EADI GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES

Challenging Global Development

Towards Decoloniality and Justice

Edited by
Henning Melber
Uma Kothari
Laura Camfield
Kees Biekart

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CHAPTER 1

Rethinking Development and Decolonising Development Studies

Kees Biekart, Laura Camfield, Uma Kothari, and Henning Melber

The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to almost seven million deaths (WHO, 2022), revealed the world to be even more complex and unequal than previously thought. It brought to the fore the need to rethink the

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'fault lines' since global inequalities had clearly worsened (Taylor & Tremblay, 2022, p. 11) as vulnerable people in the Global South suffered most from the consequences of the pandemic. Yet at the same time, it highlighted how dichotomies between North and South are becoming increasingly blurred (Sud, 2022).

We are writing this introduction in late 2022, just after the most difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have ended. We are currently facing a global escalation of the war triggered by the Russian invasion in Ukraine and serious tensions between the United States and China. Meanwhile, the failure to commit to the Paris environmental agreements, discussed during COP27 in Sharm al Shaik (Egypt), suggests that many national governments continue to undermine the ecological future of our planet. Taken together, these events indicate that we are in the midst of multiple global crises, dubbed the polycrisis by economic historian Adam Tooze (Lawrence, 2022). While these crises are not necessarily new, they are increasingly complex and interlinked.

The European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) hosted a Roundtable in November 2022 on crises. As a current stock taking exercise, we decided to include the reflections as presented then by Uma Kothari, Melissa Leach, Alfredo Saad-Filho, and Henrice Altink (Chapter 13 in this volume). During this event, Kothari pointed out: 'when no environmental crisis, health crisis, war, poverty, or economic crisis is deemed alarming enough to fundamentally change the structures and systems that create and maintain inequalities, we clearly need new tools to counter these deep injustices'. Melissa Leach added that these 'crises have structural roots, yet economic and political power are increasingly concentrated amongst those with vested interests in maintaining those structures'. This highlights how inequalities and injustices underpin crises and in turn challenge the principles of inclusion and basic human rights. While Alfredo Saad-Filho argued that we are witnessing a convergence of crises in neoliberalism, Henrice Altink maintained that crises often overlap. What is new, she says, is that now 'crises seem to come more often and last longer and can intersect with short-term crises and shocks'. All participants of the Roundtable agreed that these multiple crises affect everyone and that this calls for a global response.

No longer content with tinkering around the edges, levelling critiques at this or that definition of development, policy directive, or methodological approach, this volume explores what a fundamental reconsideration

of Development Studies might look like. Drawing on notions of decoloniality and reflecting on ideas around solidarity this volume explores how our critiques can disrupt and renew understandings of development and articulate a more progressive politics. Furthermore, contributions engage with approaches to, and processes involved in, studying development. This requires a critical analysis of the practices of development researchers, the nature of research partnerships, and the selection of themes to study. As such, this volume provides a reconsideration of how knowledge is produced, validated, and disseminated. It highlights ways in which transformative processes of knowledge production can be achieved.

With recent global campaigns and movements responding to growing demands to decolonise knowledge we are arguably positioned at a critical moment, one replete with potential to shape the future of Development Studies. This volume contributes to these attempts to decolonise Development Studies and in so doing introduces ways in which new forms of solidarity that work towards achieving global social justice can be promoted. Recognising the historic injustice of global poverty and inequalities, contributors address how these can be combatted through teaching, research, and engagement in policy and practice and the sorts of political challenges these might encounter. They examine the contexts in which decoloniality can be developed, analysing these on firm historical, theoretical, epistemological, and empirical grounds.

In an earlier volume, EADI published essays outlining perspectives on Development Studies in the new millennium (Baud et al., 2019). The present volume aims to provide renewed perspectives, focusing on decoloniality and revealing ideas about solidarity while also addressing the epistemological and methodological limitations of Development Studies. This volume brings in new voices including those of early-career researchers located outside Europe and North America. As Langdon (2013, pp. 389–390) proposes, decolonising Development Studies can be achieved by supporting the emergence of a new generation of scholars able to challenge 'normalised coloniality' in its globalised context by destabilising Eurocentric colonial frames. As such, this book also includes reflections on how we teach development in multiple and varied ways and in different settings and how we engage with the world outside academia.

Furthermore, chapters in this book highlight how distinctions between Global North and Global South are as Taylor and Tremblay (2022, p. 16) argue, 'becoming increasingly meaningless and even counterproductive to efforts that need to be collaborative, joined-up and inclusive'.

They remind us that current challenges are interconnected and cannot be addressed in isolation. Instead, they suggest that 'to address them collectively, it seems important to move beyond perceptions of the world as 'them and us', as 'developed and undeveloped', as 'North and South' (Horner, 2020; Levander & Mignolo, 2011; Roy, 2022). Development has been founded upon the forging of dichotomies, be they geographical, spatial, material, cultural, or temporal. This has led to identifications, classifications, and categorisations of people and places using racialised, gendered, pseudo-cultural, and ethnic binaries. This volume confounds these distinctions by illuminating how they reinforce differences and inequalities. Fundamentally, this requires the inclusion of diverse perspectives that have been invisible or marginalised, combined with an explicitly anti-racist lens.

Key ideas such as post-developmentalism, decoloniality, and the pluriverse increasingly challenge mainstream development, signalling a renewed awareness of the 'limits to growth' as integral to the modernising trajectory and of Western dominance. These ideas are beginning to counter the hitherto almost universally accepted Eurocentric understanding of what 'development' means. Shifts in concepts and conceptualisations framing 'development' can already be traced in the evolution of ideologies and narratives since World War II (Jolly & Santos, 2016) and in more historical depth since the days of the 'civilising mission' (Ziai, 2016). They show that the idea of development has always been challenged and debated. Furthermore, the way in which development has been understood, explained, and studied has been constantly under discussion (see Sumner, 2022). Despite this, however, Parpart and Veltmeyer (2011, p. 9), building on Escobar (1997), argue that 'development discourse shaped social reality in ways that reflected the understandings and meanings of those who crafted that discourse, namely development experts from the North (and some sympathetic Southerners, often trained in Northern institutions)'. It can therefore be argued that development as it is currently practised can never bring about complete and equitable social transformation. In this context, abandoning the whole idea of development has for some time been proposed by several Southern scholars (Escobar, 1997; Esteva & Prakash, 1998; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1998).

Thus far, much critical research on development work has emphasised its failings. Either development does not achieve what it sets out to do or is actively complicit in the reproduction of systems of dominance and

exploitation. The difficulty with these approaches is that they lead to dead ends: we know what is wrong, but not what might be a better approach towards meaningful change. This volume aims to address this lacuna.

The Narrative of Rethinking Development

The volume begins with Telleria's provocative analysis of the ontological assumptions that sustain development thinking, which argues that these impose important limitations to the way global issues are understood and tackled. He suggests that while in the last fifty years development thinking has internalised a political and epistemological critique, it has not reflected critically on the ontological foundations of development logics. His argument is supported by an analysis of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which exposes the limits imposed by its ontological assumptions. The next contribution, by Ziai, focuses on how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—so widely known that they even form the basis of University ranking systems—reiterate the promise of 'development' and legitimise the capitalist world order. The SDGs represent a model based on inequality, pollution, and non-sustainable use of resources. In contrast, post-development approaches offer alternatives by, for example, highlighting the struggle of Indigenous peoples against 'development' projects. To counter those who refuse to recognise alternatives and illustrate the potential of post-development, he draws on three examples from the Sahel, India, and Mexico. These embody respectively alternatives to 'development' cooperation, protests against 'development projects', and an alternative based on non-Western models of politics, the economy, and knowledge.

Kothari picks up the baton in describing the sorts of transformation needed if we are to move towards socio-economic equity and justice, and ecological sustainability, drawing on initiatives founded on principles of social justice, well-being, and cultural diversity. While he acknowledges that these are mostly on the margins, he argues persuasively that they show the potential of a different future to that envisaged by the developers of the SDGs. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's contribution places the question of underdevelopment in Africa in the longue durée of structural adjustments of African lives and economies since the fifteenth century. Rather than focus solely on the infamous Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s and 1990s, he identifies five phases of structural adjustments from enslavement and physical colonisation to cold war coloniality, Washington

Consensus-driven structural adjustment and globalisation. His macro-historical approach highlights the position occupied by Africa in the contemporary global order, which constrains its pursuit of autonomous development.

Castro-Sotomayor and Minoia argue that the ways humans occupy Earth currently are unsustainable and pose an existential threat to all species. Notions of sustainable development are unable to tackle this as 'development' itself is anthropocentric and this shapes how human-nature relations are represented in plans of environmental governance. Drawing from their research on territorial justice, ecocultural identity, environmental global discourses, and Indigenous movements in Latin America, concerns that are rarely engaged with by mainstream development research, they argue that post-development practitioners should depart from culturalist and anthropocentric notions of identity, embrace place-based embodied experiences, and attend to nonhuman voices and agency. Through embracing pluriversal ways of being, knowing, and acting, development practitioners can find creative and hopeful sources of political imagination.

Zeweri and Farmer look at ways of knowing that are more common to development through their analysis of area studies programmes in the United States, which were created to train future generations of regional experts. They show how the entanglement of these programmes with US imperial policy means that decolonising area studies is an ethical as well as an epistemological problem. More practically, they consider pedagogical and curricular practices that could contribute to a decolonial approach, for example, carefully attending to scholarship on South–South relations in the syllabi. The specific case they present has broader implications for all post-development scholars who teach as they struggle to meet the perceived needs of their 'customers' and fit a critical and deconstructive approach within a broad and practice-focused curriculum.

Tynan challenges the adequacy of university human research ethics processes where they enable researchers to take knowledge, publish it and become an expert. She draws on the work of other Indigenous scholars, and her own experiences of research, to theorise ideas of relational accountability, refusal, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Tynan proposes moving away from concepts of 'data collection' and 'fieldwork' by understanding data as knowledge and the field as a place of relations, not a research location to fly in and fly out of. This picks up on broader

ideas of relational well-being, now increasingly common within development (White, 2015). She also reflects on authorship and publication and suggests that merely working in collaborative and relational ways may not be sufficient: researchers should be advocating for stronger research protocols, ongoing relations of accountability, and real engagement with Intellectual Property, copyright, and co-authorship.

Teresa Armijos-Burneo, Luis David Acosta, Eliza Calder, and others explore the nature of disasters and risk as historical, political, social, cultural, and economic constructions that primarily affect people and communities who have faced and continue to face epistemic injustice. They do this by looking at the relationship between the researcher and the 'researched' to show why it is important to discuss emotion and affect more openly if we want to decolonise development research. Armijos-Burneo et al. share what it means to produce knowledge through decolonial methodologies that break with the conventional research subject-researcher relationship. Alongside thinking with the 'other', they propose learning to feel alongside the 'other', as well as from them, thus breaking down traditional hierarchies of knowledge. The rich, multi-faceted, and ultimately fractured nature of their narrative meets the challenge of writing in a genuinely decolonial way by creating spaces for polyvocality and emotion, alongside analysis.

The book concludes with a number of epilogues that reflect on the themes of the volume and add different perspectives. Saad Filho highlights the contested nature of 'development' and the limitations of middle-range theories that are increasingly used to examine processes of systemic change, for example, in development evaluation. He explains that their shortcomings are due to their derivation inductively from specific cases, rather than from abstract or foundational principles. Saad Filho proposes that the weaknesses of post-development approaches relate to their use of middle-range theory which inevitably replicate the forms they critique. He then outlines the challenges to thinking about development in a time of multiple, and overlapping, system-wide crises.

Mawdsley notes the lack of dialogue between the degrowth movement and scholars debating post-development, decoloniality, and the pluriverse. She suggests that this is partly attributable to the origins of degrowth within the former heartlands of capitalism, which have perpetuated the structural and systemic inequalities contested by post-development

scholars and activists. In so doing, she identifies interlinked achievements, debates, contradictions, and dilemmas within these movements, and illustrates the potential offered by increased dialogue.

Scott's contribution touches on debates about the exploitative nature of management systems, and the increasingly rigid and demanding systems of upwards accountability that have become widespread in the development sector. She examines how development organisations have been grappling with the implications of decolonisation and how their embedding within aid chains and the aid industrial complex constrains the potential of these efforts. Her critical analysis encourages us to more realistically assess the potential of exercises such as Race audits when they are embedded within capitalist and ultimately colonial systems.

Finally, Narayanaswamy reflects on the centrality of coloniality to academic conceptualisations of development to reveal how decolonising development discourse and practice can move beyond the critical to deliver 'global social justice'. She challenges development researchers to be aware of their own role in the persistent a-historicity of their discipline, arguing that we need to understand how we are part of the problem before we can be part of any proposed solution.

In closing, as mentioned at the beginning, we have documented the contributions to the EADI Roundtable on Re-casting development studies in times of multiple crises, which engaged with the challenges we are facing as a field as part of the annual EADI Directors' Meeting (held at King's College on 3 November 2022).

The Need for New Perspectives

There is growing frustration with the association of economic growth with development. In her epilogue, Lata Narayanaswamy recognises that studying development today often translates into studying crises caused by development processes themselves. Thus, those responsible for causing development problems remain in charge of solving them. While new and critical ideas and concepts may be integrated into mainstream development discourse and practice, they do not necessarily challenge orthodox development. Instead, these radical insights are often co-opted into the mainstream, losing their radical edge and in turn become depoliticised and ahistorical. Thus, the power of definition and implementation remains unchallenged.

With the Millennium Development Goals as a significant marker (Wilkinson & Hulme, 2012) and the SDGs as the latest reference point on which much Development Studies funding depends, development discourse has entered a new stage by shifting from a North–South perspective towards a more holistic view of global challenges. But while the SDG-triggered agenda opens new opportunities in the global North, it also closes others, by reducing the notion of development to a series of goals, targets, and checklists.

Indicators and measurements of development continue to fail to capture wider social processes. 'Dataism' has emerged as a new currency, problematically considered to be a revolutionary way of producing knowledge (Harari, 2016). Yet, by reducing knowledge to algorithms such trends reinforce oppressive, anti-humanist versions of 'modernity'. Instead, what is required is deeper understanding of knowledge production as a process which involves interactions based on respect and recognition of 'otherness'. Standardising life as data for decision-making processes sacrifices other forms of knowledge founded upon empathy, social justice, and related motives—such as solidarity. If knowledge is no longer a combination of the multiplicity of experiences, it is part of the problem rather than the solution.

It remains imperative to examine the nature and intention of the knowledge created and applied. It is important to critically explore and question the conditions, forms, substance, and likely impact of knowledge produced. Additionally, it is necessary to be cognisant of the structural asymmetries of power and interests that reproduce societies and institutions. It is important then to be cautious as 'universal knowledge' in the singular is the reference point of a 'darker side of Western modernity', rather than the 'pluriversality' of *knowledges* (Mignolo, 2011).

Decoloniality and justice can only be achieved with the acknowledgement of historical wrong doings and with the recognition of the ongoing coloniality of knowledge. Imperial knowledge, used to repress colonised subjectivities, emerges from the experiences of humiliation and marginalisation enacted by the implementation of the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2016, p. 492).

The slogan that 'knowledge is power' is visible in the landscape we navigate as development scholars and practitioners. While this dictum is not new, it has more pronounced meanings and more extensive reach today through information technologies and social media. However, as Broadbent (2017) alerts us, academics 'are much happier asserting that

knowledge is power than they are conceding that power is knowledge'. But if we are serious about partnerships, we must scrutinise not only how knowledge is power, but also how power is effective in terms of knowledge. After all, the definitions and framings of development often remain 'Western property', even when presented in a different guise. Despite these pitfalls, however, we must also be aware and recognise that there has always been resistance to colonial forms of knowledge and to the concentration and exercise of power.

Organisations such as EADI can encourage robust individual scrutiny among scholars to explore and question our socialisation, mindset, values, and practice. In this way, our collective efforts can contribute to change by shifting our own perceptions and activities. At the same time, we must remain cautious about the form and extent of the current popularity of *development as decolonisation*. Thus, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, p. 42) reminds us of the importance of a pedagogy of unlearning 'as part of epistemological decolonisation which results in the removal of that colonial/Eurocentric hard disk of coloniality together with its software'. And Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021, n.d.) maintains that 'colonialism was never an event. It has always been a power structure with far-reaching consequences'.

Solidaristic 'humane security' (Khoo, 2023) demands frameworks, mindsets, and approaches to analyse structural confinements and the reproduction of asymmetric power relations. Social theory is not sufficient without an acknowledgement of the burden of the past and the need to face the consequences in the present. Wole Soyinka (1998) insists that the distance in time to a crime with impact on the present, is no argument for or against reparations. For the descendants of those who were turned into global commodities since the times of the slave trade or became victims of colonial and imperialist exploitation, this history had irreparable consequences. He refers to a healing trilogy of truth, reparations, and reconciliation. In his posthumously published notes, James Baldwin (2017) endorses this perspective when stating that history is not the past but the present. Charlotte Wiedemann (2022, p. 78) insists that we can approach an inclusive attitude guided by solidarity only if we dismiss any categorisation of deaths as relevant or irrelevant. She offers an anatomy of empathy as a mental and emotional self-positioning within a landscape of history in which Europeans were socialised, impregnated by 500 years of colonial and postcolonial asymmetries. In global realities of asymmetric power relations, European views often carry reduced empathy

(if any) with the victims of colonialism. Knowledge about colonial legacies then is largely envisaged without pain, without mourning.

Development is not only a transactional process of implementing formal knowledge based on a cognitive act. It is also a value-based affair with emotional, moral, and ethical dimensions. Thus, development needs a human core, based on people, on their perspectives, emotions, and their voices. We need to critically interrogate the cultural and mental foundations of our world views and our framing of knowledge. Perceptions of *us* and *others* must be challenged. What we take for granted must be questioned. Only from there can we initiate meaningful efforts to understand. This includes the willingness and ability to vacate the space to the experiences of those marginalised whose voices have for so long been silenced.

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CHAPTER 2

Essentialist Approaches to Global Issues: The Ontological Limitations of Development Studies

Juan Telleria

Introduction

There is a growing consensus among development researchers and practitioners that development studies is in a critical moment. This chapter offers reflections on the challenges and transformations that development studies face in order to redefine its remit, and to position itself within broader academic, policy, and practice communities. Basile and Baud explain the factors that took development studies to a critical impasse: the increase of cooperation among regional powers, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), that broke with the traditional north–south schema; the participation of new players, new sources of funds and new initiatives in the system of aid and development finance; the United Nations' (UN) MDGs and SDGs campaigns that monopolised

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global development goal setting, but neglected important development issues; the increase of international migrations, which is already playing a key disruptive role in international relations; and the emergence of new economic and political power relations that made marginalisation and deprivation manifest both in the South and the North (Basile & Baud, 2019, pp. 3–7). These factors make the study of the development of societies in the South and in the North a complex task that challenges traditional theoretical schemas. The authors conclude that 'the scope and seriousness of development issues – and their urgency – require ontological and epistemological reassessments of development studies' (Basile & Baud, 2019, p. 10).

According to Basile and Baud, one of these reassessments concerns development research. They explain that there are broadly, two theoretical approaches to social issues. On the one hand, problem-solving, which shares a positivist approach to reality, and takes the existing power relations as the framework for action. On the other hand, critical thinking, which tackles social issues from a historical perspective and questions the power relations that problem-solving theories take for granted. The authors ask:

> Do development studies have a primarily problem-oriented approach or should critical thinking prevail? Clearly, the aim of development research is to address development problems and propose feasible solutions. Yet, development research also requires the analysis of the origins of such problems and the socio-economic and political changes that can address them. This means that development studies have to engage with issues of power relationships and transformation as major issues in redefining development studies (Basile & Baud, 2019, p. 11).

My argument in this chapter is, first, that during the last decades development studies underwent a normative (political) and an epistemological critique but neglected a critical reflection about the ontological assumptions that sustain development thinking; second, that an ontological critique of development logics shows that the essentialist foundations of development theory and practice impose important limitations to the way global issues are understood and tackled.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. Sections "Introduction" and "Critical Approaches to Development Thinking" explain that, during the second half of the twentieth century, development thinking internalised

a political and an epistemological critique, but did not reflect critically about the ontological foundations of development logics. Section "Defining Development Studies" explains what ontology is and what an ontological critique of development thinking would look like. In Sect. The Ontological Dimension, I show the three essentialist assumptions that sustain development thinking. In sections "Three Ontological Assumptions" and "Development of the Individual", I analyse the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, I expose the ontological assumptions that implicitly sustain the discourse of the UN and explain the limitations that these assumptions create. The final section concludes that an ontological reflection is necessary in development studies to face the global challenges of the complex twenty-first century world.

Critical Approaches to Development Thinking

Development studies begun in the 1960s as a problem-solving approach to social issues, intended to analyse and understand social change in former colonies. The declared aim was to promote positive transformations that would end poverty, exclusion, and inequalities. Since its inception, it was influenced mainly by two different—although complementary—theoretical approaches. On the one hand by modernisation theories, which in the mid-twentieth century became mainstream in social sciences—especially in sociology departments (more prominently Lewis, 1954; Parsons, 1937; Rostow, 1959). For this approach, underdevelopment was a lack of modernisation, including a lack of capital, knowledge, industry, resources, social services, governance skills, stability, and trade opportunities. It was assumed that underdeveloped areas could develop by following the modernisation process that Western, industrialised, rich countries historically implemented since the eighteenth century. On the other hand, development studies were influenced by dominant economic theories. Many research institutes and university economics departments adopted development economics as a new field of expertise directly related with welfare economics (see Pareto, 1906; Pigou, 1920; Schumpeter, 1961) and applied quantitative, econometric methodologies to development issues. In this way, development became synonymous with economic growth and, following modernisation logics, underdevelopment was understood in terms of the lack of economic growth. At the practical level, the UN adopted this conceptualisation of underdevelopment and played, since its inception, a leading role in the

promotion and coordination of global development strategies. During the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the UN created several bodies intended to help non-industrialised countries in acquiring what, according to modernisation theories, they lacked, such as food, economic growth, modern political institutions, and education. In 1961, the UN General Assembly passed the 'First Development Decade' document (1961–1970)—a global strategy that would coordinate the cooperative efforts of both North and South governments in promoting development. This was followed by the second (1971–1980), third (1981–1990), and fourth (1991–2000) development decades. The recent Millennium Declaration and the MDGs (2000–2015), and the current 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs (2015–2030) are the continuation of such efforts.

During the 1960s and 1970s, econometric evidence showed that the development endeavour was not producing the expected results. After years of designing and implementing development plans and strategies in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, in some countries economic growth did not occur, and in others sustained growth did not translate into better conditions of life for the majority of the population. Rather, poverty grew, and inequalities increased both within and between countries. According to the United Nations Development Programme, or UNDP (1992, p. 1), in 1960 the richest 20% of the world population had incomes 30 times greater than the poorest 20%; this ratio grew to 40 times by 1970. This situation generated two different theoretical reactions. On the one hand, many researchers and practitioners continued with the previous approach to development issues. For them, the original development endeavours of modernisation, industrialisation, and economic growth were not the problem. Instead, the issue was that the development project had not been properly implemented. For example, this was the perspective of the basic needs approach—initially championed by the International Labour Organization in the 1970s and then adopted by the World Bank in the early 1980s—and of the human development approach promoted by the UNDP since the early 1990s. According to these perspectives, to avoid increasing poverty and inequality, development implied not only promoting economic growth, but also ensuring redistribution. Accordingly, redirecting development policies and plans was a matter of better managing political and economic institutions, regulating markets, implementing redistribution policies, promoting employment, and bringing the informal economy into the more formal and regulated sector.

On the other hand, many critical researchers argued that development was not only a technical issue, but also a political one (Amin, 1976; Frank, 1967; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979). Here, 'political' was not understood merely as the design and implementation of development policies, but as the recognition that different groups of people with varied (and confronting) interests and goals (co)existed in the international realm. Influenced in many cases by Marxist theory, they attributed the failure of the development endeavour to the clash between the interests and objectives of countries in the Global North and those in the Global South. In this critical perspective, underdevelopment was the outcome of the tensions and confrontations between different international actors with confronting aims and needs regarding international trade and finances. Promoting development then was seen as a matter of changing global power structures and dynamics. These authors did not assume that development was a kind of race to modernise that each country had to run individually, but a matter of removing the structural constraints that impeded non-industrialised countries to develop their own economic and political systems.

In the late 1980s and early 1990, coinciding with the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new international scenario characterised by the globalisation of a single economic and political model—i.e., neoliberal capitalism—, a novel critique of development logics emerged: post-development (see Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Rist, 1996; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). Strongly influenced by the work of Michel Foucault, post-development criticised the positivist idea that development theories objectively represented social, political, and economic issues. It explained underdevelopment as the discursive construction of an object of study—'the creation of a domain of thought and action' (Escobar, 1995, p. 10)—with important consequences regarding knowledge-power dynamics. According to this approach, within development discourses 'each concept filters perception, highlighting certain aspects of reality while excluding others' (Sachs, 1992, p. xx), which is a bias 'rooted in particular civilizational attitudes adopted during the course of European history' (ibid.). In this way, post-development problematised the universal character of mainstream development theories and practices. Instead, post-development explained that development was not the solution, but an ethnocentric discourse intended to impose an economic, political, and cultural distinction between the rich, industrialised, and powerful West and the Rest. To do so, development discourse colonised reality and

achieved the status of certainty in the social imaginary (Escobar, 1995, p. 5). Post-development scholars criticised the assumption that a single and universal subject position existed, and instead argued that many plural and diverse subject positions should participate in the construction of a world where different and plural worlds coexist. This became known as the pluriverse (see Escobar, 2020; Kothari et al., 2019).

Defining Development Studies

The lack of success of development practices has generated three reactions since the 1960s. Following Basile and Baud (2019), who differentiate between problem-solving and critical approaches to social issues, we can classify these reactions into two groups. In the first group, there is the reaction of the basic needs approach, represented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Bank, and the human development approach, used by the UNDP. These organisations adopted a problem-solving perspective that did not analyse the origins of development issues. Conversely, the reaction of dependency and post-development theorists adopted a critical perspective: dependency theory exposed how the structure of international power relations impeded the development of many countries, and questioned and challenged this order; post-development denounced the knowledge–power dynamics that development discourses generated and challenged the most basic epistemological assumptions of mainstream development discourses. However, these political economy and epistemological critical approaches were never complemented with a critical analysis of the ontological assumptions by development thinking.

The definition of 'Development Studies' proposed by the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) in 2017 is a good example of the lack of interest in ontological issues. EADI defines development studies as:

> a multi- and inter-disciplinary field of study [that] seeks to understand the interplay between social, economic, political, technological, ecological, cultural and gendered aspects of societal change at the local, national, regional and global levels.[1]

The focus of development studies, according to this definition, is societal change. Based on this succinct definition, EADI internalises the normative and epistemological concerns of critical researchers in the 1960s and the 1990s, respectively. First, EADI explains that development is not merely a descriptive field of study. On the contrary, it 'is also characterized by normative and policy concerns about inclusive and sustainable development'.[2] In this way, the definition internalises the political critique of 1960s and 1970s: development studies does not aim for technical neutrality; on the contrary, it acknowledges the ethical and political dimension of development issues. Second, EADI explains that methodological and epistemological aspects are central to development studies: 'At an epistemological level, development studies includes a variety of social inquiry approaches embedded in positivist, interpretative, historical and critical social research'.[3] Then, the text clarifies that positivist and quantitative approaches tend to be the most influential in development studies—as it was the case before the post-development critique in the 1990s—but adds that the range of methods and empirical approaches to development issues are diverse. Thus, EADI is aware of the limitations and biases that a problem-solving and technical approach to the analysis of societal change implies and includes the normative and epistemological concerns in the definition of development studies.

However, EADI's definition does not consider the limitations and biases that ontological assumptions can generate in the analysis of development issues. The definition shows normative and epistemological reflexivity but neglects the influence that traditionally and implicitly accepted ontological assumptions about societies and social change have in development thinking. In this way, the definition uncritically reproduces the ontological stands by most influential political, economic, and

[1] Retrieved from EADI's website (https://www.eadi.org/development-studies/definition-of-development-studies), section Definition and Goals of development studies, item 1. Access on 6 June 2022.

[2] Ibid., item 2.

[3] Ibid., section Learning and teaching development studies, item 3.

social Western thinkers. To explain how the ontological assumptions of mainstream development thinking limit the ability to understand otherwise social issues and social change, in the next section I present an ontological critique of development discourses.

The Ontological Dimension

To understand what an ontological critique is, we need to understand the difference between epistemology and ontology. Generally understood, epistemology is a theory of knowledge. It examines the relation between a knowing subject and a known object: more specifically, it focuses on the nature and characteristics of this relation, and on how it enables or limits the production of knowledge. For that reason, epistemological concerns are central to the design of any research process, and in the selection of a research methodology.

Western debates about epistemology traditionally focused on two aspects. The first one was the relation between the subject and the object. This is the case, for example, in disputes that emerged in the seventeenth century between rationalists and empiricists. These two currents of thought disagreed on the best way to construct an adequate relation between the subject and the object. Rationalists proposed that reason was the best means to produce truthful knowledge about reality, whereas empiricists argued that the only source of valid knowledge was the evidence of our senses. Second, they focused on the ability of the subject to produce knowledge. Kant (1998) argued that a set of universal categories in the mind of the subject enabled the production of scientific knowledge about the world. According to Kant, a single subject position existed: since the categories were universal, any observer should be able to reach the same scientific conclusions about the world. Foucault (2002) reacted to this idea suggesting instead that these allegedly universal categories were historically constructed under the influence of a culturally defined general framework—i.e., the episteme. According to Foucault, in the construction of knowledge, there is no single but many and diverse subject positions. Indeed, this is the main contribution of post-development to development debates: modernisation theories assumed that quantitative and economistic methodologies were the best way to produce universal knowledge about development issues; whereas post-development claimed that such a universalist stance systematically excluded other subject positions.

However, epistemological debates do not focus on the third element—the object—because that is the task of ontology. While epistemology asks what is knowledge, ontology asks what is being: why do we say that an object *is*? What are the conditions we put to accept that it *is*? These abstract questions lead to complex philosophical debates such that 'ontology' and its relation to epistemology has been understood variously by different philosophical traditions (Benton & Craib, 2010, p. 5). For the argument in this chapter, I draw on the work of Martin Heidegger—one of the most influential philosophers in the twentieth century. Heidegger (1962) differentiated between three levels of ontological critique. First, the ontical research, which implies the empirical study of a particular domain of objects. Ontical research in development studies, for example, is the enumeration and the analysis of 'objects' that form the field of development. These objects include, among others, countries, poverty, international relations, hunger, markets, and governments. To ask what poverty is, for example, is an ontical question. In general terms, the ontical critique is what, explicitly or implicitly, every development researcher does whenever they analyse development issues: they empirically study a domain of objects, which are assumed to exist. Second, the ontological research (also known as regional ontology) analyses the conditions of possibility of ontical objects. Ontological research goes a bit deeper than the ontical critique. For example, if we assume that countries, poverty, international relations, hunger, markets, and governments exist, ontological research looks for the nature of their existence. In this case, we do not ask 'what is poverty?', but 'what are we assuming about the nature and the existence of social, economic and political issues to define poverty in such and such way?' Therefore, ontological research focuses on *the conditions of possibility* of the existence of an object. Finally, fundamental ontology, which is more primordial and asks for the meaning of being in general (Heidegger, 1962, p. 31). It is purely philosophical and transcends the specific interests of my argument in this chapter.

The ontological reflection that addresses the conditions of possibility of development studies is important in this chapter because it complements and takes further the insights of political and epistemological critiques (Telleria, 2021a). Development studies started as a problem-oriented approach intended to transform underdeveloped societies. The political critique focused on the power structures that hindered the development of former colonies. The epistemological critique analysed the knowledge–power dynamics resulting from the way development knowledge was

produced. However, none of these critical approaches analysed the way development studies understood its object—i.e., societies and their transformation. That is to say, the critical analysis of development logics lacks first, a research that exposes the most basic ontological assumptions that sustain the field of development, and second, a reflection about how these assumptions condition the way development issues are conceptualised in theory and tackled in practice (Telleria, 2021b). Hence, the two questions I address in the following sections: (1) What does development studies assume about the processes of change and transformation of human societies? (2) How these assumptions shape the way development studies tackle—in theory and in practice—global political, social, and economic issues?

To address these two rather general questions I focus on the most influential problem-oriented development strategy in the present: the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As explained, the aim is to show what an ontological critique of development would look like, and how it could complement political and epistemological critiques.

Three Ontological Assumptions

Development discourses traditionally relied on three implicit assumptions:

Essentialism: The most important assumption concerns the existence of a human essence. This essence has traditionally been conceptualised as a list of characteristics or attributes that make human beings what they are. For example, rationality, rights, dignity, freedom, etc. From an essentialist perspective, it is assumed that these attributes can measure basic human conditions in a person's life. Accordingly, development is generally understood as the process that makes these essential characteristics more present.

Theoretical individualism: Development discourses traditionally assumed that human essence was present in each person. That is, this essence is something that every individual has. Accordingly, development has been generally understood as a process that happens at the individual level: it is the person who is developed, not society. I reflect on this idea further in a later analysis of the 2030 Agenda.

Universalism: The essentialist perspective assumes that human essence is universal, and thus present in every single human being. The logic here is that if we remove the culturally, historically, and

> geographically contingent characteristics that make human beings diverse, we find a basic set of traits shared by all humans.

It is important to highlight that these three ontological assumptions are metaphysical. There is no way to demonstrate empirically and scientifically that dignity, rationality, or freedom make us humans. Conversely, the choice of these traits results from historical reflections and debates that we can accept or refute, but which we cannot prove. In other words, the assumption that a human essence exists is a metaphysical premise that precedes the theorisation of anthropological, sociological, economic, and political issues.

The assumption that a human essence exists sets the conditions of possibility for development thinking. However, it also imposes implicit limitations to the way development and global economic, social, and political issues are understood. To answer the second question above, in the sections below I analyse the 2030 Agenda and show the limitations that its ontological assumptions create. They are basically two: an excessive focus on the individual, at the expense of the group, and the elimination of the political debate between different ways of understanding economic, political, and social issues.

Development of the Individual

The individual plays a central role within the essentialist ontological framework. It is bestowed an ontological and explanatory privilege, at the expense of the group—i.e., society. This means that in essentialist approaches to social issues, the individual is ontologically constituted first—its existence and characteristics are defined—, and then, the existence of society is theorised in accordance with the characteristics of the individual. In this context, 'first' and 'then' do not have a temporal sense, but a theoretical one: the individual person and the group coexist—indeed, the group is formed by individuals; however, the individual person and its essential characteristics have a theoretical priority in the conceptualisation of the whole framework. As pointed out above, within this perspective development takes place at the individual level.

The ontological privilege of the individual is the keystone of the narration of the 2030 Agenda. However, since it is a policy document, and not an anthropological or sociological theoretical essay, this privilege is implicit, not explicit. To find it, we must focus on the first pages of the

document, where the 2030 Agenda explains its fundamental assumptions as 'Our shared principles and commitments' (United Nations, 2015, paragraph 4). The document does not develop a theorisation of the individual person, but it states that the agenda is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proposes a very succinct but meaningful conceptualisation of human beings:

> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. (United Nations, 1948, article 1)

This reproduces the essentialist approach presented above, and the ontological privilege of the individual. The article focuses first on the individual person and mentions the characteristics that, according to the UN, form its essence: freedom, dignity, and rights. The fact that the article says 'all human beings' implies that these characteristics are assumed to be universal. Moreover, the article refers to birth, which represents the instant when a pre-social being starts its life. This is not a minor aspect of this quote as the birth is portrayed as the moment when the contingent elements of life, cultural, geographical, historical, have not yet touched the individual; thus, the birth represents the essential constituent ontological moment. Then, only after the individual is ontologically constituted, does the article add the social by explaining what the attitude of the individual should be towards others, that is, the rest of society. The rest of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set a normative framework to guide these relations between individuals to preserve and properly unfold the essence of human beings.

Such an individualistic framework results in development understood in the UN's 2030 Agenda as the full realisation of the human essence. This is an idea that is repeated many times in the document, always referring to dignity, freedom, and rights—the essential elements of human life. In the Preamble, the agenda explains that it aims to ensure that '*all human beings can fulfil their potential* in dignity' (United Nations, 2015, Preamble, emphasis added); in Paragraph 8 the text says that it envisages 'a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity (…) and of equal opportunity permitting *the full realization of human potential*' (United Nations, 2015, paragraph 8, emphasis added); in Paragraph 20 it insists that 'the achievement of *full human potential* and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be

denied its full human rights and opportunities' (United Nations, 2015, paragraph 20, emphasis added). The agenda concludes:

> We resolve to build a better future for all people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to *achieve their full human potential*. (United Nations, 2015, paragraph 50, emphasis added)

The most important consequence of the ontological privilege of the individual is that society is granted a secondary ontological role. In theoretical terms, society is conceptualised as the environment in which the (already constituted) individual person is inserted. Within this perspective, a developed society is a society that provides the proper environment for human essence to unfold. For example, a faithful religious community for those who assume that the soul is the human essence; a perfectly organised and efficient society for those who believe that reason is the essence; or a purely liberal community for those who say that freedom is the essence. The role of society then is simply to provide opportunities or impose limitations for the realisation of the human individual essence. From this perspective, the purpose of a development project, strategy, or agenda is to create an environment where individuals can fully realise their human essence, by increasing the opportunities and reducing the limitations. At the end of the process, an ideal society is one that generates innumerable opportunities for the realisation of the human essence.

The 2030 Agenda explicitly aims to build a better future, which is directly related to the secondary role that society is granted. The agenda explains that a global development strategy is necessary because the current environment in which the human essence should unfold is not adequate. Under 'Our world today', the agenda describes rising inequalities, enormous disparities, unemployment, global health threats, natural disasters, violent extremism, terrorism, humanitarian crises, forced displacements, environmental degradation, and freshwater scarcity (United Nations, 2015, paragraph 14). Within this environment, freedom, dignity, and rights cannot thrive. That is why, the aim of the agenda is to 'Transform our world'. Under 'Our vision', the agenda presents an ideal future in which there are no conflicts or economic, political, cultural, or social constraints to hinder the realisation of the full human potential. The agenda envisions a world free of poverty, hunger, disease, and want, free of fear and violence: a just, equitable, tolerant,

open, and socially inclusive world where human rights and human dignity are fully respected (United Nations, 2015, paragraphs 7, 8 and 9). In both cases—when the unsatisfactory present is described, and the ideal future is envisioned—the agenda grants society a secondary role and conceptualises it as the environment where the human essence can (or cannot) be realised.

Development Is Inherently Good

The ontological assumptions exposed above generate two important political limitations to development thinking. First, the essentialist perspective assumes that any practice that helps in realising the human essence is beneficial for everyone: a win-win way of action that does not harm anyone. In this way, the human essence provides an allegedly common and universal ground for the construction of political projects which, from an essentialist perspective, do not need any further debate or reflection. The 2030 Agenda is a plain example of this limitation. It assumes that the universal human essence creates a basic common ground of shared essential principles and values that enable the construction of a universal political project to transform the world (United Nations, 2015, preamble). The agenda finds its legitimacy in the conviction that the 17 goals and the 169 targets are a 'win-win' agreement for the benefit of all that will leave no one behind (United Nations, 2015, preamble and paragraph 18). According to the 2030 Agenda, the 17 goals are inherently positive and will benefit everyone:

> As we embark on this great *collective* journey, we pledge that *no one will be left behind*. Recognising that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met *for all* nations and peoples and *for all* segments of society. (United Nations, 2015, article 4, emphasis added)

The second political limitation regards the teleological schema that the essentialist perspective implicitly imposes. As shown above, the UN's 2030 Agenda envisions a future where the constraints for the realisation of the human essence disappear. It is a virtual stage where people coexist in peace and harmony, economic and political conflicts are rationally solved, and society is managed in a sustainable way. Such an ideal

future is central for the articulation of a teleological and normative understanding of history. From an essentialist perspective, history is the process that should take humankind to this ideal future where the human essence is fully realised.

The problem with the essentialist approach to global issues is that it imposes a very narrow understanding of the transformation of human societies and of economic, political, and social issues. Every problem is inserted into a linear schema, where countries are ranked according to their (lack of) ability to create the right conditions for the full realisation of the human essence. The focus is not on the problem itself—i.e., on its causes and on the power dynamics that derive from it—but on how this problem can be explained in terms of (lack of) development and inserted within the linear schema. As explained above, the 2030 Agenda is a good example: it explains the present in terms of the lack of ability to create the right context for the realisation of the human essence. In this sense, the 17 goals and 169 targets would be the means for the transformation of human societies in a way that they enable the full realisation of the human potential.

Overall, the essentialist perspective avoids an open debate about global issues. Once it is assumed that a human essence exists, and once its specific content is defined—there is no open debate about this—the teleological and normative schema is already built and working. From this perspective, there is no need for political debate: it is assumed that the realisation of the human essence is a self-evident and legitimate aim that no one would rationally oppose.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with the reflection of Basile and Baud about a critical moment in development studies. They emphasise that complexity is a major feature of the present world:

> [Complexity] is the outcome of the nexus between unexpected and diverse factors, and of chaotic and unpredictable behaviour where simplification is simply not possible (…). Complexity is further increased by the interplay of economic, political, and environmental processes, with a large number of subjects and systems involved, each with their own interests and needs. (Basile & Baud, 2019, p. 8)

For decades, development thinking implicitly accepted an important simplification: that, at the most basic level, every human being has the same (universal) interests and needs. Based on this simplification, development studies adopted an essentialist ontology and implicitly accepted that the human essence was the common and universal ground for the construction of global political projects. In other words, development studies implicitly answered to the question 'what is society and societal change?' in an essentialist way: first, society is the interplay of essentially equal individuals; second, very specific institutions and practices enable the construction of a stable and harmonious society where the human essence would be fully realised. For example, as pointed out above, for the UN, the 2030 Agenda sets the way for the realisation of these institutions and practices, and, in the long term, for the materialisation of a global society where everyone's basic interests and needs are fulfilled. The 2030 Agenda is presented as a self-evident political project whose legitimacy is based on the idea that it benefits all.

However, this is a simplistic assumption that does not help in managing the complex global issues of the present world. The large number of subjects involved in global issues 'generate(s) multiple, often conflicting, perspectives regarding development problems and their analysis' (Basile & Baud, 2019, p. 11). The essentialist perspective forecloses, rather than opens, the debate about the global future we want. Hence, the question: how to overcome the limitations of the essentialist ontology? Overcoming these limitations is not an easy task. The essentialist schema has a long history and pervades the way that most important social institutions such as schools, universities, governments, social sciences, law, and international organisations understand and deal with reality. The construction of an alternative ontological framework requires changing the most basic assumptions of the essentialist ontology. For example, rather than relying on the assumption that a human *essence* exists, an alternative framework should emphasise that *difference and diversity* is the most basic characteristic of society as such; rather than assuming that some specific institutions and practices are necessary for the realisation of the human essence, an alternative framework could accept that any social agreement is *contingent* and, accordingly, changeable through time. Finally, rather than aiming for the development of the human essence, an alternative framework should focus on how to ensure the *coexistence* of different and diverse subjects in a contingent and changeable environment.

Some might argue that a framework that relies on difference, diversity, and contingency might fall into moral and political relativism. This is a common reaction, for the roots of the essentialist perspective are deep and difficult to challenge. A non-essentialist perspective does not summon a relativistic world where anything is acceptable in moral and political terms. Rather, a non-essentialist framework understands that any global agreement is not the materialisation of a universal truth, but the contingent and changeable agreement by different and diverse subjects with different and diverse interests and aims. A non-essentialist approach to reality does not assume that such and such institutions and practices—e.g., the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—are self-evident and necessary. On the contrary, it realises that they are contingent constructions intended to make a peaceful coexistence possible, and that we have to care about them, and adapt them to new realities, if we really want to make such a coexistence possible. Overall, a non-essentialist perspective contributes with a flexible framework that makes room for diversity and complexity. From this perspective, societal change is not a matter of realising the universal human essence, but a matter of critically, reflectively, and responsibly managing diversity and difference in a contingent and changing environment, in order to enable the coexistence of different political projects. Certainly, not an easy task.

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CHAPTER 3

Beyond the Sustainable Development Goals: Post-development Alternatives

Aram Ziai

Introduction

The point of departure for this chapter is that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reiterate the promise of 'development' and thus continue to legitimise the capitalist world order. The claimed successes in poverty reduction are to a significant extent based on statistical manipulations. The SDG narrative neglects questions of the global economy being far more relevant to global poverty than Official Development Assistance. Being implicitly still oriented towards the 'developed' societies, it diffuses a model based on inequality, pollution, and non-sustainable use of resources. This chapter argues that post-development can offer alternatives to current practices in 'development' aid by raising issues such as the struggle of Indigenous peoples against 'development' projects and other models of organising society beyond the dominant paradigm of 'development'.

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To illustrate these issues this chapter draws on three cases: The Senegalese NGO Enda Graf Sahel, the Dongria Khond's resistance to a mining project in India, and the Zapatista self-rule in Mexico. These are different types of post-development practices: alternatives to 'development' cooperation, protest against 'development projects', and an alternative based on non-Western models of politics, the economy, and knowledge. But first I outline some of the key concerns around the SDGs.

