, this light romantic comedy of manners, with the dispossession, violence, racism and genocide associated with the slave trade and the praxis of colonialism in the colony-dependent British economy of Regency England.

The core subjects of the text, the domestic affairs of the Bertram family and those associated with them in 'civilized society', and the main protagonist Fanny Price, appear to have no relationship at all with texts focused on the impact and consequences of colonization and empire. All Said does is ask the very simple question: "Where is the money coming from?" With this one question Sir Thomas Bertram's estate in Antigua changes from a minor aside in a sentence, a place to "be away to", a location to "grow up" his eldest spendthrift son, a rationale behind the shifting willingness to be a benevolent benefactor to Fanny Price, into a location of the harshness and violence of the slave trade.

The time was now come when Sir Thomas expected his sister-in-law to claim her share in their niece, the change in Mrs Norris' situation, and the improvement in Fanny's age, seeming not merely to do away any former objection to their living together, but even to give it the most decided eligibility; and as his own circumstances were rendered less fair than heretofore, by some recent losses on his West India estate, in addition to his eldest son's extravagance, it became not undesirable to himself to be relieved from the expense of her support, and the obligation of her future provision. (Austen [1814] 1962:356)

Said's question 'Where is the money coming from?' brings an altogether different perspective into view about the concerns and affairs of the young women, young men and their families that are the subject of Austen's delicate and witty prose.

Said's analysis then proceeds to demonstrate the mechanisms by which the values, lives and social mores of the civilized society documented in the text are dependent upon the distant sugar estates of Antigua, and so associates this novel of civility with the cultural justifications for the racist social and economic violence that underpinned the way of life of imperialist Britain. In this way, Said's exploration of the network of affiliations within the text reveals Austen's use of a constant "geographical and spatial clarification" (Said [1993] 1994: 102). This analysis is then relocated within a study of the tropes within British literature that provided cultural justification for colonialism. Austen's text and those of other British literary writers are analysed for their ways of treating the wider world, the imperial environment. Said argues that the canon of British literature, by virtue of the selective focus of its texts, celebrates the nature of 'civilized' England, a home of values, morals, order, beauty, good things and good people.

But positive ideas of this sort do more than validate 'our' world. They also tend to devalue other worlds and, perhaps more significantly from a retrospective point of view, they do not prevent or inhibit or give resistance to horrendously unattractive imperialist practices. (Said [1993] 1994: 97)

By virtue of their celebration of the tropes of 'civil' society, Said argues that texts such as Austen's in the celebrated canon of British literature mask and separate themselves from their relationships with the world.

In drawing on Said's analysis to start this examination of the UN LDC category I am exploring texts that are 'of the world' in their very making, texts that are worldly in their context, content, creation and interpretation. Policy and strategy on development produced by the United Nations is overtly 'of the world' in its manner of creation, through negotiation and consensus agreement with representatives of every member country. The issues of marginality, dispossession, violence, and poverty are the very topics addressed. These policy and strategy documents are developed, interpreted and used to redress the injustices they identify. Academic disciplinary specialization and criticism does not confine their interpretation and understanding to a space away from 'the world'.

The question central to Said's concept of worldliness is, "Who addresses us in the text?" ([1984] 1991) In asking this, Said seeks to identify, explore and reveal the tropes and discourses affiliated to and within the text and the dominant readings of it. Said's concept of worldliness provides a useful analytic tool in identifying and exploring the discourses of international development policy. The very act of asking who addresses us in the text opens doors to different readings. What are the sources of knowledge? How are these texts read in the context of what they say and argue? And most importantly from a feminist perspective, where are the women?

Who is speaking?

This thesis draws on these questions to re-read development discourse via an exploration of UN LDC category, through both the work of the UN Committee that oversees the administration of the category itself, the UN Committee for Development Policy (formerly the UN Committee for Development Planning) and through the 10 year international plans of action to improve the situation of the LDCs which have been developed and endorsed by all UN member states since 1971. A key issue to explore within this LDC category discourse analysis are the questions of what is known and how it is known in these texts.

