ABSTRACT

MEGHAN CLAIBORNE
Removing the "Human" from Humanitarian Aid: The Creation of the Peasant and his Role in Development Theory
Under the Direction of PAMELA VOEKEL

During the late 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, development theory was greatly influenced by a rising class of scholars known as modernization theorists. These development experts attempted to explain the state of Less Developed Countries around the world be developing the concept of a generalized "peasant" and the "problems" associated with these peasants which kept the worlds' poorest countries from developing into capitalist societies. Because of their preconceived concept of the "peasant", these experts never truly understand the people they were developing projects for nor what the goals of their projects needed to be in order to positively affect Less Developed Countries. The approach of these modernization theorists to development led to inefficient and ineffective development initiatives. This paper will study the flaws in this sect of early modern development theory, as in the World Bank's failed Thaba-Tseka Project, by comparing it to the Good Roads Movement, an early 20th century development project. The Good Roads Movement focused on bottom-up organization, direct participation of rural citizens, and incorporation of local knowledge in project planning. Modern development theory has made a great deal of progress in the past several decades. It is important to recognize that these modernization theorists were a sect of development theory and not all experts shared this view of Less Developed Nations. Over the years these early views have been reformed and re-examined and will hopefully lead to an era of more effective development projects.

INDEX WORDS: Development, Modernization Theory, Peasant, World Bank, Good Roads Movement, Thaba-Tseka Project , Less Developed Country

REMOVING THE "HUMAN" FROM HUMANITARIAN AID: THE CREATION OF THE PEASANT AND HIS ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT THEORY

by

MEGHAN E. CLAIBORNE

A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council of the University of Georgia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

BACHELOR OF ARTS

in HISTORY

with HONORS

Athens, Georgia

2009

REMOVING THE "HUMAN" FROM HUMANITARIAN AID:

THE CREATION OF THE PEASANT AND HIS ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT THEORY

By

MEGHAN E. CLAIBORNE

Approved:

April 29, 2009
Date

Dr. Pamela Voekel
Faculty Research Mentor

Approved:

April 29, 2009
Date

Dr. David B. Mustard
Reader

Approved:

May 8, 2009
Date

Dr. David S. Williams Date
Director, Honors Program, Foundation Fellows and
Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities

Approved:

May 8, 2009
Date

Dr. Pamela B. Kleiber Date
Associate Director, Honors Program and
Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities

DEDICATION

To my family. For all your support and advice over the years. Especially for my parents, Maureen and Pat, who have been a constant inspiration to me for the past 22 years. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my Mentor, Dr. Pamela Voekel, for devoting so much time to guiding me in my research and keeping me motivated with her passion for learning. I would like to recognize Tammy Ingram for taking time to meet with me and sharing all her valuable research. Special thank Rob Tripp and especially Fred King for assisting me by lending me their experience and personal insight. Finally, I would like to thank my reader and mentor, Dr. David Mustard, for all his help and advice over the past few years.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER 1
THE REBIRTH OF DEVELOPMENT THEORY

> *Like "civilization' in the nineteenth century, "development" is the name not only for a value, but also for a dominant problematic or interpretive grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us. Within this interpretive grid, a host of everyday observations are rendered intelligible and meaningful. Poor countries are by definition "less developed," and the poverty and powerlessness of the people who live in such countries are only the external signs of this underlying condition. The images of the ragged poor of Asia thus become legible as markers of a stage of development, while the bloated bellies of African children are the signs of social as well as nutritional deficiency. Within this problematic, it appears self-evident that debtor Third World nation-states and starving peasants share a common "problem," that both lack a single "thing": "development."*[1]

The concept of international "development" began to expand greatly during the early and mid twentieth century as new world powers emerged from the First and Second World Wars and technological advances began changing the face of modern nations and their economies. People began studying other civilizations and dividing them into categories of those that were developed and those that were less developed. The new emerging class of development experts started attempting to understand the economic and social interworkings of foreign nations well enough to devise development projects to fix the "problems" of these less developed nations. While development theory has changed drastically in the past several decades, some of the earliest development experts' simplified and sometimes distorted understanding of the world's poor led to a temporary crippling of the effectiveness of some development initiatives.

This paper will explore several critiques of early development theory and explain how the standardization of the conceptual "peasant" by certain development experts is believed by some to have caused problems in the beginning stages of modern development. This early ideology

[1] James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), *xiii*.

will be compared to a successful development project in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Good Roads Movement, to explain the variances in outcomes of the different development ideologies. Finally, the paper will look at what changes development institutions have made in recent years to correct previous development ideology.

The Creation of the "Peasant"

During the postcolonial era, a new concept was born- "the peasant". With the end of the World Wars came an attempt to rebuild the broken nations affected by the wars and to create stable economies in countries that seemed susceptible to the spread of Communism. By the late 1950s, the rather disappointing results of the first wave of international development initiatives gave birth to a second generation of development theorists know as modernization theorists, or structural functionalists. As Maria Saldana-Portillo put it, these theorists "attempted to provide sociological, psychological, and cultural explanations for the failure of development economics to take hold in any given Third World society."[2] Scholars made an attempt to study and classify these "peasants" from all countries and assign them to one group possessing a certain array of specific characteristics. One of the fundamental beliefs held by these modernization theorists about less developed nations was that their inability to develop came from their traditional or backwards society. It was believed that all developing nations would have to go through the same experiences to transition into the accepted version of a modernized society.