Challenging the SDGs

Franz Nuscheler introduced a whole generation of German students and 'development professionals' to development policy. He argued that the policy field at the beginning of the twenty-first century was in a "deep crisis of meaning and justification" (Nuscheler, 2001, p. 6). However, despite development's 'long register of sins', Nuscheler (ibid.) vehemently opposed blanket criticism of development policy. Instead, and echoing a target of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), he argued that development policy could regain social acceptance if it succeeded in halving absolute poverty. This was the 'acid test of development policy' (ibid.). According to him, global structural policy was also necessary, a policy to change global economic structures to address poverty, conflicts, and environmental problems worldwide in the sense of an enlightened self-interest. Thus, development policy should not be narrowed down to development aid, and neither should it remain limited to the German Ministry of Development Cooperation (*Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit*, in German), known as BMZ.

Now, 20 years on, the acid test has been passed, the halving of the number of people in extreme poverty (from 1.9 billion to 836 million) has been achieved (United Nations, 2015, p. 3), and the United Nations (UN) has set itself new targets with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The programme on the BMZ homepage is displayed under the heading of a quote by UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon: "We can be the first generation to succeed in eradicating poverty…" (BMZ, 2017). The subsequent text reads like the wish list of development non-governmental organisations (NGOs): economic progress, social justice, ecological limits, new understanding of prosperity, responsible consumption, and production patterns. It also stresses that the industrialised countries must also change, that the focus is on the most vulnerable, and a life in dignity is formulated as a goal. As people interested in development policy and a more just

world, we could be satisfied and toast to our successes. However, despite these achievements and laudable aspirations outlined in the SDGs, for people who have been in the business of 'development' for a while or are interested in history, Ban-Ki Moon's sentence sounds rather familiar. We find it, *mutatis mutandis*, in the Millennium Declaration of 2000, in the Brandt Report of 1980, in the Declaration on the UN Development Decade in 1960, and in US President Truman's inaugural address in 1949. It is a reprise of the promise of "development" that was used towards the end of the colonial era to convince newly independent countries that the elimination of poverty did not require the elimination of capitalism (Alcalde, 1987). In the historical context of the development discourse, it becomes apparent that the SDGs mainly consist of familiar discursive structures (see Ziai, 2016): the basic diagnosis that living conditions in "less developed" countries are a problem; the promise that "we" as humanity can solve the problem of poverty today; the central prescriptions of economic growth (increase in the production of goods and services exchanged through the market in the formal economy) and technical progress (which eliminates a lack of knowledge and technology); the credo that "development" is in the interest of all actors involved and that trade-offs between North and South, urban and rural, haves and have-nots, men and women, corporations and smallholders, 'development' agencies and target groups are secondary or can be resolved.

Contrary to the reports of success, critics such as Reddy and Pogge (2009) and Hickel (2016) have pointed out that the success of the MDG campaign in halving poverty is partly due to China and partly due to statistical manipulations, especially the starting year 1990 and the shifting of the International Poverty Line by the World Bank. For instance, in 1993, the setting of the international poverty line as a purchasing power parity of $1.08 represented an increase of only $0.02 in relation to 1985. When this value is adjusted for inflation, it represents that the poverty line was lowered. This transformed a massive increase in poverty in the last two decades of the twentieth century into a significant decline since 1990. The renewed shift to $1.25 in purchasing power parity in 2005 made this decline appear even more successful (437 instead of 316 million fewer people in poverty). Yet based on a more realistic perception of poverty not confined to its most extreme forms, we would require an International Poverty Line at least twice as high—which would reveal that there are about 350 million more poor people in 2014 than in 1981, or even 850 million if we exclude China (Hickel, 2016).

As Nuscheler notes (2001) (and critics before him since the 1970s), development cooperation is not central to people's living conditions. Instead, global economic structures tend to be much more important. Such a global structural policy became a government programme under the progressive government of the Social Democrats and the Green Party 1998–2005. The proponent of this policy was BMZ Minister Wieczorek-Zeul. Despite individual successes (HIPC-II debt relief and reform of structural adjustment, civil peace service), the overall balance sheet of her achievements is rather modest. In most cases, she did not succeed in asserting her 'development policy logic', i.e. to change global structures in favour of the South because this would prevent crises and conflicts that also have an impact on the North. Her cabinet colleagues held a different logic in which orthodox definitions of national interests prevailed, and thus pursued objectives like creating market access in the South for the benefit of German companies or using agricultural subsidies to strengthen their position in the global economy (Ziai, 2007). The global economic structures largely remained untouched. And so, even today, the SDG targets divert attention away from the fact that every year more than US$486 billion in profit repatriation by multinational companies and 575 billion in debt service flow from the South to the North, while thousands of people die each day because they cannot afford access to food, medicine, or clean water (Ellmers, 2016, p. 3; Griffiths, 2014, p. 20).

Yet although the SDGs are only the next band-aid designed to heal wounds caused by an inequality-producing global capitalism, the successes in poverty reduction—especially in China, but also in some other emerging countries—cannot be dismissed. However, in the light of its ecological consequences, Chinese policy cannot provide a shining example for progressive policymakers. A progressive policy must not be about the spread of a model of society that depends on the appropriation of cheap raw materials and labour in other regions, wastes non-renewable resources and destroys the climate, but about the limitation and liquidation of such a model in favour of solidarity-based and ecological alternatives—first and foremost in the North.

Although neocolonial practices in the global economy can easily be found (Langan, 2018; Ziai, 2020), the main actors of such practices are not confined to the North. Land-grabbing countries like China, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and India also play a central role. These economic-geographical shifts do not make those practices any better. From a postcolonial perspective, the emergence of a global middle class,

an increasing part of which comes from the South, is on the one hand a step towards greater justice. On the other hand, this step remains on the road of industrial capitalism, thus often contributing to restricting access to land and livelihoods for those not belonging to this class and preventing the preservation or construction of alternative systems. As Sachs (2010, p. x) writes, "The shiny side of development is often accompanied by a dark side of displacement and dispossession".

Post-development: Conceptual Reflections

The post-development school of thought gained prominence during the 1990s with three seminal publications (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema, 1997; Sachs, 1992) which attempted to leave behind the paradigm of 'development'. Post-development theorists criticised the conflation of a good society with the Western model of society, questioned the necessity of universalising this model in the non-West and argued for 'alternatives to development' (Escobar, 1995, p. 215). Yet although they lucidly pointed out that the term 'development' was attributed to a host of heterogeneous practices which made it a shapeless, 'amoeba-like concept' (Sachs, 1992, p. 4), they failed to realise that their criticisms and post-development alternatives correspondingly were also very diverse: if 'development' can mean many things, so can 'post-development'. These authors saw 'development' as a false promise of affluence given to maintain a colonial division of labour, a failed project of universalising Western models, a hierarchic and Eurocentric construct regarding non-Western societies as backward and inferior, a process of spreading a capitalist rationality dis-valuing activities regarded as non-productive by orthodox economics, and a strategy of legitimating interventions referring to progress and the greater common good (Ziai, 2015).

Within academia, post-development has been seen variously as neo-populist and potentially reactionary, advocating a return to traditional subsistence communities, and as an approach that does not want to prescribe a particular model of society, instead conceiving cultures as dynamic and seeing room for constructive engagement with modernity (Ziai, 2004). It has also been shown that the critique of PD is increasingly acknowledged, but that 'alternatives to development' are generally seen as unrealistic or misguided (Ziai, 2019). Most people in the global South are very much interested in 'development' in the sense of a successful universalisation of Western models (Matthews, 2019), as 'the desire for

recognition and equity is framed in terms of the civilizational model of the powerful nations' (Sachs, 2010, p. viii). Another feature of the debate was that many critics of post-development have asserted that it provided "critique but no construction" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000, p. 182). Thus, the alternatives appear to be the least convincing or credible parts of the critique, so that an inquiry should focus on them. At the same time, such an inquiry should consider the heterogeneity of the alternatives.

This chapter thus investigates these post-development alternatives to 'development', drawing on three contrasting examples. To address the controversy around these alternatives being misguided if they are based on a rejection of Western models, this chapter also examines the extent to which the people on the ground desire these models and the ways in which their ideas and practices diverge from them. In this context, Western models will be understood as those that have become hegemonic in the societies of Western Europe and North America in the fields of economics (capitalism based on private ownership of the means of production, competition, and the *homo oeconomicus*), politics (representative multi-party parliamentary democracies with professional politicians and a free mandate in the context of nation-states) and science (Western, positivist science which regards itself as the only valid system and nature as dead matter to be explored and dominated).

As another pertinent critique of post-development, Kiely (1999, pp. 36–41) has asserted that the alternatives are confined to the local level and evade the problem of upscaling and, correspondingly, of relations of power in global capitalism on the national and international level. One of the case studies below will also look at large-scale alternatives at the regional level.

Enda Graf Sahel: Supporting Local Networks in Dakar/Senegal

Enda Graf Sahel is a Senegalese NGO that is part of the larger international NGO Enda Third World. It aims to look for 'alternatives to development', encompassing all dimensions in which poverty can be reduced and local initiatives can be promoted (Enda Graf Sahel, 2022). It has been operating in Grand-Yoff, in the periphery of Dakar, since 1975. Enda Graf Sahel began as an ordinary NGO working in the field of 'development', through projects and programmes in the areas of health, youth unemployment, and income generation, receiving money from Northern

agencies. After a while, however, its members realised that their activities, aiming to transform the local communities according to the ideas of the 'development' agencies, failed to achieve their stated goals and produced no lasting results, and that they often isolated individuals from their own social space (Matthews, 2007, p. 133; N'Dione et al., 1997, p. 367). Even worse, they found that their work taught the people that their way of life was deficient in comparison to the West and thus had served to reproduce a 'poverty-generating ideology … inviting the penetration of the dominant economic logic' which helped to spread 'a culture dominated by the values of a monetary economy … substituting all other kinds of thinking' (N'Dione et al., 1997, p. 367). Emmanuel N'Dione, president of Enda Graf Sahel, and his collaborators argue that the 'development culture' promotes 'the universalising claims of the development model', 'the commodification of people and goods', and 'the cult of statistics and competition between individuals' and thus 'engenders impoverishment and loneliness' (N'Dione et al., 1997, p. 368). Realising that implicitly they were telling communities that they need to adopt Western concepts and practices and goods, they arrived at a self-critical diagnosis: 'By depreciating the capacity to be self-sufficient and being satisfied with local resources, the development ideology is creating poverty' (ibid.). For them, 'development' is based on 'the idea that needs must be satisfied at all costs' and can be described as 'an enterprise that aims at progressive satisfaction of needs less and less related so subsistence'. They consider it 'absurd to accumulate an increasing heap of material 'riches'' and to claim 'that such riches, one day, will be the lot of a humanity that is constantly growing in numbers' (ibid.). Correspondingly, they reject the idea that what is valid for the West must be valid for everyone: 'if they have been able to accumulate a certain quantity of goods through industrialisation and have received a certain satisfaction from it, then this model must be universally adopted' (ibid.). On the other hand, they readily admit that accumulation of resources and investments in certain sectors are necessary'.

The parallels with the post-development critique are clear. Enda Graf Sahel criticises the universalisation of Western models and the spread of capitalist rationality, commodification, and competition, together with the notion of infinite needs and scarce resources (see Esteva, 1992). They question the dominant notion of wealth and the promise of universal affluence through 'development' and even argue that a 'creation of

poverty' (N'Dione et al., 1997, p. 368) takes place through the production of needs which cannot be satisfied locally. Yet they do not dismiss economic growth in general and are interested in poverty reduction. Let's look at their alternatives.

On the conceptual level, their ideas of wealth and of knowledge are particularly interesting. Rejecting the idea that the laws of the market can establish the value of things, they suggest that relationships, in particular networks of mutual aid, constitute the wealth of the poor and argue that wealth can be identified in the level of integration of people in their natural, social, and spiritual environment. Thus, they propose a different way of evaluating societies:

> If we were to evaluate the wealth of a society by its level of independence or autonomy vis-a-vis the foreigner, the far-off, the unknown; if we were to assess it according to its capacity to integrate and 'include' the greatest number of people; if we also assessed its capacity to redistribute—one would be led to conclude that many in the West live in a state of poverty and precariousness. (N'Dione et al., 1997, p. 369)

Enda Graf Sahel describes relations of power resulting from hierarchies in knowledge:

> Things are no longer true or false because they have been tested by people themselves (…) but because they coincide with an explanation that has been legitimized by foreign authorities: Science, Religion, Reason (…) When people are dispossessed of their capacity to explain the reasons for things, they become culturally dominated and disposed to accept their own exclusion. (N'Dione et al., 1997, p. 373)

Thus, the hierarchy between what the 'development experts' believe and what the locals believe becomes visible: only the former beliefs count as universal, objective knowledge: 'the truths of the poor (…) are only beliefs that come up against the knowledge of those who hold the levers of power' (N'Dione et al., 1997, p. 375). The alternative Enda Graf Sahel promotes is to see knowledge systems as relative to certain groups, spaces, and epochs, recognising and rehabilitating the value of the know-how and the beliefs of the underprivileged, without endorsing relativism: 'the search for a more just society must start out by legitimising all beliefs (which is not the same thing as subscribing to all beliefs)' (N'Dione et al., 1997, p. 375). Here, they are anticipating the call by scholar activist

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who recognised that the knowledge of the oppressed is a condition to achieve a more just world: there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice (Santos, 2014).

After their crisis in the 1980s, Enda Graf Sahel decided to exclusively support existing community networks instead of implementing traditional 'development' projects. Challenging the distinction between 'development experts' and 'target groups', they started to integrate themselves in these communities and to 'build upon the community's ways of addressing their problems rather than presenting themselves as 'saviours' of the community, especially its poor' (Matthews, 2007, p. 133). This corresponds to post-development's rejection of the claim that outsiders, referred to as 'trustees' by Cowen and Shenton (1996), know better how to solve people's problems than the people themselves (partly contradicting Spivak (1988) who insisted on the importance of organic intellectuals representing the subaltern and their interests). It also corresponds with Ferguson's (1994) epilogue of his study, in which he answers the question what the poor should do to improve their lives with the confident reply that they are already doing, they themselves knowing best their situation and their capacities.

Matthews (2007, p. 137), who analysed the work of Enda Graf Sahel, observed that the skills of outsiders were still often deemed useful by the underprivileged, but that their role changed significantly from that of experts to facilitators, brokers, and agents. In their own words, the facilitator 'has a supporting role in a script to be written by the farmers themselves' (N'Dione et al., 1995, p. xiii). Thus, the role of the NGO changed according to the desires and requirements of the networks, their task being redefined as putting community groups in contact with one another, providing access to funding for small, local initiatives, and revalorising disparaged value systems, knowledges, languages, and ways of living (Matthews, 2007, p. 137). For that, it was not enough that the NGO valued the capacities of the local people: they themselves had to learn to value them (N'Dione et al., 1995, p. xv).

This process of prioritising the desires of the people themselves included surprises for the EGS staff: 'community members seemed more interested in the possibility of Enda Graf Sahel providing flexible loans and of bringing Enda Graf Sahel into local social networks, thereby improving access of Grand Yoff community members to the relatively powerful and high-status people' (Matthews, 2007, p. 135). Yet the less privileged, contrary to the original ideas of the staff, insisted on engaging the more

privileged and not in an oppositional manner. And although the networks that people made use of were characterised by reciprocity, they were often neither transparent nor egalitarian. In the end, this holds true for Enda Graf Sahel as well, with N'Dione occupying a central role, although he himself downplays this and refuses to take the lead when he is expected to (ibid., p. 139).

Matthews sees the NGO's strategy of supporting popular initiatives as a post-development practice, because it is 'responding to many of the problems traditionally highlighted in development studies – poverty, inequity, oppression and the like – in a way that takes the arguments made in post-development theory into account' (ibid., p. 134), namely a sensitivity towards difference and a questioning of the authority of the expert. There are potential contradictions between denouncing capitalism and supporting microcredit or promoting reliance on one's own resources while providing access to aid funding. However, I agree with Matthews also on the grounds of the numerous parallels pointed out above between Enda Graf Sahel's theory and practice and post-development. But of course, this variant of post-development pragmatically works with the existing relations of power and distribution of wealth, trying to shift them in favour of the less privileged, but without striving for an anti-capitalist, anarchist utopia. Yet this is merely a result of renouncing the role of the expert and putting people's desires and needs at centre stage, as demanded by a more sceptical post-development approach.

While it is a pragmatic strategy to make use of existing networks and the apparatus of international development cooperation to improve lives, there are (often rural) Indigenous communities who feel that their livelihoods are threatened by the advent of modern infrastructure projects, and who consequently opt for a fundamentally different approach. The next case study will turn to one of them.

The Dongria Khond of the Niyamgiri Hills: Indigenous Resistance Against 'Development' in Odisha/India

The Dongria Khond are a small Adivasi community of about 8,000 people living in the Niyamgiri Hills, in the state of Odisha in Eastern India. Since at least 2006, they have been engaged in a conflict with Vedanta Aluminium Limited, one of the largest mining corporations, around a

Bauxite mine and refinery in the area where they live. While the president of Vedanta claims the project would lead to the 'development' of the region and benefit its inhabitants (Vedanta, 2012, p. 4), there have been sustained protests especially by the Dongria Khond which took various forms ranging from written petitions to Indian courts to demonstrations. After the refinery was built in 2006, circumventing legal environmental and social requirements, the permission to clear the forest for mining was withheld in 2010. The Supreme Court then insisted on the peoples' consent and all tribal villages voted against the project in 2013. Finally, the Ministry for Environment, Forests and Climate Change stopped the project in 2014 (Tatpati et al., 2018). The Dongria Khond's campaign was supported by NGOs such as Amnesty International and Survival International, as well as by celebrities like Arundhati Roy and Michael Palin (Hopkins, 2010).

Critics of post-development have consistently pointed out that many people in the global South are indeed very much interested in 'development' in the sense of enjoying a lifestyle like the middle class in the rich, modern, industrialised countries (e.g. Matthews, 2019). But the determined rejection of a modern infrastructure project by the Dongria Khond suggests that some are indeed much more interested in preserving their traditional way of life, as suggested by Lado Sikaka, leader of Lakhpadar village, in his reply to the question 'How do you see yourselves in the future?':

> After 10 years or more, I see us as what we are today. We don't want change. Change will mean that everything will be lost – our culture, our language. Some people are stepping out to study, but when they come back they've lost everything. What is a man without an identity? See what has happened at Lanjigarh. When the company [Vedanta] was not there, the Kui folk [Kutia and Desia Kondh] were like us, we lived like brothers. You could identify them as Kandha [Kondhs]. But when the company came, everything changed. Land was lost, culture was lost, and identity was lost. Now, they are labourers. They were kings, owners of their own land before. Now you cannot make out who is Pano, who is Kandho, everything is mixed. What is the use of that kind of development? We will at the end become labourers. Now, they are opposing us Dongria. The brother is opposing the brother. (cited in Tatpati et al., 2018, p. 93)

Pointing to the consequences of the refinery in the neighbouring community of Lanjigarh, Lado Sikaka laments the loss of culture,

language, and identity and demands their preservation against any kind of contact with Western modernity. He also argues that capitalism reduces people to wage labourers and 'turns brother against brother' (ibid.), i.e. provokes conflict within formerly peaceful social groups (see also Taussig, 2010). This resonates with the neo-populist current in post-development (see for example Norberg-Hodge, 2009) which sees harmonious traditional communities suffer under the onslaught of Western modernity and 'development', the latter sometimes even being compared to a contagious disease (Rahnema, 1997). This view is also taken in the representation of the struggle of the Dongria Khond by Survival International, most visible in their 2009 short film *Mine—Story of a Sacred Mountain*, which also emphasises the spiritual dimension of the struggle.[1] The film was advertised with the slogan 'The Real Avatar', alluding to a Hollywood movie in which peaceful aliens defend their sacred tree against human colonisers, and the message was clear: support the Indigenous Dongria Khond in their struggle against Vedanta, the destruction of their environment, and Western modernity in general.

As Wilson (2019, pp. 146–151) lucidly pointed out, this way of representing the struggle of the Dongria Khond not only reproduces the stereotype of the noble savage and binary oppositions between 'development' and Indigenous resistance, but it also misrepresents their struggle or at least silences many political aspects of it. This can already be seen by comparing the Survival International film to the documentary *Wira Pdika*, in which Khond people themselves describe their struggle without any narration or voiceovers. It shows armed protesters, political demonstrations, people recounting their experiences of police brutality and demanding schools or hospitals, also using modern technology in the form of buses and loudspeakers—elements which are absent in 'The Real Avatar' film. All in all, in the few available public scenes of the movie,[2] the Khond people's struggle hardly resembles the noble savage narrative from

[1] In its first thirty seconds, the movie presents the Dongria Khond's struggle with the following words: 'One of India's most remote tribes, a mountain they revere as a god, and a multinational mining company … As the bulldozers draw closer, what will one tribe do to save their forest, their mountain, and their god?' Retrieved from: https://www.survivalinternational.org/films/mine. Access on January, 19, 2023.

[2] Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c5L9fxxDJQ and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRyrmEAUQ10 on March 3, 2022.

Survival International but looks a lot like protests against state repression and corporate interests in other parts of the world.

So, are we to reject the romanticising representation of Survival International and admit that even the Dongria Khond want 'development' in the form of roads, schools, hospitals, and electricity? A more in-depth study by Tatpati et al. (2018) suggests a more complicated answer. According to this study, they do want roads, but not tarred roads suitable for cars and trucks because this would prove disastrous for their culture. They want schools, but local schools with Adivasi teachers speaking Kui, not boarding schools where children have to leave their homes to be taught in languages they do not understand. They want electricity, but only if it is coming from solar panels and not from hazardous high-tension wires (ibid., p. 102f). And they want hospitals because their traditional medicinal knowledge is eroding (partly through government action) and becoming less effective due to outside influences like new pesticides and illnesses, or non-traditional food that makes bodies impervious to natural cures (ibid., p. 105f). In general, the Dongria Khond practice an 'economy of restraint' (Tatpati et al., 2018, p. 92) which rejects the idea of unlimited growth and disallows unsustainable exploitation of the forest. This is embedded in a religious world view perceiving the land on which they live as sacred. Thus, the Dongria Khond's mode of living clearly does not correspond to the Western model and can be seen as an alternative to development. Yet, people are increasingly dependent on money and liquor indulgence, a trend that is perceived as problematic (Tatpati et al., 2018, p. 104).

Large parts of the Dongria Khond do not perceive their old way of life as inferior. Instead, they believe that their lives are being undermined without a viable alternative (Esteva, 1992, p. 20; Tatpati et al., 2018, p. 109). This leads us beyond either-or-solutions to what Matthews (2019, p. 111) has described as 'the picking apart of development, taking what is useful and discarding what is not'. While this is difficult to reconcile with a neo-populist post-development discourse demanding a return to traditional subsistence communities, it corresponds to the argument that 'the idea, then, in spite of 'development', is to organize and invent new ways of life - between modernisation, with its sufferings but also some advantages, and a tradition from which people may derive inspiration while knowing it can never be revived' (Rist, 1997, p. 244, see also Escobar, 1995, pp. 217–222).

Yet the Niyamgiri experience leads to further questions: what if the Supreme Court had decided in favour of the mining? Could the resistance have been upheld against State forces? And could post-development alternatives survive if they were indeed endangering capitalist accumulation? Our third example provides an opportunity to address these questions.

The Zapatistas: Armed Insurrection and Regional Autonomy in Chiapas, Mexico

After a decade of organising and preparation, the mostly Indigenous Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* or EZLN) launched an insurrection against the Mexican State on the 1st of January of 1994. The Zapatistas occupied four towns in the South-Eastern province of Chiapas. Triggered by the North American Free Trade Agreement, which had required abandoning article 27 of the Mexican constitution protecting communal property from the market, the insurrection rejected neoliberalism and demanded Indigenous rights, democracy, and freedom (Kerkeling, 2006). After twelve days of fighting, the government—under pressure from massive support for the uprising in civil society—declared a ceasefire and entered negotiations. Although these turned out to be unsatisfactory, both parties have refrained from returning to a full-blown armed conflict. Nonetheless, the government engaged in a low intensity conflict against the Zapatistas—with the 1997 massacre of Acteal being the most violent example of this—and employed paramilitary groups as threats and 'development projects' as incentives to stop mobilisation. Although only 4% of the Mexican population lives in the province of Chiapas, over one-third of its military can be found there. However, despite the conflict, there is a functioning Zapatista self-rule in about 1,000 villages since 1994, in which roughly 200,000 people organise themselves without any support of the 'bad government', as they call it (Gilgenbach & Moser, 2012, p. 14).

Gustavo Esteva (1997), who acted as an advisor to the Zapatistas, claims that the uprising was directed not only against 500 years of colonial oppression and racism, but also against 40 years of 'development'. He argues that the Zapatistas do not seek an expansion of the economy in terms of either market-led or State-led growth, but rather the protection of the commons. They would 'keep alive their own life-support systems based on self-reliance and mutual help, informal networks for direct exchange of goods, services and information, and an administration

of justice which calls for compensation more than punishment' (Esteva, 1997, p. 303).

The EZLN professes an understanding of politics which is not centred on taking State power, but on proceeding through questioning, i.e. on rejecting avant-garde claims of how society should be transformed from above (Kerkeling, 2006, p. 261). The Zapatistas do not claim to represent all Indigenous groups. Instead, they invite other groups to join negotiations with the government. Although the EZLN are sceptical towards bad governments and their homogenising claims, their aim is to reach democratic autonomy within the Mexican State. According to their understanding, the role of representatives is to govern only by obeying the will of the people (*mandar obedeciendo*, in Spanish). In practice, this translates into a grassroots democracy at the levels of villages, districts, and regions, the latter being administratively constituted by 'Good Government Councils' (*Juntas de Buen Gobierno*). There is no central authority and there are no parties. All political offices rotate to prevent the emergence of a class of professional politicians and are non-remunerated. Meanwhile, other farmers take care of office holders' crop fields. Representatives can also be voted down at any time (Gilgenbach & Moser, 2012). Women's rights occupy a special place in the EZLN, with women's law directed against 'bad' patriarchal traditions (Kerkeling, 2006).

Economically, the Zapatista insurrection started with the revolutionary agrarian law which decreed that land possessions above 50 hectares are occupied, expropriated, and distributed to collectives and landless people. This amounted to over 100,000 hectares by the end of 1994, although there are no exact figures for the present (Kerkeling, 2006, p. 174). Ecological agriculture is deemed increasingly important to produce healthy food and gain independence from pesticides and corporations. In the Zapatista economy, subsistence agriculture and production for the market exist side by side, just like individual or family ownership and cooperatives or collectives which seek to overcome capitalist relations. Several hundred Tzotzil families have formed the cooperative Mut Vitz which exports coffee to Europe and the US. There are also a number of democratically organised women's cooperatives producing handicraft for the market. Thus, despite the anticapitalistic rhetoric, there is a mixed economy combining different elements, partly because many people are interested in monetary income (Gilgenbach & Moser, 2012, pp. 17–19; Kerkeling, 2006, p. 187).

The traditional knowledge of healers (particularly women) is held in high esteem and there are organisations of midwives and herbal healers to institutionalise skill sharing and transfer of knowledge to the next generation, in the prevailing absence of hospitals and doctors. Yet they are also employing techniques and instruments taken from modern medicine and readily admit that their traditional knowledge is unfit to deal with problems of surgery. Therefore, their relation to modern medicine is ambivalent: on the one hand it displaces traditional knowledge, on the other hand it helps the healers in their work. Yet the Zapatistas have established a health system, which makes use of both knowledge systems (Gilgenbach & Moser, 2012, pp. 20–22). And just like the Dongria Khond envisioned, the Zapatistas have built local schools where practical knowledge is taught in Indigenous languages (Kerkeling, 2006, pp. 179–186).

The regional autonomy of the Zapatistas can also be interpreted as a type of post-development practice, insisting on grassroots democracy vis-à-vis the party system, rejecting projects of 'development' and any cooperation with the state and multinational corporations, valorising the knowledge of traditional healers. However, there is neither an uncritical embracing of tradition nor a wholesale commitment to Western modernity, but a selective engagement with both. In politics, economy, and knowledge, the Zapatistas clearly deviate from the model of the industrialised, capitalist societies and prove that workable alternatives to development do exist.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at three different types of post-development practices: alternatives to 'development' cooperation in Dakar, Senegal; resistance against 'development projects' in Niyamgiri, India; and an alternative based on non-Western models of politics, the economy, and knowledge in Chiapas, Mexico. We found that in all three cases, the rejection of Eurocentrism and the divergence of local people's ideas and practices from the model of 'developed' societies was coupled with a selective engagement of certain elements of what was seen as 'development'. These included, for example, access to project funding in Dakar, access to certain types of roads, schools, and hospitals in Niyamgiri, and access to modern medicine and the global market in Chiapas.

The empirical examples yield three main arguments for post-development theory. Firstly, with practices that clearly incorporate elements of post-development theory, they support Esteva's (1992, p. 17) claim that post-development is a theorisation of grassroots practices in the global South. Secondly, because of a common selective engagement with Western culture, the empirical examples correspond more to the moderate, sceptical variant of post-development as hybrid practices. Thirdly, if post-development is a 'rear-guard theory' (Santos, 2014, p. ix), rather than a vanguard theory with a clear blueprint of positive social change and capable of telling social movements what to do, this also directs us towards the sceptical variant. If claims about 'colonised minds' (Matthews, 2019) are to be avoided, neo-populist post-development cannot be an option. Of course, it may well be that people's ideas of a good society have in fact been heavily influenced by images of European superiority. However, claiming to know better what is good for people would merely lead to assuming the role of the trustees again and reproduce the hierarchies of development discourse. The task ahead is to disentangle the idea of a good society from the model of the industrialised affluent societies. And for this, examples of post-development in the North (Bendix et al., 2019) are crucial. Yet for the global South, the case studies presented clearly show that people not everywhere want to live like those in the affluent industrial capitalist regions—and thus challenge the paradigm of 'development'. Alternatives to colonial global capitalism exist.

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CHAPTER 4

In Search of Alternatives to Development: Learning from Grounded Initiatives

Ashish Kothari

Introduction

Across the world, overwhelming evidence of the ecological unsustainability and social injustice of the current path of development has led to a range of responses. Substantial efforts have been made by various governments, corporations, and civil society towards 'greening' the economy, elaborating on, and attempting to adopt, principles of 'sustainable development'. The most ambitious of these has been the 2015 agreement amongst countries to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With evidence of the impacts of the climate crisis mounting, these responses have recently been added to by, for example, 'net-zero' and carbon trading as well as by technical fixes such as geoengineering.

Peoples' movements and civil society organisations, however, question these approaches. They point out that they do not challenge the fundamental structures that cause inequality, unsustainability, and injustice such as capitalism, statism, patriarchy, casteism, racism, and other forms of

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unequal power distribution. Instead, they argue that it is necessary to search for systemic, fundamental transformations, for alternatives *to* development. The reason for this is that the term, 'development', continues to be associated with increases in the use and flows of materials and energy which an already groaning planet cannot sustain.

There are multiple initiatives around the world seeking these alternatives. These include acts of resistance, or what Hawken (2007) refers to as 'blessed unrest'. Others provide constructive solutions to human needs and aspirations that respect the Earth's rhythms and limits and can lead to greater justice. These initiatives range from grassroots practices to ambitious ideological frameworks and futuristic visions, some of which are based on ancient Indigenous cosmologies. Collectively, they provide rays of hope in what currently seems to be a worsening situation of social tension and conflicts, the resurgence of regressive right-wing forces, and suffering caused by environmental damage.

Many of these initiatives were also crucial in enabling community resilience during the COVID pandemic, from which lessons need to be learnt. A tiny virus dealt a resounding blow to humanity and exposed the deep fissures in society, especially between those who have concentrated political and economic power in their hands, and those who lead lives vulnerable to the slightest fluctuations in the economy. The former used the opportunity to increase their authoritarianism and profit-seeking, while many of the latter lost livelihoods and are still to recover, though they do not necessarily want to go back to the insecurity of their pre-COVID lives.

'Development', 'growth', or 'progress' are clearly not intended as ends in themselves, although official pronouncements often appear to make them so. Instead, they are means towards human well-being. If well-being is about having secure ways of meeting basic needs, being healthy, having access to opportunities for learning, being employed in satisfactory and meaningful tasks, having good social relations, and leading culturally and spiritually fulfilling lives, economic growth per se does not achieve these. Additionally, there is no reason why well-being has to be attained through ecological devastation, or only enjoyed by the few. Human well-being can be realised through a diversity of alternative pathways and frameworks without endangering the earth and ourselves, and without leaving behind half or more of humanity.

This chapter describes the broad contours of transformation being attempted or needed, if we are to move towards socio-economic equity

and justice, and ecological sustainability.[1] I draw from broad principles such as social justice and well-being and cultural diversity that may be applicable across the globe, though in diverse manifestations. The initiatives I present are a complex mix of creating spaces within the existing system and fundamentally challenging it, of synergising old and new knowledge, and of retaining or regaining the best of traditional and modern life while discarding their worst. Most point to a different set of principles and values than the ones on which the currently dominant economic and political structures are based. While still very much on the margins, often threatened or submerged by the dominant forces, they all show the potential of a different future.

This chapter begins with an account of a process of networking and documenting alternatives in India, and the framework of transformation emerging from these. It goes on to describe initiatives of radical transformation in various spheres of human endeavour, and the principles embedded in, and emerging from, these. The chapter concludes with a glimpse of global processes resonating with those in India, experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic period, and key lessons emerging from these for the future.

Eco-Swaraj and the Vikalp Sangam Process

Human equity, a mix of equality of opportunity and access to decision-making forums for all, depends on equity in the distribution and enjoyment of the benefits of human endeavour and on cultural and ecological security. The Radical Ecological Democracy (RED) or eco-swaraj (Kothari, 2014) framework attempts to forge this kind of human and planetary equity. *Swaraj*, loosely translated as 'self-rule', became popular when used by Gandhi as part of India's freedom movement against British colonial rule. However, its meanings extend more widely and deeply to include individual freedom and autonomy, the freedom of the human species, rights and responsibilities, and independence with interconnectedness. RED is a socio-cultural, political, and economic arrangement in which all people and communities have the right and opportunity to fully participate in decision-making, based on the twin fulcrums of ecological sustainability and human equity. Here ecological sustainability

[1] It is substantially based on previous work by the author (see references).

is understood as the continuing integrity of the ecosystems and ecological functions on which all life depends, including the maintenance of biological diversity.

Since 2013, the vision of RED has been a basis for, and has been considerably enriched by, the Vikalp Sangam (VS) or 'Alternatives Confluences' process. This has provided a platform for groups and individuals working on alternatives to the currently dominant model of development and governance to network (see also Daga, 2014; Kothari, 2015; Thekaekara, 2015). It has a website with stories and perspectives from across India, a mobile poster exhibition and accompanying booklet (Kalpavriksh, 2015), and videos of the various initiatives. Its major activity, however, is the convening of regional and thematic confluences, or *Sangams*, across India.[2] By 2022, over 20 *Sangams* had been organised in various parts of India bringing together initiatives taking place in particular regions or under themes such as food and agriculture, democracy, health, alternative economies, and energy.

The *Sangams* are a space for people to exchange experiences and ideas emerging from their practices and to reflect on a range of endeavours. These include sustainable agriculture and pastoralism, renewable energy, decentralised governance, recognition of intersectionality, and craft and art revival. Importantly, these *Sangams* have spawned a more extensive global initiative with similar aims and activities known as the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, to which I will return later.

Beyond the sharing of practical experiences, one of the most important outputs of the Vikalp Sangam process is a conceptual framework of transformative alternatives initially drafted in 2014 and continuously evolving. Vikalp Sangam can be seen as a system subversion, in so far as it challenges the status quo and provides radical alternatives (Kothari, 2019). Together, the Eco-swaraj processes and the Vikalp Sangam framework address the key question: what constitutes a systemic or transformational alternative? The Vikalp Sangam website proposes that:

> alternatives can be practical activities, policies, processes, technologies, and concepts/frameworks. They can be practised or proposed/propagated by communities, government, civil society organisations, individuals, and social enterprises, amongst others. They can simply be continuations from

[2] See, for instance www.vikalpsangam.org or www.alternativesindia.org. Access on January 23, 2023.

> the past, re-asserted in or modified for current times, or new ones; it is important to note that the term does not imply these are always 'marginal' or new, but that they are in contrast to the mainstream or dominant system.[3]

According to this framework, a holistic, alternative society would be built on five interconnected and overlapping spheres, visualised as a Flower of Transformation (see Fig. 4.1).

Figure 4.1 a diagram in the shape of a mandala depicts the intersections of different aspects of social life. It has five main spheres: economic democracy, ecological integrity and resilience, direct and delegated democracy, cultural diversity and knowledge democracy, and social well-being and justice. These spheres intersect with each other, and together, reveal different aspects of a holistic development, as explained below.

In this framework, ecological integrity and resilience includes the conservation of nature and natural diversity, and ecological ethics in all human actions. Social well-being and justice refer to equity between communities and individuals, communal and ethnic harmony, and erasure of hierarchies and divisions. Direct and delegated democracy emphasises the ability for everyone to participate in decision-making and respect of the needs and rights of those currently marginalised. Economic democracy ensures that local communities and individuals have control over the means of production, distribution, exchange, and markets, while cultural diversity and knowledge democracy, acknowledges diverse knowledge systems and encourages creativity and innovation.

[3] Retrieved on January 23, 2023, from https://vikalpsangam.org.

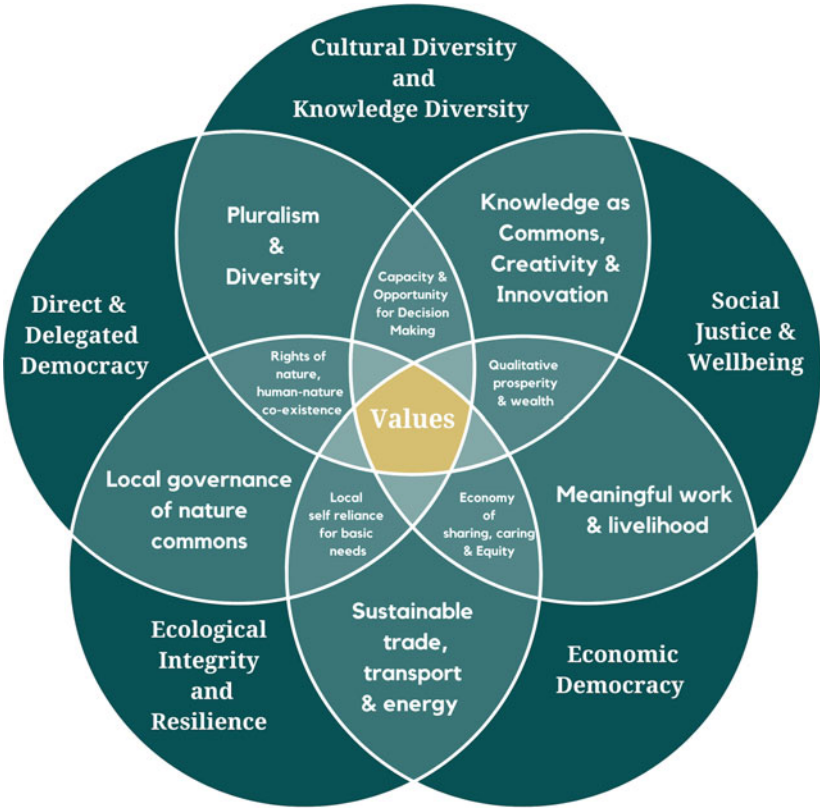

Fig. 4.1 Flower of transformation[4]

[4] Originally contained in Vikalp Sangam's 'The search for alternatives: Key aspects and principles', https://vikalpsangam.org/about/the-search-for-alternatives-key-aspects-and-principles/; see also Kothari (2021).

The Alternatives in Various Spheres[5]

The areas of transformation identified in the Vikalp Sangam framework are reflected in approaches adopted in different parts of the world. Examples of these that focus on political, economic, socio-cultural, and ecological transformations are illustrated below.

Political Transformations

Political transformations include initiatives and approaches towards people-centred governance and decision-making. Such forms of direct democracy or *swaraj* attempt to reimagine current political boundaries, making them more compatible with ecological and cultural contiguities, and to promote grounded democracy including through the non-party political process, methods of increasing accountability and transparency of the government and of political parties, and progressive policy frameworks.

The Kurdish Rojava and Zapatista regions in Western Asia and Mexico, respectively, have asserted complete regional autonomy from the nation-states in which they are contained. They have secured direct, radical democracy or democratic federalism for the communes and settlements that are encompassed in these regions. Indigenous peoples in many parts of Latin America, North America, and Australia have similarly struggled for and achieved self-determination, though not necessarily as autonomous as the first two mentioned, but with much key decision-making vesting in them rather than in their governments. In central India, beginning with the village Mendha-Lekha (Pallavi, 2014; Pathak & Gour-Broome, 2001) and expanding to a federation of nearly 90 nearby villages known as the Korchi Maha Gramsabha, there is an assertion of *swaraj* in slogans such as 'we elect the government in Mumbai and Delhi, but in our village we are the government'.[6] The 'freetown' commune of Christiania

[5] This section is adapted from broad guidance used by the website www.vikalpsangam.org, with additional guidance from the Alternatives Transformation Format (https://kalpavriksh.org/publication/alternative-transformation-format/), and material from the Radical Ecological Democracy and Global Tapestry of Alternatives websites (https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org and https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org). All information was retrieved on January 23, 2023.

[6] Retrieved on January 23, 2023 from: https://vikalpsangam.org/article/reimagining-wellbeing-villages-opening-spaces-for-self-governance/.

in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Svartlamon, in Norway, similarly claim levels of self-governance. While some of these examples do not engage with the nation-state, most demand recognition and claim what is due to them from the state whether this be access to welfare schemes, safeguards against corporate or other abuses, and/or other such support which they feel is the duty of any government to provide.

In many parts of the world, political boundaries intersect and interrupt the flows of nature such as in the case of a national boundary dividing a river basin, or separate cultural connections with, for example, armies blocking traditional routes of nomadic pastoralists. This is especially the case with formerly colonised areas of the world, such as South Asia, large parts of Africa, and many regions of Latin America, along with Indigenous territories of the so-called 'developed' world. This kind of interruption or blockage has many negative ecological, economic, and socio-cultural consequences. The bioregionalism movement attempts to interrogate such political boundaries and implement policies and practices to re-establish flows and connectivity across frontiers. For example, the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative developed by local Indigenous communities and civil society groups, has established a bi-national protected region straddling the Ecuador–Peru border to protect the region from massive extraction of carbon-related resources.

Economic Transformations

Economic transformations are brought about by initiatives that help to create alternatives to the neo-liberal or state-dominated economy and the 'logic' of growth and move away from indicators of well-being such as the gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita, to more qualitative, human-scale ones. These alternatives include localisation and decentralisation of basic needs towards self-reliance, support to producer and consumer collectives, and the development of innovative technologies that respect ecological and cultural integrity.

Democratic control of the economy, such as collective rights to land, forests, water, seeds, and biodiversity is seen as central to these forms of transformation. For example, *La* Via *Campesina* (The Peasant Route, in English), a global food sovereignty movement of several million small holders advocate for sustainable agriculture based on family farms.

Other movements include gaining democratic control over industrial or craft-based means of production, such as worker-led production in Greece and Argentina (Karyotis, 2019). Social and solidarity economies in, for example, Europe and North America, or community economies across the world, also demonstrate how non-capitalist businesses can thrive as economic units while ensuring that marginalised groups such as refugees or people with disabilities can secure dignified livelihoods (Gibson-Graham, 2019; Johanisova & Vinkelhoferova, 2019; Quiroga Diaz, 2019). There are also movements to re-establish the commons in contexts where public spaces and knowledge have been privatised (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019).

Economic democracy is also about gaining relative independence from centralised monetary systems and to move beyond money (Nelson & Timmerman, 2011). Movements for alternative economies further challenge GDP and economic growth rates as indicators of development, proposing instead a series of well-being models and indicators to provide a more robust, and locally relevant, idea of whether people are satisfied, happy, secure, and content. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness model, developed in 1972, provides a useful and bold—although with its own flaws—attempt to move away from GDP indicators. This new indicator approaches sustainable development holistically, valuing non-economic aspects of well-being just as much as economic progress. More recently, New Zealand, Finland, Iceland, Wales, and Scotland have formed a Well-being Economy Governments (WEGO) partnership. This collaboration promotes the sharing of expertise and transferrable policy practices to deliver human and ecological well-being.

Socio-Cultural Transformations

Numerous initiatives have been developed to enhance social and cultural aspects of human life. These include protecting language, art, and crafts diversity, and respecting different ethnicities, faiths, and cultures. Several Indigenous peoples and other local communities are trying to sustain their mother tongue or revive it where it has all but disappeared. This is motivated by the fact that language is a key component of unique identity against the cultural homogenisation that has been part of colonisation. Sustaining Indigenous language embeds knowledge and information that are essential for continued survival and thriving of a community, are connecting factors between generations, and are tools for resistance

against various forms of domination from outside. The group *Terralingua* helps document and support such initiatives across the world through its Voices of the Earth Project. In India the organisation *Bhasha*, which means language in Hindi, was established by linguist Ganesh Devy to document language diversity across India through the People's Linguistic Survey of India.

