Dear DARG members,

Welcome to our DARG newsletter! DARG is one of the research groups of the Royal Geographical Society and our membership is made up of academics, postgraduates and practitioners interested in development geographies. The purpose of this newsletter is to better share the work we have been doing, as well as provide a place for our members to share recent publications.

It feels like we are doing exciting things right now at DARG. We are working to maintain DARG’s intellectual contributions. Firstly, by sponsoring a number of exciting panels at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference (all listed on our website) and secondly, by working to publish from our conference roundtables. Currently, we are working on a special section developed from our 2018 roundtable on Global Development. In 2020, we will switch focus to critique Development in Response to Climate Change.

We continue to be committed to our events and prizes for students. This year our post graduate careers event focused on careers that utilise the knowledge and critical thinking covered in Development Geography - to further social and environmental justice and political change. During this sold-out event, we heard from those working in NGOs, campaign organisations, government and media. We have also awarded a postgraduate travel award, a dissertation prize and a schools essay prize, with both prizes generously supported by Routledge. This year, we have engaged more explicitly with the everyday politics of academia by partnering with the Gender & Feminist Geographies Research Group (GFGRG) to work towards changing policy guidelines to better support academics with care responsibilities to access fieldwork funding, as well as those negotiating careers breaks and parental leave.

In terms of changes, we will be voting on a name change at the 2019 RGS-IBG Annual Conference. To ensure critical distance from historical engagements with the ‘Third World’ or ‘developing countries’, as well as from contemporary shifts to Global Development, we will be proposing we change from being the Developing Areas Research Group to become the Development Geographies Research Group. So please join the vote at our annual AGM!

With best wishes,
Dr. Jessica Hope, DARG Chair
Becoming a Development Geographer was prompted by life-changing fieldwork and by encounters with inspiring female and feminist role models. While prompted initially by intellectual curiosity, being a Development Geographer soon became about using research to inform transformative change in the global South and at home in London.

It all started in Jamaica in 1987. While studying Geography at the University of Liverpool as an undergraduate, I was lucky enough to go on a third year field trip to Jamaica run by Elizabeth Thomas-Hope. Long before the days of ethical review and risk assessments, off we went to do a survey for a health clinic in Papine Market in Kingston. This was a transformative experience for me. I quickly realised that I loved meeting and interviewing people and that I was outraged at the poor conditions that people were living in. But I was also so taken by the warmth, power and resilience of the residents of Papine, especially the women, as well as by Elizabeth’s research work, the first important female role model who

With a household I interviewed in Limón, Costa Rica 1990

After Jamaica, I met the second inspiring role model, Sylvia Chant, also at Liverpool, who persuaded me to take a masters in Latin American Studies. Thanks to Sylviva, I learnt about feminist geography and I remember reading her Women in the Third World (with Lynne Brydon) (1989) and Momsen and Townsend’s Geography and Gender in the Third World (1987) and thinking that was what I wanted to do. A masters dissertation on the status of women in Jamaica, using the data we collected from the survey, cemented this for me. Again thanks to Sylvia, came the second major piece of transformative fieldwork, this time in Costa Rica. Sarah Bradshaw and I went to work for her as research assistants on her project on women and migration in Guanacaste. More intense and instructive than the work in Jamaica, this also laid the foundations for my subsequent doctoral research in the port city of Limón on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica on gender, race and labour markets under Sylvia’s supervision at the London School of Economics.

With Sylvia Chant and a research participant, Philippines, 1993

With feminist Development Geography firmly in my bloodstream by the time I finished my PhD, a post-doctoral research position with Sylvia led me to
the Philippines as part of project on gender and export-led employment. On completion of this work, Geography and feminism collided once again. Sylvia introduced me to the other major feminist inspiration who has been integral to me becoming a Development Geographer, Caroline Moser.

Caroline Washington D.C. at the time and was looking for a researcher with experience working in Latin America and the Philippines. As with my work with Sylvia, this led to multiple collaborations working on gender, poverty and violence in urban areas in the global South, particularly in Guatemala and Colombia. I always view my time at the World Bank as a form of fieldwork in itself; while it is not the neoliberal monolith that many make out, nor is it a benign force doing good in the world.

The final strand in becoming a Development Geographer relates to doing geography at home, which in my case is London. It is essential to remember that Development Geography is relational and encompasses not just the global South as a geographical entity but also people from the global South. As part of juggling the demands of family life, I therefore became a Development Geographer in London in the early 2000s as well as in the South, working mainly with the Latin American community, but also with migrants from other parts of the world (the latter notably with Kavita Datta, Jane Wills and Jon May) and always from a feminist perspective. More recently, this has also led to more creative research through engagement with the arts, especially working with Latin American artists who have been using art to raise awareness and engender change.

