

Rejoinder to Stein Tønnesson

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PRIO's director Stein Tønnesson supports my conclusions but disapproves of the basic arguments that question his campaign for globalisation studies¹ as well as of my polemic style of writing. Such disagreements are only to be expected between those who manage the system and those who are employed to do critical analyses of the same. We could simply set aside the differences and focus on the changes we agree on. But dispute over clear-cut arguments is basic to research-based learning (Björklund, 1991). So it is also important to brave the Scandinavian storm of conflicts and see where we can benefit from disagreements.

First, readers should note that what Tønnesson suggests that they should ignore as 'a long-winded argument in the style of a political pamphlet' is in fact based on a fairly conventional academic analysis of ideas to identify and review the basic positions, their consistency and the hidden agendas and power relations. A major conclusion is that the latter are largely related to political and administrative fashions and to the 'guiding' of research – a result that has not been questioned so far. Hence, it is also part of my job to contribute to the defence of academic freedom in general and, in particular, to the integrity of the sub-discipline of which I am a professor (just as a judge has to be both impartial and protective of an independent judiciary). This adds some flavour of concern to the presentation, but the level of polemic is surely mild as compared to the prior unsubstantiated, indiscriminate and derogatory critique of development researchers in general.

Second, Tønnesson maintains that I have distorted his own and Helland's writings: 'Neither Helland nor I wanted to replace research on development with research on globalisation.' However, I never said that of Helland, who wants to broaden development studies to general research of the South and to subordinate it to the conventional academic disciplines.

Let us focus here on Tønnesson and his globalisation campaign. He claims that I have constructed a false dichotomy between stud-

1 Including marginalisation, see below.

ies of globalisation and problems of development by inserting 'misleading parentheses' when quoting him. This is also wrong, with regard to both the parentheses and the dichotomy. The first parenthesis was to remind the reader of the obvious: that Tønnesson's NFR programme was within the field of development, given that it was financed through the development aid budget. My second parenthesis was to save space by excluding his elaboration of studies of globalisation: 'the interlinked processes of globalisation and marginalisation, and how they affect poor countries and regions worldwide.' Given Tønnesson's level of scholarship, this was taken for granted, as any serious studies of globalisation must also involve something on marginalisation and poor countries. Even more obvious, I already stated in my article that we certainly agree that all students of problems of development must consider globalisation. I even asked who was narrow enough not to do that already (a point that Tønnesson has not responded to). The real disagreement, however – and one which Tønnesson naturally finds to be unimportant – is that he wants to introduce globalisation (and the marginalisation involved) as *the* hegemonic approach to the study of various kinds of issues around the world, including development. By contrast, I am among those who focus on the poor and oppressed people's contextual problems of development, and then relate these problems to various obstacles and options involved, including globalisation, among other factors. This is an important difference. In the latter view it does not suffice to study poor people's problems of development from the angle of imperialism, international dependency, world systems or (now) globalisation. No, we have to subordinate these important but yet incomplete aspects to concrete analyses of concrete situations where people themselves live and work – if we do not think that we can solve the problems for them. This is also why I consider it vital to stress the academically judged relevance of the research in relation to what the aid money is meant for – support to downtrodden people's own struggles against poverty and oppression. If and when important studies of globalisation do not really focus on this, the researchers should look for other funding. It has always been attractive for entrepreneurial groups to get hold of parts of the aid budget for more or less related purposes. As development researchers, we should feel called to resist this.²

Third, I certainly agree with Tønnesson that it would be misleading to call non-development scholars 'mainstream' – but I have

² For those interested in the Swedish debate, see Törnquist (1983).

not done that without qualification! And I have definitely *never* said that well-reputed discipline development researchers are not solidly anchored within their academic disciplines. Quite the contrary: I have opposed critics who fail to recognise that such qualified researchers actually exist (but rarely have basic resources to do their job). Worse: this omission of the best existing capacity also enables critics to generalise from the often poor quality of commissioned development research to the field as a whole, and to go on to argue that it is necessary to invite noted generalists from the core disciplines even if they lack the appropriate theoretical and empirical knowledge! How Tønnesson (with some previous knowledge of Marx) can relate this to class struggle is a mystery. The struggle is rather *against* dominance à la Bourdieu and *for* the best possible academically judged quality with regard to problems of development!

While we move ahead with the conclusions and recommendations that Tønnesson and I would seem to agree on, I feel that it would also be fruitful if we could be open about our points of disagreement and fight them out.

References

- Björklund, Stefan, 1991, *Forskningsanknytning genom disputation*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis; also Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
 Törnquist, Olle, 1983, *Utvecklingen i tredje världen och den svenska utvecklingsforskningens relevans. Rapport från ett SAREC-forskarseminarium 28-30 september 1983*. Uppsala: AKUT No. 29, University of Uppsala.