Decolonisation—the attempt to shake off the domination of colonial languages, cultures, cuisines, knowledge, cartography, and much else—is an integral part of these initiatives. For instance, there are several decolonial mapmaking initiatives to bring back depictions of the landscapes and of nations from the perspective of Indigenous peoples or other local communities whose mental and physical maps have been erased or drastically changed by colonial powers and nation-states. Similarly, movements asserting the importance and validity of traditional knowledge systems are making some headway in official governmental or UN institutions. In the context of the climate crisis, the Indigenous People's Biocultural Climate Change Assessment Initiative 'emerged as an innovative response to climate change adaptation and mitigation challenges in Indigenous landscapes and environments'.[7] It has developed biocultural methods and tools based on Indigenous knowledge to assess climate change and local well-being and to develop alternative approaches to local biocultural realities. It is also increasingly recognised that the complementary use of multiple knowledges is necessary to fully understand and address climate change and reduction in biodiversity.

It is important to maintain caution in the current context of an increasingly right-wing agenda supported by the state (or elements of the public) in many countries. Initiatives which appear to be alternative in one dimension, such as sustaining appropriate traditions against the onslaught of wholesale modernity, would not be considered so if they have casteist, communal, sexist, or other motives and biases related to social injustice and inequity, or those appealing to a parochial nationalism intolerant of other cultures and peoples. The intersectional approach within the Flower of Transformation framework mentioned above can help to identify these concerns. It remains a challenge, however, how best to counteract these tendencies.

[7] Retrieved on January 23, 2023 from: https://ipcca.info/about-ipcca-history.

A vital part of socio-cultural transformations are fundamental changes in education systems. These include initiatives that enable children and adults to learn holistically, rooted in local ecologies and cultures but that are also open to those from elsewhere. Alternative approaches stress the need to encourage curiosity and questioning along with collective thinking and doing. Indeed, they advocate the nurturing of a fuller range of collective and individual potentials and relationships, and synergising the formal and the informal, the traditional and modern, the local and global. An inspiring example is the Land University (*Universidad de la Tierra*) in Oaxaca, Mexico, a collaborative effort of Indigenous peoples and other communities in creating learning opportunities for children and youth that are radically different from the alienating, dehumanising, and culturally homogenising experience of mainstream schools (Bajpai, 2020).

Socio-cultural transformations also need the democratisation and re-commoning of knowledge and the media, and their use as tools for social transformation. This includes attempts to make knowledge part of the commons and freely accessible, such as the creative commons approaches, and alternative and innovative use of media forms for communication, such as community radio (India has about 150 of these) and open-source media platforms and free software (De Angelis, 2019; Guha Thakurta, 2017; Halpin, 2019; Raina, 2017).

Such transformations need to embrace initiatives ensuring universal good health and healthcare. This requires preventative means by improving access to nutritional food, water, sanitation, and other determinants of health. It also needs to ensure access to curative/symptomatic facilities to those who have conventionally not had such access, integration of various health systems, traditional and modern, bringing back into popular use diverse systems including Indigenous/folk medicine, nature cure, and other holistic or integrative approaches, and community-based management and control of healthcare and hygiene (Shukla & Gaitonde, 2017).

Ecological Transformations

Ecological transformations include initiatives that promote ecological sustainability, including community-led conservation of land, water, and biodiversity, eliminating or minimising pollution and waste, reviving degraded ecosystems, creating awareness leading to greater respect for the

sanctity of life and biodiversity of which humans are a part, and promoting ecological ethics.

Initiatives such as Territories of Life are arguably more powerful a mechanism for conservation than official protected areas that tend to be top-down, undemocratic, and alienating for local communities. Living life within nature rather than apart from it and thinking of nature as a circle of life rather than as a pyramid with humans on top has resulted in movements for Rights of Nature, or of its components such as rivers, mountains, and species. It is important however that this is seen only as a first step towards a more general respectful reintegration within nature, akin to ways of life many Indigenous peoples have lived for millennia, and not remain limited to formal statutory law.

Given the enormous importance of energy transitions in the context of the climate crisis, many initiatives are encouraging alternatives to the current centralised, environmentally damaging, and unsustainable sources of energy and provide more equitable access to the power grid. These include decentralised, community-run renewable sources and micro-grids, equitable access to or community sovereignty over energy, promoting non-electric energy options, such as passive heating and cooling, reducing wastage in transmission and use, putting caps on demand, and advocating energy-saving and efficient materials.

Linked is the search to make human settlements sustainable, equitable, and fulfilling places in which to live and work. This requires sustainable architecture and accessible housing, minimisation of waste decentralised, participatory budgeting and planning of settlements, and promotion of sustainable, equitable means of transport.

What Principles Are Expressed in Alternatives?

At the core of eco-swaraj or RED is a set of principles that underlie many of the alternative initiatives mentioned above and to which participants in the Vikalp Sangam process have added considerable depth and nuance. The importance of these is that while alternative initiatives cannot be replicated from one place to another, given the diversity of local situations, it is possible to draw out underlying principles to devise locally appropriate practices and ideas. Principles that emerged out of the Vikalp Sangam process and in dialogues around RED and eco-swaraj include the functional integrity and resilience of the ecological processes and biological diversity underlying all life on earth. Respecting this entails a

realisation of the ecological limits of human activity and enshrining of the right of nature and all species to survive and thrive in the conditions in which they have evolved. Other key issues include equitable access and inclusion of all people to the conditions needed for human well-being and the right of each person and community to participate meaningfully in crucial decisions affecting their lives. Linked to these is the need to establish forms of governance based on subsidiarity and eco-regionalism and the responsibility of each citizen and community to ensure meaningful decision-making that is based on the twin principles of ecological integrity and socio-economic equity. Furthermore, these principles are founded upon respect for the diversity and pluralism of environments and ecologies and the need to develop collective and co-operative thinking and working. They are grounded in the ability of communities and humanity to respond, adapt, and sustain the resilience and adaptability needed to maintain ecological sustainability and equity in the face of external and internal forces of change.

Global Resonance and Networking: Lessons for the Future

Eco-swaraj as a worldview or concept, and its linked practices, has many resonating approaches across the world (Kothari et al., 2019). These range from ancient Indigenous notions (sustained over millennia or revived as part of current movements) of living well with the earth and one another (captured by contemporary concepts such as *ubuntu*, *sumac kawsay*, *buen vivir*, *kyosei*, *sentipensar*, country), to new approaches such as ecofeminism, eco-socialism, degrowth, and re-commoning. They also include radical reinterpretations of mainstream religions, trying to move away from their dogmatic and hierarchical institutional structures.

While these worldviews and concepts are extremely diverse, a core of ethics and values thread them together (Kothari et al., 2019). They share, for instance, the belief that we need to live with/within the Earth and all its beings, and that as humans we need to live in harmony and solidarity with each other. The uniqueness of each of these worldviews, and their differences, are worthy of respect through recognition by engagement. In this sense we have a pluriverse of ways of living, being, knowing, acting, and dreaming. It is, as the Zapatista say, 'a world in which many worlds fit' (Esteva, 2022). But it does not embrace all worldviews as acceptable designs for ways of life. Worldviews predicated on exploiting

and undermining others, such as capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and the destruction of nature and habitat, must be transformed to enable a pluriverse of justice, equity, and sustainability to emerge. While alternative radical approaches are spreading across the world and being re-asserted or emerging in current social movements, they remain scattered and for the most part have been unable to create the critical mass necessary to affect macro-changes. There is, therefore, a need for platforms and processes to bring them together, both as modes of resistance and constructive alternatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) revealed the vulnerability of much of humanity to events that shock the global economic system. It also exposed the dangers of a globalised world; whether or not the release of the virus was linked to ecological devastation, most certainly its lightning-fast spread across the earth was linked to global trade and human movement. It showed that people dependent on long-distance relations for their basic needs, including livelihoods, were the most vulnerable.

Conversely, examples from various regions of the world showed that communities whose basic needs were met and whose collective systems of healthcare, food production, and localised economic exchanges were strong, fared much better. In India, the Vikalp Sangam network has put together stories of COVID-19 resilience by forest-dwelling communities, women farmer groups, youth collectives, urban neighbourhood initiatives, and others.[8] The Global Tapestry of Alternatives has begun to do this more globally.[9] These stories contain many lessons on how rural and urban communities can be much more resilient to shocks and crises than the globalised capitalist and statist system. There is a need for 'rainbow new deals', that bring together the various spheres of alternative transformation into a much more holistic approach (Kothari, 2020a, 2020b).

Dominant economic and political systems often undermine such shifts or divert attention from their need by proposing deceptively simple agendas such as the 'green economy' and 'sustainable development' (Kothari et al., 2014). We are far from having an adequate understanding

[8] Retrieved on January 23, 2023, from: https://vikalpsangam.org/article/extraordinary-work-of-ordinary-people-in-multi-language-translation/.

[9] Retrieved on January 23, 2023, from: https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/reports:pandemic:index.

of the impacts of human activities on the environment, making preventive and restorative actions difficult. Additionally, there remains tension between various knowledge systems hampering synergistic innovation and the political and bureaucratic leadership for the most part lacks ecological literacy or a genuine desire for socio-economic equity. State and corporate power remains significantly unaccountable and corrupt, and patriarchy survives in various forms. Continued militarization and the vested interests that the military represents are a powerful force. Finally, there is often a feeling of 'helplessness' or apathy amongst the general public, or a willing acquiescence to the visions of consumerism, growth, and materialism.

Pathways to overcome these challenges encompass a series of strategies and actions. The kind of networking and linking of alternatives that the Sangam is attempting in India, and Global Tapestry of Alternatives in setting up at a global level, need to be taken much further. Constituents of these processes have recognised the importance of 'resistance, civil disobedience, and non-cooperation (both collective and individual) towards the forces of unsustainability, inequality and injustice, and the decolonisation of mind-sets and attitudes and institutions'.[10] In India, networks such as the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements have played a crucial role to bring these together.

Alongside these are actions to re-common what has been privatised or 'enclosed' in the past, facilitating the voice of Dalits ('outcastes'), Indigenous Peoples or adivasis, women, landless, people with disabilities, minorities, nomadic communities, workers in all sectors, and other marginalised sections. Participants working on gender and sexuality issues have stressed the need for all of civil society to support their struggles. Promoting public awareness regarding problems and solutions and providing platforms for people of different faiths and cultures to understand and harmonise with each other, including through spiritual and ethical processes, has also been advocated. Through this and other means, taking responsibility for one's own actions, while promoting the sharing of knowledge, experiences, resources, and skills, and engaging in continuous dialogue, are crucial.

[10] Vikalp Sangam's 'The search for alternatives: Key aspects and principles'. Retrieved on January 23, 2023, from: https://vikalpsangam.org/about/the-search-for-alternatives-key-aspects-and-principles/.

Other important strategies are engaging with political formations in both party and non-party form and using available democratic means of redressal and transformation while pushing for further enhancement of such spaces. In India, Vikalp Sangam has since 2019 joined with Jan Sarokar, a broad nation-wide platform that brings together dozens of networks of movements and organisations towards some common agendas that can influence the political arena. One of Jan Sarokar's key activities is organising *Janata* (People's) Parliaments, to bring people's issues to the fore.

Creating consumer awareness and options for more socially and ecologically responsible consumption patterns, especially in cities, is crucial. Here, the use of mainstream and alternative media and art forms is important, yet arts and crafts are not for instrumentalist use only. Instead, it is vital to integrate these 'into everyday lives, fostering the creative in every individual and collective, bringing work and pleasure together'.[11]

The Framework described above, or the vision of RED, could be one basis for an alternative, grassroots-up visioning of the future. But for this to emerge, much more iteration and dialogue is needed across themes, sectors, cultures, and geographies. Additionally, much greater work needs to be carried out on creating peoples' agendas in every sector or field of endeavour, building on ongoing practice and innovation. From this a critical mass of people and movements needs to emerge to take on the macro-forces of destruction and exploitation if we are to stand a chance to regain peace with the Earth and each other.

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[11] Ibid.

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CHAPTER 5

Why Is Development Elusive? Structural Adjustments of Africa in the Longue Durée

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni

Introduction

The current age of resurgent and insurgent decolonisation of the twenty-first century has led to the reopening of basic epistemological questions and the need to look into historical, systemic, structural, institutional and agential forces behind the making and remaking of the modern world from a decolonial perspective. Consequently, the tasks of locating Africa historically in the macro-histories of the unfolding of Euromodernity and the evolving capitalist world economy and explicating how Africa was integrated into the evolving modern world capitalist system, the nationalist and decolonial initiatives of remaking the world after empire, and the re-disciplining and re-adjustment of African lives and economies in the service of hyper-globalisation, has gained new impetus. This intervention also challenges the most resilient fallacy not only in the modern history, but also across dominant intellectual and theoretical perspectives on the rise of the current Eurocentric modern world system which attribute

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its rise to unique endogenous European development while ignoring the various structural adjustments of African lives and economies in the service of the coloniser's world model (Bhambra, 2020; French, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, 2020).

It was this fallacy that provoked the rise of what Cedric J. Robinson (2000) called the 'Black Radical Tradition' which formed the basis of today's resurgent and insurgent decolonisation otherwise known as decoloniality. This highlighted how African lives and economies were structurally adjusted in the service of Euromodernity in general and colonial modernity in particular. The earliest inquiry into the role of Africa in the making of the modern world was advanced by William E. B. Du Bois (1946) where he challenged the imperial and colonial historiographical attempts to write Africa out of the history of the rise of the modern world system. Howard W. French (2021) has empirically demonstrated the centrality of the role of Africa and Africans in the making of the modern world. On the other hand, theorists such as Julian Go (2016) have highlighted how the intellectual tendencies of ignoring colonialism and empire in the study of Euromodernity and the making of the modern world has resulted in a problematic bifurcation of postcolonial thought. This highlights the miscognitions of the modern world, wrought by refusal of Eurocentric social theory to take seriously how race, colonialism, and empire laid the foundation for an unequal world of developed and underdeveloped realities, due to its origin within narrow European experiences. The same point is pushed forward by Bhambra and Holmwood (2021), who lament the absence of colonialism and empire in the discussion of modern social theory and understanding of the contemporary modern world. The consequence of all this has been a deliberate attempt to ignore the role of Africa and Africans in the making of modernity and modern society, and more importantly how African lives and economies underwent structural adjustments of various kinds to be of service to the coloniser's world model.

To correct this resilient fallacy, there is urgent need to re-articulate the macro-history of the early modern world since the fifteenth century to understand and explain the position of Africa in the modern world system and its global orders. Without a return to this macro-history of the modern world system and the making of the world capitalist economy, the elusiveness of development in Africa will remain mysterious. This chapter builds on the work of Amin (1972), Rodney (1972), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2016), Bhambra (2020) and many others. It identifies four

structural adjustments of African lives and economies in the service of a rising Europe and North America.

The concept of structural adjustments is expanded and stretched beyond its common usage to refer only to the Washington Consensus-driven neoliberal interventions in African economies and lives that began in the 1970s. The encounter between Europe and Africa has been characterized by imposed structural adjustments of African lives and economies as Africa was dragged into the evolving nexus of the modern world system, its shifting global orders and expanding capitalist world economy, resisting and fighting across epochs. The chapter begins with an outline of the four major structural adjustments of African economies and African lives within an unfolding modernity.

The Five Phases of Structural Adjustments of Africa in the *Longue Dureé*

The structural adjustments of African economies and African lives were mainly driven by what Wa Thiong'o (2016) termed the journeys of capital. The first major structural adjustment of African lives and economies took place during the mercantile period. The discovery paradigm and mercantilist order began to envelop Africa in 1415 when Portugal invaded the port of Ceuta in North Africa (Newitt, 2010). Ceuta formed a bridgehead for further Portuguese imperial expansion that challenged Muslim dominance in North Africa and the broader Mediterranean region, which was in place since the seventh century. Africans were hunted like animals and subjected to racial enslavement. This mercantile period, unfolded from the fifteenth century and became dominant up to the eighteenth century, marking the beginning of how Africa gradually lost control over its economic and human resources. It was from this mercantile intervention and extractivism that such scholars as Rodney (1972) and Amin (1972) traced the underdevelopment of Africa and its contribution to the Industrial Revolution in Europe. African people found themselves at the mercy of enslavers and their collaborators. They were shipped like cargo across the Atlantic oceans to work as slaves in the plantation colonies of what became known as the 'New World'.

The discovery paradigm and the mercantilist order inaugurated a commercial shift from the Mediterranean-centred to the Atlantic-centred economy, linking western Africa, the eastern coasts of North Africa and South America as well as the Atlantic coastline of Europe and North

Africa (Newitt, 2010, p. 1). While the Spanish Atlantic sphere was being extended to the Pacific, the Philippines and China, the Portuguese were creating the Indian Ocean sphere that was extending to the East Indies. Eventually Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas were linked together through economic activities, migrations of people and selling of human beings as slaves.

What dominated the mercantile order were merchant companies such as the Dutch East India Company, formed in 1602; the British Company of Royal Adventurers Trading in Africa, formed in 1660; the French West Indies Company/Senegal Company, formed in 1664; the British Royal Africa Company, formed in 1672, among others. These chartered companies were granted extensive powers that included enslaving, conquest and colonisation. By 1650, Amsterdam had become the centre of the world having emerged from the 'mercantilist wars of the seventeenth century remarkably successful' (Terreblanche, 2014, p. 216). At the centre of their empire was the Dutch East India Company (in Dutch, *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or VOC) formed in 1602 as a chartered company. Terreblanche (2014, p. 218) argued that 'VOC can be regarded as one of the first [multinational corporations]. It was a real "octopus", with tentacles in international trade, piracy, the slave trade and colonialism'. Jan Nijman (1994, p. 215) also argued that the VOC was the 'one of the primary agencies in the expanding world-economy in its time' and elaborated that 'it contributed to the geographic expansion of trade between Europe and Asia' and concluding that 'the firm itself constituted an institutional innovation in several ways, which would be replicated by others'. In short, VOC conquered the world for the Dutch until it collapsed in 1799 due to bankruptcy. The reasons for its fall into bankruptcy is not the concern of this chapter.

The next empire-building process was British-led (1775–1945). Looting of Global South resources is what produced the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution gave Britain primacy over others. Just like the Dutch, the British formed the British East India Company and it survived for almost 300 years (1600–1874). The 'age of sovereignty' tried to put to rest the paradigm of war that dominated during the mercantile period:

> If the period between 1492 and the Peace of Westphalia (1648), including the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), can be characterised as the age of banditry in relation to chattel slavery, the period between the Peace of

> Westphalia and the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 can be characterized as the age of sovereignty. (Nimako & Willemsen, 2011, p. 20)

The rise of the 'Westphalian order' is credited for laying the foundation of the modern idea of the sovereign nation-state system. The people of Africa were not considered worth of national sovereignty that was introduced at Westphalia. This made them vulnerable to conquest and colonisation. The decision to only bestow national sovereignty to emerging European states and to exclude Africa portended the scramble and partitioning of Africa in the nineteenth century. To Nimako and Willemsen (2011, p. 20), for 'the "outside world," the importance of the Peace of Westphalia lay not in the reciprocal recognition of the sovereignty of the signatories, but rather in the non-recognition of the sovereignty of others'.

The second major phase of structural adjustment of African lives and economies was that of the shift from mercantile capital to industrial capital. This period is sometimes distorted into what is known as the shift from 'illegitimate trade to legitimate trade' (Law, 1995). There is even emphasis on what became known as 'abolition of slavery' and there is a tendency to ignore two facts. The first clarification comes from Hartman (1997, p. 10), who states that racial slavery was transformed and never abolished. The thesis of 'transition from slavery to free labour' is also challenged by Lowe (2015) who is very critical of liberal claims of progress. The second flaw is that there was a shift from plantation to colony. Africa and Africans had to be structurally adjusted to this capitalist driven shift in the modern system and its global order. It is here that the concept of racial capitalism (Robinson, 2000) helps in making sense of the inventions of slaves, coolies, bonded labourers and contracted cheap labourers—framed by racial capitalism as the animating spirit of colonialism and racialisation as the infrastructure of capitalism (Manjapra, 2020, p. 8).

The signature event for the de-structuring and re-structuring of Africa was the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference. Adebajo (2010) calls it 'the curse of Berlin' because it legitimised and galvanised the scramble for Africa and heightened its conquest, as well as enabling the partitioning, dismemberment and fragmentation of Africa into various colonies. Today Africa finds itself entrapped within boundaries drawn by colonisers in Berlin. The 'Berlin consensus' portended the physical empire and its colonial governmentality. Africans were fighting in the form of what

Ranger (1968) depicted as primary and secondary resistance. Primary resistance referred to the earliest form of African armed resistance to encroachment of colonialism and was led by pre-colonial kings, chiefs and queens. Across the continent such forms of resistance such as the Ndebele-Shona Uprising of 1896–1897 against British colonisation, did not succeed in stopping colonialism. By 1914, Africa was plunged into the age of colonial governmentality. Colonial brutality and exploitation provoked what Ranger (1968) termed 'secondary resistance', taking the modernist forms of organising the colonized into 'mass nationalism' led by African educated elite. What provoked this was the practical colonial processes of implementation of dispossession, production of unique African colonial subjectivity of rightless people devoid of privileges, and establishment of direct and indirect colonial administrations. These direct forms of colonial administrations became known by different names such as Concessionaire/Company Rule, Assimilation/Association, Lusotropicalism, Indirect/Direct Rule and Apartheid (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, 2015). For Mamdani (2013), the DNA of colonial governmentality was the practice of 'defining' the colonised for purposes of 'ruling' over them.

It was during this period that African economies were bifurcated into what Amin (1972, p. 504) termed the three 'macro-regions' with West Africa turned into a 'colonial trade economy' that was sub-divided into 'the coastal zone', 'the hinterland' and 'the Sudan'. The second colonial 'macro-region' was Central Africa, dominated by 'Africa of the concession-owning companies' (Amin, 1972, p. 504). At the centre of this 'macro-region' was what was known as the 'Congo Free State'. This was a personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium under a violent primitive accumulation of rubber, abusing African labour and subjecting Africans to worse than enslavement conditions (Hochschid, 1999). The third 'macro-region' mapped by Amin (1972, p. 504) is Eastern and Southern Africa, which he termed the 'Africa of the labour reserves'. The southern African region in particular became dominated by white settler colonies of South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa) and Namibia (South West Africa), which were characterised by massive dispossessions of land and displacements of Africans to make way for white settlers.

While Amin's mapping of 'macro-regions' might not be precise, it is very useful in demonstrating how African economies were structurally adjusted in the service of Europe and how African economies were

turned into colonial economies, which were outward looking in orientation. However, it was not only through bifurcation of African economies into 'macro-regions' that Africa experienced structural adjustment. As Adebajo (2010, p. 16) suggests, 'Berlin and its aftermath were akin to armed robbers forcibly breaking into a house and sharing out its possessions while the owners of the house—who had been tied up with thick ropes—were wide awake but were powerless to prevent the burglary'. The continued outward orientation of African economies, being driven from outside of Africa even after the dismantlement of the physical colonial empire in the 1960s, prompted Nkrumah (1965) to coin the concept of 'neo-colonialism' to describe African economies at service of Europe and North America.

The third major phase of structural adjustment of African economies and lives was the shift from empire to modern nation-states. While African people sacrificed energy and lives in struggles for decolonisation, the modern world system was rebooting itself in the face of anti-systemic forces and the rise of two superpowers. On the one hand, there were efforts by African leaders to articulate national projects with development as a central leitmotif. On the other, the Truman version of development had imperial designs at its centre. Perhaps Julius Nyerere's Arusha Declaration of 1967 can be seen as the signature of African national projects that attempted to reinvent colonial economies. This entailed efforts to reverse their outside-looking colonial orientation whereby the economy was of service to Europe and North America rather than to Africa (Shivji, 2017). Of course, the Arusha Declaration had no chance of success in a post-1945 world dominated by Cold War neo-coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Nandita Sharma (2020, pp. 14–15) correctly posited that 'Postcolonialism, far from ending the violent practices and relationships of colonialism, marks the ascendency of the colonial form of state power and its reliance on nationalist subjectivities, national forms of exclusion, and kinds of violence that nation-states carry out'. Withdrawal of physical empires opened the way for non-territorial commercial empires led by the United States of America. US capital dominated the world during the nation-states organised modern world system.

The newly 'independent' African States were all invited into what could be called a 'United Nations decolonisation normative order' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 30). It was a moment of great hope for those people emerging from the domination of empires. Hence this post-1945 form of

entrapment was and is often celebrated by Africans as a form of decolonisation and attainment of 'political independence'. Signified by symbolic accommodation of Africa into lowest echelons of the modern world system through membership in the United Nations, this entrapment might appear progressive and even liberatory. Hobson (2012, p. 185) noted that what emerged after 1945 was a 'subliminal Eurocentric institutionalism' within which scientific racism was de-escalated but never expunged from the modern world system. Binaries of civilized/barbarian and even whites/blacks were allowed to strategically recede from public and international discourse. All this reshuffling of old imperial cards to some extent deliberately confused the peripherised people into thinking that after 1945 they entered a new 'postcolonial' and even 'post-racial' age. Grosfoguel (2007) correctly noted that the major change that took place was from 'direct colonialism' to 'global coloniality' rather than from 'colonialism' to 'postcolonialism'. Chakrabarty (2019, p. 45) tried to bring into conversation the three discourses of anticolonialism, postcolonialism and decolonisation. Anticolonialism emphasised the urge 'to get rid of the colonizer in every possible way'; postcolonialism 'emphasized how the colonial situation produced forms of hybridity or mimicry that necessarily escaped the Manichean logic of the colonial encounter'; and decolonisation emphasized the economic, cultural and intellectual changes even after the end of the physical empire.

The post-1945 dispensation was not only entangled in politics of fake political decolonisation (flag and anthem independence framed by neocolonialism) but with what is here termed 'Cold War coloniality' that polarised Africans ideologically and reduced the continent to a theatre of proxy hot wars (wars induced by the contending superpowers but fought in Africa pitting Africans against each other because of Cold War ideological differences). This is another important epoch within the broader third phase that witnessed an Africa that was entrapped in a global ideological warfare that decimated any of the African authentic political and economic formulations and creations. Cold War coloniality was as dirty as all other forms of global coloniality. It countered all the initiatives of what Prashad (2007) termed 'the darker nations' that had emerged from empire and were busy constructing the third world project. Through this, (formerly) colonised peoples and their leaders tried to pace a third space between the hegemonic East led by the United Socialist Soviet Republic (USSR) and the equally hegemonic West led by the United States. The Bandung Conference of 1955 was a launchpad for re-worlding from

the periphery. In the words of Prashad (2019, p. xi), 'Bandung is no longer only the name of a city. It is the name of a set of dreams'—grand dreams of decolonisation, development and freedom. The demand of a New International Economic Order and the making of federations of the (formerly) colonised peoples signified what Getachew (2019, p. 3) termed 'worldmaking after empire'.

Chakrabarty (2019, pp. 46–47) highlighted three interventions framing the attempts to remake the world after the empire. The first he termed the 'developmental side of decolonisation (…) whereby anticolonial thinkers came to accept different versions of modernization theory that in turn made the West into a model for everyone to follow'. Indeed, the demand for a New International Economic Order and the discourses of 'catching-up' were informed by this thinking. The second intervention is 'pedagogical' decolonisation in which 'the very performance of politics re-enacted civilizational or cultural hierarchies between nations, between classes, or between the leaders and the masses' (ibid.). This reality witnessed anticolonial leaders assuming the positionality of 'teachers' who were always giving lessons on how to remake the world in favour of the dominated. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania beat all of them in pedagogical decolonisation and indeed pedagogical nationalism and consequently became known as *Mwalimu* (the teacher). Then there was 'dialogical' decolonisation characterised by devotion of 'a great deal of time to the question of whether or how a global conversation of humanity could genuinely acknowledge cultural diversity without distributing such diversity over a hierarchical scale of civilisation—that is to say, an urge towards cross-cultural dialogue without the baggage of imperialism' (ibid.). The United Nations was turned into a stage for these versions of decolonisation and a space for ventilation of visions and dreams, while at the same time it was a major cog of the modern world system and its global order.

The fourth phase is that of Washington Consensus-neoliberal-driven structural adjustments of African economies and lives. At the centre of this structural adjustment was an elaborate global financial republic (Gildea, 2019). It is made up of Euro-North American-dominated multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Thus, while the African nationalists tried to take advantage of the shift from empire to modern nation-states to advance the African national revolution including demands for a New International Economic Order in 1974, the advent of the Washington Consensus reversed everything. The structural adjustments of African economies and African lives of

the late 1970s targeted the policy domain. Policy direction was hijacked and external conditionalities were imposed on African governments that were desperate for external financial aid. Once again, African economies were forced to look outside. Here was born what wa Thiong'o (2016) termed debt slavery. Mkandawire and Soludo (1998) compiled the most important and comprehensive study of this fourth phase, which is mistakenly taken as the first example of structural adjustment. Their study highlighted how structural adjustment programmes did not respond to Africa's fundamental needs.

There was a deliberate ploy to reverse the attempts and initiatives taken by African leaders in the 1960s to try and reorient the inherited colonial economies and transform them into inward looking African economies in the service of African people. It was during this phase that the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) led by Adebayo Adedeji produced a comprehensive document in response to the imposed conditionalities. It emphasised the need for democratisation of global economic structures of power (UNECA, 1990). It also demanded human-centred development. Expectedly, this initiative failed. Imposed conditionalities of deregulation and privatisation of the economies of Africa and withdrawal of the state to allow market forces to determine everything was basically about making Africa open for the unfettered march of global capital.

The post-Cold War triumphalism of neoliberal order, which Fukuyama (2006) wrongly articulated as the end of history, is another important epoch within the fourth phase in the structural adjustments of African lives and economies in the service of global capitalism, driven by Europe and North America (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, 2015). The Washington Consensus was an important lever of global coloniality that de-structured what was remaining of African policy space and sovereignty through the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes and political conditionalities. The state in Africa which has been actively involved in developmentalism was soon depicted as the source of African economic and political problems. It had to be rolled back to open the space for unregulated and faceless market forces.

As though this was not enough trouble for Africa and Africans, the attack on the United States on 11 September 2001 inaugurated another shift towards an 'anti-terrorist order' under which the paradigm of war gained a new lease of life and a securitisation order emerged. Africa used to be depicted as an underdeveloped context since the Truman Speech

of 1949, but was now immediately re-defined as a terrain of weak and failed states that were potential abodes of 'terrorists'. The signature of the moment was the establishment of American military bases on the continent and legitimation of military interventions by the United States and its partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The military invasion of Libya and the assassination of Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi is a key reminder of this securitisation discourse.

The fifth phase is that of hyper-globalisation accompanied by the rise of China and its activities in Africa. Two contrasting discourses have emerged about Africa within this fifth phase. The first is the discourse of African rising which is justified using economic growth rates recorded by some African economies after the year 2000 (Taylor, 2014a). Taylor (2014b, p. 156) dismissed the discourse of Africa, noting that 'in this tale, where growth for growth's sake is cast as a manifestation of development and progress, the agenda of industrialisation and moving Africa up the global production chain has been abandoned'. The second is the discourse of the third scramble for Africa, which is meant to capture the increased demands for African natural resources by emerging powers from the Global South as well as developed countries from the Global North especially after the global financial crisis (Southall & Melber, 2009).

What connects the two discourses is the reality of 'high commodity prices' (Taylor, 2014a, p. 143). This connection is explained by Onuoha (2016, p. 282):

> The notion of a resurgent Africa is literally intertwined with the scramble for Africa. While some see the current interest in Africa as novel, others hold the view that there is nothing new in the process, but that it is the latest version in the exploitation of Africa.

Again, Africa is servicing the world capitalist economy within a context where 'There is no evidence thus far that Africa's structural profile is improving, which should alert us to the dangers of being dazzled by numbers' (Taylor, 2014b, p. 144).

Theory-Praxis Dialectic in Understanding Elusive Development in Africa

Wa Thiong'o (2016) highlighted four journeys of capital: slave trade, slave plantation system, colonialism and global debt slavery. This framework helps ground the four phases of structural adjustment of African economies, linking the theoretical and the empirical. What emerges clearly in the various entrapments of evolving global capital, is the undercutting of anti-systemic resistance and extra-structural agency of the African people. Wa Thiong'o's analysis directly responds to Frederick Cooper's (2014, p. 9) question: how did the relationship between Africa and Europe came to be so asymmetrical?

Another important image is that of Africa ensnared by a spider web of coloniality. Mignolo (2018, p. 97) defined the colonial matrices of power as 'a complex structure of management and control composed of domains, levels and flows' and as a 'theoretical concept that helps make visible what is invisible to the naked (or rather the non-theoretical) eye'. The theoretical concept begins by revealing that coloniality is constitutive of modernity (there is no modernity without coloniality). This means that the positive rhetoric of modernity is always hiding the negative called global coloniality (ibid., p. 98). The colonial matrix of power unfolded in terms of control of economy, authority, subjectivity and knowledge (Mignolo, 2007, p. 155). The colonial matrices of power were initially framed by theo-politics, then ego-politics (philosophy) and racist science. Today mainstream media sustain these matrices by disseminating the rhetoric of modernity and its salvationist pretensions.

The unfolding of modern history some five hundred years ago, unleashed colonialities of space (cartography and settlement), time (cutting into linear pre-modern and modern conceptions), human species/being (social classification and racial hierarchisation), nature (turning it into a natural resource), knowledge (theft of history, epistemicides and linguicides) and power/authority (asymmetrical configurations and legal codification of difference). Human history itself acquired a new definition and meaning. In the analysis of Galeano (1997, pp. 2–3) human history became understood in imperial categories of competition, rivalry and survival of the fittest. This re-definition of history announced the arrival of Euro-North American hegemonic aspirations predicated on the paradigms of difference and war. The paradigms of difference and war were used to legitimize enslaving, pillaging, colonizing, as well as

entrapping some human beings in grand imperial designs of the emerging Euro-North American-centric world system.

Paget Henry (2000, p. 4) elaborated on how human history assumed the character of 'a Faustian/imperial struggle to subdue all nature and history. This was an insurrectionary rupture with the established cosmic order of things that inaugurated a new era in the relations between the European ego and the world'. He described this radical shift as the globalization of 'the European project of existence', which 'weakened the powers of the gods, relocated Europeans at the centre of this new world' and reinvented the rest of the non-European world 'into one of its subordinate peripheries' (ibid.).

Peripherisation is a technology of coloniality. It is a form of reinvention into a subaltern position. At the political level, entrapment entailed lodgement into coloniality of power (Cox, 1948; Ekeh, 1983; Fanon, 1968; Quijano, 2000; Robinson, 2000). Entrapment in coloniality of power began with physical conquest and dragging of the colonized into the nexus of modern racial global asymmetrical power relations. This entrapment continues to disadvantage Africa and the rest of the Global South today.

At the epistemological level, entrapment entailed epistemicides, linguicides, cultural imperialism, appropriations and theft of history (Goody, 1996) resulting in coloniality of knowledge. At the intersubjective level, entrapment involved tweaking with ontology itself resulting in what became known as coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Wynter, 2003). This form of entrapment materialised through social classification of human species in accordance with assumed differential ontological densities and racial hierarchisation of humanity. At the material level, a world capitalist economy that survives on exploitation of natural and human resources has been fishing in Africa and the Global South in general for cheap labour, cheap raw materials and open markets.

As subjects of the periphery, Africans are entrapped in global coloniality. Mamdani (1996) delved deeper into the colonial technologies of reproduction of 'citizens' and 'subjects'—technologies and processes that also determined the consciousness of the colonized and forms/formats/grammars of resistance. He posited that to 'come to grips with the specific nature of power through which the population of subjects excluded from civil society was actually ruled' entails understanding 'how the subject population was incorporated into—and not excluded from—the arena of colonial power' (Mamdani, 1996, p. 15). His key thesis is that 'every

movement against decentralised despotism bore the institutional imprint of the mode of rule' and that 'movement of resistance was shaped by the very structure of power against which it rebelled' (Mamdani, 1996, p. 24).

Karl Marx set the tone on the entrapment of the Global South in colonial/racial capitalism when he categorically stated that the 'rosy' dawn of the era of capitalism was predicated on four specific events and processes: the first was the discovery of gold and silver in America; the second was 'the uprooting, enslavement and entombment in the mines of aboriginal population'; the third was 'the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies'; and the last was 'the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercialised hunting of black skins' (Marx quoted in Tucker, 1978, pp. 476–477).

No one captured the processes of disruption, dispossession and entrapment as eloquently as Aime Césaire (2000). In a poetic language, Césaire articulated four modes of disruptions and entrapment. The first related to draining of the essence of colonized societies through trampling over their cultures, undermining their institutions, confiscating their land, smashing their religions, destroying their 'magnificent artistic creations' and wiping out their 'extraordinary possibilities' (Césaire, 2000, p. 43). What was imposed after these dehumanising processes is economic, ontological and epistemological extractivism (Grosfoguel, 2016).

The second disruption entailed the tearing and severing of the colonised 'from their gods, their land, their habits, their life—from life, from the dance, from wisdom' (Césaire, 2000, p. 43). This process amounted to alienation as a form of entrapment. The third as colonial intervention entailed instilling fear on the colonized 'who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkeys'. The last colonial device described by Césaire (ibid.) is that of 'natural economies that have been disrupted — harmonious and viable economies adapted to the Indigenous population — about food crops destroyed, malnutrition permanently introduced, agricultural development oriented solely towards the benefit of the metropolitan countries; about the looting of products, looting of raw materials'.

Mazrui (1986) added his voice to the important issue of entrapment of Africa in global coloniality. He identified six forms of entrapment of Africa in global coloniality. The forcible incorporation of Africa into the world capitalist economy according to Mazrui (1986, p. 12) began with the enslavement of black people 'which dragged African labour itself into

the emerging international capitalist system'. This constitutes the first layer of entrapment. The slave labour from Africa contributed immensely to the making of the transatlantic economic nerve centre and the rise of Europe and North America into the most developed nations of the world. The second entrapment took the form of exclusion of Africa from the developing and new nation-state sovereignty system that emerged in 1648 making the continent available for partitioning in 1884–1885. As Mazrui (1986, p. 12) noted, Africa was only incorporated into the world system of nation-states after 1945 with the rise of the United Nations' global governance principle of sovereign states. But even the post-1945 incorporation of Africa into the world system entailed entrapment in the lowest echelons of asymmetrical global power relations.

Mazrui (1986, p. 13) identified linguistic entrapment as another major challenge, similar to wa Thiong'o (1986, p. 5) who depicted Africa as suffering from a 'linguistic encirclement' in a continent and a people who defined 'themselves in terms of the languages of Europe: English-speaking, French-speaking, or Portuguese-speaking African countries'. There are six modern imperial languages that have been imposed on Africa and the Global South: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, English, French and German. At a fourth level, to Mazrui (1986, p. 12) Africa was incorporated into a heavily skewed Western-centric 'international law' that constituted another enduring entrapment. The fifth layer of entrapment is that of incorporation of Africa into 'the modern technological age' which entailed being 'swallowed by the global system of dissemination of information'. Finally, to Mazrui (1986, p. 12) Africa has been dragged into and entrapped in a Western-centric moral order predicated on Christianity as a hegemonic world religion. Building on this analysis, he concluded that 'what Africa knows about itself, what different parts of Africa know about each other, have been profoundly influenced by the West' (Mazrui, 1986, p. 13).

Grosfoguel (2007, p. 216) deepened our understanding of entrapment when he distilled nine interrelated and overlapping heterarchies of power. The first lever of coloniality of power entailed the making of 'a particular global class formation' serviced by 'diverse forms of labour' including 'slavery, semi-serfdom, wage-labour, petty-commodity production' and entangled with the functioning practice of how 'capital as a source of production of surplus value through the selling of commodities for a profit in the world market'. The 'international division of labour of core and periphery where capital organised labour in the periphery'

through coercion and deployment of other authoritarian means is another important layer of coloniality of power. The third invention is that of ordering the modern world into an 'inter-state system of proto-military organizations controlled by European males and institutionalised in colonial administrations'. The fourth discernible aspect of coloniality of power manifested itself in the form of a 'global racial/ethnic hierarchy that privileges European people over non-European people' together with a 'global gender hierarchy that privileges males over female and European patriarchy over other forms of gender relations' (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 216).

In the social domain, a 'sexual hierarchy that privileges heterosexuals over homosexuals and lesbians' and a 'spiritual hierarchy that privileges Christians over non-Christians/non-Western spiritualities institutionalised in the globalisation of the Christian (Catholic and later Protestant) church', are also discernible as inventions of modernity/coloniality in Grosfoguel's analysis. In the epistemic and linguistic domain he identified 'an epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western knowledge and cosmologies, and institutionalized in the global university system' and a 'linguistic hierarchy between European languages and non-European languages that privileges communication and knowledge/theoretical production in the former and subalternised the latter as sole producers of folklore or culture but not knowledge/theory' (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 216).

The political economy of Africa is fundamentally a tale of how the continent and its people were dragged into the evolving and unfolding global coloniality through such processes as enslavement, mercantilism, colonialism and capitalism. This entrapment captures the paradoxical situation of the continent—that of 'simultaneous involvement and marginalisation' in the modern world system, global order, knowledge and world economy (Austen, 1987, p. 10). What emerged from this is an invidious position not just of being pushed to the periphery but also of being insiders who have been pushed outside of the very human ecumene (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). This takes us to the current conjuncture of rule of coloniality in markets under globalization, which is conducive to African development.

Conclusion: Coloniality of Markets and Market Fundamentalism

Africa has not been subjected to one phase of structural adjustments, but to five. If one considers the rendition of the history and phases of how Africa was and is being structurally adjusted across epochs, making it of service to the external capitalist world economy rather than itself, the elusiveness of development becomes less mysterious. The present epoch has seen modern capitalism mutating into 'a religious system, with the market as the mediating deity in the conflicting claims of its adherents. The market is the supreme deity guarded by a band of armed angels, apostles and priests who assign Hell for the unrepentant sinner, Purgatory for those showing signs of repentance and Paradise for the saved' (wa Thiong'o, 2016, p. 24).

Coloniality of markets is also meant to capture the current triumphalism of capital involving intensified identification of new sites of accumulation and investment over and above the popular human demands for better life and material security. They are driving the new scramble for African natural resources at a time when there is also an increasing Afro-enthusiastic discourse of an Africa that is 'rising', which celebrates increasing demands for African raw materials as a sign of economic growth instead of deepening coloniality. A development based on intensification of resource extraction by diverse partners rather than industrialization is nothing but a manifestation of coloniality of markets.

Today, the Global South is in its entirety trapped by coloniality of markets with capitalism assuming a fundamentalist character of insisting that there is no other way of organizing human reality. Wa Thiong'o (2016, p. 23) dramatized the ubiquity of coloniality of markets in this revealing manner:

> There is only one God, his name is market, and the West is his only guardian. Enter ye and throw your fate at the tender mercies of the market. […]. The voices of those who might see the writing on the wall are drowned by the calls for the worship of the market, literally, with the common credo of privatisation, reducible to a maxim: Privatise or Perish.

Africa, together with the rest of the Global South, needs to draw lessons from its long history of contact and entrapment in global coloniality to intensify the unfinished decolonisation struggles. As defined by

wa Thiong'o (1993), decolonisation must result in the movement of the centre towards decoloniality which emphasises delinking from colonial matrices of power and entrapment. What must radically change are the logics of capital as well as 'assumptions, presuppositions, praxis of living' introduced by global coloniality (Mignolo, 2018, p. 105).

This might be possible now because capitalism is in a terminal crisis. Eurocentric knowledge under the colonial matrices of power is exhausted. Europe and North America have lost the high ground of offering solutions to the world. The post-Cold War crafted neoliberal international order is in crisis. A possible polycentric international order might give Africa room to chart its own trajectory building on a tradition of resistance and the spirit of pan-Africanism.

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CHAPTER 6

Cultivating Post-development: Pluriversal Transitions and Radical Spaces of Engagement

José Castro-Sotomayor and Paola Minoia

Introduction

The current ways humans occupy Earth are unsustainable and pose an existential threat to all species. As the climate emergency aggravates, from the Global North and the Global South national states are still proposing climate crisis solutions that adhere to neoliberal global market principles and corporatist interests embodied by ostensible limitless economic growth and technological innovation (Gudynas, 2013). This adherence has produced spaces of coloniality where the State systematically controls

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labour, nature, bodies, and minds through various forms of epistemological and political violence—legal, military, or geographic (Chagnon et al., 2022; Gago & Mezzadra, 2017; Quijano, 2000; Veltmeyer & Petras, 2014). Facilitated by the State's actions or lack thereof, territories are desecrated by corporations' undiscriminated extractivism—from unrestrained mining and fossil fuel to agrarian and forestry. These spaces of coloniality deny or annihilate local and ancestral modes of living, hence, dispossessing areas of their ecological, social, and cultural identities (Minoia, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). The material and symbolic violence constitutive of contemporary geopolitics render the 'sustainable development' framework insufficient to decelerate the ecocidal trend of unrestrained growth. This is because the notion of 'development' is in essence anthropocentric and profoundly shapes how human-nature relations are represented in plans and structures of environmental governance (Adelman, 2018; Arrifin, 2007) The increasing sense of urgency in the face of climate havoc, therefore, offers the opportunity for an epistemological and ontological tour de force that is vital to cultivate alternative civilisational frameworks to replace development-as-modernisation praxes. The current planetary scale of the problems humanity faces demands new articulations of identities, actors, institutions, and territorialities to liberate people and the land, foster advocacy, build community, and embrace pluriversal ways of being, knowing, and acting.