One does not ‘become’ without other people and in my case, without inspirational women who guided me, not to mention collaborators, research participants and students without conducted. Being a Development Geographer no longer means solely travelling overseas or doing ‘traditional’ research. The processes and effects of uneven gendered global geographies of power are played out everywhere. But for me, it does mean feminist, grassroots and policy engagements through research that aims to bring about transformative changes, however small these might be.
We asked Dr. Kalpana Wilson, Lecturer in Geography at Birkbeck, University of London, to talk about some of the books that have informed her research in development geography. Kalpana’s research explores questions of race/gender, labour, women’s participation in rural labour movements, and reproductive rights and justice, with a particular focus on South Asia and its diasporas. She is the author of Race, Racism and Development: Interrogating History, Discourse and Practice (Zed Books, 2012). She is also a founder member of the campaigning organisation South Asia Solidarity Group.

*Sea of Poppies* (John Murray Press, 2008). Amitav Ghosh’s panoramic book about the 1838 voyage of the Ibis – a ship transporting indentured labourers from the port of Calcutta (Kolkata) to the sugar plantations of Mauritius, is fiction, but with its mapping of multiple colonial geographies, and the currents and counter-currents of mid-19th century globalization, it doesn’t seem out of place in this list. Ghosh immerses us in overlapping languages, experiences and subjectivities, and through the lives of the diverse characters on board the Ibis, ranging from Deeti, a young woman widowed by opium addiction in a region of colonial eastern India ravaged by forced poppy cultivation, who is now on the run from her powerful dominant caste in-laws, to Zachary Reid, an African-American ship’s carpenter, who finds himself making his way in a rigidly racialised world by passing as white, he conveys how lives were shaped not only by the racism and cruelty of the British colonial enterprise but the globalised economic processes of capital accumulation which it developed and sustained. One of the novel’s most compelling themes is the transformation of identity within these processes, and the contingency of identity itself. On board the Ibis, it seems, almost everyone is in the process of becoming someone else.

The seminal *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Bogle-L’Ouverture Publications, 1972) written by the Guyanese Marxist historian and revolutionary Walter Rodney is a book I think everyone working on or in development should read, and one I’ve returned to repeatedly in both my teaching and writing. Based on meticulous research and with great clarity and accessibility, the book definitively traced the processes through which slavery and colonialism in Africa simultaneously made possible the development of European capitalism and systematically produced what was then called ‘underdevelopment’ in Africa. While teaching at the University of Dar Es Salaam in the 1970s, Rodney was a key participant in the ‘Dar Es Salaam debates’ on class, the state and imperialism and his work epitomises the fact that original Marxist thinking and practice has been largely rooted in places...
in the global South and in conversations between these places. The work of delineating the massive transfer of resources through colonialism continues – see for example the recent work of Indian economist Utsa Patnaik.

In her 2007 book *Gender, Generation and Poverty*, Sylvia Chant explores the entrenched development trope of the ‘feminisation of poverty’ through extensive research spanning the Gambia, the Phillipines and Costa Rica. Not only does Chant lucidly unpick the limitations and problematic implications of the concept, she shows how the experiences and perspectives of women (and men) she talked to challenge dominant definitions of poverty itself. She argues that we should more usefully think about what she describes as ‘the feminisation of responsibility and obligation’ – a concept that has only gained in relevance during the intervening decade, with global development institutions promoting strategies like ‘Gender Equality as Smart Economics’ and ‘the Girl Effect’ which, as Chant herself has argued, have feminisation of responsibility at their heart, and which I’ve found invaluable in exploring ‘neoliberal feminism’ and the appropriation of notions of agency in development.

As someone who writes about racism and racialisation in international development, I am always excited to read work which considers processes of racialisation which operate globally and beyond widely recognized racial formations such as the United States. Jemima Pierre’s *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race* (University of Chicago Press, 2013) is groundbreaking in its focus on racialisation in West Africa and its relationship to European imperialism, which made race, as Pierre explains, both global and local. Pierre’s exposition of how racialisation takes place in contemporary Ghana is wide-ranging and compelling, exploring themes such as the positionality of Whiteness in Ghana, skin bleaching, Ghana’s heritage tourism and Pan-Africanism.

Right now I am reading Jade Sasser’s *On Infertile Ground: Population Control and Women’s Rights in the Era of Climate Change* (New York University Press, 2018). This really speaks to my own current research on racialised population policies in development. Sasser provides an in-depth, nuanced analysis of the new population discourses which frame the fertility of women in the global South as the central driver of climate change, and what the implications of this are. She coins the term ‘sexual stewards’ which encapsulates the representation of poor women in the global South as needing to be ‘empowered’ in order to shoulder their individual responsibility of saving the world from climate change by having fewer children. Sasser’s eye-witness accounts of the way this neoliberal vision of ‘sexual stewardship’ is promoted to young environmental activists in the US are fascinating!
DARG Photo competition winner!

It was an extremely difficult decision as we received so many amazing entries; however, we are very excited to announce that the winner of the DARG photo competition is: Alexander Taylor from the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge!

Title: Locating the Human in the Cloud

The metaphor of ‘cloud’ computing does not only erase the physical and political infrastructures that deliver our digital services, but also the people that work in these technical spaces. While the social dynamics that were operating in a historic neighbourhood. Then, I realised these buildings are frequently described as the ‘new factories’, the labour they are thought to contain is not that of the factory worker, but the ‘virtual’ labour of distant end-users or algorithms. Extensive focus on the novel forms of digital labour enabled by cloud platforms has left aside the labour of those tasked with ensuring the uninterrupted continuity of platform capitalism itself.