Portillo pointed out that this blanket theory "dehistoricized the evolution of global capitalism."[3] It literally took the people out of the equation of development. Instead of looking at the historical economic and social facets of a society to understand how they got to where they

[2]Maria Josefina Saldana-Portillo, The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 26.
[3] Ibid., 27.

were and what were the specific elements causing that society to remain at the present level of development, all less developed nations were grouped together. Modernization theorists attempted to create a basic mold through which to force every nation in hopes of producing replications of the accepted "developed" nation model they had created.

W. Rostrow's *Stages of Economic Growth*, published in 1960, was one of the first works of the new class of emerging modernization theorists and provides us with a perfect example of this type of development theory. Rostrow's book mapped out the five stages of development as: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption.[4] Rostrow argues that "traditional" societies remained as such due to a lack of production possibilities. It was not that the people had chosen to remain as they had, but that certain political, social and economic characteristics had not yet been changed in order for "regular growth" to take place.[5] These earliest development theorists seemed to think that less developed nations would be just like the world's super powers, if only they had the opportunity. They approached development with the predetermined conclusion that they knew what was best for these less developed nations, that they knew what they really wanted to be like, and that it was up to these foreign development experts to guide them through the steps to enter the age of modernization and achieve the ultimate goal: the age of high mass consumption.

According to Timothy Mitchell, author of *Rule of Experts*, this emerging class of development theorists caused a "category of human being[s to] became a field of expertise, the subject of his own scholarly journals and the object of a distinct body of theory and description."[6] This drastic transformation was fueled by authors like Rostrow and others who

[4]Walt Whitman Rostrow, *The Stages of Economic Development* (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4.
[5] Ibid., 6.
[6] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (CA: University of California Press, 2002), 123.

popularized these new views. Mitchell's book examined several of the earliest authors to study and develop the early image of the modern world "peasant". One of Mitchell's main sources was Richard Critchfield's *Shahhat: An Egyptian*, published in 1978. Mitchell examined Critchfield's claim that his book presented the reader with a vision of a typified peasant.

While the book focused on a particular peasant boy in Egypt, *Shahhat* became a major influence on the international representation of "the peasant" of less developed nations. Despite the acclaim it received and its widespread popularity, Mitchell critiques *Shahhat* saying that a careful reading exposes the book as a construction of earlier representations of peasants. He claims it is but "a collage of familiar Orientalist images juxtaposed with clippings taken- in fact plagiarized- from earlier writings", including large chunks directly copied from *The Egyptian Peasant* by Henry Habib Ayrout published over a decade earlier in 1963.[7]

Critchfield presented Shahhat as a traditional Egyptian coming of age during a time of modernization. As he put it, Shahhat was one of the many villagers who had "never changed their way of life in more than six thousand years but was forced to adjust to modernity in less than a decade."[8] This sounds very much like the "traditional society" described by Rostrow. The resemblance could be the result of direct contact between the authors or just a similar acceptance of commonly held notions about undeveloped nations. Either way, I believe it shows that Critchfield's work, a study about a youth growing up in an Egypt which had remained stagnant for thousands of years, was formulated to project a preconceived Western notion about these newly developed "peasants".

Evidence of this claim is found in the fact that Critchfield blatantly ignores the actual social and economic state of Egypt. In the nineteenth century alone Shahhat's region of Upper

[7] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 124.
[8] Ibid.

Egypt had seen huge changes in commerce including Egypt's long-distance trade with India, Arabia and the Sudan as well as changes in the textile industry. In addition, this time period witnessed the adoption of private land ownership and the increasing usage of technology in agriculture leading to higher levels of export crops. These are just a few examples of modernization and change that took place in the very area that Critchfield claimed was just as it had been six millennia before.[9] It seems fairly obvious that the misrepresentation of facts in Critchfield's works were part of his attempts to fit his research to the emerging development theories.

Ayrout was guilty of the same generalizations and stereotypes in his work, *The Egyptian Peasant*. As Mitchell put it, "Everything encountered, it seems, as the original of something ancient and exotic that one has already seen in a museum, or read about in the literature of Orientalism, or imagined from the distant past."[10] And Ayrout, as the inspiration of and actual source of a great deal of Critchfield's work, wrote his entire study of "the peasant" and rural Egypt without any firsthand knowledge of the subject. The only personal exposure to the area Ayrout had was looking out the window of a train on his way to Alexandria at age twelve to go receive his education in France.[11] Critchfield was not depicting a true to life vision of "the peasant," but constructing the idea of what he believed *should be* the peasant. After all, increases in investments in raw materials and in internal commerce, both of which resulted from private land ownership and technological increases, were indicative of a nation that had already reached Rostrow's second level of development, "the preconditions for take-off".[12] By beginning the novel in an Egypt that was in what Rostrow and other modernization theorists

[9] I Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 127.
[10] Ibid., 128.
[11] Ibid., 146.
[12] Rostrow, *Stages of Development*, 6-7.

accepted as the first stage of development, Critchfield was able to follow Shahhat through the proceeding stages as Egypt suddenly emerged as a "developed" nation.