In this chapter, we present ways of theorising and practising pluriversal knowledge and agency to cultivate post-development futures. That is, embracing the pluriverse in which 'there are multiple worlds, partially connected but radically different [whose recognition and praxis] entails an entirely different ethics of life, of being-doing-knowing' (Escobar, 2020, p. 27). Drawing from our research on territorial justice, territoriality of Indigenous people, ecocultural identity, environmental global discourses, and Indigenous movements, especially in Latin America (Arias & Minoia, 2023; Castro-Sotomayor, 2019, 2020a, 2020b; Hohenthal & Minoia, 2021; Krieg & Minoia, 2021), we argue that to cultivate post-development in a world of different colonial histories entangled with imperial modernity, post-development practitioners should depart from culturalist and anthropocentric notions of identity, embrace place-based embodied experiences, and attend to nonhuman voices and agency. First, we present the generative concept and framework of ecocultural identity and elaborate on how this encompassing notion may contribute to pluriversal transitions in environmental governance. Then, we redirect

our attention to territory and territoriality as strategic constructions of space that entail spiritual, material, and political dimensions of engagement that are at the core of post-development praxis. Third, we reflect on the multiple voices and agencies implicated in the germination of pluriversal worlds and show the challenges and opportunities social and political movements face in advancing alternatives to development. In closing, we suggest entry points and avenues to 'cultivating ourselves as theorists and practitioners of multiple possibles' (Escobar, 2020, p. xx) and finding creative and hopeful sources of political imagination.

Pluriversal Transitions: Ecocultural Identity and Radical Spaces of Engagement

Humans' suicidal arrogance and egocentrism stem from a system of knowledge that has fed the delusion of our independence from, and superiority over, the more-than-human world (Plumwood, 2002). Dangerous dualisms such as human/nature, nature/culture, and nature/society, define cultural narratives that foster individualistic and human-centred worldviews, which undermine and obscure human embeddedness within ecological webs of life. The predominant notion of development benefits from this insulating and hierarchical position that deeply informs how humans construct our sense of self in relation to others. Anthropogenic propositions 'continue to reinstitute modernity's separation of nature and culture, through the exploitation of class, race, and gender to obtain cheap labour and access to land' (Tornel & Lunden, 2022, p. 1). To cultivate post-development futures, it is urgent to challenge the culturalism and anthropocentrism that pervade our understanding of identity. That is, to interrogate the dominant narratives that circumscribe identity to the cultural realm (Grusin, 2015; Milstein & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020).

Ecocultural identity is a bridging framework that can be used to innovate around approaches, engagements, problematisations, and possibilities of (post-)development. The 'post' in post-development, 'signals the notions that the economy is not essentially or naturally capitalist, societies are not naturally liberal, and the state is not the only way of instituting social power as we have imagined it to be' (Escobar, 2010, p. 12). In other words, to 'visualise an era in which development ceases to be the central organising principle of social life' (ibid.), we must also be able to imagine an era in which culture ceases to be the central organising

principle of identity. Post-development spaces 'cannot be framed within classical narratives of development or dependency' (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2015, p. 209). Neither can they be fully understood by investigating identity mainly as the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, and ability without meaningful consideration to the ecological dimension that intersects but also encompasses these sociocultural identifications (Milstein & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020). To challenge development, therefore, we must understand identity ecoculturally.

Ecocultural identity is a generative concept and a framework. An ecocultural framework 'troubles the tendency to conceive of the environmental as separate from or a subsidiary of the economic, political, historical, and cultural, and instead situates group and individual ecological affiliations and practices as inextricable from—and mutually constituted with—sociocultural dimensions' (Milstein & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020, p. xviii). As a generative concept, ecocultural identity interrogates what it means to be human at the intersection of environmental and sociocultural struggles and resistance arising from patriarchal, imperialist, capitalist, and extractivist systems that exploit bodies, lands, waters, and well as information and outer space (Gómez-Barris, 2017; Junka-Aikio & Cortes-Severino, 2017; Moore, 2015). As Milstein and Castro-Sotomayor (2020, p. xix) state, all identities are ecocultural because 'we are made of, part of, emerging from, and constantly contributing to both ecology and culture—producing, performing, and continuously perceiving and enacting through them both. In these ways, one's ecocultural identity—whether latent or conscious—is at the heart of the positionalities, subjectivities, and practices that (in)form one's emotional, embodied, mental, and political sensibilities in and with the all-encompassing world.'

To expand the scope and redefine sociocultural identities as always already ecological, means redirecting attention to the power relations shaping and being shaped by human and nonhuman entanglements. An ecocultural conceptualisation of identity forces us to revisit the symbolic, structural, and political dimensions that converge and constitute environmental governance—'the process of formulating and contesting images and designs, and implementing procedures and practices that shape the access, control, and use of natural resources among different actors' (Castro et al., 2016, p. 6). However, environmental governance still relies upon discursive forms that privilege standardised business-as-usual practices that reproduce Western development assumptions and promises of progress. As argued elsewhere, environmental governance processes

would benefit from 'conceiving political spaces of participation as intercultural spaces in which ecocultural identities are negotiated, environmental ideologies are implicated, and ecological practices are legitimised through communication practices' (Castro-Sotomayor, 2020a, p. 80). Communication is deeply integrated in procedures and practices of engagement, and it is fundamental to guarantee a degree of participation that furthers the ideal of democratic dialogue and deliberation (Hunt et al., 2019). Within these public participation contexts, however, communicative practices can be constructive or destructive depending on the power relations that inform the interplay among symbolic constructions, institutional frameworks, and agonistic politics (Peterson et al., 2016). The power dynamics intrinsic to processes of dialogue and deliberation could limit or foster empowering modes of organising by disregarding or engaging with dissent and non-traditional, even confrontational, practices.

Communication, in its pragmatic and constitutive modes, allows us to identify five dilemmas affecting environmental governance processes: participation, communication, culture, anthropocentrism, and territoriality. The *participation dilemma* arises from the predominance of a neoliberal capitalist logic that overshadows legitimacy in the name of efficacy. Efficacy is attained by displaying an 'ideology of management' and a 'language of collaboration' (Dukes, 2004, see also Melkote & Steeves, 2015) that privilege short-term, measurable outputs over relational outcomes. Furthermore, participation is conceived as an 'intrinsic good', although it is never neutral because the way participation is defined and by whom establishes who participates and whose solutions are most likely to be operationalised (Sprain et al., 2012). Managerial logics and uncritical approaches to collaboration risk neglecting or undermining the existence of disagreement and increasing the possibility of excluding dissident voices, hence, weakening democratic participation.

In praxis, the *communication dilemma* sheds light on how spaces where individuals and groups discuss post/development privilege a technical-functionalist understanding of communication, which reduces communication to a matter of gathering and transmitting pre-existing information. Furthermore, a technical-functionalist understanding of communication risks feeding an information deficit model. The model assumes the public lacks scientific knowledge about the issue at hand; hence, providing more information or facts is enough to increase people's interest and involvement and possibly change their attitudes and behaviours regarding the matter (Kinsella, 2004). The information deficit

model has been proven insufficient to deliver legitimate and sustainable policies as it neglects the uneven power relations in which public and expert interactions and knowledges are embedded (Bernacchi & Peterson, 2016). This oversight renders it less likely that the public will challenge the authority of the experts' scientific knowledge and specialised language narrowing the opportunity for alternative worldviews to be part of the deliberation (Waisbord, 2015).

Third, the *culture dilemma* stems from understanding culture as apolitical and instrumental. Unproblematic notions of development benefit from this 'technification of culture' that confines it to three senses—material (e.g. art and food), behavioural (e.g. values and traditions), and functional (e.g. knowledge for problem-solving). This fixed, ahistorical, and apolitical concept of culture is used by (development) agencies, at all levels, 'to reproduce modern liberalism tenets of freedom, democracy, and individualism' (Telleria, 2015, p. 263). A critical appraisal of the concept of culture, on the other hand, would reveal that culture 'is not a benignly socially constructed variable' (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010, p. 6). Rather, the construction of culture or 'cultural' meanings is embedded in unbalanced power relations that often maintain social hierarchies and privileges. Culture is historical and political but also inextricably ecological, hence the notion of ecocultural identity discussed earlier in the chapter. And it is precisely the disregard of this foundational identity condition that leads to the fourth dilemma.

The *anthropocentrism dilemma* refers to the limited ability of communication-based participatory models 'to address anthropocentrism (human-centred interpretations and decisions) and extra-human participation' (Callister, 2013, p. 437). This limitation is not accidental; rather it is a logical consequence of the ontological separation between humans and nature, which debilitates the design of more comprehensive and inclusive processes of environmental governance and activism (Druschke, 2013; Tipa, 2009). The propagation of Western development's tenets stems from this split as it facilitates a type of environmental governance that disregards the well-being of the land's ecologies of life, obscures our ways of knowing, and hinders imagining plural ways of being that exist and thrive in specific territories.

Finally, the *territorial dilemma* refers to the different political understandings of the spatial dimension of post-development engagement and agency and its communicative entanglements. Conventional institutional

perspectives conceive territories as spaces of control and the formation of uniform national identities organised by state authorities under principles of cultural assimilation and capitalist development based on resource extraction (Arias & Minoia, 2023; Minoia & Tapia, 2023). This conceptualisation is challenged by the notion of territories as living areas, material and affective, that exceed the conscious and strategic will of humans (Usher, 2020). Contrary to a delusive understanding of territory that characterises authoritarian right-wing nationalist ideologies, our notion of territory illuminates the diverse and contested ecocultural identities that need to be democratically represented to address the planetary ecological crisis (Latour, 2017) and nurture regenerative practices in coexistence with Mother Earth (Gualinga, 2016).

Critical approaches to participation, communication, and culture are essential to democratise environmental governance processes. But to transition to the pluriverse we must create radical spaces of engagement. A critical, decolonial, and imaginative ecocultural approach provides an 'inclusive aperture through which to begin to reencounter and reimagine the range of human belief and meaning systems, values and norms, and every day and institutional interactions that symbolically and materially inform our own species' and countless others' realities' (Milstein & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020, p. 475). The generative concept of ecocultural identity directly responds to the vital need to humbly enter realms of understanding by departing from human exceptionalism. This is a step towards cultivating post-development, a historical process that demands confronting human-centred spaces of deliberation pervaded by a managerial ideology, a technical-functionalist understanding of communication, an ahistorical and apolitical conception of culture, and a phantasmagorical sense of territory. Embracing pluriversity is a vital strategy to resist the current climate crisis and ecological mass extinction. A transition to the pluriverse is unlikely to occur unless we prioritise politics and action of socio-ecological regeneration. In the following section, we expand the discussion on territories and territoriality and show how embracing emplaced embodied experiences and attending to the voices and agencies of the more-than-human world also contribute to creating paths to pluriversal worlds.

Territories of Pluriversity

Territories, as material and affective spaces, and territoriality's relational political and cultural configurations contextualise the praxis of post-development. As an analytical term specific to Latin America (López et al., 2017), *territorio* informs Indigenous and Afro positions around reclaiming land rights, revaluing natural resources, and socially and politically re-appropriating nature beyond the historical constructs of the nation-state and its government structures (Krieg & Minoia, 2021). Territory enshrines memories that remain alive through the emplaced connections with the past made of narrations of ancestors and events, and of the physical cycles of degradation and regeneration of seeds, soils, biota, infrastructures, and artefacts. Finally, territories are formed as earthly and political spaces where wider ecological processes of regeneration, and struggles for social and environmental justice, take place (Latta & Wittman, 2012). Territoriality refers to the relationships and communicative practices that reveal situated cosmopolitics which inform both the political governance of those that belong to and live on the land, and the cultural governmentality strategies that (re)locate and emplace environmental practices such as ecological conservation and stewardship (Castro-Sotomayor, 2020b). Territoriality constitutes territories as communal spaces of spiritual, material, and political dimensions of agency, at various scales, including bodies, land, and the Earth (De la Cadena & Blaser, 2018).

The multiscalar entanglements of these dimensions form the ontology of the ecological and political communities of human and nonhuman beings. Development practitioners and Western scholars, however, still fail to fully understand these ontologies and neglect them—intentionally or not. A search for more appropriate and responsive scholarly definitions of land, territories, and 'nature' has animated a geographical debate for more than a century in Western academies (Elden, 2010; Storey, 2020). Despite their differences, particularly in the emphasis given to physical, political, or techno-political features, these debates still rely on the dominant vision of neocolonial capitalist modernity. They portray land, territories, and nature as entities ontologically separated from and functionally dependent upon human actions through State regimes (Vela-Almeida, 2018).

Discrete Western conceptualisations of territories have created a foundation for expansive necrotic interventions for the extraction of resources from the ground. These are notoriously, but not surprisingly, advanced

by military actions supported and legitimised by nation-state policies and development plans (Gómez-Barris, 2017; Karikari et al., 2020). These bloody interventions of capitalist accumulation, which have increased especially after the 2008 financial crisis, have energised neocolonial apparatuses causing serious environmental damage to areas that were previously densely natured and protected by Indigenous peoples. Hence, these earthly casualties contributed to the current climate crisis and massive biological extinction. The corporate-state machinery, egregiously exemplified by Jair Bolsonaro, the president of Brazil, has dispossessed Indigenous people of their land by denying them their land rights and forcefully removing them from their territories to extract resources through plantations and mining whose products are then transferred and sold (Peet et al., 2011). Such 'disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence' (Tuck & Young, 2012, p. 5). Violating these territories means dispersing and destroying community ecologies and knowledges. Therefore, returning to land and territory is a central tenet in post-development thinking as 'repatriation of land is an objective of decolonisation' (ibid., p. 7).

Post-development opens possibilities for pluriversal understandings of territoriality where ecological and cultural ancestral knowledges can be reproduced and revitalised via interspecies dialogues and internatural communication practices that recognise and elevate nonhumans as legitimate interlocutors of the Earth (Plec, 2013) and rightful participants and actors in political decision-making processes (Castro-Sotomayor, 2020b). A concrete example of the importance of territories is offered by the political activism of the Kichwa communities of Ecuador (Iza et al., 2020). For them, ancestral territories are spaces in which Kichwa community practices validate their ecological and cultural ancestral knowledges that revitalise Kichwa's unity with the earth (Arias & Minoia, 2023). Various Kichwa concepts express the different spiritual, cultural, and political articulations that constitute their territoriality. For instance, *ayllu* is a powerful term, which for Luis Macas (2019, p. 12) indicates a family of human, nonhuman, and more-than-human beings, and at the same time, their living places:

> [*Ayllu*] is more than just a family made up of parents and children and other close relatives. It is a cosmic family in a plentiful relationship among all the beings that cohabit it. [*Ayllu*] is a space within mother earth where

> plants, animals, minerals, water, fire, air, and earth are found. But the spiritual dimension is also present, the sacred sites, the *wakas*, the spirits of our ancestors, the energies of other beings, the great spirit. [*Ayllu*] is a true social, political, economic, and spiritual fabric. [author's translation]

Other relevant evocative terms include *llakta*, which encompasses ancestral people and their territories named *Sumak Allpa*—vital spaces of *Sumak Kawsay*[1] or life in plenitude—where Kichwa people exert political and cultural control and reaffirm their autonomy and self-determination against attempts of land dispossession and ecocide (Vitery Gualinga, 2021). A newer ecological concept expressed by the people of Sarayaku in the Amazon is *Kawsak Sacha* (living forests) where all living beings, both visible and non-visible, on surfaces and deep underground, dwell in different places ranging from swamps to waterfalls (Gualinga, 2019).

Living forests have inspired life plans, a political programme of regional planning for achieving *Sumak Kawsay*. Life plans serve for the maintenance of a 'healthy territory free of contamination as well as abundant productive land that can help preserve food sovereignty. In this way, *Kawsak Sacha* aims to serve as a viable economic model' (Gualinga, 2016, p. 2). A living forest is an alive and conscious subject of law, according to the 2018 Declaration of the people of Sarayaku (Pueblo Originario Kichwa de Sarayaku, 2018). In this claim for territorial governance, legal rights shall protect all species, a stand that denounces human exceptionalism supported by anthropocentric worldviews (Srinivasan & Kasturirangan, 2016). This means that humans do not matter more than others beings but have the duty to protect all species by all means possible. The unity of Mother Earth is a principle claimed by the people of Sarayaku in opposition to the administrative, vertical subdivision between surfaces and undergrounds that the State uses to exploit areas for mining, even in Indigenous territories. Sacrality and unity of the living forest, understood as territory, express an Indigenous cosmopolitics that challenge the conformist ontological separation of nature and society made by institutional planners and developers.

[1] The term *sumak kawsay* has been at the centre of a significant and generative philosophical debate. For an illustrative discussion on the cosmological root of the term, its possibilities and epistemological obstacles see Oviedo Freire and Estermann (2014).

Indigenous conceptions of territory and territoriality stem from the ontological reckoning brought about by the recognition of the more-than-human world's voice and agency. This recognition also elicits frictions and potentialities of emergent ecocultural political sensibilities implicated in social and political movements that demand radical spaces of engagement and strive to advance alternatives to development (Bebbington et al., 2008; Mignolo, 2007; Villamayor-Tomas et al., 2022). The final section shows how these pluriversal social movements present alternative forms of agency across multiple scales, from the grassroots to the global, in order to build more democratic, equitable, and ecological existences beyond the praxis of coloniality of the State.

Pluriversal Social Movements

Pluriversal social movements contribute to creating paths to the recommunalisation of social life, the relocalisation of activities to enhance convivial modes of living, and the strengthening of local communities and direct forms of democracy (Escobar, 2020). There are social movements that, contrary to those featured in our discussion, operate within the limits of Western development, sustainability, and climate change discourses. Accordingly, the praxis of these collective organisations usually tends to suggest moderate changes to the system's market-driven logic or even advance changes that deepen the socio-environmental injustices exacerbated by the disruption of Earths' climate (Anshelm & Hultman, 2015; Hickmann, 2016). Pluriversal social movements, on the other hand, actively engage with ongoing territorial struggles and the politics of ecocultural identity by (re)positioning the more-than-human world as essential to the process of sense-making and the elaboration of non-anthropocentric conceptualisations of voice and agency (Grusin, 2015).

The collective actions of pluriversal social movements show how recognising more-than-human world entities as an inextricable element in human's coevolution and coexistence as earthlings is far from re-enchanting nature, nor does it mean a return to a romantic naturalism that essentialises nature by conceiving of it as pristine and disinterested. On the contrary, recognising how the more-than-human world—in its environmental or nature form—affects our ways of being in the world obliges (re)thinking and sensing the more-than-human world's voice and agency. Growing programmes of research have challenged

dominant visions of development and explored pluriversal experiences across the globe, especially popularised by Kothari et al. (2019). Pluriversal social movements entail a wide assemblage of practices based on earthly cosmologies that surpasses nation-based political rationalities and embraces the many forms of Nature-based spirituality. These forms engage with the territory's life cycles that nurture communities with food, knowledge, livelihoods, and energy. Social movements that cultivate pluriversal futures allow understanding of alternative ways of being and living not as simply poor or derelict, but as productive—and creative—in their own ways, and more and more necessary. Therefore, it is essential to attend to how the ontological reckoning of embracing more-than human voices percolate into the political realm, engender innovative social movements, and further transborder activism.

In the political realm, pluriversal social movements offer alternatives to the technocratic national and international organisations, which deploy conventional development discourses that shape the contemporary global governance built upon the North–South divide (Hidalgo-Capitán et al., 2014, Latta, 2014; Piñeiro, 2016). For instance, this geopolitical divide informs developmentalist discourses that still position countries in the Global South as subjects of aid. Along with environmental concepts such as common good, bilateral or multilateral concessional aid (Power & Mohan, 2010), and global stewardship, they reproduce the colonial roots of the international governance structures that continue to function based on GDP ideologies of progress and well-being. Mobilisation in political actions creates convergences of critical support to reverse oppressions causing ecocide and epistemicide. An encouraging example is the resistance and successful court cases moved by Sarayaku and Waorani Indigenous peoples, especially women, against extractive corporations that had entered their territories. The corporations were protected by the Ecuadorian state which disregarded the people's right to free, prior, and informed consent (Sempértegui, 2020). Territorial, anti-extractivist struggles have also been supported by wider Indigenous organisations like the Confederation of the Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) and international NGOs, primarily Amazon Watch (2018). These and other collective actions show that at the margins of human destruction it is possible to find elements of resistance and rhizomatic connections that can regenerate and become diverse formations in new cycles of collaborative multispecies survival (Tsing, 2015).

Furthermore, approaching social movements as seeds for cultivating post-development from pluriversal knowledge and engagement allows us to challenge the dominant frames used to understand grassroots cultural and political significance. For example, Maldonado-Villalpando and Paneque-Gálvez (2022) have demonstrated that grassroots innovation in Europe is primarily embodied by sustainability transformations championed by middle and upper- middle-class urban citizens. Another example they provide is about grassroots innovation in India underpinned by a capitalist ideology. Accordingly, grassroots' creative initiatives are conceptualised as the invention of profitable products and technologies that can improve local livelihoods and the well-being of poor people. These grassroots initiatives do not offer alternatives to development, which should instead create 'radical ruptures with the economic and cultural logics of capitalism, crafting deep social-ecological transformations to pursue just sustainabilities, enabling intercultural dialogues to create new knowledges, or building community autonomy through collective organization and management to be as independent of the state and the neoliberal market as possible' (ibid., p. 82).

Finally, pluriversal social movements experiment with ways of articulating means of production and environmental and political ideologies, not only within specific geographic locations but also across national borders and rural–urban spatial dualities. Transborder activism and political movements of resistance represent 'the emergence and remaking of political imaginaries [which] often lead to valuable localised actions as well as greater transborder solidarity' (Massicote, 2009, p. 424). These cut across multi-layered spatial and temporal scales and reflect the different fields of force implicated in the reproduction of histories, geographies, ideologies, and discourses. Examples of this global solidarity include the Consortium of *ICCA—territories of life*, an association of territories and conservation areas managed by Indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCA Consortium, 2022); the global *tapestry of alternatives* advanced in India by *Vikalp Sangam* (Confluence of Alternatives) and expanded worldwide (Kothari, 2019); and *La Via Campesina,* a transnational food sovereignty movement that has unified peasant-led agroecology projects against the corporate agro-industry (Val et al., 2019). We could also include the World Social Forum and its ramifications for bringing together diverse struggles, feminist, and alter-globalisation, thus creating global networks of solidarity as an alternative to global capitalist competition (Conway, 2013).

Urban grassroots collective actions are also an example of pluriversal social movements resisting gentrification and the creation of class and racially segregated spaces for the sole benefit of capitalist expansion. These collective actions include countermapping of spaces of solidarity, anti-eviction struggles, squatting, and other practices in cities (Halder et al., 2018). When urban grassroots embrace critical and decolonial approaches to understand and change their realities, Acosta and Tapia (2016) argue, their performances articulate memory and utopia from which a collective positioning emerges and nurtures the fight and courage to save their histories from erasure. Cultivating post-development from pluriversal knowledge and engagement, then, involves transcending colonial geopolitical borders and returning to the territories of life that sustain radical collective ethics. From these territories, we remember the ecological dimension of our cultural existence and recognise the evocative voices of the more-than-human world and its agentic power. To follow this path will offer the pluriverse the potential of moving from a thought alternative to a lived reality.

Conclusion: Reaping Common Futures from Many Worlds

We have proposed that cultivating post-development will require embarking on pluriversal transitions as a form of radical engagement—in commonality and reciprocity—with the more-than-human world. As a starting point for this transition, we must recognise that subjectivity—voice and agency—exceeds the human world, and that all earthlings, human and nonhuman, have the intrinsic right to be protected against the current trend towards extinction. It is increasingly evident that the timid attempts of the SDGs to reform development policies render the current sociocultural, political, and economic systems inadequate to face the urgency and existential threat posed by climate change (Beling et al., 2018; Murphy & Castro-Sotomayor, 2021). Amid the intensification of the climate crisis and the inequities its effects exacerbate, it makes sense that the targets of political action are governments complaisant with extractivist enterprises and corporations, often defended by military forces. Pluriversal social movements embodied radical political action by socio-territorial movements to reverse these oppressions through, for example, protest, political proposals, and direct engagement in experiments of radical commonality, reciprocity, and care (The Care Collective,

2020). Formed around shared ecocultural values that embrace the more-than-human world as a legitimate political actor, pluriversal social movements unite various groups across national borders and along ethnic and other intersectional lines to foster processes of social and environmental change. These movements' defence of a multispecies survival signals the path towards the formation of significant globalised local struggles whose responses in solidarity are encouraging and hopeful.

Within this transitional moment, what is the role of theorists and practitioners in cultivating post-development? How can our scholarship, teaching, and activism contribute to advance efforts towards pluriversal futures in which relationality, integrality, complementarity, and reciprocity between humans and nonhumans shape political and environmental governance? We have suggested that to account for plural vitalities and ecocultural sensibilities is a step towards a radical political imagination. We offered ecocultural identity and a revised notion of territory/territoriality to contribute to the creation of new social grammars (de Sousa Santos, 2011) essential to a political language that could break the cycle of violence and injustices bred at the core of unrestrained development and progress. However, we must be cautious about treating terms such as land, cosmovision, and interculturality as though they were static and ahistorical. As Inuca (2017) reminds us, these terms are usually conceived of as stemming from traditional, or Indigenous, ways of thinking that stand in opposition to Western conceptions of the world. Yet, Inuca (2017, p. 48) asserts, the dichotomy between Western and traditional 'exists in an ambivalent way because there are operational knowledges that emerge from Indigenous people that cannot be considered traditional because they have born from the blast of the relationships and struggles against the dominant society'.[2] Thus, researchers, teachers, practitioners, and activists must critically engage with how Indigenous/non-dominant languages are used to define what 'development', and sustainability and climate change for that matter, means in relation to territory, land, 'nature', and self. This praxis may legitimise democratic participation processes and outcomes as well as strengthen the civic action of communities at the margins (Micarelli, 2015; Taddei, 2012).

Ultimately, to cultivate post-development requires disciplinary cross-pollination, dialogue of scientific and cultural knowledges, and radical

[2] Translated by the author.

relationality and mutuality. As researchers and practitioners of post/development, we have an obligation to nourish creative and hopeful political imaginations; to re-invent concepts that could erode the dominant anthropocentric narrative that informs our ethical frames of actions and care. An example of language reinvention is the term Humilocene, the 'epoch of humility', as coined by Abram et al. (2020). This term echoes humble, humility, even humiliation and 'suggests, and even enjoins, a step toward restraint and a new humility for our kind' (ibid., p. 9). Given the current global civilisational and climate crisis, it is time for a final exit from the epistemic dominance of modernity that obscures the probability of actualizing legitimate alternative ways of being-doing-knowing. In that regard, the Humilocene affords imagining non-anthropocentric ethical and empathetic frameworks within which the plurality of worlds is recognised, acknowledged, and embraced in its plenitude. Only then, we will be seeding a pluriverse future.

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CHAPTER 7

Beyond Deconstruction and Towards Decoloniality: Pedagogy and Curriculum Design in SWANA and South Asia Studies in US Higher Education

Helena Zeweri and Tessa Farmer

Introduction

In recent years, the teaching and study of the Middle East (or henceforth Southwest Asia and North Africa-SWANA)[1] and South Asia has been the subject of much reflection in US-based institutions of higher education. More specifically, a key tension is how a decolonial approach to the teaching of area studies can be reconciled with the longstanding push

[1] Naming practices for the Middle East are notoriously tricky, with differences in cardinal terms (e.g. Near East versus Middle East) indexing different political and

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by universities to orient programs towards professional skills and applied knowledge in various fields of practice. While scholars of area studies themselves research themes that centre the unique political and cultural formations of the region through a diverse array of topics such as women's literary voices and the cultural expression of minority communities, their pedagogical labour is often pulled into the service of teaching students how to develop knowledge that can be used to 'improve' the region, which reflects a distinctly colonial approach to knowledge production. In this chapter, we explore the challenges of implementing a decolonial approach to the study of SWANA and South Asia in higher education programs in global development. More specifically, we consider pedagogical and curricular practices that could contribute to a decolonial approach within such university programs. We suggest that pedagogical practices in the classroom can be enhanced by carefully attending to the content included in syllabi. Additionally, we argue that a decolonial approach to introductory area studies courses can begin by more carefully focusing on the multiple layers of marginalisation and unequal power relations that were exploited by European colonialism. In recognising the many layers of subaltern subjectivity that exist in the region, we subsequently posit that a decolonial approach must acknowledge European colonialism as one of many starting points for understanding the history of marginalisation and subsequently the contemporary movements for self-determination that emerged in the region.

In considering these pedagogical and curricular practices, we contribute to ongoing conversations on decolonising area studies of South Asia and SWANA (Deeb & Winegar, 2016; Ranganathan, 2017). It is clear that the work of decolonisation cannot be limited to one universally portable set of curricular or pedagogical reforms. Indeed, decoloniality is both an intellectual and political project that must be rooted in structural changes that support the self-determination of Indigenous communities globally (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Thus, when it comes to area studies, decolonisation cannot simply be an extension of what Amy Gutmann has called 'multiculturalism's moral politics of recognition'

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(Gutmann, 1994). To avoid becoming an academic or activist catchphrase, decolonisation must move beyond a project that seeks to diversify which people, communities, and histories make it into curricula (Jivraj et al., 2020, p. 453). Instead, decoloniality in the classroom seeks to challenge systems that inhibit the aspirations of marginalised communities for self-determination and community well-being. We view the teaching of a diverse array of subaltern voices—specifically the voices of those from non-elite backgrounds and with training not recognized in the Euro-American academy—in introductory course curricula as necessary to build solidarities with existing movements around self-determination in the region (Pérez-Bustos, 2017). Scholars of SWANA and South Asia studies have called on area studies programs to more intentionally introduce students to the social movements being undertaken in the region around autonomy (Deeb & Winegar, 2016; El Shakry, 2021). We explore the challenges and constraints in teaching a decolonial orientation in area studies curriculum while also recognising the diverse needs, desires, and interests of the students we teach. In so doing, we take decoloniality seriously as an ongoing pedagogical praxis that begins in the classroom but must extend beyond it, through individual and collective work, rather than a teleological project marked by one definable moment of arrival. As Catherine Walsh and Walter Mignolo have written:

> Decoloniality, without a doubt, is also (…) practice-based, and lived. In addition, it is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and existentially entangled and interwoven. The concern (…) is with the ongoing processes and practices, pedagogies and paths, projects and propositions that build, cultivate, enable, and engender decoloniality, this understood as a praxis—as a walking, asking, reflecting, analysing, theorising, and actioning—in continuous movement, contention, relation, and formation. (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 19)

Scholars of the SWANA and South Asia regions have long struggled with the contradictions of teaching regional studies, recognising that some students might ultimately pursue careers that further neo-colonial agendas. While these run the gamut from military to development agendas, here we focus on the latter set of aspirations given the particularities of our positions teaching at the intersection of global studies (with a development focus) and area studies. Introductory area studies courses often provide the first opportunity for students who seek to

pursue careers in global development to learn about these regions and to unsettle Eurocentric imaginaries of their histories and cultures. In that sense, area studies courses can provide ideal spaces in which to enact a decolonial approach to teaching and curricula. Several questions emerge for educators in this space. How can introductory area studies courses take the goals of career-oriented students seriously while also challenging their assumptions about the region and offering alternative forms of engagement with it? How can educators introduce a deeper understanding of the multiple layers of marginalisation that exist in the region?

To address these questions, Paulo Freire's theories of pedagogy are particularly useful. Freire wrote that the classroom is a space where deep self-reflection can help build a collective consciousness of how power works in the contemporary world (Freire, 1968). Thus, the classroom, when viewed as a space of consciousness raising, can be a productive one within which to enact decoloniality as an ongoing praxis. Additionally, as Sanz and Prado (2021, p. 3) argue, implementing a decolonial undergraduate course on the Middle East requires that we 'drop the ideal of 'objectivity' if objectivity means constructing a space from which students imagine themselves to be 'gazing from nowhere' (ibid., p. 12). In other words, decolonial approaches begin by helping students to identify and acknowledge how the questions they ask about the region and what topics they find interesting in relation to it, are already shaped by their social environments, the kinds of ideas that have currency in those environments, and the desires for professional mobility that such ideas generate. Thus, it is impossible to approach a given research topic with a view from nowhere, since the questions we ask, the topics we choose, and the things we find interesting always emerge out of the position from which we view a given set of social dynamics (Foucault, 2005).

Decolonising the teaching of area studies requires recognising the multiplicity of vantage points from which history and the contemporary moment can be narrated. This often runs counter to what many universities and students see as the primary functions of an area studies degree. Some frame the goals of an area studies degree purely in terms of career potential, while others see the goal as training well-informed citizens and culturally competent professionals in public service in federal and local government institutions. For example, at the University of Virginia, where Farmer currently teaches and Zeweri previously taught, students who pursue regional majors in SWANA and South Asia are often double majoring in topics such as Public Policy and Global Development Studies.

Such practice-based majors often require students to demonstrate competency within a particular region. In such configurations, area studies knowledge is being applied to broader fields of practice. US university students are increasingly selecting classes and majors based on 'career potential' (see Schmidt, 2018). Therefore, as departments are expected to continually increase the number of students they enrol, it is difficult to resist the pressure to make curricular decisions that prioritise servicing this desire for professionalisation and career preparedness. In sum, while decolonial praxis seeks to interrupt the dissemination of neo-colonial knowledge, universities are narrowing the spaces in which less 'applied' topics can be explored.

Before continuing, it is important to take stock of how area studies in the US has historically been shaped by policymakers, war strategists, and nationalist imaginaries of the US as a leader in exporting liberal democracy abroad. In the US, area studies programs were initially designed in the wake of World War II to deepen knowledge of the culture, politics, and history of the 'Other' in order to institute colonial and imperial regimes of governance. At the start of the Cold War more funding was made available for area studies programs (Culcasi, 2010). Scholarships such as the Foreign Language Area Studies Scholarship were designed to train university students in regional languages and cultures for the purposes of pursuing a career that benefits US state and cultural objectives in the region. Subsequently, the study of SWANA and South Asia gained newfound importance following the events of 9/11. International and US-based think tanks developed research agendas aligned with US political and security logics that saw these regions as inherently violent, misogynist, and threatening. It was perceived that these 'social ills' could be transformed through military intervention and infrastructural and humanitarian development. This was exemplified by the US military intervention in Afghanistan which was framed as a humanitarian and later nation-building operation that sought to "save" Afghan women from the Taliban and their repressive cultures, and to develop Afghanistan's infrastructure, economy, and civil society (Abu-Lughod, 2002, Hirschkind & Mahmood, 2002). Hundreds of NGOs formed in the wake of the Global War on Terror and the professional opportunities generated therein were abundant. Thus, the events of 9/11 in the US created an intensified demand for regional experts whose necessity was justified through an emerging war economy.

The reverberations of these political projects were felt in the way that area studies of the SWANA and South Asia regions was organised, both topically and conceptually. For example, the region could now be understood through the tropes of terrorism, violence, and gender oppression that were seen as contrary to life in the global North. Many scholars of the region have been committed to debunking these Orientalist tropes in course curricula. Moreover, many introductory courses are dedicated to making visible a genealogy of how the South Asia and SWANA regions have been constructed as a site of the West's own, moral anxieties about its identity and how to govern its populace. While teaching students how to identify the Eurocentric assumptions that underlie the study of these regions is key, this deconstructive approach by itself is insufficient. Many of our students have expressed the desire to move beyond analysing Western stereotypes about the region in favor of understanding locally narrated cultural and political histories. For them, focusing solely on debunking assumptions, while recognized as important, did not do enough to centre Indigenous and subaltern epistemologies and worldviews, including people's aspirations for self-determination. In that vein, the sole focus on deconstruction often, while shedding light on the colonial discourses used to dehumanise people, falls short of rehumanising them and reinserting them back into historical narratives of resistance in meaningful ways. As Maldonado-Torres argues, decoloniality 'refers to efforts at rehumanizing the world, to breaking hierarchies of difference that dehumanize subjects and communities, and which open up multiple forms of being in the world' (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, see also Freire, 1968). In the following section, we illustrate attempts we have made to facilitate such efforts in the classroom.

As educators and scholars, our perspectives on decolonising SWANA and South Asia studies are rooted in the multiplicity of disciplinary and institutional settings in which we teach, write, research, and advise students. Zeweri is a cultural anthropologist who also has graduate training in Near Eastern Studies and has taught an introductory course on the Middle East and South Asia in an interdisciplinary Global Studies program at the University of Virginia (UVA). She has worked for policy and advocacy non-profit organisations in the US that focused on Middle East-Western Europe-North America relations. Farmer is also a cultural anthropologist who directs a program and teaches several courses in Middle East and South Asia studies within the same Global Studies program at UVA. Our positionalities as cultural anthropologists, area

studies scholars, and teachers in a highly interdisciplinary program that attracts students from Anthropology, Middle East and South Asia Studies, and Global Studies, afford us a unique lens to examine the relationship between knowledge and practice in pedagogical settings. The University of Virginia (UVA) is an institution that is known globally for its commitment to training students for careers in the field of global development. It has invested significant resources for students to gain 'international experiences' and become culturally competent practitioners. UVA, like many globally recognized universities in the United States, might be categorised as what Chatterjee and Maira (2014, p. 7) refer to as an 'imperial university', one that 'legitimizes American exceptionalism and US expansionism' through prioritising certain forms of academic knowledge, including 'liberal ideologies of gender, sexuality, religion, pluralism, and democracy' that constitute the premise of development projects in the contemporary world.

The Global Studies program is composed of six tracks that cover environmental issues (Global Studies-Environment and Sustainability-GSVS) and public health (GPH), and investigations into the relationships between commerce and culture (GCCS). The three other tracks are of particular interest here: Global Development Studies (GDS), Global Studies-Security and Justice (GSSJ), and Global Studies-Middle East and South Asia (GSMS). Global Development Studies defines its project as studying the theory and process of development from an interdisciplinary perspective. It encourages students to think about development as not only about the provision of aid but about structural inequalities and state-sanctioned violence. However, while this approach is incorporated at the pedagogical and curricular level, institutionally, GDS benefits from resources and funding that actively place students on the track to becoming development practitioners. While development is a vastly heterogeneous field, the development industry into which many graduates enter relies on premises about the global South that continue to reproduce colonial binaries and hierarchies. Likewise, GSSJ attracts a diversity of students to study issues around peace and conflict. However, while students learn about, for example, the refugee crisis and the racialised logic of borders in North America and Europe, what gets missed is an understanding of how coloniality endures at multiple scales that go beyond the West-Other binary. For example, when looking at the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, while courses may consider the role of the US in producing the crisis, an understanding of US relations with Saudi

Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE as part of a broader set of foreign interventions is largely ignored (Dogan-Akkas, 2021). These courses aim to balance attention to structural logics of coloniality in the contemporary world, with the demands that students gain the analytical skills necessary to address problems one might find in an NGO focused on peace making or a national security agency or consulting firm. We use the term 'developmentalist' to describe the desired career trajectories of many of the students in these programs, as the careers tend to be more oriented towards changing the world according to dominant narratives of progress rather than in critiquing or interrupting Euro-American cultural forms, economic systems, and political interests. The GSMS track was intended to shift away from Eurocentric studies of the 'global', but has struggled to meaningfully centre regional knowledge and to attract students to a program that is explicitly designed to challenge them intellectually without a clear career trajectory. Introductory courses in SWANA and South Asia studies sometimes miss the opportunity to delve into local histories and to stimulate student curiosity about the multiple layers of power, politics, and culture in the region. Our experiences of teaching these three tracks lead us to identify two key entry points into the decolonisation of the teaching of area studies: opening up what kinds of subaltern voices get incorporated into syllabi and avoiding the notion that local narratives are always situated in response to Western narratives and stereotypes of the region.

In the fall of 2020, I (Helena Zeweri) embarked on teaching an introductory course on the study of the Middle East and South Asia in the Global Studies-Middle East and South Asia (GSMS) track. I was excited to participate in shaping a more critical perspective for students. Part of my goal was to illuminate the constructed nature of categories such as the 'Middle East' and 'South Asia' as well as to detail how such categories have real effects on the lives of people in these regions. While postcolonial theory points to the necessity of understanding the work these categories performed for colonial projects (as well as their neo-colonial iterations) (Bhabha, 1994; Mehta, 1990; Mitchell, 1991), these categories, as problematic as they are, have had material effects on the lived experiences and subjectivities of people in the region in complicated ways. It was this tension—the one between colonial categories as constructions yet real, as imported by colonial powers yet locally adapted, reworked, resisted or reappropriated—that I was keen for students to better understand.

I began by introducing students to the content of such categories, including the traditions, practices, and systems of knowledge that they connote for different communities. My thinking was that a decolonial approach requires unpacking the political projects and nationalist imaginaries that undergird the creation of such categories that are often taken for granted. In other words, tracing these categories' historical conditions of possibility (to demonstrate the relationship between knowledge and power) could reveal the assumptions, cultural erasures, and political desires sewn into them. For example, a decolonial approach would entail asking who benefits from a category like "South Asia," and which cultural practices and histories have come to count as part of this category, and which have been excluded. While acknowledging the colonial history of the term and its exclusionary effects, it is also important to explore how the category has gained global salience and been instrumentalised by people with different levels of privilege. Students came to see that despite the origins of 'South Asia' as a top-down construction, local and diasporic mobilisations of the term can be used to achieve political recognition and legitimacy in the face of state marginalization. For example, minoritized groups use the term to connote pan-ethnic and pan-caste identities among diasporic minorities who seek to constitute significant voting blocs in, for example, the US.

While students appreciated the many layers of meaning that have been attached to colonial identity, some students were concerned that to recognize local reinterpretations of the term 'South Asia,' might result in the forgetting of its colonial origins and its over-romanticization. Historically and today, the category has been exclusionary and oppressive, and has not always properly captured the social and racial hierarchies that predated, and were exacerbated by, British colonialism in the region. Through examining scholarship that traced the genealogy of the category, we discussed how the term was weaponised to exclude communities from rights, resources, and recognitions, such as for example the marginalised Dalit community. A student pointed out, for example, that Dalit scholarship had already highlighted how certain cultural and political forms that are readily categorised as South Asian are in fact rooted in a Brahman-centric worldview, but that this scholarship has hardly gained any traction in the Euro-American academy. It became clear that the kind of literature that we privilege in the classroom does not adequately feature subaltern perspectives and historical narratives from non-elite backgrounds. Rather, through focusing on literature written primarily by elite diasporic people

who had more ready access to the Euro-American academy, I began to see how introductory area studies courses could end up perpetuating the assumption that such categories were uncontested and apolitical, fitting neatly within supposedly shared cultural expressions. Through collective discussion about these gaps, we returned to the initial starting point of the course, which was the idea that history could be told from multiple vantage points, and that these influenced the kinds of historical events, cultural forms, and political movements that circulate in European and North American academies.

As an educator, I sought to craft an introductory course that examined both the emergence of colonial knowledge regimes and the power relations that exist between the elite intelligentsia and minoritised and Indigenous subjects within the region. Doing so revealed to students that colonial categories of knowledge both produce and rework existing hierarchies that benefit some and intensify the oppression of many others. A decolonial approach to the curriculum meant being attentive to how such power relations are shaped both by European colonialism and the inherited histories of subjugation that predate European colonialism and worsen because of it and endure after its formal end. This means moving beyond a world systems theory perspective which tends to reproduce the West-Other binary (Connell, 2007). As Barbara Abou El-Haj (1991, p. 143) has argued, the way that world systems theories frame European colonialism as simply a relationship of 'importation' or 'Euro-centrism' focuses too squarely on the binary between the local and the global, thus ignoring the economic and cultural cleavages that exist in a given region. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (1994) have used the concept of 'scattered hegemonies' to refer to the many lines that cut across local–global binaries, thus unsettling the idea that there is a 'pure' local and a 'pure' global.

I began to consider more intentionally and critically how we teach subaltern cultural forms in the curricula. Turning back to the aforementioned example, while we can acknowledge that South Asia is an inherited colonial category and that it is used variously by those living in and outside of the region, students could sense that acknowledging this tension only began to scratch the surface of recentring marginalised voices and their struggles. In other words, a decolonial approach would need to centre the writing, scholarship, and analytical voice of those who are either wilfully excluded or bypassed. However, it became increasingly difficult to articulate how this knowledge could be directly useful for students, many

of whom were about to embark on summer internships with development organisations in the region. While the question of utility remained unresolved by the end of the semester, it was clear that one part of the work of decoloniality was to defetishise the idea of local voices and cultural knowledge and to widen student perspectives on whose voices come to narrate postcolonial histories.

