



---

# Track 3: Strategies towards alternative ways of researching

---

by Andreas Novy

November 17th, 2007

Newcastle

---

# Demologos

- **Track 1- Theoretical research**

- Review of theories on socioeconomic development and methodology

- **Track 2 – Empirical research**

- Case study analysis

- **Track 3 – Policy relevance**

- Alternative Observatory
- Transdisciplinary Research

---

# Transdisciplinarity

- Bridging different disciplines
  - DEMOLOGOS is based on the dialogue of diverse disciplines within social sciences
  - **Theoretical synthesis papers** as an attempt to integrate diverse approaches and to elaborate a proper theory of socioeconomic development
- Bridging theory and practice: linking practical experience to academic knowledge
  - TSP 6 on development
  - Track 3

*A. Is transdisciplinarity a useful approach for critical social research?*

---

# Development

- Development as a
  - **Contradictory process** of socioeconomic change
  - The **intent to develop** (and to change the world)
- Contextualized agency
  - **Historical-geographical** contextualisation
  - **Analysis of conjuncture** (Analysis of the socioeconomic and political situation): What to do here and now?
- Strategic selectivity
  - Insist on actors **capacity to change** the world
  - Insist on the **structural embeddedness** of agency
  - **Strategic selectivity** in deciding what to do here and now
    - Politics of the possible
    - Trans-forming the political (another world is possible)