While membership of this UN committee and the delegates at the international meetings that develop and endorse UN policy and plans comprise representatives from all over the globe, including individuals with LDC nationality and LDC country delegates, there is no question that these individuals are not 'the poor'. These delegates and representatives are not those for whom poverty, ill health, dispossession and marginality are daily life. The very ability to be present at these events locates these individuals as literate, identified as authorities within their field and country, with access to opportunities and sources of funds. In international development practice, these participants can be identified as privileged, viewers or voyeurs of the poverty of others, and representatives of modernity (Pigg 1996:161). In her work Pigg locates development practitioners, researchers and policy-makers as unwitting or unconscious representatives of modernity who despite motivations of goodwill, cannot be separated from the harm – violence, dispossession, poverty – colonial and post-colonial eras have generated. As such, those in the authorship role for these UN policy documents are, to draw from Said, associated through the network of affiliations with the disruption and violence of colonialism, the inequities of globalisation and the fundamental socio-

political and economic change that is the bread-and-butter business of ‘doing development’.

The writings of Gayatri Spivak are useful here in acknowledging these questions of who addresses us in UN development policy texts. In exploring the dynamics of the privileged interested observer in her work on the politics of representation, Spivak (1987) argues that there is an inherent violence present in the act of knowing and speaking for others, in becoming an acknowledged expert and authority on the lives and culture of others, and in the documentation, creation and use of this knowledge. This is particularly the case for those who become experts in fields associated with gender and development, where there are stark inequalities in the socio-economic positions of external experts and those who are ‘known’, for whom gender violence and chronic poverty are the stuff of daily life. An example of Spivak’s arguments is found in her discussion of a story written by Bengali writer and activist Mahasweta Devi, about an Indian academic specialist on rural tribal communities. This example locates the representative of modernity with exacerbating violence and poverty.

In this story Senanayak, a Bengali academic specialist in indigenous combat and politics is asked and accepts involvement in a military police search for Santal¹ guerrilla fighter, Draupadi (also known as Dopdi) Mehjen. She has been involved in attacks on farms that have illegally bored extra waterholes during a severe drought, and police stations where fellow fighters have been imprisoned, tortured and killed. Senanayak’s years of academic specialisation and research on the customs and warfare methods of forest-dwelling tribal communities stand him in good stead in advising and guiding the police raids. Draupadi is duly captured, interrogated, multiply raped and tortured. The story concludes with Draupadi, still alive after her night of torture by the military police, tearing her sari so it cannot be worn and confronting Senanayak as she is brought to him for the morning’s interrogation:

The commotion is as if the alarm had sounded in a prison. Senanayak walks out surprised and sees Draupadi, naked, walking towards him in the bright sunlight with her head high. The nervous guards trail behind.

What is this? He is about to cry but stops.

Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds.

What is this? He is about to bark.

Draupadi comes closer. Stands with her hand on her hip, laughs and says, the object of your search Dopdi Mejhen. You asked them to make me up, don’t you want to see how they made me?

Where are her clothes?

¹ Santal is the name of an indigenous tribe, identified as one of the Austro-Asiatic Munda tribes, living in West Bengal, India (Devi in Spivak 1987:187).

Won't put them on, *sir*. Tearing them.

Draupadi's black body comes even closer. Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senanayak simply cannot understand. Her ravaged lips bleed as she begins laughing, Draupadi wipes the blood on her palm and says in a voice that is terrifying, sky splitting, and sharp as her ululation, 'What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?...

Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts, and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid. (Devi 1981 in Spivak 1987:196)

As Draupadi stands before Senanayak, it is the confrontation with the results of the use of his knowledge, of the reality of the violence associated with its use, which renders him speechless and afraid. In her commentary on this story, Spivak acknowledges the relationship between her own writing and violence, a relationship which is always present in the growth of academic and other literature associated with interdisciplinary 'development studies', particularly the literature on the situation of women in the third world. It is a difficult and troubling association to find oneself identified and located as actively involved, or at best quietly complicit, with the promotion of marginality, violation and dispossession.