I (Tessa Farmer) recognised Zeweri's concerns, having felt similar dissatisfaction with the awkward gaps and the seemingly insurmountable (and possibly contradictory) task of introducing a critical area studies perspective on vast swaths of the globe in a single semester to a US university audience. I was concerned about the possibility of reifying North–South relationships as central to every story. Even when critiquing imperial histories or including subaltern voices, it is all too easy to reproduce Eurocentrism by assuming that Euro-America is always the reference point to which people in the region react, orientate themselves, and resist. As Zeweri's experience highlighted, this marks a failure to meaningfully account for local dynamics and hierarchies (Spivak, 1988). While much scholarship in SWANA and South Asia studies does take this up as a field of study, a cursory glance at university syllabi suggests that subaltern voices can also reflect the social, cultural, and economic capital acquired through their access to North American and European academies. I began to contemplate the extent to which we are attentive to the key questions animating debate within these contexts (Moll, 2018) inside US university classrooms. More specifically, when students take a SWANA or South Asia studies course for developing cultural competence in the hopes of working in and on these regions, it becomes clear that a decolonial project to move beyond Eurocentrism requires a re-examination of pedagogical and curricular practices and possibilities.

Curricular Issues

The imagined East–West binary largely privileges the European imperial period (early eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century) as the moment of interaction. This interrupts understandings of global flows of knowledge, technology, and people prior to that moment that were fundamental to shaping what we understand as the metropole. These historiographic acts of erasure (Abu-Lughod, 1989) can result in a failure to take seriously how local people resisted imperial powers (Connell, 2007; Loomba, 2015). Making visible these erasures entails attending

to the long histories of interactions between world regions as well as to the possibilities that the effects of colonialism are heterogeneous, multiple, and not easily captured by models that view the metropole as the locus of power and colony as the locus of subjugation (Pérez-Bustos, 2017). Instead, it is necessary to excavate the multiplicity of interactions between these regions forward and backwards in time, as well as show the many South–South engagements that go beyond these binary East–West relations.

Selecting key topics and addressing the diversity of religious traditions, cultural identities, and language groups that a semester-long course should cover is a further challenge. For example, issues of race, nationalism, globalisation, economies, gender and sexuality studies, legal regimes, citizenship, and migration are all key issues that require attention. Moreover, making sense of texts and other materials authored by marginalised communities from within these regions requires advancing 'radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 17). In order for students to understand that material well and to more fully grasp the significance of regional issues, classes need to offer detailed contextual knowledge.

One way to counter the challenges of achieving breadth and depth across temporal, geographic, topical, and regional scales in a short amount of time is for instructors to curate connections to material and experiences beyond the course itself. They can do this by connecting students to other courses, museums, readings, and resources at their institution and beyond that can provide a deeper understanding of the limited scope that any one course can cover on context-specific issues from migration to gender and sexuality, to racial politics, to struggles for sovereignty.

It is also important to introduce students to organisations that counter Orientalist representations and that feature a diverse array of experiences from the region. Organisations such as the Arab Studies Institute (ASI) and media outlets like the *Middle East Research and Information Project* (MERIP) and *Jadaliyya* (a part of the ASI) are spaces where reporting from the region is more nuanced and rooted in the lived experiences of people from multiple socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Farmer has used the resources that ASI has collated in its news, academic reviews, and pedagogical guidance as a teaching resource on these world regions. Doing so has helped her to build a program connecting students with scholars and activists in the region through

campus residencies, virtual lectures, and research abroad. Zeweri has drawn students' attention to the websites of interdisciplinary collectives throughout the region and its diasporas that merge creative expression and scholarship centred around self-determination, Indigenous rights, and resuscitating marginalised histories. These include movements such as *The Rights Collective* and *Equality Labs* that privilege a multi-caste intersectional perspective. Zeweri has also integrated an analysis of musical and artist groups' social media to introduce students to perspectives that otherwise may go unrecognised if journal articles and monographs constituted the primary source material.

Social media accounts of public intellectuals, creatives, activists, and writers, when used ethically and in conjunction with existing scholarship and news reports coming out of the region, is another potential site where educators could look to help students unpack contemporary public discourses around politics, society, and culture in the region. Access to resources is a key issue when thinking about the kinds of materials to incorporate. Finding sources that are written in English or have been translated into English is itself a challenge, particularly when looking to move beyond texts and media that are in common circulation. With a wider array of sources, curricula might then focus on how local communities themselves have historically been engaging in practices of subversion, resistance, and reappropriation of colonial logics, and in some cases internalising and mobilising them in the service of challenging power and hegemonic political projects. As contributors to the book *Understanding and Teaching the Modern Middle East* have advised, educators can be creative in how they include other sources such as literature and novels (Colla, 2021) and films (Rastegar, 2021).

Highlighting the multiplicity of the local entails centring Indigenous perspectives with the recognition that the idea of 'indigeneity', along with who can claim it and why, varies by context. For example, for some, the claim to land is mobilised towards the creation of an independent nation-state, while for others these claims exceed the idea of a state. Some scholars have noted that decolonisation connotes a formal change in sovereignty from European colonial powers (Duara, 2004), whereas for others it is not a fully realised project, as is the case with displaced Palestinians or stateless Kurdish communities. In other words, decolonising the curricula requires being clear on how decolonisation is being defined and by whom. Additionally, sovereign nation-states continue to experience political subjugation by neo-colonial imperial interventions as in

Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. As Muriam Haleh Davis (2021, p. 87) notes: 'All sovereignties, then, were not created equal. Moreover, they were attained with different degrees of violence and came after discrepant forms of revolt'. Part of addressing this tension, according to Davis, is to help students denaturalise the nation-state as the main unit of political organisation, and to expose them to South–South transnational solidarities that have existed prior to, during, and after formal European colonial projects.

Pedagogical Issues

When it comes to implementing decolonial pedagogies in the classroom, students may experience discomfort in unsettling their cultural preconceptions and learning to think outside dichotomies such as global North/global South, West/non-West. We propose that part of the decolonial pedagogical project entails asking students to become more conscious of the kinds of frameworks that make them uncomfortable and why. Rather than seeing discomfort as a sign of something amiss with the perspective being presented, students can be encouraged to use their reflections to more intentionally engage with the deconstructive dimension of learning. It also requires asking students to learn from each other, including elevating the voices of students who have experience collaborating and advocating with communities from the region. Initiatives such as the Decolonial School[3] hosted by the California College of Arts are useful for thinking about what assignments and learning strategies could count towards decolonial modes of instruction rooted in subaltern, Indigenous, and marginalised epistemologies.

A strategy we have found useful is to explicitly lay out the goals of a semester-long experience in studying the regions, so that students understand that there are layers of the deconstructive and reconstructive projects that are important for each topic covered. While they may not always verbalize this, students might at times be struggling to reconcile ideas that seem contradictory but are in fact part of a larger and

historical moments, and with shifts over time about which countries are considered to be incorporated in those terms. Here we have chosen the Southwest Asia and North Africa, following the SWANA Alliance, who have put this term forward as a decolonial regional designation that doesn't centre Europe. Retrieved on January 31, 2023, from: https://swanaalliance.com/about.

[3] Retrieved on May 5, 2022, from: https://portal.cca.edu/thriving/decolonial-school/.

layered history of power, domination, and resistance. We identify six key learning objectives that can serve as the basis for an introductory area studies course and ease students into embracing these contradictions with more openness. First, students will learn foundational information about everyday life in communities across multiple socioeconomic classes in the South Asia and the SWANA regions. This goal is often what brings students to the class in the first place. Second, they will gain a basic orientation to local cultural logics, historical trajectories, and contemporary political economy that animate everyday life. Part of the goal here is to counter inherited 'culture talk' (Mamdani, 2002) that explains events and patterns through the trope of 'archaic cultures'. Instead, one might offer explanations for why and how things happen in these regions by contextualizing local moral and social worlds within broader political economies of the regions.

This leads to the third goal wherein instructors have students reflect on their own exposure to 'culture talk' and to narratives that have sanitised imperial histories in textbooks and contemporary media about the region. Students need to be aware of the ideas that they, possibly unconsciously, bring into the classroom. Fourth, students will be introduced to the diversity of ideas and experiences on a topic to shift away from the notion that there is a singular, homogeneous regional culture, pattern of political thought, or form of cultural expression. In this way, students can recognise that the cultural 'Other' is composed of a vastly heterogeneous set of communities and histories and that 'cultural norms' are often shaped by hierarchical power relations in a given context. Fifth, students will have the opportunity to reflect on how they can learn more about their own cultural traditions and experiences through actively reflecting on the production of social and political norms and institutions elsewhere. As Omnia El Shakry (2021) writes, it is important to emphasise comparability rather than exception in the study of the region.

The sixth and final objective involves encouraging students to move beyond cultural chauvinism and culturally relativist positions. Cultural chauvinism, the assumption of the inherent correctness of, for example, Euro-American lifeways and political systems, is often embedded and unconscious until explicitly pointed out. This process of exposure can sometimes lead students to take a 'hands off' or culturally relativist stance in which the inappropriateness of judging another culture by 'our' rules leads to the belief that they should therefore avoid engaging with anyone 'elsewhere'. Helping students to move past these positions requires

demonstrating to students that there is no straightforward distinction between 'here' and 'there' as we are always already embedded in systems and institutions that impact the conditions of possibility elsewhere (Abu-Lughod, 2013; see also epilogue of Ferguson, 1990). Indeed, students' everyday lives are already tied to supposedly culturally distant others through the products they buy, the global circulation of capital and the political representatives they vote for and their policy agendas abroad. By moving beyond culturally chauvinist and relativist positions, students might instead see that there are other opportunities to act in meaningful ways for global well-being and there are other logics that could provide guidance on a different vision of the future, what Arturo Escobar (2017) has called a re/emerging pluriverse. If a course seeks to help students understand the problems with the developmentalist agendas that might have brought them into the classroom to begin with, then turning towards regionally specific decolonial projects can provide students with alternative possibilities for what meaningful action in the region looks like and what their own positionality implies for how they might intersect with those projects.

Conclusion

Introductory area studies courses that focus on development issues offer a unique lens through which to explore the work of decoloniality. Often, students take these introductory classes because they have a sense that such knowledge could be useful for the kind of career they want to pursue. At the same time, there is a sense of openness and curiosity that students bring to these spaces that can be harnessed towards broadening their perspectives on what counts as valuable knowledge and whose voices are seen as authoritative. Critical perspectives entail experiencing the cognitive dissonance of realising the limits of our intellectual worlds. As we ask students to be comfortable with the discomfort of knowing that there are other ways of making sense of the categories that we have inherited and reproduced, we as educators can also examine our own scholarly blind spots and the sources and limits of our knowledge. Thus, learning to reflect on curricular and pedagogical practices is one starting point of a decolonial approach.

Here, an anthropological disposition towards how people make sense of what they see and experience every day becomes a useful approach in presenting multiple 'local' perspectives within a given context. For

example, Tanya Jakimow (2015, p. 1) has argued that anthropologists who teach in Development Studies should see their contributions as going beyond simply offering a 'critical' approach to development or equipping students with cultural knowledge to aid development interventions. Rather, an anthropological approach is rooted in a disposition of curiosity about how people create meaning, the broader systems that structure such meaning-making processes, and the forms of sociality that are rendered valuable to people. While we do not teach in Development Studies as such, Jakimow's point is relevant to our context. Part of fostering curiosity among students means showing them how people in the region make sense of their everyday realities. This exposure can prompt students to reflect on their learning process, their own communities, and how they themselves are positioned in relation to different kinds of power. In other words, integrating anthropological questions as a starting point for more diverse content, can help students make the connection between knowledge and power and become interested in how people experience and navigate the world. Doing so runs counter to the goals of development projects, which are rooted in essentializing modes of thinking about human experience. In focusing on facilitating social well-being, development projects are rooted in the idea that culture is a bounded entity that can be marked by arbitrary geographic boundaries and that people in a given community necessarily have shared experiences of, for example, the state or colonialism, and thus are all invested in the same kinds of futures. While unpacking the historical roots of cultural essentialism in the development industry are beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to point out that the professionalization of cultural competence does not reconcile well with an anthropological orientation towards area studies.

While decentring a utilitarian approach to decolonising introductory area studies programs is important, it cannot be seen as an intellectual endeavour that exists outside of the scope of students' own material and economic realities, concerns, and aspirations. In many cases, students are aspiring practitioners who want to act ethically. If ethics 'represents and demarcates the bounds of actions acceptable in the work of bringing these worlds into existence' (Hancock, 2008, p. 173), then it is important to consider how our curricula can support this. For many students, a job with the government and/or a development organisation is a way of achieving socioeconomic mobility and oftentimes it is too late for some to transition career paths even if they believe in the ethos that comes out of a more critically minded and decolonial area studies course. This is certainly

the case for those navigating life in an economy in which access to healthcare, a stable income, and other basic resources are becoming increasingly difficult for college graduates entering the workforce. As educators, we might think about what structural reforms need to be undertaken so that being an ethical actor does not mean having to sacrifice basic access to resources and rights. Having said this, we recognise that even this line of thought is not entirely reconcilable with the broader project of decolonisation in the North American context. What does the desire among the labor force to achieve a more ethical and economically stable future mean for the question of Indigenous land, self-determination, and sovereignty? This question, which was also raised by Tuck and Yang (2012) needs to be part of the conversation around decolonising the classroom and university.

Decolonising area studies is an ongoing epistemological, political, and institutional project that requires attending to how people and communities make sense of their conditions of possibility and imagine and enact different futures. In this ongoing endeavour in which we both continue to learn and grow, we take student perspectives and critiques seriously. Many of our students have experienced the enduring effects and ongoing violence of coloniality, experiences they have brought to class discussions in which decoloniality is much more than a theoretical project. For them, decolonizing the classroom must serve a broader project of furthering a more complex and inclusive understanding of the human experience. As such, decolonising introductory area studies goes well beyond representation and is inextricably linked with the ongoing struggles and movements for human dignity and social justice in all its forms.

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CHAPTER 8

Data Collection Versus Knowledge Theft: Relational Accountability and the Research Ethics of Indigenous Knowledges

Lauren Tynan

Introduction

I am a Pairebeenne Trawlwoolway woman from tebrakunna country in lutruwita/Tasmania, an island just below the mainland of the country now known as Australia. As someone relatively new to the academy and to research, I find research ethics fascinating and confounding. I have appreciated the process of applying for research ethics approval through the university, and simultaneously been deeply troubled by it.

I am writing this chapter because, even in the few short years I have been involved with academia, I am already tired of seeing settler researchers write and present *about* Indigenous Peoples' knowledges without Indigenous Peoples' involvement. This extends to many different communities who are subjects of research. Through research, peoples' knowledges and lives become data, published and owned by researchers.

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As Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2016, p. 5) says, 'communicating or describing knowledge does not mean it belongs to the communicator'. And while it is easy to point the finger at settler and non-Indigenous researchers, I am also bound within this same conundrum as an Indigenous researcher (see Sullivan, 2020).

I am also writing this chapter because I see ways that research can be done differently. I am learning from incredible Indigenous scholars who are theorising and practising research that is grounded in Indigenous knowledges. I am learning from Country and see how non-Indigenous scholars are working in powerful collaborations with Indigenous communities and Country to challenge the expectations of the academy (see Bawaka Country et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2020). Country is a term used across Australia to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land, encompassing all the more-than-human relations that make up Country, such as animals, spirits, memories, seas and people. All of Australia is Country and I, for example, am from tebrakunna country. Country has been mapped over by colonising naming practices that seek to inscribe foreign (British and now Australian) ownership over land and people who have been dreaming and living here for time immemorial. Country is agentic and plural which is powerfully different from the Western term country that reinforces a singular narrative, often about wealth and power.

In my research, I have a real concern for ethics, especially the broad area of Intellectual Property, and the emerging focus area of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). I am working with Elders and knowledge holders from my Aboriginal community, and I see there are loopholes and incentives in research practice for me to record their knowledge (collect data), put my name to it (publish it) and become an expert (own it and profit from it). To tackle this, I believe a stronger research ethics can be found through relationships, specifically, relational accountability (Wilson, 2016). This goes beyond any bureaucratic process of research ethics and encourages ethical engagement through protocols (cultural and legal) and relationality. An ethical practice that engages with protocols and relationality decentres the academy as instigator and arbiter of ethical research and brings forth an ethical practice that is held in relationship with those who produce and own the knowledge, both people and Country.

This chapter begins by unpacking the differences between data and knowledge, before considering research within a colonising and decolonising framework. I then provide an overview of how research

ethics are being reinvigorated through relational accountability (Wilson, 2016), refusal (Simpson, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2014) and Indigenous Data Sovereignty (Walter & Carroll, 2021). Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and copyright is also discussed. These challenges and ideas are considered within the context of the academy and how researchers are advocating for a stronger engagement with ethical practice. Throughout, I reflect on my own research practices, providing examples of how I have come to understand and tackle my thesis, fieldwork and publications. The chapter concludes with suggestions for how development (and all) researchers can undertake stronger ethical practices and relations of accountability with their research communities.

In writing this article, it is not my intention to focus too heavily on colonisation and further critique the academy and research. My purpose in undertaking research is to celebrate Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing by looking to the knowledge of Country and our Old People (ancestors and knowledge holders) to guide us into the future. However, as a Pairebeenne Trawlwoolway woman, our stories teach us that the future is not a fixed point yet to come, that time is simultaneously the past, present and future, and that the past has big messages for the future. It is also important for me to contextualise my work for a diverse audience who may not be familiar with my positionality. I write from a settler-colonial context, where our colonisers have never gone home, but live side by side with us and are being offered an opportunity by Indigenous Peoples to step into the Law/Lore of Country and help care for Country for the generations to come. I hope you will join me in this opportunity.

Data Versus Knowledge

Throughout my PhD research I often pondered about the fine line between collecting data and taking or stealing knowledge. The term data collection is used so frequently by researchers that it can obscure the reality that data often begins as knowledge (produced and owned by people or Country). I have started to think of data collection, analysis, and findings as a well-oiled machine that has the potential to decontextualise and fragment knowledge, creating a sterile end-product of data.

In this section, I consider the differences between data and knowledge and wonder if data is sometimes used as euphemism for stolen

knowledge. Understanding how data differs from knowledge is an important step in (re)considering research ethics and how researchers engage with the stories and statistics gifted to them by research participants or collaborators. We can think about how harms and benefits flow through research practices, and how we can reorient these flows towards relations of accountability. Aboriginal researcher Stuart Barlo and colleagues beautifully express the nuances of data and knowledge in research, noting that:

> In an Indigenous context, it is particularly important how we develop relationships with the data. What we call "data" in a research context is actually people's stories and life experiences and knowledges. These are gifted to the researcher by participants within the research relationship. We, as researchers, have to acknowledge and appreciate the gift of knowledge that is being offered, and we have to treat that knowledge with tremendous care and respect. This means that we have to develop respectful and accountable relationships with the data, and thus with knowledge itself. (Barlo et al., 2021, p. 44)

Similarly, Aboriginal scholars of the Palyku people, Ambelin and Blaze Kwaymullina, writing with non-Indigenous scholar Lauren Butterly, highlight that knowledge, in its vast array of forms is 'not lifeless data waiting to be collected' (Kwaymullina et al., 2013, p. 5). Instead, knowledge belongs to people and knowledge comes from Country. My own understanding of knowledge is informed by my epistemological and ontological position as an Aboriginal woman. This means that I understand knowledge as relational, subjective and connected to Country.

However, deep, ethical engagement with knowledge is not only required when engaging with Indigenous communities. The way knowledge is construed in dominant research practices is often informed by Eurocentric and Western epistemologies and ontologies which, informed by the Enlightenment, understand knowledge as empirical, objective and connected to the mind. Canonical thinkers Foucault (1972) and Said (2003) concluded that knowledge is not innocent, it is an exercise and apparatus of power. Through processes of imperialism and colonialism, non-Western knowledges and peoples were/are positioned on the periphery as 'Other', relegated to the realms of mythology and primitivism. Western knowledges, on the other hand, were/are positioned at

the centre and 'taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth' (Said, 2003, p. 46).

The re-casting of diverse knowledges into a scientific truth has extensive and serious implications for research in many communities. Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015, p. 12) asserts that many communities are silenced through 'the power of Western knowledge and its ability to be the definitive measure of what it means to be human and what does and what does not constitute knowledge'. Silencing also occurs through the universalising of knowledge, a process through which the West collects local knowledges, disconnects them from people and place, creating sterilised, objective and lifeless data (see Nakata, 2007; Smith, 2012).

Reflecting on the use of knowledge in development, Uma Kothari (2005, p. 433) notes that 'the development of tools and techniques designed and controlled by the development expert privilege forms of Western knowledge [whilst] masquerading as universal and neutral'. This chapter works with a plural, rather than universal or hierarchical understanding of knowledge. When disconnected from places, peoples and therefore, from forms of accountability, knowledge recast as data becomes ripe for extraction and collection in the research process. These collections are amassed into databases, with little attention paid to the data's original context, whereby access is either restricted to benefit a select few or deidentified, sterilised and subsequently shared publicly.

Throughout my training as a research student, I have been encouraged to find a niche area of research, one that is awaiting discovery, and to collect as much data as befits my narrowed scope, to interpret it, and to become an expert (Tynan & Bishop, 2022). Dominant research training programs re-iterate the idea that peoples' stories and statistics are data waiting to be collected, interpreted, and published by the researcher. Rather than problematising the ethics of knowledge and research, asking 'whether the research should be undertaken at all' (Kwaymullina, 2016, p. 440), research training tends to focus on the different methods researchers can use to best collect data, what I have referred to in other work as 'consumerist research practices' (Tynan, 2020, p. 164). While some qualitative researchers offer the idea of generating data to highlight the co-creation of data, the notion of 'collecting' largely goes unproblematised in research yet is linked to a long history of colonising practices where collecting is a euphemism for theft.

Research and Colonisation

Collecting is deeply tied to the colonial project in which research and scientific advancement were used to legitimate practices of theft. Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p. 64) notes that 'the idea that collectors were actually rescuing artefacts from decay and destruction, and from Indigenous peoples themselves, legitimated practices which also included commercial trade and plain and simple theft'. Smith goes on to emphasise 'that colonialism was not just about collection. It was also about re-arrangement, re-presentation and re-distribution' (ibid., p. 65), similar notions that are applied to research and the role of researchers when it comes to the collection, interpretation and translation of data.

Collections have come under scrutiny by Indigenous Peoples as illegitimate havens of stolen wealth: 'these collections have become the focus of Indigenous peoples' attempts to reclaim ancestral remains and other cultural items (known in the West as 'artefacts') belonging to their people' (ibid., p. 64). Repatriation movements and Indigenous research projects are targeting museum collections, gallery collections, private collections and, increasingly, data collections, to reclaim stolen knowledges and return them to Country and community where they belong (see AIATSIS, 2021). Undertaking research from within the same Western institutions (e.g. universities) that legitimated this theft of knowledge, and are situated on stolen land is no easy task. I was certainly very hesitant.

When I started my PhD, I did not want to do fieldwork. I had read too many texts linking colonialism and research, showing how deeply colonising or 'dirty' research is, especially with Indigenous communities (see Nakata, 2007; Smith, 2012). I was fearful of bringing a(nother) colonising practice to Indigenous communities and Country, whether consciously or not. When I pictured fieldwork, I saw safari suits, specimen jars and super-structured interviews with hesitant people. I saw communities left in the dust, while researchers flew back to the big cities with hours of recordings and photographs, ready to write hefty manuscripts and claim another notch in their expertise. I wanted no part of this.

My supervisors challenged me early on: 'if you can't find a way to do research in a non-colonising way, with integrity, then what hope do the rest of us have? You have to find a way'. I began to step away from the dominant research discourse of 'fieldwork' to recognise that 'the field'

is actually Country and 'working in the field' means working within an infinite web of relations, of which I am only one tiny part. The field is a place of relations. It is not a research location to fly in and fly out of.

My decision to do fieldwork shifted when I realised it was actually an opportunity to deepen relations with Country, the place, the people and the knowledge. When I returned from my first research trip, I had a meeting with my supervisors to recap my time. In this meeting, I cried and was angry. I cried for the stories I heard about the devastation to Country and how we were going to heal. I was furious because I could see the easy pathways where I could run off with the knowledge shared with me and build my expertise as a researcher—where I could profit from the theft of knowledge, by calling it data collection and justify this theft by calling myself a researcher.

While the ongoing dominance of colonising research practices often defeats me as an early career researcher, I am also emboldened by the work of scholars who are reinvigorating research practices and proposing new or reclaiming ancient systems of ethics. Some of these systems work within Western law to protect Intellectual Property and copyright, while others are based on local Law/Lore of relational accountability and knowledge pluralism. Engaging with ethics as a practice of Law/Lore is powerful as Law/Lore refers to the overarching frameworks of accountability in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies that dictate responsible behaviour and relations. The Lore/Law is informed by the stories held by knowledge holders over thousands of generations and is embedded in the land. Much of the work being done to transform research ethics responds to calls for more solidaristic, decolonial and convivial approaches to research and engagement.

Decolonisation

Many Indigenous scholars, including myself, are hesitant to use the term decolonisation when it comes to challenging research and Western universities. While the structures and operations of the academy are deeply colonising, in countries like Australia, these structures sit on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Country, a powerful force of Law/Lore that predates the recent arrival of Western knowledge institutions (by at least a mere 100,000 years or so). From this perspective, the concept of decolonisation recentres the colonial institution and decentres the a priori status of Indigenous sovereignty and land.

Understanding decolonisation in relation to sovereignty situates decolonial practices within a very explicit framework of land back; the return of land to Indigenous Peoples. Tuck and Yang's (2012) infamous work *Decolonisation is not a metaphor* cautions scholars against using decolonisation to further embed settler power and futurities. They note:

> Decolonisation, which we assert is a distinct project from other civil and human rights-based social justice projects, is far too often subsumed into the directives of these projects, with no regard for how decolonisation wants something different than those forms of justice. Decolonise (a verb) and decolonisation (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks. (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 2–3)

In postcolonial contexts, especially in Development Studies, decolonisation is often used in ways that do not centre sovereignty, land return and just reparations. Sometimes this is due to an absence of recognisable First (and/or Indigenous) Peoples, or because it is easier to talk about tweaking systems than returning land and governance to the rightful people.

Decolonisation is often used to refer to the repealing of imperial (often European) rule from sites of colonial power, including former colonies and peoples. To date, decolonisation in this context has often had an epistemological focus, including the dismantling of colonial knowledge structures, histories, iconography and curriculum content. These challenges have occurred within (and without) universities and been championed by people of colour and often marginalised communities whose histories and voices continue to be erased. An example of epistemological decolonisation is the Rhodes Must Fall movement. It began with student protests at the University of Cape Town in 2015 and inspired the Rhodes Must Fall campaign at the University of Oxford (Ahmed, 2020; Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford, 2022; UCT Rhodes Must Fall Movement, 2015).

In my work, I support many of the interventions being undertaken by Indigenous, (former) colonised and marginalised communities that are attempting to recentre the knowledge claims of their own people and refute the universal authority of Western knowledges and research. Epistemological decolonisation is an important focus in the movement to reclaim histories and knowledges in the face of colonialism. However, in

writing from a settler-colonial context, I also maintain a strong commitment to a more ontological understanding of decolonisation, through the reclamation of and reconnection to Indigenous land and sovereignty.

Given that decolonial movements carry different goals in different contexts, it is important then, to demarcate the goals of research being done in the name of decolonisation. This chapter will not result in my community being given back our land tomorrow (unless you, dear reader, own some of that land and would like to contact me). However, this chapter does speak to how I, and you, will conduct ourselves while researching with that land, and its peoples who hold the land in our bodies, cell walls and deepest memories. By decentring the colonial values that are embedded in research institutions and that drive research agendas, such as researcher expertise, academic outputs and fieldwork timeframes, decolonial research practices can encourage researchers to recentre Country and its legitimate knowledge holders, and therefore, develop stronger relations of accountability. This applies to all research, including research with non-humans, those entities who hold their own agency, knowledges and accountabilities (see Tynan, 2020).

Decolonisation is a helpful umbrella term to articulate a stronger engagement with research ethics, and many scholars have pinpointed ways to do this. For this chapter, I first look at relational accountability and refusal, before engaging with Indigenous Data Sovereignty, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property and copyright.

Relational Accountability

Relational accountability re-orientates the responsibilities held within research practice. Rather than researchers being accountable to universities and grant funders, first and foremost, relational accountability teaches that researchers are accountable to their relations which includes family, Country and their research communities (see Tynan, 2020; Wilson, 2016). Barlo et al. (2021, p. 40) note that Indigenous scholars have demonstrated how relational worldviews inform respectful research with Indigenous communities by providing an ontology that recognises and frames the ways we exist as and through our relationships—with our families and communities, with our research topic, with research participants and communities, with the Knowledges participating in our research, and with the Lands with whom we live and work.

Relational accountability is not limited to Indigenous research. Shawn Wilson (2016, p. 6) articulates relational accountability as 'a process of systematically bringing relationships into consciousness and becoming accountable with, for, and to them'. Relational accountability is inherently reflexive and responsive, moving with the rhythms of our research relationships. It requires constant checking in, with ourselves and our research collaborators, be they people, Country or the topic. Sometimes, this is a very confronting practice. Sometimes, it is deeply nourishing and unexpected (see Tynan, 2021). Relational accountability teaches that stronger ethical research is not necessarily found through stricter human research ethics policies at the university. Stronger ethics is found through relationships, which is a relational practice of research. Relational accountability is being accountable to the relationships that sustain our work—our family and research relations. If these relationships are not strong, there is no work. There may be data, but not knowledge. There may be quotes but not insight.

However, this is not always easy. For example, I am doing my PhD with my ancestral community in lutruwita/Tasmania, but I live on the mainland of Australia and I have two babies. My ability to spend time with my (research) relations has been heavily restricted due to COVID-19 and family obligations. However, I am learning to not see this as a limitation, because being accountable to my family is also part of the research relationship. Raising strong Aboriginal babies is being accountable to my community and our future. In my work (Tynan, 2020) I conceptualise my thesis as kin, as 'the sis', the sister; I cannot demarcate research as relation without extending or starting that accountability with my own relations, my family. This is about refusing the stereotype or reification of the Lone Wolf researcher (Kanngieser et al., forthcoming). It is taking our relationships seriously and respectfully. Because relationships are the path to decolonisation.

Relational accountability is that feeling you get in your gut, knowing you have not called your research collaborators recently. It is that moment before you present at a conference and realise you should not be standing there alone, that your collaborators should be with you. It is the writer's block you are feeling because you are trying to author a publication on your own. As Wilson (2016, p. 11) reminds us: 'Good conclusions ensue when all the relationships are accounted for, that is, when relational accountability is achieved'. Through relational accountability, research can

only ever be valid and legitimate when relationships are nourished and the research is held to account by those relationships (ibid.).

However, universities do not adequately support researchers to enact relational accountability. Fast deadlines for grant proposals and limited funding to support relationship building means many researchers are restricted in their ability to meaningfully engage through relationships. Relational accountability is not a tick-the-box exercise. It is not simply about producing a research report for your community at the end of the project. Instead, relational accountability takes the dominant concepts of ethics—reciprocity, beneficence, benefit-sharing—and places them firmly within a framework of ownership, authority and accountability.

Relational accountability does not just operate as a downward accountability from the vertical hierarchy of university funder to research participant (Banks et al., 2015). Relational accountability understands that everyone and everything is related, it operates outward and across relationships (Tynan, 2021; Wilson, 2016). While the hierarchy still exists within institutional research, it is disrupted by the powerful role of Country. Country is everywhere, across all time (past, present and future); Country cannot exist within a hierarchy. Relational accountability opens up beautiful opportunities for researchers as it focuses on being accountable to all research relationships, including nourishing relationships with family and Country—it starts at home with our babies. Relational accountability, therefore, is learning that your research relationships are more important than the research itself, and sometimes this requires of us an ability to step back from research and to refuse the expectations of the academy.

Refusal

Refusal is learning to say no. As a challenge to research practices, I primarily draw from the theorisations of Kahnawake Mohawk researcher Audra Simpson (2014), as well as Unangax scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2014). Tuck and Yang (2014, p. 813) ask 'when we overhear, uncover, are entrusted with narratives that we know will sell, do we stop the sale?'. Refusal teaches us that ethical research practice must refuse the colonising right to know. It teaches us that peoples' stories and statistics are not lifeless data ripe for collection but are knowledges that do not belong to us. Tuck and Yang (2014, p. 812) advocate for a refusal 'of the settler's unquestioned right to know, and to resist the

agenda to expand the knowledge territory of the settler colonial nation'. Research is often defined by institutions as the discovery and advancement of new knowledge. However, refusal prompts researchers to ask: should this research be undertaken and if so, am I the best person to do so? And, if I undertake this research, what should be shared and what relationships and accountabilities need to be in place to make such decisions?

Audra Simpson's (2014, p. 105) notion of refusal 'articulates a mode of sovereign authority over the presentation of ethnographic data, and so does not present "everything"'. She situates refusal as the binding practice between Indigeneity and sovereignty, 'an ethnographic calculus of what you need to know and what I refuse to write (…) This is not because of the centrality of esoteric and sacred knowledge. Rather the deep context of dispossession, of containment, of a skewed authoritative axis' (ibid.).

Refusal blocks the settler gaze and the machinery of Western knowledge production that desires 'new' knowledge in the name of research (Tynan, 2020; Tynan & Bishop, 2019). My own research is on Indigenous fire practices, often referred to as cultural burning. I initially refused to research this topic. Cultural burning is a way of looking after Country with fire, using the knowledge of our Old People (Elders and ancestors). Cultural burning works from the premise that fire is a friend that nurtures and heals Country when used in the right way (see Steffensen, 2020, Tynan & Riley, forthcoming). Cultural burning is a practice that I am passionate about. It involves me and my family caring for Country on our weekends, camping with other community members and sharing knowledge. For me, it is a cultural practice that I undertake for love of Country and I am myself repaid in the process in ways that can never be accounted for; my spirit is filled up along with the opportunities to live and learn from a generous community. I was hesitant to apply a colonising research agenda to this practice, afraid of how it could compromise my relationships to Country, fire and people.

However, I realised that even if I enact a refusal to research this cultural practice, other researchers may not. As someone already embedded within the cultural burning community, I was well placed to undertake this research by (hopefully) finding a respectful pathway. It is this initial refusal to research this topic that spurs my commitment to methodology and ethical engagement. Of course, I am stumbling and learning along the way, with the love for Country and community steering my way. This is

how refusal binds to relational accountability. It calls on us to be accountable to the research community first and foremost; to be humble and respectful.

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted many researchers to reconsider the importance of their research and, especially in development, sparked renewed discussions about localisation and the authority of local communities to govern, undertake and have ownership over research design and analysis (Cornish, 2020). In this context, refusal can be seen in community responses to research where, for example, access to vaccines and healthcare may take primacy over research topics on climate change. Similarly, researchers themselves may enact refusals to research funders by advocating for a shift in research funds and goals to support emergent community agendas.

Unable to travel to my own research community due to COVID-19, I have reallocated the designated travel funds to better remunerate research collaborators for their time (both continuing the research without my presence and co-authoring publications). In hindsight, I should have always had more budget set aside for this and take it as a key learning moment in my development as a more ethical researcher. Ethical research is about standing firm in the principles of beneficence, reciprocity and accountability and actioning these as a practice. *Practising* good ethics can be hard, and often requires researchers to be creative, for example, in justifying funding re-arrangements and changed project outcomes. Refusal is an act of agency that prompts researchers to question how research is undertaken and who benefits.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) is a global movement that explicitly outlines the right of Indigenous Peoples to 'govern the creation, collection, ownership and application of their data' (Maiam nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective, 2021). It is strongly informed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Importantly, IDS reframes 'data' as knowledge itself, in any format. IDS is a critical intervention in the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous Peoples' agency and knowledges and collapses the divide between 'data' and 'knowledge' by holding researchers to account for *all* information collected on or about Indigenous Peoples. IDS provides important lessons for stronger ethical

engagement with research and can be used as best practice when working with any research community and their data.

Palawa researcher Maggie Walter and Ahtna researcher Stephanie Russo Carroll bring an important evaluation to the knowledge versus data conversation. While qualitative research is often easily critiqued for its use of subjective knowledge, quantitative research is heavily lauded as the source of objective truth-telling through its use of statistics and data. Walter and Carroll (2021, p. 2) insist that,

These pervasive data are not neutral entities. Statistics are human artifacts and in colonizing nation states such numbers applied to Indigenous Peoples have a raced reality … Data do not make themselves. Data are created and shaped by the assumptive determinations of their makers to collect some data and not others, to interrogate some objects over others and to investigate some variable relationships over others.

IDS strips data and statistics of their function as an authoritative, objective truth by revealing the role of humans in the creation and interpretation of data. It teaches us to be sceptical of statistics and how they can be weaponised to create deficit discourses about many communities (Walter & Carroll, 2021). Hawaiian scholar Manulani Aluli-Meyer (2008, p. 225) captures this, cautioning 'we *still* believe statistics is synonymous with truth. It is a dangerous road to travel when we pack only empirical ways of being into our research backpack'.

IDS calls into question the right of researchers to solely determine how data is gathered, analysed and published. Walter and Carroll (2021, p. 2) state that 'for Indigenous Peoples, the statistics and data per se are not the problem. From a policy perspective, the far more critical question is how such numbers are deployed and what and whose purposes do they, and their attendant narratives, serve'. Kukutai and Taylor (2016, p. 3) respond, concluding that 'the collection of data on Indigenous peoples is viewed as primarily servicing government requirements rather than supporting Indigenous peoples' development agendas'. This is where researchers have a responsibility and a role to play in shaping how research data is translated and communicated to policy audiences. Researchers are able to enact refusals to the colonising right to know, to the colonising right to extract and collect data and to the colonising weaponisation of data by governments.

Another key concern of the IDS movement is Indigenous Data Governance. Many universities, at least in Australia, are currently introducing stricter measures for the management of research data. Researchers are

now required to produce formal data management plans to categorise, store and share their research data. While on the one hand this ensures the security of data, it is also based on the values of Western research that emphasise data sharing and the discovery of data for the public good. This raises concerns for key ethical practices of ensuring research data is owned by research communities and not held in data banks with university gatekeepers and researcher 'custodians'.

To date, the IDS movement has been more well established in settler-colonial nation-states, including Australia (see Maiam nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective, 2021), Aotearoa/New Zealand (see Te Mana Raraunga—Māori Data Sovereignty Network, 2021), and Turtle Island/United States (see United States Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network, 2021). However, recent publications such as *Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Policy* (Walter & Carroll, 2021) include contributions from Mexico, Basque Country, Sweden, Canada and Quechan communities. Researchers are also networking at the international level through the Global Indigenous Data Alliance.[1]

While the focus of the movement is centred within the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the principles of data sovereignty are important for researchers working with any community group, especially those often considered marginalised, or those communities they do not necessarily belong to. To encourage stronger ethical engagement with research communities and their data, researchers also need to be well-versed in Western legal traditions of Intellectual Property and copyright. It is through this literacy that researchers can be transparent with communities about how research data is collected, stored, disseminated and owned.

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Copyright

I was appalled when I realised that whenever I publish something as a researcher, the copyright of that publication automatically rests with me. I realised that I would need to spend a large chunk of my PhD researching the Western legal system to understand how Intellectual Property and copyright functioned in research. I was even more troubled when

[1] Retrieved in September, 16, 2021, from: https://www.gida-global.org/.

I realised that other researchers around me did not carry this concern or necessarily knew the answers to my panicked questions about how it was legal for me to simply type up someone else's knowledge and then claim ownership and copyright over it. I believe this is a highly unethical process that needs careful attention from researchers when working with any community, especially Indigenous communities.

Formal research ethics applications will often ask a question akin to, 'will the proposed research activity involve the acquisition of material objects or information that is regarded by participants as valuable cultural property?' As both a participant and an investigator of different research projects, the response I most often see is, 'no, it is not the aim of the study to collect any sensitive traditional knowledge'. Researchers will clearly state to ethics committees and participants that they are not collecting Indigenous Cultural or Intellectual Property (ICIP). However, the key questions remain. Who decides what the research will collect? Can researchers define this from the beginning? And how does the researcher determine whether they have collected 'data' or 'Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property'?

ICIP rights are 'defined as Indigenous People's rights to their heritage and culture. Heritage includes all aspects of cultural practices, traditional knowledge, and resources and knowledge systems developed by Indigenous people as part of their Indigenous identity' (Kearney & Janke, 2018, n.d.). When ICIP covers all aspects of cultural practice as part of Indigenous identity, it is impossible to separate an Indigenous person from their ICIP. Similarly, it is impossible to separate an Indigenous person from their Indigenous community since the definition of Indigeneity is bound to the collective notion of community or Country.

The greatest concern about ICIP and copyright in research with Indigenous communities is that protections under Western legal regimes are only afforded to individuals and not to collectives providing yet another example of how knowledge is construed from a Eurocentric perspective. As Janke (2009, p. 7) notes with reference to the Australian system: 'whilst moral rights are part of the copyright law, these rights are given to individual creators, not communal groups. Currently there are no cultural integrity rights for Indigenous knowledge holders and no attribution right of knowledge holders if they are not recognised as "authors"'.

Here, the legal system under which research operates (at least in Australia) is unevenly weighted to give authors (i.e. researchers) the

power and authority over Indigenous Peoples knowledges and histories. While research participants technically retain any Intellectual Property over their personal interview recordings, once these recordings are *translated* (typed-up, paraphrased) into research outputs, the copyright rests with the author (often the researcher). This is why it is important that co-authorship of research outputs is not only normalised but considered best practice in research. Authorship helps protect copyright. Criteria for the co-authorship of academic publications is often very prescriptive, placing value on Western forms of knowledge such as the ability to write in print form (usually in English). While purporting to protect the integrity of academic authorship, such criteria place strict limits around what counts as knowledge, authorship and contribution. These criteria do not go far enough in recognising (and protecting) the role of knowledge holders and research participants. Thus, the antiquated culture of rewarding the Lone Wolf researcher (Kanngieser et al., forthcoming) must be shifted to incentivise collaborative, ethical research practice. Indeed, it is imperative that co-authorship of research outputs with participants and collaborators becomes the new norm.

For this reason, best practice guides for ethical research call upon researchers to create protocols (ways of relating and benefit-sharing) with research communities and partners to negotiate such inequities. However, as shown below, the creation and success of protocols is still largely dependent on research actors and their assumptions about what knowledge is and how knowledge is constructed (see Raven, 2010).

Research Ethics and Protocols

Australia has quite a robust system of formal university research ethics approval. This has been, in part, due to the pressure placed on universities and research institutions to be held accountable for, and prevent the replication of, past research practices that exploited Indigenous and marginalised communities, resulting in the theft of knowledge, stories, ancestral remains, body tissue and, of course, ownership over research (Raven, 2010; Smith, 2012). The latest iterations of best practice research in Australia are set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research,* first published by the National Health and Medical

Research Council in 2007 (and updated in 2018)[2] and the *Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research,* published by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in 2020.[3]

While Australia may have some of the most stringent formal research ethics processes, the system still takes place within universities that are governed by patriarchal whiteness (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). As Wiradjuri scholar Corrinne Sullivan (2020, pp. 352–353) notes, when it comes to researchers working with Indigenous communities:

For many universities, the ethics review process, however, has become an exercise in compliance and risk management rather than ethical engagement. In complex socio-political settings, it seems to be easier for review processes to rely on rather colonial and categorical thinking about representative organisations and their gatekeeper roles than to support deeper ethical engagement with unrepresented or poorly recognised nonconforming groups that are not formally organised.

Sullivan (2020) reflects on the contentious and ambiguous concept of 'community' and how ethical engagement can be hindered by outdated ideas of a single community representative or organisation with whom to consult and from whom to seek approval. Under these circumstances, researchers must find ways to practice ethical research both within and without the constraints of formal ethical review processes. In my own research, guided by the work of best practice documents and Indigenous researchers such as Terri Janke (2009) and Vanessa Cavanagh (Cavanagh et al., 2021), I created a protocols document to be negotiated with the Aboriginal community I was researching with. Kearney and Janke (2018) explain that:

> Protocols are non-legal guidelines that offer a system of rules stipulating the correct procedures to be followed in particular situations [like research]. Protocols have been widely used in Australia to protect ICIP [Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property] in areas where the law falls short. They provide a mechanism for the protection and recognition of ICIP … While the law remains limited in its protections, protocols

[2] Retrieved on January 31, 2023, from: https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018.

[3] Retrieved on January 30, 2023, from: https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/aiatsis-code-ethics.pdf.

> provide the best alternative to ensure that ICIP is valued and defended. (n.p)

The protocols document I produced outlined the purpose of protocols, the key principles guiding my research, intellectual property and copyright and what this looks like in the research and reciprocity and how it will be honoured. My main impetus was to clearly communicate my concerns about intellectual property and copyright, to be transparent with the community about how I would prefer to negotiate the terms of my research to ensure research collaborators are sufficiently acknowledged, and to ensure that I was properly 'giving back' to the community as a form of reciprocity.