The philosophy behind Critchfield's and Ayrout's writings comes from the works of Gustave Le Bon, author of *Les lois psychologiques de l'evolution des peoples* and *Psychologie des foules*. Both of these works address social structures and played a large role in helping to define "the peasant." The first issue Le Bon looks at is how to scientifically examine the differences between modernized and antiquated or "backward" societies. He also tries to identify what it is that separates the masses from the elite in societies. Le Bon argued that as a nation evolved, the elite were separated from the masses like cream from milk. As the psyche of its people developed based on hereditary accumulation of ideas, beliefs and feelings, the elite began to develop a "collective mind". As a result of this process, "It is the elite that 'constitute the true incarnation of the forces of a race…' The crowd or mass (la foule) is composed of cells so merged together that they constitute a 'provisional being,' with an unconscious collective mind."[13] Ayrout's employment of Le Bon's philosophy throughout his work is obvious in statements like, "The peasant is "as little of a personality as he is of an individual."[14]

The "Problem

These works by Ayrout and Critchfield, which were so influential on early development theory and the concept of "the peasant," were based not only on dubious factual sources but were deeply influenced by a philosophy which did not even recognize "the peasant" as a true individual being. Ayrout suggested that the "solution" to the *problem* of a people without architecture, material, or intellect was a total reconstruction of the village. But what was the

[13] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 130.
[14] Ibid., 131.

problem Ayrout was talking about? Despite the fact that this man who was hailed as one of the first *experts* on "the peasant" had based his writing consisted mainly of what he had stolen from the *Description d'Egypte*, journals of 19th century tourists visits to famous Egyptian museums, and the philosophical writings of Gustave Le Bon, Ayrout still considered himself knowledgeable enough about these "peasants" to step in, define problems resulting from their way of life, and suggest that he had the answers for how to fix the situation.

Like Le Bon and Ayrout, these experts kept trying to define these foreign peoples in terms of what they lacked to make them just another developed nation. Everyone was trying to figure out what was wrong with the peasants' life that was causing them to remain so different from the rest of the developed and civilized world, what was the missing piece in the "peasant" puzzle? Maria Saldana-Portillo points out that even Rostow's work is "an effort to map a large problem."[15] The solution to Rostow's "problem" is guiding every nation to reach the highest level of development, high mass consumption. Rostrow admits that culture does play a role in this transformation, but to him culture is seen only as something that will either encourage or inhibit the change. Modernization seems to be seen as the main subject in this process of development.

How did "the peasant", as a person affected by these so-called solutions, fit into this scenario? The answer was simply that he did not. "The peasant" was not consulted for advice. He became the product of the modern author or development expert whose own way of seeing life was transferred upon "the peasant" to whom he gave a voice. The people of a nation and their culture are merely entities to be acted upon, rather than being the ones making a conscious decision to adopt modernization or maintain their traditional culture. It is apparently widely accepted that if the people have maintained a traditional society, it is a result of ignorance or

[15] Saldana-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*, 28.

insufficient resources, not a choice. Commenting on this theory, Mitchell said that "In this manner the peasant subject is produced for nonpeasant consumption, packaged by a universal press and sold."[16]

While there were other development experts at this time with less rigidly formulated views of "the peasant", there is undeniable evidence that these modernization theorists were at least somewhat influencial in their day. Critchfield's *Shahhat* was translated into English and made available in the United Sates in 1945 by the U.S. Four Point program and declared to be the essential introduction to rural Egypt for all American development experts.[17] Works like Critchfield's were reportedly used for study by agricultural scientists, development training, and policymaking in Washington. One of his works was reprinted by a university press for use in course study. Critchfield himself was hired as a consultant on Third World villages by the U.S. Agency for International Development and was one of the first recipients of the MacArthur Foundation fellowship.[18] The success of Critchfield's works and career are evidence of the popularity of these early development theories. Mitchell pointed out that it was the widespread academic recognition of these experts' theories that "enabled these forms of prejudice, ignorance, and misrepresentation to flourish and gave such dubious books their circulation and acceptance."[19]

Another example of this stereotypical literature leading to a misrepresentation of peasant life was James Mayfield's *Rural Poliitcs in Nasser's Egypt*, written a decade after Critchfield's book in 1971. Mayfield's book is supposedly a study on the "psychological barriers" created by the Arab Socialists Union's state-capitalist intervention in rural areas during the 1960s. He

[16] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 144.
[17] Ibid., 133.
[18] Ibid., 145.
[19] Ibid., 152.

attempts to explain why, psychologically, the peasant is unable to help himself and must be guided, like an incapable child, through modernization. According to Mitchell, "The book explains the peasant personality as an unstable mixture of violence and submissiveness. The submissiveness is said to be created by the peasant's general inability to comprehend the forces shaping his life, and by the way he raises his children… to cherish authority, being discouraged from 'independent thinking.'"[20] This statement, the basis of Mayfield's work, reeks of Le Bon and the same ignorance of a true firsthand understanding of peasant culture as Ayrout and Critchfield.

While Mitchell had at least visited rural Egypt during his research, it is obvious that he viewed the Egyptian countryside through a Western tinted microscope. Mayfield's work is riddled with stereotypes and generalizations of the people used to explain the inability of Capitalism to flourish in Egypt. Despite this apparent lack of actual insight into the peasant psyche or an understanding of his response to social and economic stimuli, Mayfield became a widely consulted academic expert on rural Egyptian politics and was regularly employed by the U.S. Agency for International Development.[21] While the concept of "the peasant" and understandings of the social, economic and political workings of developing nations has come a long way over the past few decades, it does not seem that development experts were ever able to truly remove themselves from these earliest works. When one examines the development projects of the World Bank and USAID, it is still easy to find the essence of Le Bon's philosophy and a generalized mentality about "peasant life" hidden among the charts, graphs and detailed social and economic development plans.