We grieve for our third world sisters; we grieve and rejoice that they must lose themselves and become as much like us as possible in order to be "free"; we congratulate ourselves on our specialist's knowledge of them.... When we speak for ourselves we urge with conviction: the personal is political. For the rest of the world's women, the sense of whose personal micrology is difficult (though not impossible) for us to acquire, we fall back on a colonialist theory of most efficient information retrieval. We will not be able to speak to the women out there if we depend completely on Western-trained informants. As I see their photographs in women's studies journals or on book jackets - indeed, as I look in the glass - it is Senanayak with his anti-fascist paperback that I behold. (Spivak 1987:179)

Spivak's use of this story by Mahasweta Devi brings to the fore the violence, present, past and future, associated with knowledge making. This story dramatises the violence of contemporary knowledge and expertise about developing countries. The knowledge practices used by Senanayak are those of the colonial authority in orientalist literatures, the specialists in colonial cultures documented by Said in *Orientalism* ([1978] 1991). In this story, the connection between knowledge and its use in facilitating violent dispossession and quelling of resistance is clear, direct and unambiguous. This story provides a connection between the seeming untouchable objectivity of UN policy and, as Said would term it, its links to the world. It reminds us to ask, Where are the women, their voices and experiences? Devi's story informs readings about the violence associated with the development of policy and bureaucratic administration of the LDC category that seeks to define who are the poorest amongst the poor without the participation or awareness of 'the poor' themselves.

I have reflected on this difference in power and knowledge making through the experience of participating in the LDC conference in 2001. As a white western

woman with the position and privilege of wealth, race and higher education, I had the privilege of participating in the conference about the countries defined as the poorest of the poor amidst the palatial marble lined halls of the European Parliament and Commission buildings. The contrast with the lives of the women in LDCs whose voices struggled for any discursive attention at the conference was and remains stark. The lack of voice through the lack of any form of participation in a discourse that produces material effects through the provision and targeting of aid finance is a violent disenfranchisement.

Development as discourse

Foucauldian and post-structuralist understandings of power/knowledge have heavily influenced the emerging discourse analysis of development. The analysis of development discourse draws explicitly on the work within development studies of Raymond Apthorpe (1996, 1997), Arturo Escobar (1984-85, 1995), Gustavo Esteva (1992), James Ferguson (1990), Chandra Mohanty (1991, 1997), Uma Narayan (1997), Stacey Lee Pigg (1996), Wolfgang Sachs (1992), and Gayatri Spivak (1987, 1996, 1999). In various ways these authors investigate the genealogy of the term 'development', situating its use in specific contemporary social, political and economic contexts, each rooted in particular imperial and colonial histories. It is an analysis rooted in an interest in exploring not only how knowledge is produced and reproduced, but for whom (the West or the Rest?) and the power dynamics involved (Hall 1992). This exploration of the conceptual filiations associated with development as a concept, theory and praxis, challenge the *realpolitik* assumption that development is an objective, commonsense, geographically and historically universal concept. The violence of knowledge-making identified in Pigg (1996) and Spivak (1987, 1996, 1999) can be seen in the unqualified failure of these efforts by the UN to alleviate poverty in countries identified as the poorest of the poor through the creation of category LDC.

Drawing on Foucault I argue that there are specific elements that operate within LDC discourse that can be identified as tools that organise information and produce knowledge, which I have termed 'technologies of knowledge'. Gender analysis provides the entry point identifying discursive boundaries that function to determine what information is considered valid within UN LDC development discourse. I define gender analysis as a process of identifying the gendered differences and inequalities between the social, economic and cultural experiences of diverse women and men, that recognises both the position of the researcher and the 'knowledge object'. It is when these discursive boundaries are visible that the operation of these technologies of knowledge can be explored. I define technologies of knowledge as devices within discourse that function to produce knowledge in a variety of ways and have material effects and consequences. These technologies of knowledge within development discourse, and their interaction with gender analysis, are what I examine in this thesis, with UN LDC category as a case study.

The UN has played a significant role in the production of development discourse, initiating the first of a series of Decades for Development in 1961 to coordinate international efforts to alleviate extreme poverty and reach discursively defined

goals of social and economic growth. According to Escobar (1995) this process commenced and constitutes a discursive “making and unmaking” of the third world in development discourse.

As part of this production of development discourse in the post Second World War period, the United Nations created a new classification in 1971, the Least Developed Country (LDC), to describe the “poorest and most economically weak of the developing countries, with formidable economic, institutional and human resources problems, which are often compounded by geographical handicaps and natural and man-made disasters” (UN Capital Development Fund 2006). The LDC category established and administered by the UN identifies a grouping of countries that are the ‘poorest of the poor’, facing the greatest challenges and obstacles to sustained social and economic change that would ameliorate the difficulties faced by their populations. In the three decades since this discursive act of creation, the number of countries classified as Least Developed has increased from 25 to 50. These countries have a combined population of approximately 600 million people, who comprise roughly 10% of the world’s total population but who receive only one tenth of one percent of its income (UN Capital Development Fund 2006).