I was not sure how the process of creating and sharing a protocols document would be received by the community. The process took time, as the Circle of Elders (part of the Aboriginal organisation I was working with) wanted to thoroughly consider the document and what I was asking of them. Given the emphasis on beneficence in ethical guidelines, I was surprised that the community felt the document was overly prescriptive in its suggestions for how reciprocity could be honoured. However, the organisation asked if the document could be used to help inform a local university process for ethics processes.

What was revealed through the process was the tension between ensuring transparency in the research terms (by setting out a protocols document) and my fear of unwittingly introducing an onerous and colonising paperwork process to a very small, volunteer-run community organisation. This led me to question whether my attempt to practice a strong ethics placed undue emphasis on Western values of ethics (a prescriptive, print-based agreement). My concerns about research as a colonial practice led me to question if I was unwittingly colonising our research relationship.

This realisation came when the organisation responded to my list of suggestions for honouring reciprocity that included helping to develop community resources, presenting to community groups and paying knowledge holders. They commented that they would prefer to honour reciprocity by conducting reciprocity through family business, through relationships and through relational accountability. I had unknowingly prescribed the terms of how I could be beneficent and reciprocal in ways that potentially undermined those very principles. The notion of conducting reciprocity through 'family business' came about because of

my ancestral connection to this community—they are my extended family, even if I did not know them well. It shows that reciprocity is often not prescribed and prompts us to consider what reciprocity might look like in research and relationship building.

Reciprocity—'They're Gonna Think I'm Part of the Exhibition!'

I am in nipaluna/Hobart, the capital of lutruwita/Tasmania, attending an academic conference. This is my first time in the city and I have an opportunity to meet some of my extended family and to share with them my research ideas about Aboriginal fire practices. The next day, one of them gifts me some river reed, a very special fibre used by our ancestors to weave with, now scarce due to recent flooding events. In the next conference session, I clumsily weave the reed into a basket, my first time using this magical fibre, and gift it back to my relative.

On the last day of the conference, this newly acquainted relative takes us for a fieldwork trip to some special local sites. While there, he brings us into Country through a smoking ceremony, smoking us with the beautiful firestick he has made, the same style used by our ancestral grandfather, mannalargenna. At the end of the day, he drops me at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery where I hope to catch two of their exhibitions in the thirty minutes before they close. He opens the boot of his car to reveal a cave of treasures. He hands me the half-burned firestick we used previously in the day, the shells of two abalone he caught and shared with us during the week, a bag full of prepared river reed for weaving and a new, fully formed firestick (Fig. 8.1). I am lost for words with this overwhelming generosity.

I trudge through the museum entrance, looking for a locker to store my gifts. I am here to see the permanent exhibition about Tasmanian Aboriginal People and the new exhibition *Tense Past, Past Tense* by Tasmanian Aboriginal artist Julie Gough about our Country and family. With mud caked to my boots from slipping in the riverbank to harvest the reeds, the sounds of shells clattering together, and firesticks falling out of my bag, I think to myself, 'they're gonna think I'm part of the exhibition!'.

As I hastily move through the museum exhibitions, I peer into glass cases containing the images and possessions of my Old People, our ancestors. Material culture is precious, but I wonder how many people think

Fig. 8.1 Researcher holding a firestick; a bundle of gifts including firesticks, shells and river reed (*Source* The author)

these items are just artefacts and relics of the past. In lutruwita/Tasmania, a myth endured for centuries that my people were extinct (tebrakunna country & Lee, 2019), playing into deeply racist and Social Darwinian theories. Far from being objects of the past, these items are living culture, and in that moment, living in a plastic bag I shoved unceremoniously into a locker downstairs. This experience caused me to reflect on the protocols document. Rather than treating it as a formal document to be displayed behind a glass case, protocols need to be living processes (Smith et al., 2020). Protocols can be messy, take time, and change, reflecting the nature of relationships.

When I return home to mainland Australia, I receive news of a family reunion being organised with one of the Elders from Tasmania traveling up to meet this branch of the family. Unbundling the river reed gifted to me in Hobart, I weave a basket and gift it to this Elder at

the reunion. She takes the basket back to Hobart, and the circle of gift-giving and reciprocity returns in full. These are serendipitous moments of a relational research practice, where everything is in relationship and those relationships are constantly moving, never prescribed (Tynan, 2020, 2021). These moments occur when relational accountability is thriving, and the research process remains open. They occur when universities do not expect research students to have concrete research questions, theoretical frameworks and tick-the-box ethics applications. These moments of relational and ethical engagement come from a willingness to be open, to be convivial and solidaristic.

Conclusion: Explaining Reciprocity and Ethical Engagement

In this chapter I have tried to explain the nuances of reciprocity and ethical engagement and the ways researchers, like myself, are drawing on relationality to strengthen ethical research practices. I wasn't even sure whether to include the personal stories in this chapter, as it breaks away from the conventional academic genre of speaking *about* something. Stories attempt to speak *from* a place of relationality, showing how it is practiced. However, I think about the risks when time is not taken to explain reciprocity, ethical engagement and permissions granted as part of the research process. I think about the litany of conference presentations I have sat through and asked in my mind: who are you? Where are you from? Do you have permission to research and share this knowledge? How do we know if you do?

Questions like this are prompting even further interventions in the ways researchers are expected to conduct themselves when presenting and sharing research, especially with Indigenous communities. Frustrated by the anthropological hangover in research that still manages to produce scores of white researchers researching *about* Indigenous Peoples and knowledges, academic associations such as the Australian Association of Research in Education (AARE) and World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE) are introducing measures of accountability to their conferences. If non-Indigenous researchers submit abstracts to present research *about* Indigenous Peoples and knowledges, they must conform to various accountability measures. These include that Indigenous People must be listed as first authors, non-Indigenous researchers must submit their abstract along with an explanation of how they have

gained consent and permissions to share this research, researchers must include a slide at the beginning of their presentation outlining their positionality and role in the research project and only Indigenous Peoples can present within 'Indigenous' streams and sessions.

These are examples of how researchers are refusing the colonising traits of research practice, and calling for a stronger ethics of accountability. In this chapter, I have brought to the fore the many scholars and community members who are pushing the boundaries of research practice by dismantling the lines of accountability that traditionally flow back to the university. These scholars are re-instating lines of accountability and benefit back to those who *own* the knowledge, which extends outward to Country itself (see Bawaka Country et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2020).

While I have shared examples from Indigenous research contexts, the chapter aims to speak to a much broader audience. In considering how we practice stronger research protocols and relations of accountability with our research communities, we need to consider what research actually is, who benefits from it, and how we can dismantle the knowledge hierarchies attached to the role of researcher and attached to the ways research is expected to be communicated. Ethical research is a practice that begins at home, with our babies, the Country we reside on, and the relationships we hold. These relationships inevitably extend outward, to encompass new research relationships, and new forms of accountability. To practice ethical engagement with knowledge and research, we must recognise that research is not something that happens 'over there', but a practice that extends our relationships, creating stronger accountabilities here, there and everywhere.

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CHAPTER 9

Assuming Power in New Forms: Learning to Feel 'With the Other' in Decolonial Research

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I remain deeply interested in what research is, and how research as an idea has evolved in the west, what its meanings are, what people think they are doing when they say they are 'doing research' or when they are teaching others to do research (Appadurai, 2006, p. 169).

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On 3 June 2018, Guatemala's Chi'gag volcano[1], known more widely as *Volcán de Fuego* (Fire), erupted, resulting in devastating and tragic consequences for local individuals and communities. Due to Guatemala's endemic legacy of poverty, exclusion, and social violations, this disaster, like many previously, disproportionately impacted those already marginalised. There is no clear consensus regarding the effects of the disaster, but it is estimated that between 114 and 413 people died, 3200 were forced to move to temporary shelters, and a total of around 1.7 million were in some way impacted. Furthermore, around USD 214 million was lost through damage to infrastructure, trade and businesses (CONRED, 2018; CEPAL, 2018; Romano, 2019).

As demonstrated in the works of Few et al. (2021), Hallegatte et al. (2017), Zambrano and Gómez (2015), and Narváez et al. (2009), disasters primarily affect people and communities who have faced and continue to experience epistemic injustice. Researchers have identified the 'root causes of risk' and demonstrated that peoples' vulnerability to disaster is largely determined by social systems, unequal power relations and differential access to resources (Wisner et al., 2004). Countless models for calculating risk and potential economic losses exist, variables to measure vulnerability are used to inform policy and researchers continue to show that these disasters are not natural (e.g. Puttick et al., 2018; Wisner et al., 2015).

[1] In the Kaqchikel language, this is the name that was given to what we now know as the Volcán de Fuego (Volcano of Fire) in Guatemala.

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Despite important advances and contributions to policy and practice, calls have recently been made to rethink research agendas, methods, and resource allocation in Disaster Risk Studies to make it more equitable and to avoid reproducing the very injustices that the discipline is trying to overcome.[2] At the same time, appeals to decolonise Disaster Risk Studies have appeared in various special issues and publications (Armijos & Ramirez, 2021; Cadag, 2022; Marchezini et al., 2021; Yadav et al., 2022). Within these publications, however, there is little exploration of the interaction between emotions, knowledge production, and power relationships as an intrinsic part of the research process in a topic—Disaster Risk Studies—that is constituted by traumatic and complex events.

This chapter aims to contribute to the important endeavour of decolonising Disaster Risk Studies and, more broadly, Development Studies, by focusing on the researcher and how they (and therefore the knowledge they produce) change with and through the emotions embedded in the research process (Garcia Dauder & Ruiz Trejo, 2021). Through a series of individual narratives, we explore how the researchers' multiplicity of positionalities are transformed by the research process in its circular relationship with emotions that emerge and, in turn, inform it. In doing so, we recognise plural forms of knowledge production (Escobar, 2003) that transcend the realm of 'thinking' to acknowledge ethical, emotional and relational commitments in the research process (Cahill, 2007a). We argue that this is a step towards both admitting vulnerability and assuming power and knowledge in new forms, while also challenging dualisms often present in Western thinking (body/mind; reason/emotion; public/private; researcher/research object) and their associated hierarchies and hegemonies (Cahill, 2007a; Garcia Dauder & Ruiz Trejo, 2020).

In what follows, we explore individual and collective experiences that we had as researchers involved in the participatory action research project 'From volcanic disaster to psychosocial recovery: art, storytelling and knowledge exchange (2018–2021)'. The chapter is divided into three sections: first we introduce the project that brought the authors together and the activities we conducted. We then present nine personal reflections from the team focusing on how doing research on disaster risk has

[2] See, for instance, the RADIX Manifesto. Retrieved on February 1 2023, from: https://www.radixonline.org/manifesto-accord

individually and collectively transformed us. In presenting these personal thoughts, we take a feminist methodological approach and offer individual exercises of 'deep reflexion' (Rocheleau, 2015; Garcia Dauder & Ruiz Trejo, 2020). Through these narratives, we argue that decolonising research and challenging existing hierarchies of knowledge and power (e.g. Escobar, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Segato, 2015; Smith, 2012; Sultana, 2019) entails recognising the political, ethical and analytical role that emotions play in the research process (Jakimow, 2022; Garcia Dauder & Ruiz Trejo, 2020). We conclude with some implications of this awareness for decolonial research.

Exchanging experiences of disaster and recovery

The project 'From volcanic disaster to psychosocial recovery' connected people from Guatemala, Ecuador, and Colombia who had been marked by volcanic disasters and, using creativity and art, encouraged the exchange of knowledge and experiences as a form of promoting psychosocial recovery. Approaches used to design the project included the ethics of care (Gilligan, 2013), liberation psychology (Shapiro 2020), decolonial engagements with power and knowledge production (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Segato 2015), and storytelling as a form of personal and social recovery after a traumatic experience (Jackson, 2013). We used art and creative expression to open spaces of careful knowledge and emotional exchange between the survivors while also encouraging the imagining of possible post-disaster futures (Carruyo, 2016; Shapiro, 2020). What we did not envisage was the impact that this project would have on us, the 'researchers'. It is precisely those experiences that this chapter examines.

Our first research moment took place in June 2019, when four academics, two artists and three volcanic disaster survivors travelled from Ecuador, Colombia, and the UK to Guatemala. During an initial event, the *Escuchemos* (Let's Listen) workshop, in which we got to know local community leaders and listened to their eruption and evacuation experiences[3], we were able to propose our methodology for knowledge exchange. We subsequently worked with approximately 80 people affected by the eruption, drawn from two communities, Santa Rosa and

[3] The Escuchemos workshop was funded and organised through a NERC (Natural Environment Research Council) Urgency grant NE/S011498/1.

15 de Octubre La Trinidad. In a circle beneath a giant Ceiba[4] tree, we started with introductions to the wider community groups. Stories and experiences from Ecuador and Colombia were shared with those who had recently experienced disaster in Guatemala. We also walked along with the survivors in a procession and attended a ceremony commemorating a year since the eruption.

After sharing experiences of volcanic disaster and recovery under the Ceiba tree and in a classroom, everyone was invited to draw what they would like their communities to look like in the future (Carruyo, 2016; Shapiro, 2020). This approach pursues a form of cognitive justice by sharing experiences, through listening and finding commonalities and differences among those who had lived through the disasters and their distinct journeys of recovery. In this context, sharing stories is recognised as a fundamental human need, a way of restoring some sense of 'humanity' after extreme traumatic experiences (Jackson, 2013). The individual drawings were combined and used as a basis for murals painted in two bus stops in Santa Rosa and the community canteen in *La Dignidad* (The Dignity), a temporary shelter in Escuintla, Guatemala, where people from la Trinidad were living. Men and women, while painting the walls and telling more stories, understood their pain and their grief and felt that they were not totally alone as others in different parts of Latin America had experienced similar events. This is explored in more detail below, but the researchers and artists were challenged at every step, too, navigating between theoretical and epistemic frameworks, trying to understand and make sense of the strong emotions we ourselves were feeling as a result of the exchanges. While listening and painting, we continuously questioned the role we played in the survivors' revisiting of their experience (Fig. 9.1).

"An older woman smiles while observing a painted mural in a bus stop. The mural portrays a flowery rural landscape, with happy families gathering around a volcano".

In early 2020, the research team and leaders of the two participating communities prepared for a face-to-face meeting in Guatemala. Here, photographs and other artistic work from the activities in 2019 would

[4] La Ceiba (*Ceiba pantandra*) or Kapok tree is the national tree of Guatemala. It is used as a gathering point for community meetings in many places.

Fig. 9.1 Bus stop, Santa Rosa, Guatemala. June 2018. Photo by Rosmarie Lerner

be exhibited in a public space to contribute to the dialogue with local and national authorities. The aim of the exhibition was to improve living conditions and help residents lead dignified lives after the disaster. The arrival of COVID-19 made this in-person gathering impossible. We experienced a taste of 'research on demand' (Segato, 2015) when participants from Guatemala, Ecuador, and Colombia asked the research team to find a way to continue this journey together. Those who, at another time, would be the 'research subjects' were driving the research process forward. In the spirit of decolonising knowledge production, and the defence of collective voices, we aspired to feel, smell and create, as we had done months before under the Ceiba tree in Guatemala. This represented an important methodological challenge. In response, we agreed to meet online and three new members joined the team to help facilitate knowledge and emotional exchange in virtual spaces across different countries.

We recognised that the power of healing through words and personal encounter as a form of resistance could not easily be replicated through our screens. It was thinking from the heart—feeling-thinking (*senti-pensar*)—within the communities and territories where we worked that opened methodological paths for us (Fals Borda, 2009; Escobar, 2016). In this approach, 'territories' are a set of emotions, identities and thoughts that configure connected orders of meaning, rooted in places and cultural particularities. We approached the challenge and overcame some of the distance by combining the virtual meetings with an idea that has been around for centuries: a *kipi*, a traditional bag used by Indigenous women in the Andes to carry children or objects on their backs. The one we received in each one of our homes contained an essence (rosemary oil), accompanied by fabrics, threads, needles, phrases, colours, paper, pencil, and photographs, filled with creative possibilities. We travelled symbolically with them across the kilometres to Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, and the United Kingdom.

The Ceiba tree and the borrowed classroom turned to Google Meet and in 2020 and 2021 we were, once more, exchanging glances, ready to feel the comfort of seeing each other.[5] Our methodology which at the start of the research process had been collective painting and discussing possible futures during face-to-face workshops, was transformed into online storytelling and artistic creative sessions. Thus, we could continue to support work on psychosocial recovery while also recognising the need for people to rebuild relationships with their territories where disaster had occurred. For months, during these online meetings, both the disaster survivors and the researchers and facilitators exchanged experiences mediated by the *kipi*'s shared symbols and materials. No matter where we were, we wove words and memories into strength. Based on the shared experiences of disaster and recovery, we carefully created an illustrated, written, and narrated story about recovery from volcanic disasters that represented the diverse histories that had been shared. The story responded to a fundamental wish from the project participants: to ensure

[5] Eight virtual meetings were organised during 2020 and 2021 and attended by five community representatives of volcanic disaster survivors from Santa Rosa and 15 de Octubre la Trinidad in Guatemala, two from Nevado del Ruiz in Colombia and one from Tungurahua Ecuador. Nine researchers, artists and facilitators from Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador and the UK also participated in these meetings—the authors of this text. For more details please visit the webpage created to bring together the process. https://www.tejiendorenaceres.com.

that subsequent generations know what had happened in all three locations.[6] In addition to the illustrated story, a quilt was also created, for which all online participants contributed a fragment of their stories of recovery, of their own life, of our shared experiences, in the form of a painted or embroidered piece of cloth. These fabrics travelled from Colombia, Ecuador and the United Kingdom to Guatemala, where their stories were stitched together into a large quilt that will be exhibited in other communities affected by disasters in Guatemala.

A Quilt of Voices: Thinking-Feeling with the Other

With the aim of learning how to feel and think in producing decolonial knowledge (Fals Borda, 2009), and to write this chapter as an exercise of deep reflection, the team members asked themselves: what were we doing, thinking, and feeling when we were weaving and painting alongside the disaster survivors? What did building collective stories mean for us? How can we participate and reflect, as outsiders, with those who have experienced disasters firsthand? What intellectual and emotional spaces are we 'allowed' to inhabit in this kind of research process?

Here, we present responses to these questions from nine members of the team: researchers, artists, activists, colleagues from Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and the United Kingdom. Through these narratives, we share a polysemic weaving of voices and images, bringing the feeling-thinking research journey to life. These reflections are shared as individual honest and open texts, a considered depart from the traditional hierarchies of knowledge production through the acceptance and pursuit of emotional bonds. We interrogate how knowledge is produced and explore how 'new forms of solidarities and collectivities' (Sultana, 2021, p. 158) that result from emotion and sharing of experiences between researchers and participants are built into the research process itself. We therefore pursue the assumption of power (and vulnerability) in new ways and through emotion (Cahill, 2007a) and in a personal narrative form.

[6] The story is available in print and online, on the project webpage. www.tejiendoreneceres.com. The printed version of the story has been distributed to the participants and their communities in Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador and UK.

The following section will be subdivided in several parts. Each represents one of our voices, and together it becomes our collective experience and voice.

William

I am William and I write as the son of a labourer father and a housewife mother. A heterosexual man, with all the privileges and suffering that it brings. I am *Mestizo* (mixed-race with Spanish and Indigenous descent), or at least that's what the Spanish Empire called us. An academic for those who only speak in the language that we were colonised with. I write from the field of psychology, which is my profession. Sustainable development and the environment are my fields of expertise. The culture and knowledge of Latin America are the current steppingstones of my doctoral research and training.

Vamos pueblo, carajo! El pueblo no se rinde carajo! (Let's go people, damnit! The people will never give up, damnit!). Those were the two slogans, among others, unfathomable and unquantifiable like the dreams of a dignified life, which accompanied the social movements that progressed in Colombia during 2021. Decolonial research, as a subversive praxis, is possible, when subjects establish and cultivate knowledge, as well as think from the heart and feel with the head. It is from here that we resonate, harmonise, and dissociate for this project. The journey started by recognising the eternal presence of feelings, sealed by the injustice of pain and grief lingering from the events in Armero (1985), Tungurahua (1999-2016) and Volcan de Fuego (2018). Here, neutrality and objectivity, both dogmas of positivism, fall into the void that follows them. I cannot be neutral when facing injustice, when facing pain; it is impossible to be objective while their expression and shaping emerge through intersubjectivity.

It was in the fertile land of Guatemala that bodies, souls, and footsteps were gathered. The individual voice came to be the collective voice of Colombia, Guatemala, Ecuador, and the United Kingdom. It came through shared pain and, before the exhausted persons who did not want to be shaped only by the tragedy, it blossomed through knowledge, feelings, and transformative thoughts. There I was, beneath the shade of the Ceiba tree, clumsy in my actions, with this little bit of humanity, facing men and women who, with great strength, transformed uncertainty in coming together into a creative aesthetic for healing and recovery. I saw

them, I felt them, I smelled them, I touched them, I listened to them. I could not help but challenge, once more, albeit with new elements involved, the poverty prevailing in research methods. There I was nestled, positioned, stating from the perspective of 'us'.

This 'us' invited me to think of those unknown people whose voices no longer wander this plane, simply due to their not being part of a social class protected by money. They walked early into the arms of death simply for being proletariats, inexhaustibly seeking air to endure, day by day, the fires smothered by the men who imposed inequality as a form of social interaction, those who held the mountain accountable for the death caused. These were the people who I was deprived of knowing. So, there I was, clumsy in my actions, surrounded with this little bit of humanity, baring my soul, ready to heal myself, to heal us.

The pandemic became our companion for these furtive steps. The shadow of *La Ceiba* became distant, those initial aromas were no longer there. We needed to prepare ourselves to meet in different ways. The weaving, painting, and new aromas, mediated, paradoxically, through Zoom blossomed in our spaces. And there, once more, with my minute breath and the forthcoming scourges of love, I found myself. We all found ourselves. We put together a team through the notion of the authentic soul, while we accounted for deaths in Colombia… *el pueblo no se rinde carajo!* And in our team, we also did not give up. What was I doing by smelling, painting, and weaving in this project? Healing myself, healing all of us together, sharing tears and laughter as the base of a fountain of knowledge.

As knowledge was formed, we also formed ourselves. Every voice was one of support. The language we used made us reflect philosophically, in that beautiful way that caresses the soul. We painted, to reflect what was said when the words were silent. The aromas and textures opened up a return to Nature, since it was she that was first felt. Hummingbird wings allowed us to soar through the mountains, the loops, and the crags. We were careful to not cause ourselves harm, and to not live with harm as a categorical imperative. Time flowed for those eternal gatherings which, in reality, lasted just an hour.

Carolina

I am Carolina, a Guatemalan woman who was marked by the Chi'gag volcano eruption. A communication expert by profession, I write from

my best kept memories of this journey. I want to tell my story as though it were a *güipil*.[7] It is not only a piece of clothing which is representative of our Mayan identity, but also a garment preserving colours, threads, stories, fights, reawakening, and knowledge which have all been passed down from generation to generation. In them, we can uncover the sky, the dawn, the sunset, both death and healing, spirituality, ethereality, the sun, maize, nature herself, as I have discovered them myself on this journey with people who are so far, yet so close all at once.

My path in this *güipil* began by remembering the stories which had been embroidered into me and into the volcanoes, beneath the earth, sharing the same land. It all reconnected me to a recent past, full of life experience. Through the *güipil*, all of my senses came alive, but it was my hands, together with the hands of the others, the protagonists of my story, which made me go back, made me resist, and made me appreciate it all. I never used to embroider, and yet, here, I embroidered.

I spent many years believing that the needle and thread were not my friends, that they didn't belong to me, nor me to them, but how wrong I was! It was an experience that was as unexpected as it was necessary. In that moment, I felt myself thinking about how I wanted to share the experiences that had marked me over the last few years, from that grey day in June 2018, and it took me back to Chi'gag, and continues to take me back there. I wanted to share what I had seen, what I had been told, what I had felt when I was told, as well as what I had felt when seeing the injustices happening all around me. I started to give shape to my weaving. Each stitch was a story, a smile, a tear. I found it so freeing, and it was only afterwards that I realised that I wasn't just telling someone else's stories, but I was also telling mine. In each stitch, I felt the hands of my grandmother, who was excellent at embroiderer. I felt her eyes seeing what mine saw, and I honoured her. I honoured my mother too, who, with her delicate hands, had weaved four lives.

And this is how it was every afternoon. I connected with my core, with what was deep down inside me. I listened to what came from within, and I began to heal. I was not only weaving a past, but also a present that saw a free future, full of lights and beautiful moments lingering on a patch

[7] A traditional embroidered blouse wore by Indigenous women in Guatemala. Each community has a different style of embroidery and can be identified by their style and use of colours.

from a quilt that was created in the east, the south, and in the centre of the cosmos. How refreshing.

With everyone sitting beneath the shade of the Ceiba tree, we created moments which were then transformed into new ideas, into new words. Time stopped while we heard the fluttering wings of butterflies newly born from their cocoons. Not a day went by when this fluttering didn't leave us with a smile on our faces, a knot in our throats, or simply a beautiful memory to hold onto. We learned to take our time, to surprise ourselves by smelling the inviting aroma of the rosemary, touching a lemon leaf, listening to the call of the condor. We grew from within ourselves, and we healed together.

Yes, we had lived with the bellow of the volcano under different suns, but we moved together under one *güipil*, which recounted the tales of fights, awakenings, and teachings through its fabric. And here I am, embroidering once more, creating a new patch for this quilt of memories.

Lina

I am Lina, a woman, daughter, mother, wife, and friend who found, through the fields of psychology, research, and disaster risk, an opportunity to understand what is human, and to rescue it from the depths of what is not.

Here's a little something from my past… Aged just 10 years old, on Tuesday 13 November 1985, I heard a call coming from inside my house: 'What's happening? Why are people making such a racket? What could it be?' My mum leaned out of the window and asked the neighbours: 'what happened?' 'It's all red, it seems like the Nevado is red!', they responded. 'Armero? That's where Aunt Lilia lives!' she said. My grandfather, a man so close to my heart, who loved the beautiful custom of eating fruits, a man who smelled of coffee and the countryside, arrived with his weaponry (a sack, a machete, and rubber boots) and his grey hairs, and declared: 'I'm going to find my sister!'

My mother, through her tears, bid him goodbye.

There came a knock at the door. My grandfather had returned, bringing nothing with him but sorrows and the bitter tales of pain and rupture, accounts of orphans, mud, thefts, and the fear of being left buried.

One year later, it was decided that we should consider Aunt Lilia to have passed away. Once again, my mother cried, but with more pain.

Time passed… Years later, I volunteered with the Red Cross as a psychology student. Here is where the story started, the one that has led you here to read these words today.

And now, many years later… I never could have imagined that today, once again, I would be seen, remembered, and asked questions as a granddaughter, a daughter, a niece, a cousin, and a researcher. I give to the world of writing the understanding of those feelings, thoughts, and dreams that I have held onto since my childhood.

What would have become of me, that 10-year-old full of feelings, thoughts, and dreams, in that moment, not understanding what had happened, hearing things like 'the Nevado del Ruiz has exploded! Armero is gone! My aunt has disappeared!'. If I had weaved alongside and together with others, from the thoughts and dreams of men, women, families, and scientists, perhaps I would have better understood what it means to lose someone and not be able to say goodbye, and to appreciate and remember places as they were in my memory, without being able to visit them again.

Today, to the world of writing, I give the thimble, the needle, the brush, the colouring pencil, the fabric, and the thread, so that they convey and weave alongside the words and new scientific discoveries. I went to the heart of each library, shelf, or link, so that I could understand without the need to be 'scientific', but simply by being the colour, the brush, the canvas, the needle, and thread.

Through weaving together, we created real spaces in virtual environments, from my home and their homes, where every word, every stitch, and every brushstroke took me from country to country, imagining places, close to volcanoes, in Ecuador, Guatemala, and Colombia. I wove while journeying with my soul, while listening to it and beholding phrases, paintings, songs, aromas, *Las Ceibas*, and other marvels. These conjured up my own story, the story for which I fight day after day as a teacher, a researcher, and a dreamer, fighting for there to be no repetition of these disasters. There, where imagination is valued, that imagination which creates worthwhile realities filled with dignity, so that others might start to weave while baring their soul. I fight to join together the pieces of history with threads of hope, like a political demand to carry new dreams, through which we can create reality.

I was weaving, and my soul discovered through this research that we were and we continue to be one community, which has produced its own blanket for those cold moments, for those moments of uncertainty, of creation, and of dreaming.

Luis David

I am Luis David, a native of Kumanday,[8] son of a migrant from the recession and a disappeared person from the violence, dedicated to the meticulous work of building a collective social fabric.

Stop and think.

A dream shows us separated. It is both sad and untrue. We are together, all connected. The dream resembles life and death. Perchance, are the functionaries who sit behind their screens and write in a dead language understood by nobody really living? Do they know that their words are of life and death? Or we could say that the women, men, and children who speak in our story are all dead, recounting to us their memories of resistance. They teach us in school that rocks are lifeless, and that the mountains are just a part of the landscape where people live their lives and build cities and roads…and the fire and the rock laugh when they surprise the people who, perched on shoulders, are terrified of their sighs and yawns.

Stop and start.

It is enough to create a circle to tear down the illusion. It is enough to look into each other's eyes and recognize each other as equals. It is enough to take the time to listen to the oldest stories. That fire which touches the very core of your chest, the very same that lives in Kumanday, in Volcán de Fuego, in Tungurahua… in everything and in everyone. We are one together, and we will continue to be one together. There is nothing which is remotely capable of changing that. There is no science which can do that. For this reason, thinking of art as a medium is to fall into the trap, to look from on high, hanging from the rope, everything at a distance, asking ourselves the right questions: where are we looking from? What are we feeling? How can we reflect and write?

We enter earnestly into the mud, and we submerge ourselves. It is simple and straightforward. Weaving allows us to return to the collective consciousness. We continue weaving, writing a text in parts, and ultimately, that's what we did. All of us did it together, because we carry on together. We ask permission, we give thanks. We are worthy messengers, pollinators of the message.

[8] Kumanday was the name given to the volcano Nevado del Ruiz in Colombia by the Quimbaya people.

I remember Oti showing us a kidney bean. This same bean had been with her, moving with her since she was young, travelling with her when she needed to leave. It returned with her, expecting a land where it could be sown. I learned that day that the seed is her memory, it is her fuel. Her thinking is aligned with it. What is this bean, really, that joins us on our journey? What is it that binds it to our thinking in the background?

Stop and start.

Return to the everlasting collective. Spread the word instead of taking it. Lend your voice instead of snatching it away. Bridge the gap and cross it, if not for reassurance or to feel a part of something, then to be in the collective, when we can, and from where we can. Here, in the gathering. There, in the meeting. Beyond, in the quilt, in the photo, in the text …

Daniela

This narrative intends to place me, Daniela, as a subject that is crossed by the realities that we live in Latin America. However, what could a white, heterosexual and academic woman say about the injustices that these people have experienced? About the evolution of their displaced, uprooted and survived lives? Not much at first. With this thought I found the project for which I am writing these paragraphs, but this time I place myself from the perspective of an investigated researcher and I highlight my experience in meeting those with whom I find meaning.

The issue that brought us together in the first instance was disaster risk management. The tragic disaster of Armero, on 13 November 1985 in Colombia; the Volcan de Fuego eruption on 3 June 2018 in Guatemala, and the volcanic activity taking place in Tungurahua, Ecuador, between 1999 and 2016. These events have been key moments in our lives. They help us to redefine our relationships with volcanoes.

My mission was to establish fluent and effective communication with those people who live, survive, resist, and go about their daily life at the edge of and in relation with volcanoes far and wide in Latin America. Within the framework of this experience, I was able to establish relationships with people from Guatemala, Ecuador, and Colombia, from a place of caring, intending no harm. In this way, I was able to get involved in their lives, in their day-to-day activities. Some people shared more than others, but they all let me into their homes, their worlds, their happiness and sadness, their grief, and their hope.

It was because of this project that I told the stories that lingered deep within my family, those which we had never spoken of before. The feeling of togetherness fostered through conversation brought them back into existence. Once upon a time, a large part of my family had come from the department of Caldas in Colombia, including before I was born and those events that followed with the eruption of Kumanday. Through this revelation, I could weave our experiences into my small piece of fabric. Before my patch was even complete, these stories were already united. They had joined together long ago beneath the earth. They had flowed from emotions surging through the veins of the mountains. They had brought forth unthinkable hopes into the fertile lands of the present.

My interest began from an intellectual perspective, one of solidary and of mutual support. It ended up being sensitive, emotional; contemplative sometimes, and simply about listening other times. Unexpectedly, I was able to recognize myself as part of that community that continues to live at the foot and sheltered in the heat of the waters of the volcanoes. I began this path in a dialogue with and about volcanoes and we ended up together weaving, reborn side by side in landscapes to which we already belonged.

Eliza

I am Eliza and write this as a female, an academic, a volcanologist from the UK who has lived and worked in Latin America, and who is venturing into interdisciplinary territories.

My piece for the collective quilt was developed from a place of grief that I was experiencing in my own life at the time. It therefore felt natural that I could try and represent the grief I witnessed and felt in the survivors of the 2018 Fuego eruption through that place in me.

I approached the work in a style inspired by the art of Violeta Parra, the Chilean folk singer, composer, painter, poet and social activist who cofounded the *Nueva Cancion* (New Song) political movement. Violeta was an expert creator of *arpilleras*, embroidered cloth stories using simple stitching, often used to process the maker's current reality. Violeta described her pieces as 'songs that were painted'.

Hearing the accounts of the *Fuego* disaster from people who fled the pyroclastic flows, who fought for their lives with their children in their hands at the very visceral boundary of life and death, the people that arrived to help who faced unspeakable scenes, family members who

survived, but survived tormented: It changed me. An outpouring of trauma so raw, there was no space for normal social filters or boundaries. My emotional centre of gravity, and my interests and purpose as a researcher, shifted irreversibly through those experiences. The ash that lay in deceivingly delicate layers that only moments before had mercilessly grappled with the rights of a community to survive. In these places Nature reigns.

But pyroclastic flows disgust me now. How shall I explain that to the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)[9]?

We are privileged to work in a globalised context, in person or online, our worlds are wide, ample and enriching. We develop connectivity and solidarity with individuals geographically far removed. I lived an intense experience of the Fuego eruption crisis working remotely, but alongside volcanology colleagues at the National Institute for Seismology, Vulcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology of Guatemala (INSIVUMEH). Through subsequent research projects that experience continued and has been extended, now through sharing with this group online and around a collective creative activity. We meet, share, make and discuss. The topics evolve, we grow a shared history together. We share of ourselves as people, our experiences of the eruption and recovery. Our coming together forms a space where people bring their stories. This way of working is a giver of moments.

In interdisciplinary work, the lack of walls, the permission to wonder, mingle, exchange and learn, is freeing. More than that though, the permission to be present and represent yourself as an individual in your work with more integrity, rather than using a lens that represents only part of you while filtering out other parts, brings to me a sense of release. In this kind of work, you are the value system, versus you have developed a valued instrument. In the academic work culture, it can be easy to feel instrumentalised, only valued for the skill set or specific knowledge you bring. When we form spaces and ways of working where people are the value system where along with diverse skill sets and knowledge, each one brings life experiences, perspectives, and emotional responses, and new understanding arises in those spaces, that is something that is more whole and horizontal.

[9] NERC (Natural Environment Research Council is part of the UKRI (United Kingdom Research and Innovation), the institution that funded this project.

Pablo

I am Pablo and I am passionate about journeys, both real and imagined. In my rucksack, I carry colouring pencils, brushes, and paper with which I portray my existential journeys, both individual and as part of acommunity. Below are some watercolour paintings I created in response to the conversations we had during the online meetings between 2020 and 2021. The quotes below are words by disaster survivors from Guatemala (Fig. 9.2).

"A painting depicting a mountainous landscape made from women sleeping peacefully. Grass grows from their bodies. Above them, a colourful group of people and animals in an embrace look up to the horizon, where a flying hummingbird delivers a leaf to a pigeon".

Fig. 9.2 Hope grows with the memory of those absent, by Pablo Sanaguano

"It carries the voice of the silence, the living heart, and the hearts of those who are no longer living. It carries the hope of not repeating the errors which were made in the past. It brings harmony and union, the voice of those who had no voice, who could not say what happened". Roberto. (Fig. 9.3)

"A colourful painting depicts a mountain as if made of women, a hummingbird and plants. On top of this mountain, a group of people dance in celebration".

"Strength, because we realised in those conversations that we were not the only ones who had gone through these terrible, ugly experiences. It was something very difficult. Many of us in those moments had lost loved ones, family, and friends, and we had to draw strength from where we had none. To know people who had also gone the same gave us the strength to carry on in this dismal situation, but we have, and the fact that we are alive and breathing is a great opportunity in life". (Norma) (Fig. 9.4)

Fig. 9.3 Intercultural celebration, by Pablo Sanaguano

"Three multicoloured women embrace against the night sky. Their legs seem to blend with the earth."

"I touch the textures, the veins; like veins in a lung, the volcanoes also have veins which come together. These veins have brought us all together in one way or another. At La Trinidad, I didn't lose family members, but many men who loved the countryside lost their lives when they went to see how their crops and fields had been destroyed and lost… They died of heart ache. The middle line is the line of time, the union, and the Strength, despite the distances between… Thanks to you, I have learned a lot. Strength must be there. And if there is union, we can." (Alicia) (Fig. 9.5)

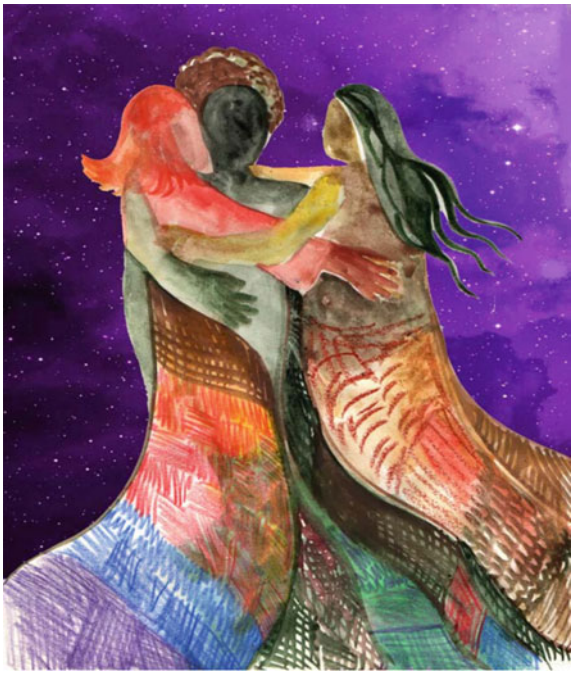

Fig. 9.4 Multicolour Embrace, by Pablo Sanaguano

Fig. 9.5 Harmony between Peoples

"Two people of different colours embrace. Their bodies blend with the depths of the earth, which is painted as mud with multicoloured seeds".

"We will be moved by trembling winds … But when the fruits fall from the trees, there are some seeds which remain scattered and there are hummingbirds who gather and carry the seeds. The seeds once again grow in us, and we will do the work of the hummingbirds, to carry the seeds to others. When they see the quilt, others will see our work and the fruit which has already started to grow. We will cherish this seed, and we will make it grow". (Jairo)

Jaime

I am Jaime, I write as a man and an academic, from my homeland, a mountain fold dominated by the great Kumanday volcano.

'Friends: a change in route must be decided upon. The long night in which we have submerged ourselves, we need to shake it off and leave it behind. The new day which is already beginning must find us firm, alert, and resolved'. With these words, Frantz Fanon (1983, p. 193) in the epilogue to *The Wretched of Earth*, a work brimming with intellectual burning and historical detention, declared the need to no longer imitate the cultural models imposed during colonial times, whose effects linger in the minds of the colonised peoples. It was not enough to end the relationships exploited by colonial domination, that which established these forms of misuse of people and their bodies, and which governed the production both of truth and knowledge creation.

The long night spread beyond the power that the colonial system exercised over the territories, and the darkness of this night engulfed the abodes of language, encompassed the symbols, put imagination in place. It was slowly building an impregnable epistemological fortress, one which required the colonials' emerging knowledge to fulfil principles of validation and criteria of legitimacy. These principles ignored the possibility of thinking from other places of enunciation, other perspectives. Little by little, colonialism transformed into coloniality, and political submission became intellectual resignation. But at the end of the century, the words of Fanon were heard, and the image of a new day was seen, one which pointed from the emancipated heart to the people who had previously submitted, with its deepened aurora. It found us prepared to try paths which we had abandoned or never taken. Shaken by the long night, we received the dawn like a poet receives the gift of words and the condor the gift of the wind. There we were, traversing through language with questions which wove the language of the land with the feelings of the community. Unlike the colonisers, we were not exploiting the experience as a device through which to govern the legitimacy of knowledge. Thus we depart from the illusion of achieving aseptic objectivity and axiological neutrality.

Teresa

I am Teresa and write this account as a woman, from a privileged position of an academic in the field of Development, a bilingual person with access to different realities, stories, ways of thinking and living in both Latin America and the United Kingdom. I am the person who had the opportunity to bring together all these people to exchange diverse forms of knowledge. The aim was to understand what disaster risk means from the voices and experiences of people living in those 'at risk' places. This patchwork text elaborates on a small part of my experience in this long process of transformation, where I present myself and deliver in my stitches and weaving, part of a story of change.

In front of me, I had a piece of fabric, threads, and a needle which had arrived inside the *kipi*. It was a free space, where I could create and share what I had felt, heard, and learned over months of virtual meetings. In the evenings, over several weeks I embroidered what I was feeling. I decided to embroider *La Ceiba* tree which had accompanied us from the very beginning, at the temporary shelter La Dignidad in Guatemala where, under the shadow of this imposing wise tree, we had met each other for the first time. Stitch by stitch, I remembered the stories shared in those face-to-face and virtual gatherings, what I had felt, what had made me cry.

Every stitch reminded me why I do what I do, why sharing stories and creating networks can be transformative, why feeling keeps me going. The first brown stitch gave shape to the weaving. This stitch, which would become the tree trunk, was the symbol of the methodologies, the structure for the meetings, those precious moments of exchange. Then, little by little, leaves appeared on the fabric, each one made up of three stitches in different shades of green. As the leaves on the fabric grew, so too did the branches, upholding what we learned and the exchanges we had shared.

After several weeks of embroidering, the branches were leafy, the trunk strong. In one of the virtual meetings, I was able to show what I had created up until that point. That exchange gave me the strength to carry on, to continue weaving late into the night, to break with the traditional academic structures of analysis and interpretation, to learn to share what I felt, and not only what I think when I do 'research'.

The final stitches became roots as the tree continued growing downward. The network was large; it joined with other trees, it traversed

subterranean paths of imagination. Those stitches in fabric are now the roots of a tree that has 'stuck' well. They are the roots that sustain my practice, they are the leaves that give meaning to my journey. It is the tree that taught me that there is no 'us' and 'them' in decolonial research. I am no longer afraid of saying 'we', because we are the trunk; we are the leaves; we are the branches; we are woven; we are knowledge that feels. We are La Ceiba tree.

Multiplicity of Positionalities

In this patchwork text, we shared what it means, in practice and in intimacy, to produce knowledge through methodologies and approaches that break with the traditional 'research subject'—'researcher' relationship (Smith, 2012; Brown and Strega, 2015; Shapiro, 2020). We ventured into a way of doing research that questions 'assumed' power relationships and recognises how we come to 'know' and how we create new forms of knowledge through emotion (Fals Borda, 2009; Shapiro, 2020; Cahill, 2007b). We did it to question traditional forms of knowledge production and hegemonic research paradigms (Cahill, 2007b).

We have shown what it meant for us to take that path from our places of enunciation, multiply situated subjectivities with specific histories and motivations which have ultimately become collectively political (Cahill, 2007b). While recognising these multiple positionalities, we also show that in creating—making, painting, and weaving—we were returning to a collective consciousness. We became part of each other's stories, breaking down imposed and accepted structures of power and knowledge that separated us—the 'researcher' and the research 'subject'.

In recognising the role of emotion in the process, we also acknowledged vulnerabilities from our own positionalities, offering a window into how power hierarchies can be inverted through the most basic of human capacities, sharing stories and emotion (Jackson, 2013). In doing so, we actively respond to calls to decolonise knowledge production (e.g. Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Segato, 2015) and change our position from *studying* the so-called 'other', to the practice of *thinking with* and *feeling from and with* the other (Garcia Dauder & Ruiz Trejo, 2021; Cahill, 2007a, 2007b).

This chapter was written by asking ourselves: What were we doing, thinking, and feeling when we were weaving, or painting? What did building collective stories mean for us? How can we participate and

reflect, as outsiders, with those who have experienced disasters firsthand? What intellectual and emotional spaces are we 'allowed' to inhabit in the research process? We wrote it as an exercise of personal and collective reflection and suggest as a conclusion that decolonising research requires changes in the way in which knowledge is produced from 'the outside' in academia. Knowledge needs to feel.