[20] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 160-162.
[21] Ibid., 164.

This is due in large part to the concept of "the economy" that was developed during the second half of the twentieth century. By constructing the framework of an economy, it becomes easy to break down a country's elements one by one and "diagnose" any possible problems. The complex interworking of a nation are dehumanized and examined piece-meal in numerical terms according to the collective growth or decline, rates of unemployment and productivity, and are laid out in a "legible series of measurements, goals, and comparisons."[22] According to Mitchell, "Employing the language and authority of neoclassical economics, the programs of economic reform and structural adjustment advocated in Washington by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United States government could judge the condition of a nation and its collective well-being by simply measuring its monetary and fiscal balances."[23] The way at looking at people as a series of numbers and graphs put further distance between peoples of developing nations and "peasant" experts. Now they were reduced to comparable figures, easily relatable across all expanses of developing countries. The true peasant, not the expert's ideal "peasant", his homeland and culture were further removed from the studies of development theory. The disconnect between development experts and the people they are working with has caused major problems in enacting effective development projects.

[22] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 272.
[23] Ibid., 272.

CHAPTER 2
UN-DEVELOPING DEVELOPMENT

In *People and the State: An Anthropology of Planned Development,* A. F. Robertson states that development projects are the actualization of nations' attempts to "bring into being ideal worlds."[24] According to Robinson, development agencies are guided towards these unrealistic objectives by scholars who possess a supposed knowledge of how real societies work. But, as previously discussed, scholars are often incorrect or biased in their studies of foreign rural societies. This obviously has a detrimental effect on the possible effectiveness of development projects. It is no surprise that, "Through Africa- indeed, throughout the Third World- one seems to find closely analogous or even identical 'development' institutions, and along with them often a common discourse and the same way of defining 'problems,' a common pool of 'experts,' and a common stock of expertise… And, in nearly every case, these projects seem on inspection to be planned, implemented, and justified in very nearly the same way."[25] Even from these earliest development theorists we can see a problem emerging within development theory that would later prove to be disastrous. This was that development theory for the most part seemed to be an outside force acting upon a nation to insight change.

The Example: the Thaba-Tseka Project, Lesotho, 1975

A prime example of the disconnect created between development experts and rural societies was the World Bank Country Report on the Thaba-Tseka Project in Lesotho in 1975. The first paragraph of the report contains a description of Lesotho that seems to rival

[24] A. F. Robertson, *People and the State: An Anthropology of Planned Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), I.
[25] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 8.

Critchfield's analysis of Egypt. The Report depicts a "traditional subsistence peasant society," "virtually untouched by modern economic development," troubled by "rapid population growth resulting in extreme pressure on the land, deteriorating soil, and declining agricultural yields," causing the people of Lesotho to no longer be able to produce enough food.[26] But, after reviewing first hand studies of Lesotho's economic and social development, Fergusson refutes these claims stating that, "The fact is, then, that Lesotho entered the twentieth century, not as a 'subsistence' economy, but as a producer of cash crops for the South African market; not as a 'traditional peasant society,' but as a reservoir exporting wage laborers in about the same quantities, proportionate to total population, as it does today. Lesotho was not 'untouched by modern economic development' but radically and completely transformed by it."[27] As early as 1910, Basutoland (Lesotho) was exporting excess grains, already some 60,000 male citizens were working as wage laborers outside Lesotho in South Africa, there was a system of trains to provide transportation, education was being provided to around 10,000 students by over 200 missionary schools, and there was a general standard of living exceeding that of most South Africans.

A 1966 paper written by Leistner for the Africa Institute of Pretoria explicitly states that, "Any meaningful analysis of the territory's economy and prospects must be based on a thorough appreciation of its position as an enclave in the Republic's economy," it discusses the "structural changes in the territory's economy during the past century" which includes its "transformation into a money economy" and "the integration of its economy into the world economy."[28] The

[26] World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), Lesotho: A Development Challenge (Washington, D.C., 1975), 1.
[27] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 27.
[28] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 35 quoting G. Leistner, Lesotho (Pretoria: Africa Institute, 1966), 2-28.

report by the World Bank seems to pretend that these events have never happened and acts as if it will be responsible for their occurrence in the future.

These inaccuracies seem puzzling considering the level of competence possessed by the authors of the Lesotho report. After all, the World Bank is considered one of the top development organizations and they have some of the brightest minds in the field working for them. How, then, could they produce such a misguided report on Lesotho? As Ferguson points out, "It must be recognized that what is being done here is not some sort of staggeringly bad scholarship, but something else entirely… a special sort of discourse with a special job to do."[29] The disconnect between academic and "development" discourse is not accidental or a result of lack of scholarship. It is formulated as a result of certain objectives derived from modern "development" theory. Experts knowingly distorted facts in the report to make Lesotho seem like a typical "Less Developed Country," or LDC. They had to do this in order to "set up a target for a particular sort of intervention: the technical, apolitical, "development" intervention," part of which included translating "certain unmanageable sorts of facts into a more acceptable register."[30]

Explanation of the Development Project Disconnect

Ferguson's explanation of the World Bank Report shows that these statements are the result of careful concentration to set up a complex picture of a typical LDC, ripe for development intervention. First he addresses the presentation of Lesotho as the undeveloped, subsistence level farming society that was left behind as a result of decades of neglect from its colonial power, Britain. As Ferguson says, "Lesotho is not merely poor; it is poor because it has

[29] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 27-28.
[30] Ibid., 27-28

'remained at… a low stage of social and economic development."[31] Another important point is the description of the relationship between Lesotho and South Africa. The report makes it seem like the migrant labor to South Africa is simply a result of close geographical proximity. There does not seem to be any attempt to explore the previous relationship with South Africa during Lesotho's history and how the social and economic development evolved together due to their interaction.