Table 1: List of Least Developed Countries as at 2005

Afghanistan	Guinea	Sao Tome and Principe
Angola	Guinea-Bissau	Senegal
Bangladesh	Haiti	Sierra Leone
Benin	Kiribati	Solomon Islands
Bhutan	Lao People’s Democratic	Somalia
Burkina Faso	Republic	Sudan
Burundi	Lesotho	Timor-Leste
Cambodia	Liberia	Togo
Cape Verde	Madagascar	Tuvalu
Central African Republic	Malawi	Uganda
Chad	Mali	United Republic of Tanzania
Comoros	Mauritania	Vanuatu
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mozambique	Yemen
Djibouti	Myanmar (Burma)	Zambia
Equatorial Guinea	Nepal	
Eritrea	Niger	
Ethiopia	Rwanda	
Gambia	Samoa	

Source: UNCDP 2000: para 109

Since the introduction of the LDC classification, these countries identified by the UN as the ‘poorest of the poor’ have been the specific objects of many international programmes, policies and strategies through efforts facilitated by LDC strategies and many others. However this classification initially designed to aid developing countries has seemingly had the opposite effect: not only has the number of countries classified as LDCs increased; further, it is recognised that inequality in the global economy is increasingly marginalising these countries as their indebtedness outstrips national GDP, a greater number of the world’s population are living in poverty (World Bank 2000), and in many countries the economic and social conditions for economic growth are worsening (Akubue 2000; Arrighi 2002; Haque 2002). The LDC category is also used outside the UN. In

recent years the LDC category emerged as a critical issue within the Doha Round (or 'Development Round') of World Trade Organisation (WTO) talks, which sought to attain new trading benefits for LDCs (WTO 2000; WTO 2001; WTO 2006) as an attempt to address this situation².

There is the question of why one should examine a seemingly ignored category of UN policy, given that there have been so many international policy strategies produced by the UN on such a broad range of topics. Wolfe (1996) has argued that UN policy processes function as face-saving rituals for countries who like to appear as if they are addressing issues of human rights and development, particularly when it comes time to review implementation:

The institutional imperatives to identify 'progress' that took at face value the 'national achievements' reported by governments, and the normative declarations approved by those governments, clashed with observable reality. (Wolfe 1996:1)

The procedures established within the collegial 'family of nations' (Hyndman 1998) at the UN ensured that bureaucracy numbed research reports and strategies:

An intergovernmental body might direct the Secretariat to prepare a report for its next meeting on how to satisfy all human needs. Half a dozen functionaries would strain to do so. The result, which might be expected to have a reception equivalent to that of one of the great documentary landmarks of human history, would be tepidly approved or criticized and would disappear without trace into government archives and the storerooms of the issuing organisations, rarely remembered even by other functionaries preparing subsequent 'practical' reports. It might receive a brief mention in the more conscientious newspapers when it appeared, but scholarly journals would not trouble to review it. (Wolfe 1996:2)

This appears to be the fate of the LDC category. Created in 1971 as a mechanism to increase development assistance and effectiveness to the 'poorest of the poor', after ten years little had been achieved and the discursive response was to prepare a ten-year policy plan. The admitted lack of any improvement in LDC category countries at the conclusion of this first ten years led to a predictable discursive response, another ten-year plan. A third ten-year plan is in place now. As noted previously, at no point in my research for this thesis have I been able to identify any scholarly work analysing this category LDC. It is the productivity of LDC as a category within development discourse that is of such interest to me. Bringing this category out of the archives and into the realm of study is an act of forensic exploration of the production and reproduction of LDC category, and as such provides useful insights into development as discourse more broadly.

