

Chapter 5: Conclusion

...I have tried to argue that a critical intimacy with deconstruction might help metropolitan feminist celebration of the female to acknowledge a responsibility toward the trace of the other, not to mention toward other struggles. That acknowledgement is as much a recovery as it is a loss of the wholly other. The excavation, retrieval, and celebration of the historical individual, the effort of bringing her within accessibility, are written within that double bind at which we begin. But a just world must entail normalization; the promise of justice must attend not only to the seduction of power, but also to the anguish that knowledge must suppress difference as well as differ-ance, that a fully just world is impossible, forever deferred and different from our projections, the undecidable in the face of which we must risk the decision that we can hear the other.
(Spivak 1999:198-9)

Spivak's call for deconstruction of grand narratives has a particular focus in this quotation on the narratives of universal and essentialist womanhood, narratives which in their invoking of a global sameness erase local diversity and difference and structural inequality. In the introduction to this thesis Spivak's arguments about the location and politics of knowledge-making and use were illustrated by the story of the use of an academic specialist Senanayak's information to facilitate the violent apprehension and subsequent rape of an indigenous woman, Draupadi. I have drawn on this story to situate the analysis of grand narratives of enlightenment within development discourse in 'the world' with all its violence and inequity. With the use of the story of Draupadi fighting for rights to access water for her tribe, Spivak highlights indigenous female agency and strength. With the use of the story of Senanayak, Spivak locates herself in the shoes of the academic specialist with expert knowledge, who unwittingly facilitates rape and violence in the capture of Draupadi. This story highlights the problematic nature of the use of knowledge about others, particularly those with less access to the international privileges of socio-economic power. It is this story which has provided a way forward for this thesis in its search to answer the initial question, which was framed by Said's challenge, to identify the worldliness of policy texts within United Nations development discourse. Unlike Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park*, UN policy documents on the Least Developed Countries are not concealing topics of poverty and inequality. Their subject matter is the very stuff of the world that Said argues is hidden in *Mansfield Park*. A starting point in answering Said's challenge, which I have explored in this thesis, lies in the questions inspired by Spivak's story of Draupadi: where are the women, and how are women known?

The thesis has put forward the proposition that gender analysis can play a critical role in identifying aspects of how development discourse functions. It argues that in analysing UN Least Developed Country policy, development discourse functions in three ways which I have termed technologies of knowledge: classification through criteria, data and policy. Throughout this thesis, gender analysis has been used to identify the discursive boundaries and limits of the UN's LDC category, and to explore the ways in which the technologies of knowledge operate. In so doing it has maintained a specific focus on identifying where the women are and how they are 'known' in UN LDC development discourse. This approach has been crucial in an exercise that has sought to explore why international policy that focuses on the countries that are the poorest of the poor has not included a focus on women, the poorest of the poor.

Chapter 1 outlined the research methodology and the reliance on primary policy texts, in the absence of a body of academic literature analysing the UN LDC category. This chapter also outlined the key concepts and analytic approach taken in this exercise, notably the focus on discourse analysis and the use of the concepts of technologies of knowledge inspired by Foucauldian theory. The chapter locates this thesis within the body of literature within development studies that draws on Foucauldian discourse analysis to assess development theory, policy and praxis. This includes the seminal work of Escobar, Ferguson, Sachs and Shestra which has sought to highlight the ways in which key development concepts, such as poverty, progress and planning, have their own distinctive genealogies as concepts and terms, which interact to produce development discourse and praxis. Chapter 1 also locates this work within the field of gender analysis of and within development, and situates it explicitly with the work of theorists such as Spivak, Mohanty and Narayan who have questioned feminist ways of knowing about women in developing countries.