Around a Ceiba tree the rites of the word—stories from the different volcanoes in Latin America—found the right place to listen to the collective feeling. Painting a mural, the rites of memory found a favourable space to create possible and plural futures. Around metaphors that took flight and pierced the distances, experiences were interwoven and the ancestral rites of the guardian peoples of volcanoes were awakened. None of it seemed to meet the archetypes of scientific research, and perhaps no already established methodology could bring these paths together under a single epithet. We discovered that the assumptions which underlie the illusion of a separation between research subjects and the researches, 'objectivity', crack at the slightest touch of the languages of art and the recognition of emotion (Shapiro, 2020, Jakimow, 2022). They crumble before the sincere willingness to listen to the knowledge of the 'other' and vanish when voices circulate between bodies who forget their inherited positions of power and recognize themselves happening in the same present.

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PART I

Reflections and Epilogues

CHAPTER 10

Development and Post-development in a Time of Crisis

Alfredo Saad-Filho

Introduction

The field of development studies has always presented difficult challenges for policymakers, academics, practitioners, journalists and concerned citizens. Methodologically, these challenges can be usefully approached from two angles. On the one hand, by appreciating the essentially contested nature of the concept of 'development'. For Gallie (1955, pp. 171–172), an essentially contested concept:

> (I) must be *appraisive* in the sense that it signifies or accredits some kind of valued achievement. (II) This achievement must be of an internally complex character, for all that its worth is attributed to it as a whole. (III) Any explanation of its worth must therefore include reference to the respective contributions of its various parts or features; yet (…) there is nothing absurd or contradictory in any one of a number of possible rival descriptions of its total worth (…) In fine, the accredited achievement is initially variously describable. (IV) The accredited achievement must be of

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a kind that admits of considerable modification in the light of changing circumstances; and such modification cannot be prescribed or predicted in advance (…) [Therefore] we should (…) say not only that different persons or parties adhere to different views of the correct use of (…) [the] concept but (V) that each party recognizes the fact that its own use of it is contested by those of other parties, and that each party must have at least some appreciation of the different criteria in the light of which the other parties claim to be applying the concept in question. More simply, to use an essentially contested concept means to use it against other uses and to recognise that one's own use of it has to be maintained against these other uses.

On the other hand, accepting the limitations of the middle-range theories that are frequently deployed to examine processes of development—that is, processes of systemic change that are only partially purposeful, not fully controllable and highly susceptible to unintended consequences. These processes take place in distinct ways, in large swathes of the globe, over long periods of time.

For Merton (1968), middle-range theories derive inductively from stylised empirical observations (e.g., countries have followed distinct economic policies and have grown at different rates over time; capitalists are wealthier and have a lower marginal propensity to consume than workers; microloans can allow poor people to purchase productive assets and so on). These observations may or may not be 'correct', but they are invariably selective and tend to be highly suggestive of causation; they generally derive from common sense notions of 'how the world works', allusions and reasoning-by-metaphor. They are often based on intellectual fashions, rather than being rigorously grounded on a 'grand' theory and tried and tested chains of reasoning deriving from the structure of the theory, backed up by empirical evidence.

Because of their immediate appeal to plausibility, those (often 'fashionable') middle-range observations can be widely (if temporarily) adopted as analytical starting-points even by analysts with incompatible viewpoints. In this way, those observations end up becoming structures used to explain the stylised facts that had generated them in the first place (e.g., uneven development is due to domestic policy differences; capitalists are richer because they save more; microcredit reduces poverty, etc.). In doing this, middle-range theories tend to conflate cause and effect, since they generally suggest that, since those stylised facts have *implications* for development, they must also *cause* those observable outcomes

without further mediation. This can slip into conclusions unsupported by a solid analytical scaffolding, that could secure the conceptual structure and contextualise its outcomes (e.g., individual countries are entirely to blame for their own failure to develop; in order to accelerate economic growth governments must cut taxes on the rich; or governments should transfer resources from development banks to microcredit institutions). Over time, the structure of middle-range theories tends to create logical fissures and missing links with the evidence that, in time, become apparent and lead to their supersession by newer fashions based on different sets of empirical observations.

The essentially contested nature of development implies that disagreements about its meaning, significance and implications, and the 'best' policies to accomplish developmental goals can never be resolved definitively. In addition, the deployment of middle-range theories to examine specific development problems, which may be demarcated thematically, chronologically, geographically or in other ways, can create intractable difficulties. The difficulties concern the identification of the problem, its context and historical background, consideration of the options, evaluation of the policy choices and so on. These complexities cannot be untangled by middle-range approaches, since they derive inductively from the specific cases themselves, rather than from abstract (foundational) principles. Examples of middle-range theories in development include structuralist, dependency and evolutionary theories and, as will be shown below, post-development. To reiterate, these theories are not necessarily 'wrong', since, In the social sciences, validity is quite separate from theoretical consistency. However, by construction middle-range theories stand in contrast with grand theories starting from first principles. These seek to derive logically conclusions that may, eventually, inform policy choices or that could be applied empirically in other ways. Grand theories in development include, primarily, neoclassical and Marxist theory—showing that the matter concerns methodology rather than political preference, ideological inclination or the orientation of the conclusions.

The twin challenges of the contested nature of development and the dominance of middle-range theory are aptly captured in this collection. It focuses on the deconstruction of conventional development discourses (with a small d, in the sense of Hart, 2009; see also Lewis, 2019, Mawdsley & Taggart, 2022), and the critique of their implications for Development (with a capital D) problems and processes. This

is done primarily, though not exclusively, from the perspective of post-development (see, for example, Escobar, 1995; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997; Sachs, 1992).

This essay includes four short sections. Following this introduction, the second section outlines the agenda of the post-development approaches examined in the contributions to this volume, and their strengths. The third identifies some potential shortcomings in these approaches. The final section outlines the challenges to thinking about development in a time of multiple, overlapping and systemic crises.

Developing a Transformative Agenda

Post-development approaches are, by construction, middle-range. They have offered four especially important contributions to the study of d/Development. First, they provide rich critiques of the history of development and the limitations of the current global dispensation and offer convincing arguments supporting radical (and much needed) changes to our modes of living. This is clearly stated by Ashish Kothari in this volume, who highlights 'the broad contours of transformation being attempted or needed, if we are to move towards socio-economic equity and justice, and ecological sustainability. (…) Draw[ing] from broad principles such as social justice and well-being and cultural diversity (…) [t]he initiatives I present are a complex mix of creating spaces within the existing system and fundamentally challenging it, of synergising old and new knowledge, and of retaining or regaining the best of traditional and modern life while discarding their worst'. The goal is to identify 'a different set of principles and values than the ones on which the currently dominant economic and political structures are based' (see Chapter 4).

Second, post-development approaches have highlighted powerfully the limitations, contradictions and perverse outcomes of the theories associated, most recently, with the Washington Consensus and the post-Washington Consensus, and the neoliberal policies that derive from them (see Fine & Saad-Filho, 2014). These policies have often failed in their own terms, when the outcomes are compared with the stated goals of the adjustment programmes that, often, herald the policy shift towards neoliberalism (in this volume, Telleria and Ziai critically review the chequered history of development studies, and Ndlovu-Gatsheni examines five waves, or phases, of structural adjustment in Africa, with dire consequences for the continent).

Third, post-development approaches have highlighted, perhaps as never before, the agency, voice and heterogeneity of the subaltern, the intrinsic value of their experiences, the severity of the consequences of the mainstream policies imposed upon them and the drastic implications of these policies for subaltern lives and communities (see, in particular, the contributions by Armijos-Burneo et al., and Zeweri and Farmer in this volume).

Finally, post-development approaches have stressed the limits of the Earth within the currently dominant modality of development. Recognition of the ecological disasters inflicted by neoliberal development strategies is valuable, but post-development contributions go beyond the description of specific outrages. They also draw systemic conclusions about the climate catastrophe driven by contemporary capitalism, and the tensions, contradictions and displacements currently reshaping the global environment, with unpredictable but, inevitably, catastrophic consequences (see Castro-Sotomayor and Minoia in this volume, and IPCC, 2021).

Limitations

The valuable contributions of post-development approaches outlined in the previous section coexist with analytical constraints that may affect some contributions in different ways. Perhaps the most significant is the focus on the small, rural, native and marginalised (see, for example, the thoughtful intervention by Ziai in this volume). This can serve as a valuable counterweight to the stress of most conventional development literature on macroeconomic policy issues, the preferences of large-scale industrial and financial capital and the machinations of powerful interest groups operating through the state. This is unquestionably limited, and limiting; yet, the alternative focus on the small can shift the analysis away from the fact that the so-called developing world, today, is mostly (peri-) urban and proletarian, rather than agrarian and peasant, and there is no way back from this.

A closely related issue concerns the assumption in some post-development writings that traditional communities either are, or were, organised horizontally and that they lack internal drivers of change, with movement being imposed from outside, typically through imperialist intervention. Historically, however, traditional societies tended to be heavily hierarchical, and those social structures were often destroyed (or,

in some cases, transformed and partly reinforced) through confrontations against colonising and imperialist powers. These confrontations frequently ended in the brutal defeat and destruction of the social structures that used to prevail in the societies under attack, while new structures of inequality emerged under conditions of external domination. Pre- or post-conflict, traditional societies were always dynamic, but generally not democratic, open or tolerant. Notwithstanding the strengths and limitations of Western 'bourgeois democracy', they ought not to be compared with this given the sharp differences in ambitions and circumstances. To project upon today's most marginalised societies arcadian or timeless fictions of freedom and equality would distract from the recognition of their internal contradictions, dynamics and processes of change, which would be idealistic and ahistorical.

Examination of the material structures of social reproduction is essential for the study of any society. It follows that proposals for policy changes or, more ambitiously, for wholesale social transformation, must recognise that a predominantly urban world with 8 billion people cannot be sustained without industrial processes and mass production, mass employment, mass housing and mass transportation, large-scale provision of public services and so on. In turn, these must draw on scientific rationality and the organisation of production with a view to the maximisation of efficiency and the minimisation of waste by some generally accepted criteria. This implies that traditional small-scale agriculture and artisanal production, while deserving of respect, autonomy and support, cannot be expected to expand significantly, at least in the medium term, since this would be incompatible with the sustenance of contemporary societies. Note, also, that 'autonomy' and 'support' may come into contradiction (e.g., the provision of financial services, tax rebates, grants, export subsidies, roads, electricity and other infrastructure, and legally enforceable labour rights could infringe on local autonomy).

In other words, while it is imperative to limit and, if possible, reverse the assault of capitalist accumulation on the world's remaining non-capitalist enclaves, this cannot be scaled up towards the expectation that the wider technologies, property relations and structures of social reproduction can be dismantled, unless we are willing to contemplate catastrophic losses of earnings, social identities (currently, mostly based on urban and proletarian circumstances) and welfare systems. While it is essential to recognise place, roots and identities, it will take time to reorganise a world that has been structured by internationalised patterns

of production, consumption and employment. The encasement of the analysis into marginalised communities can limit the reach of some post-development contributions and highlights the importance of avoiding the drift into political ambitions that may be incompatible with the material circumstances, forms of living and expectations of the vast majority.

Urgent solutions are needed for a wide range of problems hindering the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world, and policy changes can give an essential contribution to the improvement of their circumstances. For example, cash transfer programmes (while heavily questionable on account of their conditions as well as side-effects) can drastically reduce extreme poverty (Saad-Filho, 2015); funding for education and health services can save lives and improve prospects for the vulnerable and better infrastructure can facilitate production and enrich the lives of the poor. They must have the same rights to information, mobile telephones, transport, water, sanitation and advanced healthcare as anyone else, even though these services cannot generally be financed, organised or provided entirely within, or by, small communities. It is also essential to recognise that poverty under capitalism has two analytically distinct drivers, which have been examined in very different ways with significant political and policy implications.

For mainstream economics, poverty derives primarily from exclusion from market processes because of incomplete markets, market failures or limitations to voluntary exchange. It is measured by the inability to reach arbitrary expenditure lines, which could be US$2.15 per day or whatever. This viewpoint implies that markets are unambiguously creators of wealth, and that economic growth, the expansion of markets and the integration of poor people into them can eliminate poverty, for example, through opportunities for paid work or sales of goods or services. This approach is rightly criticised by post-development scholars because it is incomplete: although economic growth can alleviate poverty, adverse forms of integration into the market economy can also create poverty. This can happen, for example, through the dispossession of poor peasants by debt or rural development projects or the elimination of livelihoods because of the expansion of large capital (e.g., the dislocation of street sellers by new planning laws, new supermarkets or gentrification). In addition, capital-intensive technological change (from tractors to robots) can destroy jobs and skills, and 'pro-market' policy shifts can disrupt established lifestyles (for example, trade liberalisation can make small-scale

agriculture economically unviable). Market growth can also create environmental stresses that undermine livelihoods and destroy the productive capabilities of the poor (e.g., rising commercial demand can lead to overfishing and the collapse of stocks). This implies that 'free markets' do not necessarily or spontaneously eliminate poverty, and that targeted policies are *always* needed to steer economic growth towards social integration, sustainable livelihoods and the distribution of wealth. While mainstream economic theories focus almost exclusively on the potential of markets to eliminate poverty, post-development approaches generally stress how capitalist policies and processes create poverty. It is, however, important to recognise that *both* the creation and the elimination of poverty are inherent to capitalism, and their interaction must be examined concretely.

A final comment about post-development approaches is that stressing the local can shift the focus away from systemic or society-wide processes that can condition or set limits to actions by individuals or small communities. For example, the growth of inequality, premature deindustrialisation and premature financialisation under neoliberalism, or the adverse implications for the poor of the macro-institutional structures of neoliberalism, such as 'independent' central banks and regulators, the proliferation of privatisations, public–private partnerships, conditional (rather than universal) welfare benefits and so on. Going beyond the well-known concerns of the economic development literature, post-development has, rightly, called attention to the twin imperatives of ecological sustainability and climate justice. These potentially competing imperatives, and the ensuing policy choices, must be examined in the light of their implications for the poor and for the poor countries, including their right to development and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (see Saad-Filho, 2022).

Development in a Time of Crisis

We live in times of crisis, across the economy (prolonged stagnation punctuated by catastrophic finance-driven crises), politics (the erosion of democracy and the rise of new forms of fascism), health provision (expressed by the disastrous outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic), the environment (due to the joint pressures of the pursuit of profit at the local level and climate change at the level of the world as a whole), and much else, with implications for employment, trade, food production, water supplies and more (for details see Saad-Filho, 2021). Post-development

approaches have made an important contribution to the examination of these processes and their implications for the global system, all the way to local communities.

Systemic and overlapping crises demand complex and internally consistent explanations, that must be grounded on a grand theory. These crises also open spaces for new understandings of the problems of contemporary development, their root causes and the potential solutions responding to local demands, however, contested these diagnoses and policy proposals may be. These alternatives must address the flaws, shortcomings, contradictions and limitations of an infinitely acquisitive and environmentally destructive neoliberal modality of capitalism whose prosperity relies, increasingly, on outright despoliation, extraction and fraud. Neoliberalism must be overcome in order to preserve lives, livelihoods and the stability of the Earth's climate. No task is more urgent, and none requires greater mobilisation of our collective energies.

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CHAPTER 11

South-South Cooperation and Decoloniality

Emma Mawdsley

Introduction

In this brief reflection, I do not attempt a comprehensive analysis of the multiple ways in which we might theorise and approach the ideas, materialities and practices of decoloniality and (whatever is meant by) 'South-South Cooperation' (for a more comprehensive analysis, see Muhr, 2022). I even sidestep the many questions raised by the term

Position statement: I am a white British-Australian academic, who has always learned and worked in 'privileged' institutions. Cambridge University, my current professional home, is intimately intertwined with, and still benefits from the profits of, enslavement, colonialism and ongoing structural injustices in national and international academia. As a Geographer and one who specialises in 'development', I am caught up in disciplinary lineages and legacies fraught with complicity in colonial and post-colonial power structures. I do not believe I can fully decolonise my thinking, practices or being. But I can commit to the journey of listening and changing while trying to stay attentive to the dangers of complacency and tokenistic virtue-signalling.

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'South-South Cooperation' (or 'South'/'North'); and I only focus on the last 20–25 years, and not the extraordinarily fertile and revolutionary decades of the 1950s–1970s, or the struggles, resistance and innovations that followed in the 1980s and most of the 1990s. I explore whether and how contemporary South-South Cooperation (SSC) reflects, practices or achieves decoloniality in its normative imaginaries and languages, practices, relationalities, knowledge politics and power matrices. By SSC I refer to 'official', state-led institutions, policies and practices, which may enrol, fund and partner with the private sector and other civil society actors. I don't cover alternative actors and geographies of southern transnational collaborations, which would have a very different flavour and analysis.

I start this analysis by asking whether official SSC today invokes, enrols or embodies decoloniality? The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation defines SSC as:

> a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South, born out of shared experiences and sympathies, based on their common objectives and solidarity, and guided by, inter alia, the principles of respect for national sovereignty and ownership, free from any conditionalities. Operationally, South-South cooperation for development is a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions.[1]

While this definition captures a lot, it is notable that it infers but does not name colonialism. It also distinctly plays down the earlier counter-hegemonic politics of South-South Cooperation; and indeed, today's geopolitically competitive dimensions within and across both 'South' and 'North'. It also foregrounds the exchange of knowledge, skills, 'resources' (sic) and technical know-how, with no mention of loans, Lines of Credit, grants, debt relief or other financial instruments (unless these are euphemised as 'resources' in the list of knowledge-related exchanges). These are the most potent tools for current contestation of Northern

[1] Retrieved on January 29 2023, from: https://unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/

hegemony—that is, the realm of development finance—but they are also muted in the UN's definition. SSC here is being rendered technical and being rendered unthreatening/unchallenging.

SSC is, of course, a hugely diverse, complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Within and between SSC actors there is an enormous variety of narratives, interests, modalities, agendas, capacities and much more besides. Moreover, in the last twenty years, SSC has changed quite considerably, deepening and expanding (although in some cases, like that of Brazil, also undergoing significant contraction), and all within a shifting global development landscape. No singular argument can possibly be accurate, and the overview that follows can and should be contested and refined. So, allowing for this diversity and dynamism, how might we understand SSC in relation to decoloniality?

At first glance, or in one register, the last two decades have seen an emphatically successful, if still not complete, decolonising assault on one of the most invidious bastions of (post-)coloniality: namely, the incredibly powerful normative nexus of ideas, institutions and financial leverage that constitutes the world of Development. This world includes actors like the Bretton Woods Institutions and many parts of the United Nations (UN); the OECD-DAC (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee) and its member states; the EU and its development bodies and policies; philanthrocapitalist foundations; western liberal non-governmental organisations (NGOs); the media; novels, films and other cultural artefacts and representations and so on. As Kothari (2005), Escobar (1995) and many others have shown in detail, the post-war Development industry inherited ideas, institutions and personnel from the colonial matrix of knowledge and power. The Development industry was the epitome of post-colonial epistemic hegemony over the Global South, suffused with the exercise of power in various forms.

The challenge mounted by SSC since the early 2000s to this 50–60 year-long dominance has happened at several levels. In a previous paper I have expanded on these in a threefold framework (Mawdsley, 2019). The first is *ontological*: compared to previous decades, in the early twenty-first century, SSC became highly visible. Southern partners were increasingly recognised and acknowledged as essential to development governance (the so-called 'traditional' actors' attempts to cooperate, co-opt and discipline SSC is demonstrative of the fact that they began to 'matter'). Southern partners are no longer framed as silent, marginalised

supplicants (whether compliant or subservient), but are securely established as influential actors and agents, whether seen as allies or adversaries.

The second element of the South's twenty-first-century challenge to the colonialist continuities of Development accompanies and is constituted by their growing geoeconomic power, and the shift in status, capacity and ambition (albeit highly uneven; and precarious in the light of COVID-19 and the global economic downturn). The surge in Southern development finance in particular has substantially changed the *material* hegemony of the North in Development. Larger Southern partners like China, India and Turkey can fund loans, grants and debt relief; humanitarian relief; technical assistance and educational scholarships; summits and forums; not to mention cyber, metal and concrete infrastructure, on a scale unmatched in previous decades. 'Middle power' partners like Indonesia, Chile, Mexico and South Africa are also committing more finance and foreign policy focus to development partnerships; and regionally important countries like Rwanda, Ethiopia and Bangladesh are increasingly astute at leveraging the expanding marketplace of development partners and their finance. While all of this is more politically and economically fraught than a simple 'rise of the South' might suggest, it does capture the big picture trends of the twenty-first century—at least up to the Covid pandemic: the medium- and longer-term outcomes are yet to be discerned, but closer and deeper South-South relations of some sort and type seem likely.

Third, and related to both, SSC has constituted a challenge to the *ideational* authority of the former colonial powers and their multilateral platforms. This is not to say that this has resulted in *epistemic* disobedience on the part of the 'South'; and neither has it resulted in a decolonising form of re-learning within the 'North'. We will come to this below. But in the last twenty years or so, the South *has* successfully projected alternative languages, stated principles and specific approaches to 'Development'. Early twenty-first-century efforts to co-opt Southern partners into Northern logics, practices and disciplinary mechanisms (Abdenur & Fonseca, 2013), and ongoing attempts and offers of trilateral or bilateral partnership with Southern providers have produced various collaborations, but in these and elsewhere, it is clear that SSC has retained and indeed projected its ideational autonomy. The assertion of Southern agency at global development governance events like the 2011 Busan conference on Aid Effectiveness, which were traditionally directed and dominated by OECD-DAC donors and Northern-led multilaterals, is

an example of this. So too is the failure of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation to cohere as the North's nominally inclusive new Development platform. Indeed, as many commentators have suggested, the direction of ideational travel could be said to be from 'South' to 'North'. The Northern and Northern-dominated Development sector has de-centred the direct poverty reduction focus of the early/mid-2000s, and to some extent re-focussed away from 'making markets work for the poor' through various forms of neoliberalising, individualised social policies. Instead, the investment and energy now lie in approaches initially led by the South—infrastructure, and (explicitly rather than hidden) blurred and blended finance to support neo-mercantilist partnerships that are (supposedly) win–win (Murray & Overton, 2016).

Throughout most of this time, Southern leaders, intellectuals, policymakers and commentators enrolled the anti-colonialist languages, histories and principles of Bandung, the Non-Aligned Movement, the creation of UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and so on. They framed South-South Cooperation in the empathetically shared experience of colonisation and/or (in the case of China) 'national humiliation'; and the experiences of nations which, even after formal independence, were subject to the galling and enduring injustices of a rigged international system. They project different and more egalitarian principles, based on solidarity and mutual respect; and insist on development knowledge and experience that is based in shared geographies and experiences (see, for example, Shankland & Gonçalves, 2016). However, in the context of Southern 'development' partnerships, in recent years there has been a stronger and more explicit turn towards a more pragmatic, geoeconomically strategic and nationalist set of policies and stances, especially amongst middle and larger Southern powers. In some cases, the older 'Third World-ist' language (Prashad, 2007) has been diluted and/or augmented by the open insistence on national interests; as well as a stronger focus on ensuring a return on investments. Both can be in tension with claims to not impose (policy) conditionalities, partner sovereignty and win–win outcomes.

To what extent then, could it be said that contemporary SSC embodies or reflects decoloniality? For many critical scholars, there is a huge amount to welcome in the ways in which South-South Cooperation has unquestionably fractured the long-standing power matrix of the colonialist Development industry. The latter's nodes of power—like the OECD-DAC—its ideational hegemony (such as the neoliberalised, individualised

focus on market-led social policy as 'the' solution to poverty reduction), and its normative power hierarchies (such as the persistent framing of donor-recipient tutelage) have all come under significant challenge. Whether and how these will be sustained or re-inscribed is an open question—the 'new Cold War' is already playing out through 'Development' initiatives like the US's International Development Finance Corporation, and the EU's Global Gateway (Schindler et al., 2022).

But does SCC—in its dominant state-led form—seek to delink from Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies? Does SSC provide a method or paradigm of restoration and reparation, that acknowledges and validates the multiplicity of lives, life experiences, the cultures and knowledges of indigenous people; the legitimacy of alternative livelihoods; or de-centre hetero/cis-normativity, gender hierarchies and racial privilege? In an interview, Achille Mbembe (in Confavreux, 2022, p. 131) said of 'decolonial discourse', that it:

> (…) puts on trial 'Western reason', its historical forms of predation and the genocidal impulse inherent to modern colonialism. What decolonial theorists call the 'coloniality of power' refers not only to mechanisms for exploiting and predating upon bodies, natural resources and living things. It is also the false belief according to which there is just one knowledge, a single site for the production of truth, one universal, and, outside of that, only superstitions. Decolonial discourse wants to tear apart this sort of monism and overthrow this means of bulldozing the different knowledges, practices, and forms of existence.

As the chapters in this collection show, there are many ways of understanding and exploring 'decoloniality', but if we follow Mbembe, we can ask specifically whether the formal realm of SSC—diverse and dynamic as it is—puts 'Western reason' on trial; refuses the modernist impulse to exploit and predate upon bodies, natural resources and living things, and celebrates and supports different knowledges, practices and forms of existence. In this short reflection I really can't do justice to these complex questions, which inevitably have no singular answer. Instead, I attempt three short but nuanced responses, more to join the start of a discussion, rather than try anything definitive.

Is 'Western reason' on trial? No and yes. The great structures and concepts of capitalism, finance, science and technology (which are ascribed to the West, but which in fact have many more diverse origins

and geographies in their makings) are not rejected but are the focus of competition—to break into, seize and lead. Whether designing technological path dependencies for particular solar power configurations; investing in port and rail infrastructure; creating master plans and building cities or innovating in the mobile phone market, most Southern economic partnerships are working on similar/hybrid terrains as Western powers. Although aesthetics, working practices and geoeconomics considerations may differ, the underlying ontologies of modernity are not seriously challenged by Southern partners, who offer a vision of modernity that is little differentiated in its essentials from those of the western mainstream—modernised agribusiness, smart cities, high speed infrastructure, (green) energy and so on. The challenge is to the distribution and ownership of thought leadership, trade and economic ties, not to its fundamental modernity.

Where there is some departure from this is in China and India's projection of 'traditional' health knowledges, which in India's case, is driven by a growing recourse to Sanskritic concepts, including claims to the value and superiority of non-Western philosophies and science captured in ancient texts (Nanda & Viswanathan, 2010). Although this sits alongside and does not displace India's considerable modern pharmaceutical and medical expertise, the narrative around the sector is not trivial, given its new invigoration by the Bharatiya Janata Party under Narendra Modi. Whatever one's views on the value of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy), the forces of Hindutva in India are a good reminder of the ways in which decolonial thinking, ideas and arguments can be co-opted by the forces of prejudice, hate and extreme nationalism. The incident of Walter Mignolo's endorsement (and later retraction) of J. Sai Deepak's (2021) book is a notorious case in point. Sai Deepak starts with what seems like an uncontentious reading of decolonial theory and theorists, before turning his exposition on decoloniality to the hate-fuelled agenda of Hindutva. There are many now socially disenfranchised and rightly fearful Indian Muslims who would welcome the protections provided by a genuine commitment to a liberal Constitution.

Second, as might be expected given the commitment to (Southern) modernity discussed above, most development partnerships are founded on a techno-modernist mainstream approach to anything approaching a more sustainable or just exploitation of bodies, resources and living things. Southern partners are contributing hugely and substantially to renewable energy in particular, and can and have shared socially and

environmentally positive and innovative ideas, knowledge and assistance. Amongst these, Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* (Family Bursary) is one example (Pomeroy et al., 2019); or India's sponsorship of 'Jaipur Leg' to fit limb prostheses through camps from Fiji to Equatorial Guinea (ANI, 2022). There are certainly extremely positive examples provided through and by SSC of progressive and sometimes innovative responses and solutions to 'development' challenges. But with partial exceptions (such as Cuba's systemic approach to healthcare systems and justice), these do not constitute system-wide revolutionary alternatives *to* d/Development. Rather, they share more than they differ from the (so-called) 'traditional donors', whether in social policy or environmental approaches.

This brings us finally to the widest and most obvious rift between formal SSC and decoloniality in thinking and practice, and that is respect for and celebration of alternatives knowledges, cultures, practices and forms of existence. This should not be mistaken for the SSC principle—enshrined in Bandung and through other forums, agreements and statements—of respect for the sovereign dignity and autonomy of Southern states as development partners. While sometimes honoured in the breach, this is an important and meaningful distinction from Northern donors, and it constitutes a decisive rejection of 'liberal internationalism' in practice—all too often unaccountable, hypocritical, uneven and damaging. But this principle is one of respect between states, and not within them (indeed, there is a fundamental incompatibility here). To date, notable powers and norm leaders in SSC have not shown any interest at all—if anything hostility—to the many examples of alternative ontologies and ways of socio-economic organisation that are often foregrounded and celebrated as examples of decoloniality.

This reflection just scratches the surface of such a complex intersection between SSC and decoloniality. I hope that this preliminary, short intervention will, open up ideas and debate, and far more extended and deeper responses.

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CHAPTER 12

Decolonising Development Management: Epistemological Shifts and Practical Actions

Caitlin Scott

Introduction

As the chapters in this volume have shown, the processes and tasks of decolonising development are complex and multifaceted. My comment draws on some of the key points in these contributions to reflect on how development management might be decolonised and re-imagined. I argue here that the increased standardisation of ever more invasive tools and technologies for planning and management in the international aid sector amount to a kind of colonisation by bureaucratisation. The ideas that underpin these enmesh actors and organisations in forms of market coloniality that functions across and through the hierarchies of the aid industry. These institutions and processes are extensions of colonial power relations, predicated upon powerful myths of modernisation, and justifying complex and demanding technocratic processes that conceal the political nature of the sector. While organisations across the aid industry

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endeavour to grapple with various decolonising agendas and methodologies, the new frontiers of colonial expansion being created through digital dimensions in aid need to be confronted. This commentary begins with a consideration of the managerialisation of aid, exploring continuities with colonialist framings, before reviewing the nature of some decolonising efforts. It asks whether these are aligned with a fundamental reimagining of how development interventions are designed and managed, or recognise the plurality of epistemologies that a radical decolonising agenda suggests.

In this commentary, 'development management' is used to refer to a set of technologies, processes and disciplines used throughout the aid system for the organisation and control of people, resources and values.[1] These range from ideas about how non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are best managed to management practices such as accountancy, audit and human resources (Power, 1999; Townley, 1994). They have also come to include rigid formats and prescriptions for how projects are designed and managed by the institutions that pursue development as planned change (Cowen & Shenton, 1996), be they large bilateral agencies or small community organisations. These technologies are underpinned by a view of development as modernity, pervasive in development practice today with its array of technical specialisms (Quijano, 2000). Complex social, historical and cultural realities are rendered into quantifiable absences or problems that provide justifications for development intrusions (Ferguson, 1994; Li, 2007). This is done by technologies that equip the development professional with a set of standardised approaches that allow a depoliticised assessment of the situation they seek to transform (Scott, 2023).

With development's end goals long posited as the achievement of western notions of modernity, and the means through which this is achieved a series of technocratic and rational instruments, the management technologies that undergird that rationality have come to play a central role in how development is done. Over the last twenty or so years, managerialist approaches based on notions of rational analysis of efficiency, and instrumentalist consideration of ends rather than means, have come to dominate the sector. The new public management approaches

[1] Noting that the concept of development management has been open to debate. See Cooke (2008) and Gulrajani (2010).

brought into the sector since the 1980s on rising tides of neoliberalism introduced technologies that presumed to fix the deficiencies of the public sector with innovations from the profit-driven private industry (Dar & Cooke, 2008; Cooke, 2008; Kerr, 2008; Klikauer, 2015). Justified in the name of efficient use of funds, for example by the OECD's Paris Agenda (2005), the ensuing 'results agenda' (Eyben, 2015) saw means of management by metrics permeate the sector, forms of managerialism spread through global networks of NGOs (Roberts et al., 2005). Today's development projects are planned and set out according to tightly defined outcomes and predetermined objectives, inputs and outputs, all of which are set out in standardised results frameworks that are calibrated by an analysis of value for money. A contemporary education project might, for example, have a clearly defined objective of 5000 children achieving higher results on standardised test, and a range of quantified sub objectives to deliver this such as a set number of teacher trainings and literacy improvement interventions, all to be delivered according to a predetermined sequence within a three year time frame. Such a project's achievements will be regularly verified by tracking complex arrays of progress and performance indicators, within the heavily quantified systems of metrics that are an extension of wider audit regimes (Muller, 2018; Power, 1999; Strathern, 2000). Framed as ethical means for responsible accountability, these audit systems are expansive technologies of governmentality, which transform both organisations and people into auditable entities subject to scrutiny, while evading questions about the ethical premises on which they themselves are based (Scott, 2022; Shore & Wright, 2015).

Critiques of the use of management technologies in development have long noted these as antithetical to progressive development agendas (Dar & Cooke, 2008; Girei, 2017; McCourt & Johnson, 2012), given their roots in systems designed for profit making and in exploitative contexts such as factories where, according to the father of scientific management Frederick Taylor, workers could be treated as mere intelligent animals (Klikauer, 2015). The positioning of management as a science, identifying itself as rooted in a positivistic enlightenment epistemology that seeks universal truths and is objectively premised, presumes the universality of its own world view and hides its status as a product of specific inequities (Cooke, 2008; Reiter, 2018). The exploitative potential of the dehumanised and dehumanising stance contained within management practices is often deliberately hidden or overlooked (Cooke, 2003),

such as the lethal impacts of cutting of safety protocols in name of cost savings (Shore & Wright, 2015). As Grosfoguel (2007) notes, modernisation is the other side of the coin of coloniality, part of the modern world system is based on divisions of labour and racialised hierarchies. In effect then management is a key driver and facilitator of modern coloniality, maintaining a hierarchy of knowledge and of power as a subjective form of manipulation but which hides its subjectivities behind a veil of science (Cooke, 2008; Dar & Cooke, 2008; Klikauer, 2015).

The continuities between colonial and development institutions are apparent in the hierarchies of aid, whose mechanisms of grant dispersal and management highlight functional linkages between colonial administration and development management agencies (Eyben, 2014; Ferguson, 1997). Structured with demanding regimes of audit and upwards accountability towards donors, top down management from afar easily reproduces an ethnocentric white gaze (Pailey, 2020). While positioning themselves as advocates for change, most Northern NGOs are embodiments of the structural inequalities that development is founded upon. These inequalities are often reproduced through pay differentials between expatriate and national staff, the use of colonialist language and representations that reinforce stereotypes of modernity. Many western NGOs have been accused of losing sight of the critical or transformative agendas that they claim to have been founded upon and offering palliative agendas as extensions of the state in areas where this cannot go (Banks et al., 2015; Duffield, 2007).

In recent years, in the wake of movements such as Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall, some agencies in the sector have moved to publicly question their own practices.[2] This includes how they represent the people they work with, for example, in fundraising or annual reports, and more structural factors such as financing and decision making within projects. A few key examples include the START Network (2022) for humanitarian action, which commissioned work that notes how reforms need to acknowledge the role of racist and colonial understandings in informing decision making and systems of control. Other initiatives across a number of NGOs include a range of prototypes for 'reimagining'

[2] *The New Humanitarian* website has been building a database of decolonial initiatives in the sector and on which a wider range of efforts can be reviewed. Retrieved on February 2 2023, from: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2022/08/12/10-efforts-to-decolonise-aid

methods of assessing risk and compliance management to alternative modes of solidarity.[3] One such initiative is of the removal of any racist language and abandoning terms such as 'developed' and 'developing'.

The broadly conceived 'localisation agenda', covering a range of efforts and views to place more control and funding in local hands and brought to the fore by the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 (Pincock et al., 2021), received new impetus from the logistical impediments generated by the Covid pandemic. Statements such as the Grand Bargain (2016) and Charter for Change[4] have focused the localisation of humanitarian aid on commitments to improve principles for partnership, transparency and support rather than undermining local capacities, as well as to put more money directly in local hands. At times the sheer scale of the transformation of understanding required has been inadvertently revealed. In an off-record discussion amongst senior policy makers about decolonising the sector, the CEO of a philanthropic organisation observed 'I hadn't really understood and appreciated the big picture, the anger, the anti-aid movement, the strong anti-North perspectives …. I have never been much exposed to that' (cited in Aly, 2022).

Meanwhile, the global presence of Oxfam has embarked on what it calls 'a profound transformation to redesign attitudes and behaviour' with an 'intersectional vision' of 'anti-racism'. This pledges to recognise systemic and structural elements, and to seek racial justice and power shifts in accordance with the localisation agenda. Mechanisms for achieving this include having diversity champions and an emphasis on co-creation and changing language and storytelling to reflect these principles. While a key indicator of success is 'when communities tell us we've succeeded' (Oxfam, 2022, p. 12), a radical formula is hard to discern here. On the contrary, what might be decolonial about these new efforts, rather than simply being more inclusive, is not always apparent. In the case of Oxfam for example the model makes the link between racism and the root causes of injustice in poverty that it works to address. However, the initiatives are coming from the top down, initiated by those closer to the control of resources rather than any significant abandonment of hierarchies of power and the colonial modalities these involve.

[3] Retrieved on February 4 2023, from: https://rightscolab.org/ringo

[4] Retrieved on February 4 2023, from: https://charter4change.org

In relation to localisation it is not clear how giving local partners greater financial control resolves fundamental epistemic issues about what development should or could be, nor how it might highlight ongoing racialised discourses and practices. Rather, localisation itself rests on an implicit binary between northern donors and southern recipients, often involving a poor conceptualisation of the local (Roepstorff, 2020), and echoing colonial spatial relations and power inequalities. Localisation runs the risk of being as ambiguous a term as partnership, which can cover an array of power relationships, used for example in framing British development since the imperial era (Noxolo, 2006). Partnerships are also heavily promoted in the SDGs to promote collaborations with the private sector, thus themselves becoming vehicles for the universalising logics of managerialism (Olwig, 2021) rather than providing spaces for alternative relations.

Decolonisation efforts within development management need to recognise and acknowledge how the aid system promotes new forms of colonisation. As aid becomes a site for investing the excess capital produced by extreme inequalities of wealth, in forms from investment bonds to philanthropic capitalists' private agendas (Mawdsley, 2018; Mediavilla & Garcia-Arias, 2019; McGoey, 2012), new forms of coloniality are being created. Following Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (this volume) richly productive framing of eras of colonial structural adjustment, these could form constituent parts of a 6th era of coloniality, with which critique should also engage.

Conclusion

For the aid sector to move from universalist western frameworks of modernity and science to a pluriverse of practice (Narayanaswamy, 2022), while continuing to be underpinned by colonial era inequalities and paradigms, is a difficult and challenging task. It would require a total transformation of purpose and systems, given that the aid sector is itself an expression of colonial regimes. Rather than dismissing dominant management theory as a form of manipulation, aid agencies would need to question their position and their power. We would need to see a much more honest reckoning with the impact of managerialism across the sector, that maintains a regime of surveillance over so-called partner NGOs in the global South, and of the stranglehold this places on reimagining what development and progress might look like. Alternative

propositions do exist, as explored in this volume, such as the alternative futures identified by Kothari, and provide a basis on which Indigenous forms of management could be explored. Other alternatives to the current aid regime range from creating grassroots charities that manage their own funding and rejecting aid altogether, to global public investment in basic services (Glennie, 2021). Within the current aid framework more modest changes could include shifting funding directly to communities to further their own goals and managed according to their needs. This could be assessed by and linked to new forms of accountability, that are forged in new dynamics such as that of relational accountability as set out in Tynan's chapter in relation to research. Management as the organisation of people and resources needs to change and be based on an epistemology that is respectful of humanity, is able to recognise power and seek emancipatory objectives within a transformative agenda. It also requires thinking about the kinds of research that underpin the development of new projects and programmes, and how communities can be active in shaping what futures they want, rather than being the subjects of an off-the-shelf project designed from afar that reproduces colonial paradigms, or being a vehicle for new digital forms of coloniality.

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CHAPTER 13

What Is 'Development' and Can We 'Decolonise' It? Some Ontological and Epistemological Reflections

Lata Narayanaswamy

Introduction

How might decolonising development discourse and practice support a move beyond the 'dead-ends' of critical research—so good in identifying problems but not solutions—and actually deliver 'global social justice', as the Editors challenge us to do with justifiable urgency? In writing this I take inspiration from Telleria's critical reflections in this volume on the ontological assumptions that underpin 'development thinking'. In setting out the philosophical debates inspired variously by Kant, Foucault and Heidegger, Telleria explains: 'While epistemology asks what is knowledge, ontology asks what is being: why do we say that an object *is*? What are the conditions we put to accept that it *is*?'. His analysis of the

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constitutive elements of 'development' thinking in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) leads us to a wider ontological and epistemological reckoning: What is the 'development' that we seek to 'decolonise'?

Let us begin by considering the words of Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in a speech he delivered at the European Diplomatic Academy in Bruges, Belgium on 17 October 2022:

> Europe is a garden. We have built a garden. Everything works. It is the best combination of political freedom, economic prosperity, and social cohesion that the humankind [sic] has been able to build – the three things together (…) The rest of the world (…) is not exactly a garden (…) Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden.[1]

For our present purposes, this quotation provides a rich illustration of the persistence of colonial ways of 'knowing' the world that are overtly racialised: a 'civilised' European 'garden' (read: White) that places itself at the top of a hierarchy that is distinct from, and looks down upon, the untamed, unruly 'jungle' (read: Black/darker-skinned). Echoing the voices of many others,[2] we as development studies scholars may balk at the perceived audacity of setting out a worldview that seems to draw so overtly from racist, colonial tropes, his words only strengthening the case for 'decolonisation'. Yet, even as we might rightly reject characterisations of the world that draw on colonially rooted 'civilisational' narratives, the broader thrust of his words represents an essential element of our own disciplinary focus, namely the deliberate bifurcation of the world into 'developed' and 'developing'. Where are we 'developing'? It would appear to be a place called the 'Global South'. It is both a geographical and discursive place (see Narayanaswamy, 2017) in which the ontological frame of 'development' is heavily invested. How did we arrive at this framing? Put another way, as set out plainly by Jones (2000, p. 237): 'Why do we talk mainly about 'doing development' 'over there' in the 'Third World' and not in the inner cities of the West'?

[1] Retrieved on February 4, 2023, from: www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-diplomatic-academy-opening-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-inauguration_en

[2] See www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/10/19/josep-borrell-apologises-for-controversial-garden-vs-jungle-metaphor-but-stands-his-ground; www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/10/17/josep-borrell-eu-racist-gardener; www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/eu-ukraine-josep-borrell-fontelles.html

In the remainder of this reflection, I will briefly consider some of the epistemological challenges of how we 'know' development in Higher Education (HE), using these critiques to highlight the ontological tensions of 'development' in its discourse and practice. I ask: Do we as 'development' researchers need to reflect on our role in the persistent a historicity, and the resultant artificial North-South binaries, of our discipline? Even as we seek to 'decolonise', do we need to understand how we might be part of the problem before we can be part of any proposed solution?

What Is 'Development'? Coloniality, Development Studies and Higher Education

'Development' is a terminology that reinforces global rich/poor dichotomies; these are not only reductive but also lack any reflection on how and why the world came to be understood as divided in this way in the first place. Irrespective of ideological tendencies the term 'development' itself is used to connote 'a favourable change, a step from the simple to the complex, from the inferior to the superior, from worse to better' (Esteva, 2010, p. 6). This link with 'favourability' is key. Regardless of what precisely is being discussed, 'the assumption is ubiquitous', as Ziai (2016, p. 58; emphasis in original) notes, that '*development* is a good thing'. Its most recent 'favourable' iteration is the Sustainable Development Goals, commitments to act on 'global challenges' or 'leave no one behind' that are intended to address both the temporal and material dimensions of inextricable and persistent global crises. But where change is proffered by wielders of these tools, it is in ways that are essentially constrained. They must not fundamentally undermine the (neo)colonial extractivism on which the current system depends, itself the legacy of a 'coloniality … [that] is constitutive of modernity' (Dunford, 2017, p. 383). In short, we have a system continually reinventing itself by claiming that it is the only and best source for solutions to the problems it caused.

Critiques of 'development' (see for example Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 2010; Kothari et al., 2019; Kothari, 2005; Ziai, 2017) draw our attention to this dominant assertion that there is something natural about a movement from a state of backward, under-developed rural subsistence (read: Global South) to diversified and self-regulating, developed market-based knowledge economies (read: Global North). It has led some post/

decolonial scholars to suggest that perhaps we might do away with the language and associated scholarly investment in 'development' altogether (Schöneberg, 2019; Ziai, 2016). We may agree that this is the most logical conclusion to this debate.

But this is easier said than done. As researchers and interlocutors we are still tied to the existence of 'development' as an ontological object. It is very hard to undo what Vergès (2021) calls the historical and temporal colonial 'entanglements' of our fractured modernity. This 'entanglement' establishes 'development' as a 'something' that we promote, measure, observe, critique or reject. It is a central referent in our global discourse, even where we might, as many post-development scholars do, be proposing to re-imagine 'it' altogether. Development 'rationalities' are so entrenched (Olwig, 2013) that some critics have argued that for many individuals, communities and groups it would be 'almost impossible (…) to envisage futures that are not bound up in some form of development imaginary' (Laurie et al., 2005, p. 470, citing Escobar, 1995). In short, it is reasonable to argue that everyone has a relationship to the idea of 'development'.