It is important to note that this category 'LDC' is different to the category 'Less Developed Countries' that was explored in James Ferguson's influential text on development in Lesotho (1994). Ferguson is describing a classification developed and used by the World Bank for internal fund allocation and development activity purposes. Given the prominence of the World Bank, the term has been taken up by

² An example of these benefits can be seen in the initiative launched by the European Union (EU) in advance of this round of talks. The 'Everything But Arms' initiative was designed to give all LDCs equal access to EU markets for all products, goods and services except military manufactures (UNCTAD 2002: 224; Cernat et al 2003)

other multilateral and bilateral lending and development assistance organisations. Both 'Least Developed Country' and 'Less Developed Country' are part of a wide variety of classifications and groupings used by various development agencies and institutions, each of which may or may not be associated with an analytic approach and praxis³. For example, a term that emerged in the mid 1990s was 'HIPC', Highly Indebted Poor Country, which was associated with new strategies for debt-relief (Easterly 2002; Gautam 2003). One of the more recent terms to emerge from the World Bank is 'LICUS', Low-Income Countries Under Stress (World Bank 2005), associated with the provision of new grants for a small range of development activities to support basic social services (for example, for countries who have defaulted on loans, or who may have recently been or currently are in conflict).

This thesis is a study of development discourse through the core texts associated with the administration of the UN's category LDC over thirty years, including UN committee reports, international UN strategies and data. It focuses on the construction and generation of a discourse. As a discourse analysis of international development policy and its administration, this study pays particular attention to the presence or absence of gender as a way of placing third world women at the centre and starting point of analysis (Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian 2003). In so doing, this project will explore some of the ways in which development is a site of contest and debate, both in its praxis and in its conceptual foundations. A particular contribution of this thesis is the bringing together of post-modern influenced critiques of development with gender analysis, a noticeable absence from the seminal work of Escobar⁴, Esteva, Ferguson and Sachs.

With the use of gender analysis, the thesis will explore three key areas of development discourse: I have termed 'technologies of knowledge', policy, classification and data. The central contention of this thesis is that UN policy on the LDCs provides an important, useful, and previously ignored example of how development functions as a discourse, and that a critical characteristic is that it is constrained in its ability to comprehend, describe and promote change in developing countries. After extensive reviews of the literature, it has become clear that the UN's LDC category has not been the subject of academic research or analysis. In exploring the way that this category operates as a discourse I have focused on assessing how the category includes and excludes gender analysis in its operation. This fundamental connection is based on an understanding that as women are over-represented in the populations who are the 'poorest of the poor', gender analysis is critical to policy initiatives designed to ameliorate poverty in the group of countries that identified as the 'poorest of the poor'.

³ The production of new terminologies and categories is a characteristic of international development discourse, and constantly subject to debate. See Liou and Ding (2002) for an interesting debate about the inadequacy of broad categories and large groupings of developing small states, which concludes that new categories are required.

⁴ I am aware that Escobar has collaborated with Wendy Harcourt to produce *Women and the Politics of Place*, published by Kumarian Press in October 2005. Unfortunately due to problems with the Australian distributors, I have not been able to obtain this in time to include it in this thesis.

Gendered Perspectives

Since the category LDC was created by the UN gender disparities continue to exist, and are prevalent in every region of the world in various forms (King and Mason 2001). These persisting gender-based inequalities are evident in terms of morbidity, mortality, health, poverty, education, and access to services, employment, credit, land, basic rights, and levels of participation in decision-making. An increasing feminisation of poverty has been frequently linked with the implementation of structural adjustment policies, and with the increasing prevalence of female-headed households, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America (Ashfar and Dennis 1992; Baden et al 1998:4; Beneria and Bisnath 1996; Stewart 1995). This information has been used to argue that as national poverty disparities increase, there is an increasingly greater impact on women (Simmons 1992). This is not to say that all women are poor, and all the poor are women, to paraphrase Kabeer (1994). It is, rather, an argument that the gendered dimensions of poverty are a critical component of the social context in any given country or community. It is an argument that if one is to focus on the poorest of the poor, then surely one should focus on women.

This leads to a core question within this project: If the LDC category is designed to alleviate poverty in the countries that have been identified as the 'poorest of the poor', to what extent do these strategies recognise women in LDCs and the gendered disparities in the prevalence of poverty? This question then leads to others. How are the gendered dimensions of poverty present in these international policy texts about the LDCs? How is the 'network of filiations' (to paraphrase Said) present when searching policy texts for acknowledgements of gendered disparities? How does the appearance or absence of gendered approaches and strategies play out existing tensions in the production and reproduction of development discourse?