While the World Bank Report claims that there are several reasons Lesotho is at such a low stage of social and economic development, the only reason it actually names is the lack of attention from the British government during its time as Lesotho's colonial power until around 1950. Interestingly, a report by Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons in 1977 on rural poverty in Central and Southern Africa discusses several initiatives enacted by the British government from 1935 to 1952. These include the terracing of lowlands for farming, the planting of buffer grass strips in the mountains to protect from erosion, the construction of 52,379 small dams, the planting of 18 million trees, the "purification" of the nation's sheep flocks to merino standards, and the planting of 12,000 vegetable plots.[32] Still, the World Bank seems to claim that Lesotho is, and always has been, underdeveloped and poor simply because no one has ever tried to develop it. According to Ferguson, "The World Bank Report, like all 'development' discourse…tends toward a picture in which the colonial past is a blank, economic stagnation is due to government inaction, and 'development' results from 'development' projects."[33]

The main problem with the World Bank report is, like in Mitchell's analysis of previous studies of impoverished peoples, there is a great deal of ignorance about the people themselves.

[31] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 32.
[32] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 37 quoting R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds.), The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 25.
[33] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 37.

For instance, the report states over and over again that, "Agriculture is the backbone of the economy" and that "Agriculture supports 85% of the population" in Lesotho.[34] In purely economic terms, the report states that agricultures makes up about 70% of the GDP, while according to Ferguson the more commonly accepted figure is only about 40%. This is just one of pages and pages of incorrect or misleadingly presented information Ferguson cites in his critique of the World Bank Report on the Thaba-Tseka Project.

As Ferguson said, "Lesotho, as an LDC, is taken to constitute a natural economic unit, responsive to the National economic planning, and entering into relations with South Africa only as one economy with another."[35] According to the report, in a *new* trend caused by recent agricultural production declines, about 60% of the male labor force has been forced to work outside Lesotho as migrant workers. In fact, this was not a new phenomenon. Migrant labor had been a common practice in Lesotho as early as the 1850s and had only continued to grow since then. This basic misunderstanding of the fundamental workings of Lesotho and its complex system of international social and economic relationships caused the World Bank's development project in Lesotho, like in so many other places, to be doomed from the start.

As in the works of Ayrout and Critchfield discussed by Mitchell, the "peasant", in this case the Basotho, was in no way consulted during the construction of this report. Instead, people were classified according to age, sex and occupation and studied by foreigners who are left to reconstruct Lesotho on paper, in their own terms. This way of viewing Less Developed Countries would never have been effective. Like Ayrout defining a "problem" with peasants and posing the only "solution" as rebuilding their villages, Ferguson stated that the World Bank's

[34] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 59.
[35] Ibid., 62.

mission was to "find the right kind of problem; the kind of 'problem that requires the 'solution' they are there to provide."[36]

The $12 million Thaba Bosiu Rural Development Project, funded by the World Bank in response to this report, was estimated to bring a five-fold increase in household income from farming development projects. [37] The basic unit of the development project was not the people of Lesotho, but the state: "an apolitical tool for delivering social service and agricultural inputs and engineering economic growth."[38] But, as Ferguson pointed out, "Issues involving the political character of the state and its class basis, the use of official position and state power by the bureaucratic elite, the functions of bureaucratic "inefficiency" and corruption, matters which are central to academic understandings of modern African states, are nowhere to be found in the 'development' version of Lesotho."[39] The local people of Lesotho were finally consulted on the project in a 1979 CIDA. By this time the project had already been designed, implemented, and assessed as not having made the households or the area better off.[40] One development expert claimed the project may have been a failure, but not more so than any other project. With this in mind, the Project Coordinator actually stated in 1983 that he felt the project was a "success story!"[41]

Ferguson went on to explain that the whole explosion of the "development theory" industry has facilitated the continued disregard for the individual in development projects. "If 'development' interventions look very similar from one country to the next, one reason is that they are designed and implemented by a relatively small, interlocked network of experts." [42]

---

[36] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 70.
[37] Ibid., 51.
[38] Ibid., 65.
[39] Ibid., 65.
[40] Ibid., 251.
[41] Ibid., 254.
[42] Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 258.

When studying another development project in Zimbabwe in 1981, Ferguson inquired about the highly paid expert in charge of project that all the local agricultural development officials were waiting on to begin the project. As it turned out, the expert knew virtually nothing about Zimbabwe, but had worked mostly in India. Still, the local officials were putting their trust in him because, he knew "development". These projects have become "standard packages" implemented widely across a varying array of Less Developed Countries, with little change to adapt them to the different locations.[43] The main effect of the project was not to increase agricultural production, but to expand local state control and make it easier for the government to monitor the people and enforce military conscription.