Nor is the bifurcation of the world on which 'development studies' depends merely some arbitrary outcome of increasing disciplinary specialisation. Higher Education was in fact central to the function of Empire, with universities at the heart of producing knowledge that legitimised Imperial world views premised on reinforcing race, gender and class divides:

> In many cases universities and intellectuals were responsible for upholding the legitimacy of racist hierarchies and the necessity of colonialism in the West *against the grain* of anti-colonial and anti-racist social movements and intellectuals in the colonies, and subsequent grassroots movements for the abolition of colonialism and racism in the West. (Gani & Marshall, 2022, p. 9)

The various European Empires offered laboratories to test ideas around modernity that took as their core the establishment of the 'native, other' to justify the colonial enterprise and its main mechanisms of land expropriation and universalising, for instance, enlightenment principles against a perceived 'barbarism' (see Dunford, 2017): 'Those within the walls [of universities] became knowers; those outside the walls became non-knowers' (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 7). Thus HE 'walls' have helped

to cement developed/developing binaries in both our discourse and practice and now shape contemporary inequalities in knowledge production (Melber, 2015).

Shifting Our Ontological and Epistemological Lenses Towards More Global, Pluriversal Approaches to Understanding Global Social Justice

With these thoughts in mind, we need to ask ourselves what effects has coloniality produced, and what would happen to our understanding of the world, and ourselves as 'development' researchers/scholars, if we widened our lenses to understand the inclusion/exclusion effects produced by (neo)colonial extractivism in the (global) round?

If decolonising development is about recognising the ways in which diverse European colonial encounters continue to underpin but also shape the manifestation and experience of inequality and exclusion in a range of contexts, it is imperative to ensure that we undertake some joined up thinking. This must take account of how coloniality, and the extractive capitalism it embedded, continues to drive exclusionary dynamics, and not just in the so-called global South. In the ontological sphere of development, for instance, there is no disciplinary space given to discussion of indigenous marginalisation and displacement in the settler colonial states of the Global North. These challenges are not considered to be in the domain of 'development' studies, even if the persistent and severe exclusions that are produced by (neo)coloniality mirror those of severely marginalised groups whose lived realities are geographically and discursively understood to be in the Global South. Moreover, by not thinking about coloniality in the round we also risk invisibilising British imperialism in Ireland, Danish imperialism across the Nordic countries and the extreme and persistent marginality of nomadic communities including gypsy, Roma and traveller groups across Europe. The historical and contemporary colonial dynamics that reproduce these marginalities in the global North means that for many of these groups, the challenges they face due to legacies of imperial violence or the threat to livelihoods and culture because of the climate crisis are not substantially different to those effects that we understand as global development challenges being faced in and by marginalised groups in the Global South.

Nor is this only about invisibilising (neo-colonial) marginality in the Global North. The homogenising tendencies of the language of development and its reliance on the idea of an undifferentiated global South are no less problematic. Recent scholarship, such as that by Sud and Sánchez-Ancochea (2022), argues in favour of retaining the terminology of 'the South' for its value in highlighting the colonial nature of power dynamics in the modern world. Its reductiveness, however, further masks the ways in which the same settler colonial strategies, echoing its 'race', class/caste and gender dynamics, persist and/or are being repurposed in many places WITHIN the global South to marginalise and/or displace groups labelled with colonially inspired monikers including tribal, nomadic or indigenous. These diverse ways of life are deemed 'backward' and thus antithetical to the interests of settled, aspirational, modern majorities keen to pursue 'development'. The idea that the North-South divide represents primarily an oppressor-oppressed/white-Black distinction invisibilises (neo)colonial dynamics producing these inequalities within the Global South. Indeed, there are economists stressing the ways in which 'the persistence of imperialism' is leading to 'greater material insecurity and popular alienation from the state and the elites, as well as the rise of divisive socio-political tendencies *in both developed and developing worlds'* (Ghosh, 2019, p. 392, my emphasis).

Given that 'development' as an idea is hard to reject in practice, what if instead we decolonised 'development' by challenging its epistemological and ontological underpinnings? In short, what if 'development' was instead about everyone? Whilst we might draw attention to the situatedness of particular material realities that are a result of being a former colonial possession as much of the 'Global South' might be understood to be, we can take inspiration from a growing scholarship, including that of Shilliam (2018), Bhambra (2020, 2022) and Karam (2022), engaging with shared colonial pasts as a way of re-imagining historical and contemporary conceptualisations of modernity. These scholars are drawing attention to how this affects our understanding of current political, social and economic settlements, with a focus on the UK. They are working through what might happen to our understanding of the UK's changing social, political and economic landscapes and attendant inequalities when understood through the lens of Empire, heretofore invisibilised as part of our collective story in the Global North. In his own UK education, for instance, Karam (2022, p. 2) shares that he was presented with a story where 'Britain, as the birthplace of industrialised

capitalism and parliamentary democracy, had organically created the ideal political, economic and legal systems for wealth and stability'. In echoes of Borrell's speech cited above, this 'had made the country rich while others were poor, civilised where others were barbarous' (ibid.). What happens to our understanding of contemporary events, including Brexit, a fractured and diminishing welfare state, or industrial decline and growing inequality, if we understood Empire not as a historical artefact but as part of a continuum entangled with our present in ways that have and continue to (re)shape contemporary social, political and economic fissures?

Shilliam (2018) is similarly concerned with elucidating the (neo)colonial dynamics that shape conceptions of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor in the UK. Whilst there is no room to do justice to the sweeping and in-depth nature of his scholarship on the shifting historical and contemporary racialisation of inequality, he is clear that coloniality sits at the heart of how marginality is (re)produced:

> (…) elite actors have racialized and re-racialized the historical distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor through ever more expansive terms that have incorporated working classes, colonial "natives" and nationalities. Elite actors have always been driven in this endeavour by concerns for the integrity of Britain's imperial – then postcolonial – order. (ibid., p. 6)

Whilst Shilliam's focus is on Britain, his point may be extrapolated to the wider (neo)colonial metropole, echoing that of Ghosh's above i.e., efforts designed to maintain the 'integrity' of 'postcolonial orders' is resulting in similar patterns of exclusion and marginalisation the world over. Karam (2022, p. 3) also draws out the fallacy of development as a 'one-way road', where 'crises were [presented as] part of the maturing process that these developing countries would have to pass through', whereas, '[d]evelopment's promise to flatten the world has failed to materialise'. Drawing on Césaire's contention that 'colonial relations are subject to the 'boomerang effect'—the notion that ideas and practices that are tested in the colonies are then applied in the colonial metropole[3]—he asks us to contemplate:

[3] Verso books has hosted an entire series on the 'boomerang effect', available here: www.versobooks.com/blogs/4383-the-imperial-boomerang-how-colonial-methods-of-repression-migrate-back-to-the-metropolis

> … what if empire's aftermath isn't just something we need to debate when thinking about the place of a particular cultural artefact or whether or not a particular building's name is offensive? What if it stretches to our legal and economic systems, which produce vast wealth disparities, both at home and abroad? (ibid.)

Karam (2022, p. 12) further highlights the silence on the relationship between 'the aftermath of empire' and 'the unemployed former industrial worker or the single mother stuck on a zero-hours contract that doesn't pay enough to cover childcare', as if these are 'wholly disconnected'.

These observations would suggest that (neo)coloniality actually creates very similar types of divisions and outcomes in terms of 'haves' and 'have-nots' the world over. So how do we decide who or what is, or needs, developing? Is 'development' ever about food-bank users in the UK, or social security claimants who work at Amazon warehouses or Walmart stores in the US, or the people forced to go straight back to work after giving birth or adopting children because no economic value is placed on 'care', and unpaid work is not an option? These forms of social, political and economic exclusion are not considered 'development' questions. Instead the starting point is, as Borrell notes above, that 'everything works'. Homelessness, hunger/malnutrition or social exclusion in the Global North are not 'development' challenges, but rather exceptional and/or unfortunate side-effects of capitalism that simply need to be managed or tweaked, historically through charity but eventually in the twentieth century through the establishment and expansion of more comprehensive 'welfare states'. These, as Esping-Anderson (1990) reminds us, are heterogenous but designed to manage these exigencies of capitalism. Perhaps ironically, these same mechanisms by which 'developed' subjects are kept from the perceived penury and even barbarism of being understood as 'developing' are historically tools for which colonial subjects paid and now, as development subjects, are unable to access beyond grand notions of 'aid' and 'charity' underpinned by white saviourism (Bhambra, 2022).

Where Do We Go from Here as 'Development' Scholars?

Where then does that leave our deliberations about 'decolonising' development? If we are unable to devise a new ontological frame, then we must establish new solidarities, moving away from binaries and building an epistemological understanding of 'development' that is relevant to everyone. Here I am inspired by Cornwall's (2020, p. 39) personal reflections on her first trip to Zimbabwe, where young people whom she met would describe 'a new purchase like a pair of shoes, a cap, a bicycle' as 'development'. She goes on to suggest that for her the language of 'development' is 'reparative: trying to make good something that was broken or damaged' (ibid). Well, it does not seem unreasonable to assert that (neo)colonial extractivism has broken everything, creating and extending continuous and overlapping crises—climate change, pandemics, extreme inequality—whilst simultaneously crippling our capacity to collectively address these challenges. 'Decolonising development' must start by dissolving North–South binaries, where 'development' is not just about black and brown bodies in distant places, or darker-skinned bodies in the Global North, but instead recognises how coloniality continues to shape the lives of *everyone*. 'Development' could then be the expression of the pursuit of social justice and re-imagined as a genuinely global, pluriversal endeavour.

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CHAPTER 14

EADI Roundtable: Recasting Development Studies in Times of Multiple Crises

Uma Kothari, Henrice Altink, Alfredo Saad-Filho, and Melissa Leach

Introduction

On 3 November 2022, the annual EADI Directors' Meeting was held at King's College, University of London, UK. Part of the deliberations included an opening Roundtable discussion focusing on development studies in times of multiple crises. The four invited speakers have summarised their presentations, which are herewith documented.

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Here, I consider calls to decolonise and reflect on what that might mean for development and for our role as scholars and practitioners.

There have always been multiple crises—although these shift and offer new challenges—and so we are perpetually involved in an ongoing process of rethinking development in order to respond to this or that crisis. However, when no environmental crisis, health crisis, war, poverty, or economic crisis is considered alarming enough to fundamentally change the structures and systems that create and maintain inequalities, we clearly need new tools to counter these deep injustices. There is no single, simple answer only ways of showing how to unsettle development and to sit with the ensuing uncomfortableness.

We would do well to remember what Edward Said wrote:

> underlying every interpretation of other cultures is the choice facing the individual scholar or intellectual; whether to put intellect at the service of power or at the service of criticism, communities, and moral sense. (Said, 1981, p. 164)

Decoloniality is in the service of criticism, communities, moral sense, and ultimately justice. And, as Indigenous scholar and artist Katerina Teaiwa (2020) says: 'where does the crisis end, if not with justice'. Calls to decolonise are currently on many agendas, within academia itself there is much focus on decolonising the university, decolonising the curriculum, decolonising knowledge, and for some of us these extend to discussions on how colonising structures can be unravelled.

But of course, as Mignolo (2020) and others remind us, these calls for decoloniality are not new but have been evident for centuries ever

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since, for example, Indigenous peoples' resistance to colonisation and the struggles of South Americans against European invasion.

Calls to decolonise knowledge and research are also not new. Frantz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Jamaica Kincaid, and Toni Morrison all addressed these issues. Moves towards decoloniality then have never gone away; there is a circularity to these ideas, and some have come to the fore again. There has always been resistance to forms of dispossession, refusals to be incorporated into programmes that do harm, and protests against the concentration and exercise of power. And alternative possibilities are already underway. However, we are now at a particular moment of multiple, interconnected new and old crises that require us to reconsider approaches to decoloniality. I suggest we start by considering three fundamental concerns that may be preventing us from decolonising.

First, one obstacle to decolonising is the perpetual cycle of co-optation of radical ideas into the development mainstream that has for long characterised development theory, discourse, and practice. So, I am wary about some of these calls to decolonise. My ambivalence stems from a disquiet about how decolonising development is being promoted and understood, and by whom. It is being invoked by different people applying varied and multiple meanings to it and with diverse motives. The concern here amongst critical development thinkers is that development discourse and practice have a long history of appropriating, sanitising, and purifying progressive, ideas and approaches. Historically, concepts and theories, however remotely radical, do not remain so for long. Instead, they become co-opted into the mainstream, being appropriated by international development agencies, governments, and practitioners and in the process become ahistorical and apolitical. For example, in the 1980s, feminist theories transmuted into the less critical, 'gender and development' approach. In the 1990s participatory development became the acceptable face of a more radical consciousness raising, and in the 2000s the powerful theorising and activism of anti-racism became incorporated into the language of 'culture and development'. It is important to remain vigilant, therefore, that decolonisation does not become a more acceptable, palatable version of a radical anti-colonialism. As Sidhu and Zacharek (2022, p. 1) write:

> we were also concerned by the ease with which de/coloniality – a critique developed from centuries of anti-colonial resistance in the *Abya Yala* (an

Indigenous term for 'Latin America') – has been stripped of its political radicalism through mechanisms of elite capture.

Second, we need to consider our own roles. Fundamentally we need to ask what decolonising means for those of us who identify with, are involved in, development in its manifold manifestations. The process may require many of us currently engaged in development to vacate the space and be silent allowing others, formerly colonised, Indigenous, and marginalised people to determine debates about decolonisation and decoloniality. While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) talk of partnerships framing it in cosy coming together terms, this is not about just *adding* Global South partners. Instead, it means *not* doing things as much as doing things, it is about moving out the way, standing aside and as Parvati Raghuram says avoiding lingering as that too can assume moral authority.

And the third obstacle to decolonising development, perhaps most provocatively, if development discourse and practice today is in part founded on a colonial legacy manifest in, for example, what it means to progress and how distinctions and hierarchies between people and societies, places and cultures are forged, then is development itself as we know it untenable after decolonisation. Given its colonial legacy what and where is development after decolonisation? Will we, can we, still use the term development and will it mean the same once we have decolonised? Are we ready to accept this?

Decoloniality and Development

In terms of what we can do, some important work on decoloniality has been recently summarised by Radcliffe (2017). The literature reveals how colonial structures of power, knowledge, and subjectivity are inextricable from the contemporary world and attempts to untangle the production of knowledge from a primarily Eurocentric position. It also recognises that the forms of knowledge—about economy, democracy, development, education, culture, and so on—through which the world is apprehended, explained, and modelled for the future are deeply rooted in post-Enlightenment Euro-American thinking and claims to universality (Mignolo, 2000). Decolonial literature also engages with a wide range of critical and radical scholarship including critical Black scholarship, Indigenous and feminist theories (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). It moves

away from a provincialising of Western claims by, instead, encouraging rethinking the world *from* Latin America, *from* Africa, *from* Indigenous places, and *from* the marginalised in the global South (Grosfoguel, 2011).

These understandings are hugely important. They recognise that simply labelling something as colonial does not make it go away, sometimes it just comes back and even stronger. They have led to important shifts in thinking, but they remain constrained. As Esson (2017, p. 385) remind us:

> The pursuit of critical consciousness via decolonial thinking could do more harm than good…the emphasis on decolonising knowledges rather than structures, institutions and praxis reproduces coloniality, because it recentres non-Indigenous, white and otherwise privileged groups in the global architecture of knowledge production. It is argued that an effective decolonial movement … necessitates that the terms of the debates about decolonisation and decoloniality are determined by those racialised as Indigenous and non-white by coloniality.

Some argue that 'Decolonisation' may not even be the most appropriate word for this process, because, like colonisation, it came from somewhere else. Jackson (2020), for example, suggests it could be replaced with the 'ethic of restoration'. One way to break free of this problem, to change the rhythm of the perpetual circulation of ideas and their co-optation is to make our interventions count—to focus more on the material rather than solely the symbolic. I now turn to this point.

Decolonisation Is Not a Metaphor: Repatriation of Objects that Matter

Here, I take inspiration from Tuck and Yang (2012). In their groundbreaking work, *Decolonisation is not a Metaphor,* they argue that decolonisation is a question of territory, of the giving back of stolen land, objects, and resources and as such has real material effects. They remind us that decolonisation 'cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks' (ibid., p. 3). They caution scholars that decolonisation can further embed colonialist power. Pat Noxolo (2017, p. 343) similarly writes that 'decoloniality can become yet another instrument for time-honoured colonialist manoeuvres of discursively absenting, brutally exploiting and then completely forgetting Indigenous people'.

Both texts argue that 'decolonisation is far too often subsumed into the directives of civil and human rights-based social justice projects, without recognising that decolonisation wants something different than those forms of justice' (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3). As important as their goals may be, social justice, critical methodologies, or approaches that decentre colonial perspectives have objectives that may be incommensurable with decolonisation. Because they can be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and re-inhabitation that further colonialism. According to these authors, the easy adoption of decolonising discourse by educational advocacy and scholarship, evidenced by the increasing number of calls to 'decolonise our schools', or use 'decolonizing methods', or 'decolonise student thinking', turns decolonisation into a metaphor.

Seeing decolonisation as a metaphor makes possible a whole set of evasions and a reproduction of colonialist relations. Hence, decolonising development is not about the abstract, it goes beyond rhetoric, academic exercises, and theories. It moves beyond the symbolic, beyond interrogating individual positionality and forms of knowledge production. It is about a practice and fundamentally, it is material. It entails giving back appropriated resources and the undoing of economic structures that reproduce colonial inequalities. While scholars have long shown how capitalist economic systems dehumanise populations and legitimise devaluation, expropriation, and dispossession based on racist framings there remains a reluctance to perform the critical, material work of redistribution and reparation that Tuck and Yang (2012) so powerfully articulate. Specifically, they argue that decolonisation 'is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies but must 'bring about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life' (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1).

Ways Forward: Repatriation of Stolen Objects and Reparations as Redistributive Justice

Recently, there have been global campaigns and decolonial public protests that have been hugely important in some parts of the world. But there are two areas that often remain largely outside of the remit of 'development' and that scholars are not fully engaging with: repatriation of stolen objects and reparations as redistributive justice. These are rarely considered in development, they are not seen to reduce poverty or inequalities, and therefore are not considered urgent. But they are. They are hugely

powerful in addressing injustices, can profoundly shift ongoing coloniality, and have real material effects. What is justice after all than righting wrongs.

I want to look at the rhythms of coloniality and the possibilities of decolonising through objects and specifically, the repatriation of what museums call artefacts. Calls for decolonisation have importantly questioned the role of museums and histories and cultures of collections. One expression of this that has recently been gaining renewed momentum is the repatriation of objects stolen and appropriated through colonialism—legacies of European imperialism that resound today.

The return of the cultural property to their country of origin or former owners (or their heirs) is important—it shows respect for the dead, for cultural beliefs, and for the hurt that has been caused. Repatriation is about restoring dignity and making right the wrongs of the past. It is about apologising.

Repatriation of Objects Stolen

In 2019, Maori remains were handed over to the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. The Director of the Pitts River Museum in Oxford, Laura van Broekhoven, said: 'We can't undo history but we can be part of the process of healing'.[1] In July 2022, Germany and Nigeria signed an agreement whereby hundreds of objects looted and removed by the British during colonialism and later auctioned off to Germany would be returned. A representative of the German Green party at the time said, 'we have reason to celebrate (…). It was wrong to take the Benin bronzes and it was wrong to keep them. This is the beginning to right the wrongs' (Oltermann, 2022, n.d.). And in 2019, the Manchester Museum, part of the Manchester University—where I work—established 'The Return of Cultural Heritage project'. In partnership with The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the Manchester Museum began returning sacred objects to Indigenous communities in Australia. This was based on an acknowledgement that these items were taken by force under processes of colonisation and continue to have damaging effects.

[1] Retrieved February 5, 2023, from: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-45565784

The Curator of the Manchester Museum acknowledged that the Western processes and protocols established to catalogue, preserve, and analyse objects and specimens in isolation from traditional owners, countries of origin, and diaspora communities, continued to inflict loss, trauma, and exclusion upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. And at the repatriation ceremony in Australia, one of the Traditional Owners said 'we share a dark history – but it's moments like this, when we come together as one, united by our desire to do better, to be better and to right the wrongs of the past, that we start to heal spiritual hurts and the intergenerational trauma that still exists today. Repatriation of objects fosters truth-telling about our Nation's history'. Objects matter. They embody stories, histories, and social relations. Things have affective, emotional, and political power. This shifts the emphasis away from what objects 'symbolise' to how they create inequalities and violence, but also, hopefully through the repatriation of objects, how they can begin to right past wrongs.

The return of stolen objects provides one example of the potential to develop progressive, transformational, decoloniality. Reparations and redistributive justice are also important. But nowadays we cannot sit back considering these injustices to have been created by others in the distant past. Development interventions continue to lead to the appropriation of material resources (land, assets, natural resources, rivers, water, extractive industries, deforestation) through, for example, the linking of aid with trade, or what Harvey (2017) calls accumulation by dispossession and what Sassen (2014) refers to as the brutality of expulsions—through displacements, evictions, and eradications. Decolonisation is not a metaphor—giving back land, objects, and resources are hugely significant. As Mangubadijarri Yanner (a representative of a Native Title Aboriginal Corporation) expressed upon the handover of Aboriginal artefacts by the Manchester Museum, 'locked deep within objects is also our histories and our stories'.[2] This is echoed by Lauren Tynan (2021), who reminds us that stories are held in the land and in memory.

[2] Retrieved on February 4, 2023, from: https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/oct/07/manchester-museum-to-return-artefacts-to-indigenous-australians

Reparations

Debates around reparations also have a longer history but are little discussed in development even when considering decoloniality (see Kothari and Klein forthcoming). At the pan-African conference on reparations for enslavement and colonisation in 1993 calls were made for the international community to recognise that there is a unique and unprecedented moral debt owed to the African peoples which has yet to be paid—the debt of compensation to the Africans as the most humiliated and exploited people of the last four centuries of modern history. The conference also demanded that all states in Europe and the Americas—which had participated in the enslavement and colonisation of African peoples, and which may still be engaged in racism and neo-colonialism—should desist from any further damage and start building bridges of conciliation, cooperation, and reparation. Another global effort to demand reparations for slavery and colonialism emerged at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism held in Durban. This led to the development of an action plan to eradicate racial discrimination and intolerance through education and international cooperation, recognition, and compensation. And, in 2013, the Caribbean Reparations Commission's (CARICOM) Plan included payment of reparations by the former colonial European countries to the nations and people of the Caribbean Community, for Native genocide and the transatlantic slave trade.[3]

On the international stage calls for reparations have also been demanded as a form of climate justice through what is referred to as Loss and Damage (see Boyd et al., 2021). These reparations go some way to acknowledge the extraordinary loss faced by Global South populations who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, yet the least responsible. Reparations for climate justice demand much more than compensation as they must also transform economic and political systems that continually undermine the lives and futures of Indigenous people and those in the Global South (Perry, 2021; Táíwò, 2022). Many of these demands remain unanswered, having met with silence from Western governments. However, an example of reparation to redress historical violence took place in 2003, when the British government paid £20

[3] Retrieved on February 4, 2023, from: https://caricomreparations.org/

million to more than 5000 Kenyans who survived the abuse of British colonialists during the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s.

Possibilities of Decolonial Futures of Development

What does decolonisation mean for development? Following Noxolo (2017, p. 342) I suggest that decoloniality can provide 'a loud and radical challenge' that 'is linked more directly to protest and direct confrontations with existing practice'. This requires a recognition that privileging of the future over the past creates problems for thinking about justice for historical wrongdoing. It leaves no room for remedying past injustices or for moving towards a responsible accountability. As Tronto (2003) maintains, we need to remain vigilant to those historical relations which remain hidden, unrecognisable, or have mutated.

Henrice Altink, Professor of Modern History and Co-Director of the Interdisciplinary Global Development Centre (IGDC), University of York

I am giving my views on decolonisation as a social historian. Social history is a history from below, concerned with inequalities and paying attention to deep-rooted economic and social factors as agents of historical change. Therefore, I want to stress that living during times of multiple crises is nothing new and that inequality is a major driver of these crises.

Nowadays, we constantly hear on the news that we are living in times of intersecting, overlapping, or multiple crises, which are social, economic, political, and ecological. For example, we face the global crisis of climate change alongside the pandemic, or we have to cope with the cost of living crisis alongside the War in Ukraine. And global crises such as climate change, the pandemic, and the War in Ukraine also intersect with local crises, such as Brexit in the UK or the assassination of president in 2021 and ongoing gang violence in Haiti. And these multiple crises occur not just alongside one another but they can also compound. So, the current food insecurity in the horn of Africa is largely due to adverse weather conditions compounded by local conflict, the impact of the war in Ukraine, and the COVID-19 pandemic. And it is not just the news but also major international donors and funders that using this language of overlapping, intersecting, or multiple crises. For instance, the recent

World Bank group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) annual meeting started with a talk by their directors entitled 'Addressing Multiple Crises in an Era of Volatility'.

What the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and their intersection with other global and local crises have done is accentuate the systemic vulnerability that results from the incorporation into a global system characterised by uneven development. But as a historian, I want to stress that living in times of overlapping, intersecting, or multiple crises is not new. We need to move away from the idea that crisis is an external shock to an otherwise stable and functioning system. This has seldom been the case and we could even argue that the default is living with 'multiple crises'. For instance, the Spanish Flu in Latin America coincided with the fall out of World War I when export to Europe and US was heavily affected and there was also political upheaval in many countries. For instance, in 1918 the year the flu broke out there was a popular revolt in Cordoba, Argentina. There, they had to cope with the outbreak of the flu, an economic downturn caused by World War I, and political upheaval. And to give a few other examples that multiple crises are nothing new: the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998 occurred at a time when many Asian countries experienced a crisis of governance; and in 2017, the hurricanes Irma and Maria hit Puerto Rico just after an outbreak of Zika and amidst political upheaval that made the impact of the disasters all the more devastating. In all these examples, the local connects to the global and specific crisis intersected with political, economic, and social issues.

History teaches us then that crises never neatly follow on from one another: they can happen exactly at the same time or overlap. But crises now seem to come more often, last longer, and be of a different kind than in the past. They also increasingly intersect with short-term crises and shocks. If in the more distant past physical wars and pandemics were common, nowadays we were surprised by the recent pandemic and the war in Ukraine. We are much more familiar with financial crises. We have lived through the Wallstreet crash, the 1970s crisis and the more recent 2008–2009 crises, and political upheavals such as the fall of the Soviet Union and the Arab spring. But as crises seem to come more often and last longer, and intersect in complex ways with short-term shocks, it is harder for policymakers to plan accordingly. This pattern also poses risks for achieving the SDGs. Many countries that expected to refocus on achieving the SDGs after the worst of the pandemic had passed now have

to deal with the war in Ukraine, which led to inflation and limited their fiscal capacity to achieve targets.

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development argues that inequality has been the driver, amplifier, and consequence of the multiple crises that many countries in the Global South are now facing. It argues that neoliberal globalisation and related policy choices are at the heart of the challenges posed by these multiple crises, having paved the way for unsustainable hyperglobalisation. Neoliberal globalisation has certainly enhanced the vulnerability of many in the face of the pandemic and war in Ukraine, just think of informal sectors workers who in many parts of the world were excluded from any social protection measures adopted to cope with the pandemic or the increase in food prices in the wake of the pandemic. I do not disagree that the rise of neoliberal globalisation has done much to compound the impacts of the recent multiple crises in the Global South but as a historian I also think we need to pay attention to longer term factors that have enhanced the vulnerability of many in the face of multiple crises. And particularly here I am thinking of colonialism without which we cannot really understand the inequality in the world. But colonialism has also had very specific impacts. For instance, colonialism caused much ecological degradation and climate change has compounded the impact of this. I am a Caribbean historian, and a lot of trees were cut in Caribbean islands to make way for sugar plantations, and this has led to significant soil erosion which now compounds the impact of floods that are becoming frequent and more severe as a result of climate change.

I want to also stress that crises are not inevitable—policy choices can turn events into crises and so we need to think carefully about these choices. The current configuration of crises can act as a wakeup call for policymakers to pay attention to how people are positioned vis-à-vis crises and more generally pay attention to social inequalities. Moments of crisis can unsettle conventional thinking about development paths, disrupt accepted world views, and present opportunities to rethink and change direction away from business as usual. Just think of the number of times in recent years that we have heard slogans like 'build back better'—we don't want to go back to pre-covid times we want better times, etc. The past has shown that crises can be opportunities for change—people can think and act in different ways develop new systems/ policies and we have seen that during the pandemic in many countries e.g., the formation of mutual aid organisations and the increase in social protection programmes

across Latin America and the Caribbean. But crises can also stifle action for alternatives as individuals, groups, organisations, and states have just too much to deal with. And even though crises do present policymakers with opportunities to create a better world, they do not always act on it. For instance, policies adopted in the wake of the economic depression of the 1930s did a lot more to reduce inequality than policies that were adopted during the 2008 global financial crisis which resulted in more inequality. In this time of multiple crises what should Development Studies do? I argue that it may need to focus on other themes and issues, as listed below.

1. The pandemic has led to nationalism/protectionism and suggests the need for a *greater focus on multilateralism and global cooperation*. I work on Latin America and the Caribbean, where there are numerous regional organisations, but how they work and what could be done to make cooperation easier and more effective has not been studied much. Development Studies also needs to consider how developing countries can be heard in international policy setting fora—at COP26, for instance, the Small Island Developing States that I work on and who are the forefront of climate change were largely ignored.
2. The pandemic saw a *rise in social protection policies* in developing countries and in many places. These have remained in place and are now offering many buffers against the price inflation largely triggered by the war in Ukraine. As social protection is central to reducing poverty more focus on how these policies can be sustained to enhance resilience for future crises is needed.
3. The coming together of austerity, with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, have accentuated the vulnerability of those working in the informal sector while they have also pushed more people into this sector. *There should then be a greater focus on informality*.
4. The constellation of recent multiple crises has also raised questions about the United Nations' system: whether as the cause of some of the problems or because of its inability to solve them as in the case of Ukraine. For a long time, there has been criticism of the system especially when great powers like Russia and China can stifle action. The recent crises have highlighted the *need for rethinking global governance*.

5. The concept of resilience has been given more prominence in recent global crises. If crises come faster and become more complex, we will need more resilient systems and communities. At this year's meeting, the World Economic Forum launched a Resilience Consortium.[4] But what we need to do is unpack the complex relation between resilience and multiple crises. People and communities can build resilience when dealing with a crisis: they build self-help networks and early warning systems, and they may be able to apply this to an ensuing crisis. But what happens if shocks come together and more often? Will their coping strategies suffice, and will they have enough resilience power? Also, we should not forget that not all communities and individuals build up resilience in the face of crises—some simply do not cope. We need more exploration of this concept of resilience, which has now become popular.

These are some of the points that Development Studies may be focusing more on. However, we may also need to change some of our working practices. As global crises intersect with local crises, we need accurate local information and for that we need to work closely with local researchers and NGOs. Examining major global challenges such as inequality and the effects of climate change amidst multiple crises also places greater emphasis on Interdisciplinarity—not just between cognate disciplines but also between social scientists and natural scientists. I want to make the case of historically grounded research as it can offer insights into long-term factors that compound the impact of new crises but can also highlight effective practices that people have adopted for centuries to cope with crises. Our approaches should also be flexible and multiscalar, as global and local crises often intersect in unpredictable ways.

[4] Retrieved on February 4, 2023, from: https://www.weforum.org/projects/resilience-consortium

Alfredo Saad-Filho, Professor of Political Economy and International Development, Department of International Development, King's College London

My contribution to this roundtable focuses on four converging crises in the current 'age of neoliberalism' across economics (low growth, volatility, finance-driven crises), politics (crisis of democracy), health (the COVID-19 pandemic), and the environment (a threat to human existence and a catastrophe to non-human species). I claim that these crises are closely intertwined, and they are symptomatic of the limitations and vulnerabilities of neoliberalism. Overcoming them will require moving beyond neoliberalism, towards a new, democratic, and more egalitarian, system of accumulation.

This contribution argues that we are experiencing a convergence of crises in neoliberalism. I understand neoliberalism as the contemporary form, stage, or mode of existence of global capitalism (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017). If these crises cannot be addressed successfully, there is a risk that our societies could submerge into a systemic crisis not only of neoliberalism, but of the current structures of social reproduction more generally, with severe implications for poor countries and for poor people everywhere (for a more detailed analysis, see Saad-Filho, 2021).

The starting point of this review is the rise of neoliberal financialisation since, at least, the mid-1970s. In summary, financialisation has led to the transfer of state capacity to allocate resources onto a globally integrated financial system, allowing finance to control the main sources of capital and the main levers of economic policy (for an overview of financialisation, see Fine, 2013, Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017, Krippner, 2005, 2011, and Sawyer, 2014). This process was functional, in the sense that it facilitated the restoration of the US hegemony after the defeats in Vietnam and Iran, and the dollar crisis in the 70s (Panitch & Gindin, 2012).

Neoliberal financialisation also led to a sharp recovery of profit rates after their long-term decline in the post-war period, and it was accompanied by rising inequality, the accumulation of debt by households, and by falling investment and gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates (for an overview, see Panitch & Gindin, 2012). Financialisation also fuelled a vast sphere of pure speculation, despite the unprecedentedly favourable conditions for real accumulation delivered by neoliberalism itself, across geopolitical domination, to policy changes and the decline of all previous

sources of resistance. What I call the *economic paradox of neoliberalism* is that these favourable conditions were associated not with unprecedented prosperity but, instead, with continuing economic slowdown, especially in the core countries (for a detailed analysis, see Boffo et al., 2019).

In political terms, several paths of transition to neoliberalism can be identified. They include an authoritarian path, as in Chile and Turkey, a democratic path, as in the UK and US, and conjoined transitions to neoliberalism and to political democracy, as in Brazil, South Africa, South Korea, and Eastern Europe. Whatever the pathway, by the 1990s a democratic political form of neoliberalism had become dominant. However, these neoliberal democracies were typically circumscribed by an institutional apparatus designed to lock in neoliberalism, and insulate economic policy from any form of 'interference' by the majority. These institutions include so-called 'independent' Central Banks, inflation targeting regimes, maximum fiscal deficit rules, privatisations, public–private partnerships in place of fiscal spending, and so on; in parallel, the poorer developing countries witnessed the consolidation of a global aid industry existing side-by-side with a macroeconomic policy industry based on the forceful spread of structural adjustment policies tempered by highly conditional debt relief (for an emblematic case, see Weeks (2007).

Institutional rebuilding under neoliberalism dramatically reduced the policy space available to nominally democratic governments, both in the North and in the South. However, once economic policy was effectively out of bounds for democratic debate and, in practice, could not be changed, the political space was taken up by debates around culture, religion, nationalism, and racism. Exclusion from democratic political processes compounded the alienation of the social groups that had lost out economically under neoliberalism, which could be, for example, typically blue-collar male workers in the advanced capitalist economies, or the white middle classes in Brazil. In all cases, in the absence of any form of class politics or genuine representation of their interests, these groups of economic losers under neoliberalism were led to frame their disappointments, resentments, fears, and hopes through the prism of *ethical conflicts* between insiders and outsiders, and the perception of 'undue privilege' given by the state to corrupt politicians, the 'undeserving poor', minorities, women, foreigners, and foreign countries.

The *political paradox of neoliberalism* is that the institutionalisation of neoliberal democracy eventually undermined democracy itself: the structures of representation became unresponsive, and public policy became

increasingly indifferent to the interests of the majority: those who had lost out under neoliberalism were also—by design—ignored by its institutions. This process of institutional(ised) alienation opened spaces for anti-systemic forces polarised by 'spectacular' authoritarian neoliberal leaders. These are supposedly 'strong' people who cultivate a politics of resentment, reason through direct appeals to common sense, claim to be able to 'get things done' by sheer force of will, and promise to confront those who undermine 'our' nation and harm 'our' people. However, when they are in power, these spectacular leaders invariably impose policies intensifying neoliberalism, under the veil of nationalism and a more or less explicit racism. Nationalism and racism are useful in this context because they can offer an intuitive understanding of loss of privilege as well as a plausible path to respond to economic and social injury, restore collectivity, and reaffirm the self-worth that neoliberalism denies almost everywhere else. Yet, to the right of these spectacular leaders, tend to stand even more dangerous neo-fascist movements claiming to represent the 'losers' more aggressively, and with an even simpler logic.

The *paradox of neoliberal authoritarianism* is that the economic and political crises of neoliberalism open spaces for spectacular leaders, but their political agenda, when it is implemented, directly harms their own political base. Mass frustration tends to intensify, which these leaders navigate by creating new conflicts: in this sense, they do not resolve conflicts and do not generally address the felt needs of society; instead, they promote a succession of resentments in order to expand their own political space. In this sense, authoritarian neoliberalism is intrinsically unstable, and its dynamics tends to feed the growth of fascism.

This dangerous situation was dominant until early 2020. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic intensified those contradictions: the economy was not growing—and then it collapsed, in the sharpest economic contraction in the history of capitalism; neoliberal political systems were authoritarian, and they tended to become even more inflexible, often to the point of perversity, sometimes imposing health policies that would kill millions and entrench COVID-19, so the coronavirus can *never* be eliminated (Saad-Filho, 2020, 2021).

The final crisis to be mentioned very briefly in this comment is the environmental crisis (for a more detailed analysis, see Saad-Filho, 2022). It relates, first, to the contradiction between the limitless search for profits which is intrinsic to capitalism, and the limited capacity of

the Earth to support accumulation while sustaining a climate compatible with the continuation of life as we know it. Second, it relates to the tension between the longstanding awareness of the environmental limits to growth, and the inability of governments and intergovernmental organisations to do much about it. Third, it concerns the tension between the accumulated emissions by leading Western economies, and the rising emissions in developing countries claiming the right to development today. Fourth, it concerns the structure of the global economy, in which several countries are invested in the production of fossil fuels, even though this is unsustainable, and they must exit as rapidly as possible—but refuse to do this because of the short-term losses and political difficulties of doing so. These tensions have been intensified by financialisation, that tends to raise emissions and block mitigation because it feeds procyclical behaviours that reinforce existing economic structures, increase volatility, and concentrate income, wealth, and power. It follows that financialisation is incompatible with climate adaptation, strategic industrial policy, and redistribution.

I suggest that the challenges of diversifying energy sources, securing macroeconomic stability and sustainability, and redistribution of income, wealth, and power must be addressed *together*, for reasons of legitimacy, practicality, and effectiveness. The key point is that the costs and sacrifices in the energy transition can secure the essential public support only if they are coupled with the reversal of the excluding logic of neoliberalism.

Let me summarise this. Neoliberalism is currently trapped by paradoxes, intrinsic limitations, and overlapping crises, and it cannot deliver economic, political, or environmental stability. Instead, it is sliding into fascism and pushing society towards environmental collapse. In these difficult circumstances, it has become urgent to advance a transformative agenda. I suggest that this agenda can be driven, politically, by fundamental concerns with equality, economic and political democracy, and the restoration of a collective sphere of citizenship focusing, initially, on the decommodification and definancialisation of social reproduction. This can start from the universal provision of public services: health, education, housing, and transport, expanding later into other areas of social reproduction.

The difficulty when conceptualising policy alternatives is that they must be supported by new social movements and new structures of representation, from political parties to trade unions to community associations corresponding to the current mode of existence of a society that has

been extensively decomposed domestically, imperfectly integrated globally, that has distinct cultures but is connected through internet-based tools. We can see important successes in new social and political movements emerging in different parts of the world, but we have not yet identified precisely how to build these new organisational forms. It is my belief that there is nothing more important, right now, than to build these movements to reshape our mode of existence, both in poor countries and in rich countries.

Melissa Leach, Professor and Director of the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex

An age of multiple crises may or may not be new, but there are some particularly contemporary things about our current one:

1. The extent to which crises are intersecting (climate and environment, pandemics, conflict, economic crisis, inequalities)—in their drivers, underlying causes, and impacts;
2. Intersecting crises are sharply highlighting existing (and sometimes deepening) inequalities, inequities, and injustices. These have in turn thrown into sharper relief a range of challenges to the principles of inclusive economies, effective institutions, and free speech.
3. The extent to which crises are global, affecting everyone everywhere, albeit in different and contextually nuanced ways; in high income as much as low- or middle-income settings.
4. The significance of uncertainties, amidst fast dynamics, difficulty of predicting and calculating probabilities and outcomes (as if risk); real surprises, and ambiguities (meanings of what for whom).

In this context, at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), and with key partners, we have already been suggesting over the last year that the time seems right for a 'recasting' of development and development studies that is underpinned by the centrality of universality (development as progressive change for all), plurality, justice, equity, and resilience. Rather than small adjustments and tweaks to concepts and practices, we are calling for a radical reimagining of what is possible. Recasting is, in this sense, less about reshaping and revising, as a sculptor might do, and more

about throwing forward into the future, like a fisherperson (re)casting their line.

As part of an emerging 'recasting' agenda, I will highlight four potential areas of focus, and then three areas of cross-cutting challenge and opportunity. These potential areas of focus for research and learning are:

New authoritarianisms. Populism is becoming ever more widespread in rich and poor countries, authoritarian and democratic ones. There are tendencies for shutting down political freedoms—controlling legal systems, the press, etc., or direct (sometimes violent) restrictions on (non-violent) protests. Some nations are withdrawing from multilateralism; crucial decisions are being made on a nation by nation basis, frequently short-term, often with future generations not represented in current decision-making amidst a closing of civic space coupled with a trampling of digital rights. Development studies can help document trends; analyse causes and counter these authoritarian, polarising tendencies; and identify and inform potential policy and action directions. It can explore the drivers of change that promote more effective, accountable, and inclusive governance institutions and mechanisms that can help re-establish trust relations with citizens, including the possibilities offered by digital technologies.

Contemporary capitalisms. Recent analyses of capitalism and prevailing financial systems are revealing how their workings underlie many aspects of current crises, and their underlying shared drivers, including rising inequality, indebtedness, failures to tackle environmental issues, and health injustices (including obstacles to cheap production and sale of vaccines in LMICs). Development studies can offer deeper analysis of current and emerging financial models that may work against sustainable futures. It can question the directions in which financial and capitalist systems unfold, exploring the politics of such directions. And it can engage with debates that switch the emphasis from growth to fostering economies based on principles of collaboration, regeneration, and care.

Equity. There is a need to work with and build on approaches to intersectionality, where different forms of (in)equity (by gender, class, disability, race, place, etc.) are not just additional but mutually constituting and reinforcing. How do intersecting inequities interact with intersecting crises? Development studies can explore issues such

as the evolution of labour and accumulation and the role of technology; fragility of the labour market; taxation; and the implications of climate change and environmental challenges for equity. It can explore and foster solidarities and connections between struggles and movements for equity and justice, around and across race, class, gender, nature, and the more-than-human.

Epistemologies and the politics of knowledge. Development studies can promote inter-, trans-, and multi-disciplinary approaches to tackle complex challenges. It can help make more transparent the political economies of knowledge and evidence and reveal more clearly the interests and ideologies underlying different models and conclusions. It can call out the way power reworks uncertainties and unknowns as if they were controllable manageable risks, and thereby make space for alternatives that respond better to everyday uncertainties and people's knowledge of them, and foster resilience. It can explore and bring to centre stage epistemologies and ontologies that are marginalised by mainstream development and sciences, bringing these to greater attention and legitimacy.

Some key cross-cutting challenges and opportunities include:

Confronting power and its paradoxes. Crises have structural roots, yet economic and political power are increasingly concentrated amongst those with vested interests in maintaining those structures. The power and agency of civil society, citizens, and movements amongst those marginalised by mainstream power are increasingly important, yet increasingly constrained by contemporary political dynamics—from authoritarian populism to backlashes and closing spaces. Power in tackling challenges is increasingly equated with predicting, controlling, and managing risk, in a world that is actually pervaded by far less controllable uncertainties. What forms of theory, imagination, and practice that can help point the way out of these paradoxes, towards transformation and a more inclusive and accountable, caring, and adaptable politics of development?

Addressing how processes in the aid industrial complex intersect with other forms of change. Development as ongoing, complex change involves processes well beyond and apart from 'big D' Development as aid, yet the aid and interventions of the development industry

interact with such processes. What are the outcomes? How might aid industry practices need to be changed to address and respond effectively to multiple, intersecting crises? What can we learn from histories and genealogies of the discourses and practices of the aid/development industry, as well as disruptions to these?

Fostering change in development studies itself. Development studies is already well positioned to address multiple, intersecting crises because of the field's interdisciplinarity, multi-sectorality, critically constructive engagement, and normative orientation towards 'good change', however and by whomever that is defined. However, there are important challenges and opportunities to go further: to become more equitable, collective, and collaborative, and to embrace the diverse implications of 'decolonisation', in order to address the historical structural inequities and power asymmetries in development studies that constrain its ability to support transformative change.

To end on an optimistic note, recasting development means being more critically engaged than ever, while also identifying, supporting, and being part of a politics of hope—towards more equitable, resilient, inclusive futures.

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