This thesis' exploration of development discourse is situated within postcolonial and feminist readings of gender and development, such as those by Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian (2003), Marchand and Parpart (1996), Mohanty (1991, 1997), Narayan (1997), and Spivak (1999). In this it will examine aspects of the politics of representation of women and poverty, with a particular focus on the UN international policy on the LDC as a site of contested gendered development discourse. In charting the making and unmaking of the LDC within development discourse, this thesis will identify the presences and absences of the gender analysis.

The analysis will apply key questions to identify the status of gender analysis within the intergovernmental development texts produced at the start of each ten-year UN plan for the LDCs: Is development considered to be gender-neutral in the construction of these policies? When is gender important within this discourse and when is it silenced? Where gender is brought into development discourse, what theoretical models of gender and development are being employed? What are the processes of discursive construction and production of the identities, communities, needs and priorities of the global poor and global women? This thesis highlights that, at a time when gender analysis in international development practice grew in prominence and recognition with the series of UN international conferences on the

status of women in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1995, it was poorly applied when used in these international development strategies for LDCs. Gender analysis in international development practice and research in these three decades has not only increased in prominence and recognition, but has also undergone major changes in approach from women in development (Boserup 1971), to women and development (Mies 1982, 1986; Visvanathan 1997), to gender and development (Moser 1993; Ostergaard 1992; Wallace and March 1991) and gender mainstreaming (Woodford-Berger 2004; Subrahmanian 2004). This is discussed in detail in Chapter 1 as part of the discussion that locates this thesis within postmodern-influenced critiques of development theory and praxis, and feminist interventions in development discourse.

Technologies of Knowledge

My reading of LDC category is influenced by Foucauldian theories of knowledge-making which have identified the ways in which discourse functions both as a means of producing knowledge and wielding power. This relationship and the phrase ‘technologies of knowledge’ is explained in Chapter 1. It is based on the postmodernist insight that all knowledge is based on a paradigm of what ‘counts’ as knowledge, what information can be incorporated as valid within a particular discipline or way of knowing. Chapter 1 locates the methodology and research approach of this thesis within postmodern-influenced readings of development as discourse, and the body of feminist interventions and critiques of development theory and praxis. This case study of UN LDC category explores the ways in which it functions as a discourse of development. This analysis of how the category LDC functions within development discourse charts what I propose are three key identifiable technologies of knowledge: policy, categorisation using criteria, and data. Throughout the thesis gender analysis is critical in identifying and exploring how these technologies of knowledge operate.

The discussion of these three technologies of knowledge – policy, category criteria and data – is framed by a discussion of development discourse and gender analysis in Chapter 1 ‘Key concepts and analytical approach’. The discussion on gender positions this analysis as influenced by the trajectory of feminist engagements with development as both as a theoretical discourse and as praxis. The discussion on development positions this work within post-development critiques of development policy, practice and theory. In reading all these texts about the UN LDC category and policy what has become clear, and what I document in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, is a repeated shifting of LDC women from invisibility to visibility and back again. Discursive gendered assumptions are visible through both many absences and some rare specific mentions of LDC women. The analysis in this thesis highlights gendered aspects of the boundaries of what development is, whom it is for and how it can be understood.

Chapter 2 ‘Policy texts: structured representations’ focuses on an analysis of this technology of knowledge, policy. Policy articulates definitions of conceptions of development, and outlines endorsed authoritative directions for action, through recommendations for a wide range of actors with influence. This chapter explores the ways in which women have been represented in the three ten-year long

international strategies adopted by the United Nations General Assembly to alleviate poverty in the LDCs, covering the periods 1981-1991, 1991- 2001 and 2001- 2011. This discussion focuses on the ways that processes of policy formation and recommendation constrain analysis of the situation in LDCs. The analysis covers thirty years of international development policy through these major policy strategies. While there is some change over this period, the gender roles represented are limited. In addition, despite the rhetoric to the contrary, gender analysis and issues of importance to women remain marginal to the central policy recommendations. Furthermore, these policy initiatives tend to locate agency/responsibility for women's issues solely with the LDCs themselves, without supporting recommendations for assistance with the full range of development partners, including donors and multilateral agencies. What becomes clear in this examination is that throughout this time period these policies are unable to move beyond a narrow, 'culture-free' analysis of the situation in LDCs and as a consequence, are unable to move beyond a narrow development approach in which gender is always marginal.