Chapter 2 focuses on policy as a technology of knowledge. It examines the products of the three UN Conferences on the Least Developed Countries, held in 1981, 1991 and 2001, and through tracing the representation of women, identifies the discursive continuities in the documents, despite the decade between each one. In identifying the ways in which policy operates as a technology of knowledge the key argument is that the policy format itself structures representations and discussion, limits agency, and relies on essentialist 'culture-free' representations. The assessment of the representation of women highlights the fleeting appearances of women or gender analysis, the separation of the social and economic, and the lack of agency attached to the references to action on the status of women. The discussion charts the way in which the policy process becomes increasingly focused on the production of policy, and policy is used as a barometer legitimizing issues for inclusion within LDC discourse. This is identifiable through the inclusion of issues and concerns in the policy documents that had previously been ignored through reference to other policy texts. The result of this operation of policy as a technology of knowledge is that the policy analyses and prescriptions are limited by the boundaries of UN LDC discourse, and critical issues are either excluded in total, or included in such a marginal position that they are excluded from the assessment of effectiveness of policy implementation.

Chapter 3 explores the second technology of knowledge, categorization through criteria. The key focus of the argument in this chapter was to highlight the ways in which gender analysis highlights the boundaries and limitations of the UN LDC category and its administration. The chapter argued that the body charged with the administration of UN LDC category, the UN Committee for Development Policy (formerly Committee for Development Planning), has been unable to broaden the analysis undertaken of individual LDC country contexts, or of LDCs as a group in comparison to other international groupings of developing or developed countries, as the boundaries of the discourse excludes women and gender as issues of relevance. Through reviews of the category itself, and through the processes of assessment for country inclusion (or exclusion) from the LDC grouping, the UNCDP has inexorably focused on producing increasingly specialized and refined processes for the administration of the category without questioning the core assumptions embedded within it, such as the exclusion of gender analysis. The attempts at including gender analysis and specific references to the status of women are inherently marginalized affairs, whether in the proposed human capabilities approach to development, or in other discussions. The references to women or gender analysis are always transitory, included one moment, excluded the next, and always essentialist, treating women in LDC countries as homogenous passive victims or only as potential agents ignoring the current breadth and diversity of contributions by women to social and economic and cultural and spiritual life in LDCs.

Chapter 4 explores the operation of data as a technology of knowledge. It argues that, as a result of the very definition of what information is included in the criteria, the information included is gender-blind, and thus produces a limited analysis. This chapter traces the data used in three criteria that assess inclusion in category LDC by the UNCDP with the most recent data produced by UNCTAD in its LDC reports for 2002 and 2004. The criteria are economics biased. The chapter traces arguments of feminist economists that conventional economics is based on an artificial separation of social and economic spheres. This separation is identifiable in the ways that data operates as a technology of knowledge within UN LDC development discourse. A key feature of the operation of data as a technology of knowledge is that it uses the nation state as the unit of analysis, which fundamentally inhibits the ability to undertake and produce any sub-national level analysis. This factor means that there is no use of gender-disaggregated data, and as a result no gender analysis of poverty is undertaken. There is also no ability to produce analyses that assess similarities and differences between different LDCs, with the result that all LDCs are effectively treated as homogenous.

This thesis contends that while UN LDC category policy and administration has been ignored until now in academic debate and discussion it provides a useful and important area for study, highlighting aspects of the operation of development discourse. The thesis draws on primary UN reference material to undertake this analysis of development discourse and identifies and argues two key findings. Firstly, the thesis demonstrates that there is a fundamentally critical role for gender analysis within postmodern-influenced analyses of development discourse,

identifying the limits of information that has discursive legitimacy. As a result of this first finding, the thesis argues that UN LDC development discourse operates through three technologies of knowledge: category classification through criteria, data and policy. These three technologies of knowledge function in various ways, but all reinforce UN LDC discursive boundaries that limit and constrain the analysis undertaken and produced, with the result that critical issues which impact on the development trajectories of countries within the LDC grouping are excluded and the analyses are 'culture-free'. In exploring the interaction between gender and these three technologies of knowledge in UN LDC category, this thesis provides useful insights into the modes of operation of development as discourse.