[43] Ibid., 259.

CHAPTER 3
GOOD ROADS MOVEMENT

But not all development projects have failed. What is it that separates the successful initiatives from the ones previously mentioned? Take for instance the "Good Roads" movement in the United States. The Good Roads Movement was a nationwide initiative from around 1880 to 1920 to improve the roads of America. It was begun by upper class bicycling enthusiasts who found America's roads unaccomadating to their newfound hobby. According to one contemporary slogan, roads were "Wholly unclassable, almost impassable, scarcely jackassable!" [44](U.S. Department of Transportation, The Federal Highway Administration at 100) The Good Roads Movement originated in Newport, Rhode Island, where a group of bicyclists unified to strengthen their movement by forming the League of American Wheelmen to lobby for better roads. Despite its upper class origins, the movement quickly gained popular national support, especially among farmers, to aid rural access to roadways and improve economic opportunities.[45]

The early evolution of the Good Roads movement illustrates the main characteristic of the movement which separated it from the early modern development theory mentioned above: It was a bottom-up movement carried by the people who were to be affected by it. Rather than being an outside engineered initiative thought up by a group of foreign experts, the Good Road Movement was developed and supported by the American people in general. This next section will focus on examining the Good Roads Movement in Georgia and explain how it is an example of a successful development project and the reasons for this success.

[44] Richard F. Weingroff, "A Peaceful Campaign of Progress and Reform: The Federal Highway Administration at 100"; *Federal Highway Administration*, http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/fall93/p93aul.html (accessed April 8, 2009).
[45] Tammy Ingram, *Dixie Highway: Private Enterprise and State Building in the South, 1900-1930* (2009), 1.

The first step to road construction in Georgia during the Good Roads Movement was in 1868 when the heads of local ordinaries and elected commissioners were given charge of county road work.[46] Less than fifty years had passed since the Civil War and in the South protection of state and local rights was still a huge issue. This defense of local powers meant that the people affected most by the construction of roads in Georgia, the farmers and rural population, had a great deal of say in the development of the Good Roads Movement. Over the next twenty years, laws were passed in Georgia to divide the counties into smaller militia districts and to standardize the administration of local road. Citizens of the militia districts were left to decide what road should be constructed and to petition their county commissioners to get them to build these roads. In addition, the citizens took an active role in the actual construction. All men ages 16 to 50 were required to aid in the building of the roads. This not only allowed the most efficient use of resources and labor but also ensured that the roads that were built would be as economically and socially beneficial as possible for the people they were built for.[47]

The enthusiasm and participation of Georgians in the development of Good Roads, combined with this localized control over development, were two key aspects which made the movement so successful. The development of roads in rural Georgia was not a plan that resulted from some preconceived idea of what changes the rural South must undergo in order to become modernized. Rather, it was a movement that sprang out of the population's direct needs to have access to main roads and railways to help expand trade and encourage economic development. By 1912, there were already over 53 Good Roads Clubs in Georgia founded and run by local enthusiasts. According to Tammy Ingram, a professor at Agnes Scott University specializing in the Good Roads Movement, "their main purpose was to draw attention to the conditions of roads

[46] Tammy Ingram, *Dixie Highway: Private Enterprise and State Building in the South, 1900-1930*, 19.
[47] Ibid., 20.

by holding meetings, organizing automobile contests, advising local road authorities, and lobbying politicians for more funding of roads."[48]

The involvement of the Georgian masses and their united strength in promoting the Good Roads movement contrasts sharply with the expected level of involvement of the peasants in early development theory and projects like Thaba-Tseka in Lesotho. The inhabitants of rural Georgia were neither invisible nor ignored during the planning stages of the Good Roads Movement. Evidence of this is a statement made by Joseph Pratt said in 1910, "People are beginning to realize the great importance of good roads, and of the enormous savings that such roads will bring to them; they are beginning to demand good roads; and are forcing our public men to take a deeper and wider interest in this most vital question."[49] The leaders of the Good Roads Movement were the citizens themselves and their local leaders.

In light of the overall success of the movement, the usage of newspapers and public meetings to raise popular support for the initiative is evidence to the effectiveness of the peoples' involvement in the development movement. Clark Howell, one of the most influential men in the Good Roads Movement in Georgia, was such a powerful force in the movement because he was editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. He was able to use the newspaper as a tool to reach a broad audience and promote participation in the Good Roads movement by encouraging gatherings and petitioning of Georgia politicians in charge of the movement. There are countless examples of newspaper articles, both in the *Atlanta Constitution* and in national papers, supporting the movement and calling for the public to speak out and get involved. One New York Times article from 1908 reads, "If the present agitation for good roads is continued by the

[48] Tammy Ingram, *Dixie Highway: Private Enterprise and State Building in the South, 1900-1930*, 23.
[49] Joseph Hyde Pratt, "Good Roads Movement in the South." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 35, no. 1 (1910): 105.

motorists of many Southern States, it will only be a question of a year or two more before it will be possible for automobilists to tour through the South on new highways."[50] In this same article there is mention of a Good Roads Congress in Atlanta, GA in which supporters from throughout the state took steps to increase the good-roads appropriation.