Chapter 3 'Category LDC: acts of administration' focuses on the creation and administration of the category itself as a technology of knowledge. This chapter focuses on the way in which the category LDC is defined. It is based on extensive primary research of the reports of the body that oversees the administration of the countries included, the United Nations Committee for Development Planning (UNCDP) 1981-2004. This research revealed the significance of the criteria in administration of the LDC category. The chapter begins with a discussion of the constitution of the UNCDP. It then explores in detail the ways in which gender is introduced into the analysis undertaken by this UN Committee, identifying the gender roles identified by the Committee as relevant to LDCs in development planning and policy. This discussion is followed by an examination of the criteria used in determining LDC status and identifying the factors that have been the main drivers behind changes implemented over time. It becomes clear that the criteria invite a narrow, mechanistic and limited range of knowledge of development context. The chapter undertakes a detailed survey of the ways in which the Committee has applied the LDC criteria in making its determinations about which countries have been included or excluded and why. I argue in this chapter that the process of administering the category LDC seems to produce a circular self-referential discourse where every issue and every country's situation seems to come back to the criteria and the difference between the information they include and what is outside their scope. This circular mode of operation inhibits the ability for this discourse to incorporate broader issues in LDC country assessments and reviews. I argue that fundamentally, this characteristic of this technology of knowledge inhibits the UNCDP's ability to introduce and apply gender analysis to its work and recommendations.

Chapter 4, 'Data- knowing by numbers' focuses on data as a technology of knowledge. Data are the types of policy facts used by this administrative regime in defining, categorising, analysing and monitoring the development context in LDCs. I argue that data operates as a technology of knowledge in LDC discourse to limit the type of information used in understanding the dynamics of poverty in LDCs. This chapter is based on research on the data within the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Least Developed Countries Reports from

2002 and 2004. None of the data used in determining LDC status is disaggregated by sex, neither is the data used in the poverty analyses produced in these two reports. The chapter explores what this data reveals about LDCs as well as analysing what is 'outside the frame'. The chapter begins with a discussion of the use of the nation-state as a unit of analysis, and draws on feminist critiques of international relations and liberal economics to question the utility of this reliance on national level aggregates. This examination of data focuses on the three LDC criteria. Focusing first on the low-income criteria, the chapter explores readings of national poverty indicators, notably how these can reveal comparative information about the differences between nation states but are limited in their ability to describe poverty in the countries themselves. The chapter then discusses the other two criteria, national economic vulnerability and human assets and reveals the limits of these criteria in identifying the complexity of the development context in the LDCs. This is made explicit in a specific discussion of the development impacts of HIV/AIDS and conflict, both factors currently excluded from the range of formal policy facts used in LDC policy analysis. Throughout this discussion, the inability of the data to incorporate information that would enable gender analysis is used as an illustrator of how the data operates as a technology of knowledge in LDC category discourse.

The conclusion reframes the initial questions asked in the introduction about the relationship between LDCs and gender, and the worldly operation of policy texts, with a summary of the three technologies of knowledge and how they have revealed some of the discursive boundaries of UN LDC policy, particularly through its inability to incorporate gender analysis.

At the outset of this thesis I would like to state that my argument does not address *realpolitik* questions about the failure of LDC strategy to alleviate poverty. In so doing, I want to make clear that I do not argue that the invisibility of gender is the sole cause of this failure, nor is the lack of gender analysis the key to the inadequacy of LDC policy. This would deny the role and significance of the many other contributing factors to the current state of affairs in those countries identified as LDCs, including shifts in trade and commodity prices; the impact of globalisation; HIV/AIDS; national levels of indebtedness and the impact of structural adjustment reforms; the impact of the high reliance on aid; and the presence of internal and external civil unrest, destabilization, overt conflict and warfare. Rather, through this exploration of UN LDC development discourse, I will be exploring how these strategies operate when the gendered nature of poverty is *not* a central concern. What this analysis of LDCs category and policy provides is an appreciation of the connections that can be made between gender analysis and analysis of the operation of development as discourse. Through this work this thesis seeks to place women in the third world at the centre of analysis, and provide a modality for recognising the importance of critical reflection within development theory and praxis.