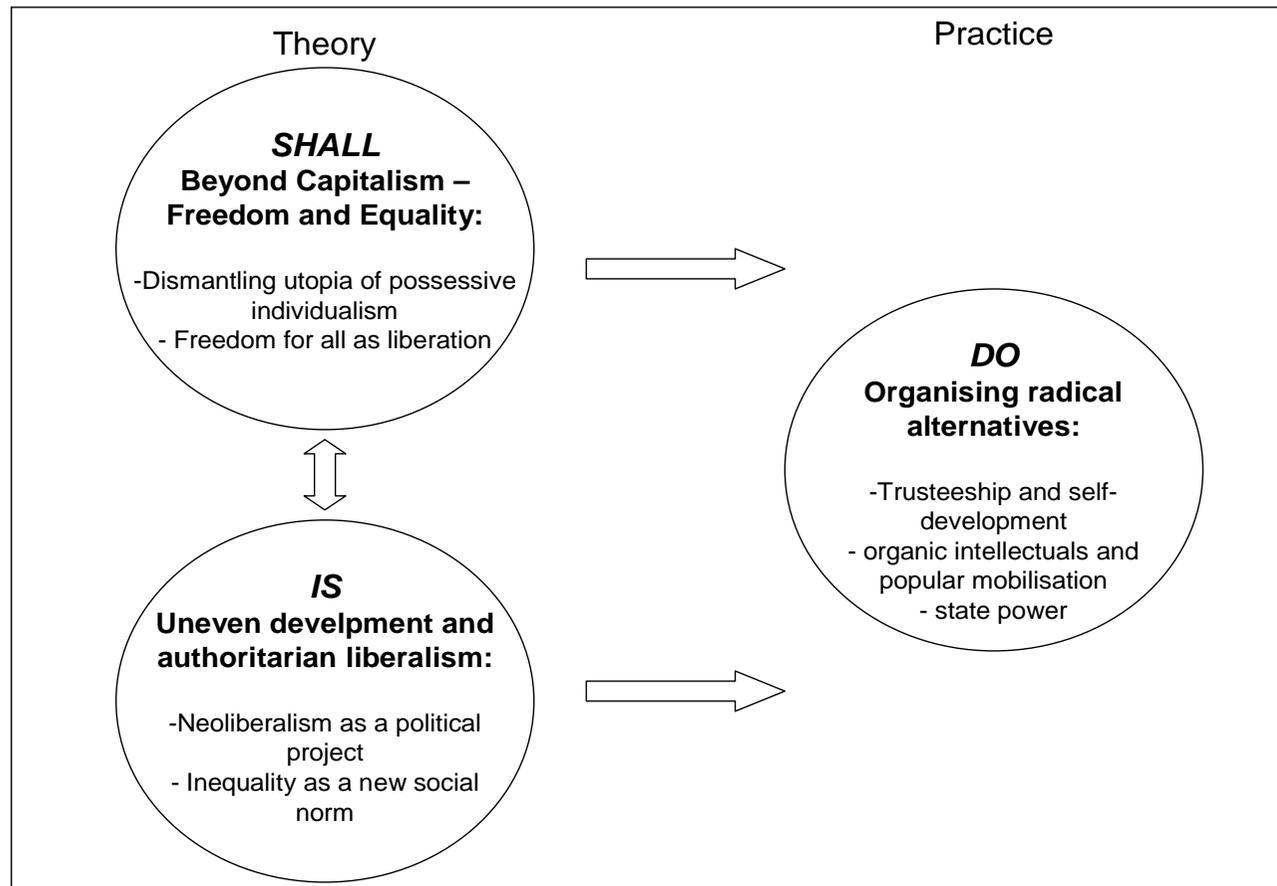
---

## Track 3

- **Alternative Observatory** (Pasquale de Muro)
- **Transdisciplinarity**
  - How does DEMOLOGOS-research contribute to strategies for alternative forms of development?
  - Politics of the possible
  - Model of Is – Shall – Do
    - Analysis – concrete utopia – strategic agency

# Current Development in Europe

Figure 2: Current Development in Europe



---

# The model of Is – Shall - Do

## 1. **IS**

1. Weakness of counter-hegemonic movements
2. Strong hegemonic consensus (neoliberal/liberal?)
3. Distance between our research and current local/regional development

## 2. **SHALL**

1. Lack of alternative visions in concrete case studies!

## 3. **DO: what can we do here and now?**

1. Deviant mainstreaming / move to (liberal?) hegemonic consensus to the left

*B. Does the model increase the impact of critical social research?*

---

# Steps towards strategic agency 1

- **Experimentation** with forms of social innovation
  - ⇒ challenge: **break the isolation of the intellectuals** – we can learn from Gramsci, Gorz, Freire etc. as practitioners and thinkers
  - ⇒ relate DEMOLOGOS-knowledge with social and political movements: Which type of knowledge empowers social & political actors to path-shaping? (alternative socioeconomic statistics, contextual knowledge about laws, organisations and institutions)

---

## Steps towards strategic agency 2

- Context specific knowledge acquired in case studies: what do we need locally, regionally?
- Abstract knowledge acquired in DEMOLOGOS: ASID-model of resources, organisational changes, relationship university – social movements
- Politics of upscaling – alliance building
  - Transborder laboratory of cooperation from below in Brno: experiment of theory-practice-dialogue

*C. Do these types of knowledge increase local / regional actors capacity to act strategically ?*

---

## Steps towards strategic agency 3

- Institutionalise **dialogue between researcher and practitioners**: “nobody knows everything and nobody knows nothing” (Freire)
  - Stakeholder as path-shapers of development
- **institutionalisation of critique** via alternative Think Tanks:
  - to systematize social innovations in the regions and organise cooperation from below between regions
  - the organisational side of a critical institutionalist approach: regular context and agency-sensitive analysis of concrete conjuncture (“What shall we do here and now?”)

---

# DEMOLOGOS-Research Framework – a step towards alternative development

- DEMOLOGOS integrates critique and the search for policy alternatives
- DEMOLOGOS is interested in history to learn for the future (from path-dependency to path-shaping)
- DEMOLOGOS deals with local dynamics as entry points to empower counter-hegemonic multi-scalar agency
- DEMOLOGOS stresses strategic agency and strategic selectivity (ASID, CHID)

*D. Is the research framework indicated by DEMOLOGOS-research worthwhile exploring further to increase the relevance of critical social research?*

*E. Is DEMOLOGOS-Research Framework compatible with the creation of an Observatory?*