An important point in the structuring of the movement is that the states made it clear that their laws were not to interfere with county laws. Each county remained an independent nucleus of road construction during the Good Roads Movement. An address in 1926 by John N. Holder, the then current chairman of the state highway department, before the Annual Convention of The County Commissioners Association of Georgia reiterated the importance of local knowledge and expertise in the development of an efficient roads system. He explained that "the state highway department needs the advice and assistance of the county commissioners in each county" and how important his communication with these men had been to his job.[51]

There were Good Roads Conventions throughout the state to encourage local supporters of the movements to come out and share ideas. One in Albany on June 9, 1909 attracted between 400-500 people. These Good Roads "enthusiasts" were able to meet personally with the chairman of the board of County Commissioners; Clark Howell, the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* and an avid Good Roads Committee member; and Professor Straham at the University of Georgia, one of the main Civil Engineers responsible for mapping out and building the roads in Georgia. They literally sat around eating barbeque discussing the changes in state legislature and the appointment of State engineers to supervise works and other details of the

[50] "Good Roads Movement Stirring the South," *New York Times*, 20 December, 1908.
[51] John N. Holder, Address Before the Annual Convention of the County Commissioners Association of Georgia, Savannah, GA: June 3, 1926.

development project.[52] While this level of involvement would obviously be impossible and wasteful for modern international development projects, the main point of this example is to show the intimate level of involvement that locals had in the direction and goals of the Good Roads Movement. It was this attention to local needs and wants that made the project so successful.

One of the leading proponents of this movement was Congressman Dudley M. Hughes. Mr. Hughes was Georgia's 3rd Congressional District Representative from 1908 to 1917. To understand exactly why Congressman Hughes' involvement helped contribute to the success of the Good Roads initiative, it is imperative to understand the reference frame through which he operated. Congressman Hughes was a prominent Georgia agriculturist even before he began his political career. He personally owned a large farming complex named Magnolia Plantation and was involved in numerous agribusiness enterprises including Magnolia Orchard and the Georgia Fruitland Company. He was president of the Georgia Agricultural Society from 1904 to 1906 and was active in establishing the University of Georgia's School o f Agriculture. He also served as a Georgia State Senator from 1882-1883 before his election to Congress.[53] In addition to his first hand knowledge of and agriculture and economics in rural Georgia, Congressman Hughes political theories contributed a great deal to his successful support of the Good Roads Movement.

As discussed above, the freshness of the Civil War in the South had led to a greater support among politicians and their constituents of maintaining states' rights. Congressman Hughes's rigid observation of state and county rights is a clear example of this trend. While

[52] "Good Roads Clubs," *Good Roads Magazine*, March 1909, 101.
[53] Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Study, "Dudley Mays Hughes Collection"; *Dudley Mays Hughes*, http://www.libs.uga.edu/russell/collections/dhughes/index.shtml (accessed April 10, 2009).

serving as a Georgia Congressman in 1909, Hughes responded to a county paper expounding the importance of road service by explaining that, "it would be improper for me to take a stand in any county of my district in a matter that is personal to them. This should be a question that the county alone should adjust without outside interference."[54] By attempting to avoid taking too much power from County governments, Hughes kept the Good Roads Movement in Georgia operating on a local level. As was discussed above this was one of the keys to the movement's success.

Rather than taking control of the movement and implementing a road construction project of outside design in the counties, Congressman Hughes wrote each county individually in the 3rd Congressional District and asked if they wanted a government superintendent of roads to visit their county and show them how to best build and use roads. "He would have gone with them, with either the pick and hoe or advanced implements for road working, and would have given them his practical experience in building a first class highway."[55] While Congressman Hughes advocated bringing in outside road specialists to help with the Good Roads movement, he used them as consultants who communicated with county residents to blend expert and local knowledge. This is a totally different way of thinking about development projects than Ferguson encountered in Zimbabwe where an expert on Indian development was brought in to direct the local agrarian experts.

[54] Dudley M. Hughes to Joel T. Deese, November 16, 1909.
[55] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

It is important to point out that the early modern development theory discussed is not representative of all development theory at that time or in the present. Modern development theory is the result of decades of trial and error and countless efforts of well-intentioned and brilliant minds working to change the world. The early experts and projects I discussed were a part of the history of development theory. While many of the ideas they discussed have been reworked and some even dismissed, it is important to recognize the role they played in the transformation of development theory.

In speaking with two World Bank employees, I gained a very interesting perspective on their views of these critiques. Robert Tripp, a current anthropologist with experience working at the CIMMYT and ODI on global development projects in rural areas, commented on Ferguson's study of the Thaba-Tseka Project in Lesotho in *Anti-Politics Machine* as being "pretty accurate" and "depressingly true" and similar to several other projects he had seen.[56] Fred King, a former World Bank employee who focused less on actual development projects and more on macro issues like government policies and structural adjustment, was more critical of the critiques mentioned above. King reported that there had been a major reorganization of "how the Bank did business" shortly before he began working in 1973.[57] This 1972 reorganization was an attempt to begin to decentralize the Bank's operations. The changes to allow development theory to be handled in a more decentralized and direct manner suggest that the Bank recognized that there were problems with the contemporary structure of development projects and their

[56] Robert Tripp, interview by author, April 7 2009, E-mail.
[57] Fred King, interview by author, April 10 2009, E-mail.

effectiveness.[58] King also pointed out that there were two other reorganizations during his time at the Bank directed at "decentralizing operations and getting expertise more country or regionally focused."[59]

In addition to structural changes, King commented on his personal views about the evolution of development theory over the past few decades. "Development is difficult and much more complicated and we are still learning what works and what does not work."[60] In defense of the Bank in the Thaba-Tseka project and similar projects, he said the Bank is not only working on refining its development theory in general, but also how to deal with the limitations of its resources and power. According to the World Bank charter, the Bank is obliged to work not just with countries but with their governments too. This added challenge of working with and through the governments of less developed and developing nations further complicates developing and implementation of World Bank projects.