Fieldwork stories

by Aysegul Can

I have spent most of my time as an urbanist studying urban preservation and historic environment. For a long time, historic built environment and how it was preserved were very important to me, and I did not pay much attention to the social dynamics that were operating in a historic neighbourhood. Then I realised the relation between urban conservation, urban renewal projects and gentrification. This was around the time that, in Istanbul, urban renewal and
regeneration projects were popping up everywhere and turning almost every historic environment into a construction site. This led me to start researching about the processes of gentrification and especially state-led gentrification and displacement in the historic environment of Istanbul.

During fieldwork, I experienced difficulties. For example, residents’ motivations for sharing or not sharing any kind of information are complicated and hard to predict. For this reason, I tried to not pressure or insist people that talk about specific subjects, but I rather tried to talk about what they were passionate about and tried to channel that subject towards what I was really interested in. For example, during my fieldwork, I listened to an interviewee complaining about his doorbell and people sometimes accidentally ringing his doorbell for 20 minutes before I had my opening for the things I really wanted to talk about, which were his opinions of the newcomers in a gentrified neighbourhood.

Yet, when people do open up about their vulnerabilities, it may be emotionally burdening for the researcher to listen to their stories. When I was listening to an interviewee talking about how her house was burned down, and how destructive for her to be exiled from her homeland, I could not help but tearing up. In addition, everyday, after finishing neighbourhood interviews in the poor neighbourhood of Tarlabasi, Istanbul, I felt a sense of guilt and maybe even shame while I was sipping my latte in a nearby Starbucks located in an already gentrified neighbourhood.

I could not help but empathize with the inhabitants facing displacement pressure and felt anger towards the people who work with and for the system that stigmatizes and displaces these inhabitants to benefit the capital. To work with that anger and not sabotage my own research while conducting elite interviews with government officials by asking them too emotionally loaded questions, I usually needed to remind myself of the globalized and abstract processes at work in a state-led gentrified neighbourhood, and that as frustrating or unjust as anything may sound, it was not the ‘fault’ of any specific individual. In the end, as a researcher and as an activist, all I can do is (or we can do) to tell and use their story to make sense of the emancipatory processes that are happening all around the globe, and (hopefully) create a discourse for a better world.

Aysegul is a geographer at the Istanbul Medeniyet University, and she is also a DARG committee member.

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DARG sponsored events at the RGS-IBG annual conference 2019

DARG AGM Friday 1.10-2.25, Sir Alexander Fleming Building, Room 121

DARG Social (with LAG-UK): Please join us for drinks in the upstairs room at The Mitre, Lancaster Gate, Thursday 18.30-20.00, 28th August

Photo Exhibition: Voices from the margins of disaster
Gemma Sou (University of Manchester)

Rural to where? Rural young people’s geographies in mobility, learning, trajectories and hopefulness
Tracey Skelton (National University of Singapore, Singapore)
Jessica Clendenning (National University of Singapore, Singapore)

“Secondary Cities” in the Global South
Nina Gribat (Technical University Darmstadt, Germany)
Christian Rosen (Technical University Darmstadt, Germany)

The political ecology of being green: critiquing green energy
Jessica Hope (University of Bristol)
Ed Atkins (University of Bristol)

Development geography’s ‘creative turn’: reconfiguring power and partnership?
Deirdre McKay (Keele University, UK)
Amanda Rogers (Swansea University)

Furthering the Decolonising Debate in Geography: International perspectives
Sarah Radcliffe (University of Cambridge)

Europe and marginality: Decolonising policy on refugees and peripheries
Cyril Blondel (University of Luxembourg)
Lucas Oesch (University of Luxembourg)

Latin American Geographies in the UK: where next? A roundtable discussion
Sam Halvorsen (Queen Mary University of London)

Infrastructure and Citizenship: (de)constructing state-society relations
Charlotte Lemanski (University of Cambridge)
Jon Phillips (University of Cambridge)

Film Screening: Wandering Souls — a story of Cambodian resilience and healing

Author meets readers: David Simon’s Holocaust Escapes and Global Development: Hidden Histories
Miles Kenney-Lazar (National University of Singapore)
Felix Mallin (University of Singapore)
James Sidaway (National University of Singapore)

Amazonian geographies of the past and the future
Nina Laurie (University of St Andrews)
Katherine Roucoux (University of St Andrews, UK)
Anna Macphie (University of St Andrews)
Recent publications from some of our DARG members


Kothari, U and Arnall, A 2019 Everyday Life and Environmental Change, The Geographical Journal


Schech, S, Skelton, T., Mundkur, A and U. Kothari, U 2019 International Volunteerism and Capacity Development in Nonprofit Organizations of the Global South, Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly


Varvara Nikulina, David Simon, Henrik Ny and Henrikke Baumann (2019) ’Context-adapted urban planning for rapid transitioning of personal mobility towards sustainability: a systematic literature review’,Sustainability 11, 100