In general, King's attitude towards the critiques of the development theories cited above is one of incredulity and near disbelief. He had never heard of Ayrout, Critchfield or even the results of the Lesotho project. Interestingly, King was not able find the analysis of the Lesotho Report on the World Bank's online database. King's unfamiliarity with these early modern development theories seems to suggest there have been attempts to change the way development experts view the peasants of the world and organize development projects. The idea of the "peasant" promoted by Ayrout, Critchfield and Mayfield has been replaced by a better understanding and appreciation of local populations and the importance of working directly with the populations of less developed countries.

---

[58] World Bank, "World Bank Historical Chronology: 1970-1979"; *World Bank*, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/EXTARCHIVES/0,,contentMDK:20035661~menuPK:56317~pagePK:36726~piPK:437378~theSitePK:29506,00.html (accessed April 11, 2009).
[59] Fred King, interview by author, April 10 2009, E-mail.
[60] Ibid.

Further evidence of this is the recent World Bank project, *Voices of the Poor*. In this research initiative over 60,000 poor men and women from 60 different countries were interviewed about the details of their daily lives and their personal thoughts on the causes and effects of poverty. The project was "an unprecedented effort to understand poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves."[61] *Voices of the Poor* was born from the 2000/2001 World Bank Report which focused on the effects of poverty on the individual and the importance of incorporating this understanding into development theory. The Report noted that,

> "Poverty outcomes are also greatly affected by social norms, values, and customary practices that, within the family, the community, or the market, lead to exclusion of women, ethnic and racial groups, or the socially disadvantaged. That is why facilitating the empowerment of poor people—by making state and social institutions more responsive to them—is also key to reducing poverty."[62]

Voices of the Poor is evidence of the changes in modern development theory and World Bank's attempts to foster a deeper understanding of the world's poor. Modern development theory increasingly recognizes the complexity of the interactions of economic, political and social processes present in less developed nations. It is no longer assumed that the condition is due simply to a decision by or the ignorance of the "peasant".

Development theory and the forces that motivate the people behind the theories have varied and changed over the years. This paper has examined just one area of the diverse history of the development theory. It has examined old and new theories, unsuccessful and successful projects. Hopefully, through the consideration of ideas like the ones discussed in this paper and

[61] World Bank, "Voices of the Poor"; *World Bank*, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/0,,contentMDK:20612393~menuPK:336998~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992~isCURL:Y,00.html (accessed April 12, 2009).
[62] World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), *World Bank Report 2000/2001* (Washington, D.C.: 2001), 2.

the benefit of trial and error over the years, development theory will continue to become a more effective tool for understanding and battling the real problems of those suffering in our world.

WORKS CITED

Dudley M. Hughes, to Joel T. Deese, November 16, 1909. *Dudley Hughes Collection*. Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Study. University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

"Good Roads Clubs," *Good Roads Magazine*, March 1909, 101.

Holder, John N.. Address Before the Annual Convention of the County Commissioners Association of Georgia. Savannah, GA: June 3, 1926.

Ingram, Tammy. Dixie Highway: Private Enterprise and State Building in the South, 1900-1930. Emory University, 2009.

James Ferguson, James. The Anti-Politics Machine. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

King, Fred. "History Thesis," April 10 2009, E-mail.

Leistner, G.. *Lesotho*. Pretoria: Africa Institute, 1966.

Mitchell, Timothy. Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity. CA: University of California Press, 2002.

Palmer, R., and N. Parsons (eds.). The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Pratt, Joseph Hyde. "Good Roads Movement in the South." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 35, no. 1 (1910): 105.

Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Study, "Dudley Mays Hughes Collection" *Dudley Hughes Collection*. http://www.libs.uga.edu/russell/collections/dhughes/index.shtml (accessed April 10, 2009).

Robertson, A.F.. People and the State: An Anthropology of Planned Development. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Rostrow, Walt Whitman. The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto. Cambridge University Press: New York, 1971.

Saldana-Portillo, Maria Josefina. The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Tripp, Robert. “History Thesis,” April 7 2009, E-mail.

Weingroff, Richard F.. “A Peaceful Campaign of Progress and Reform: The Federal Highway Administration at 100”. *Federal Highway Administration.* http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/rw93.cfm (accessed 8 April 2009).

World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development). Lesotho: A Development Challenge. Washington, D.C., 1975.

World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development)., “Voices of the Poor”, *World Bank*. http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/0,,contentMDK:20612393~menuPK:336998~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992~isCURL:Y,00.html (accessed April 12, 2009).

World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development)., “World Bank Historical Chronology: 1970-1979”. *World Bank*. http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/EXTARCHIVES/0,,contentMDK:20035661~menuPK:56317~pagePK:36726~piPK:437378~theSitePK:29506,00.html (accessed April 11, 2009).

World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), *World Bank Report 2000/2001*. Washington, D.C.: 2001.