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Jessica Hope, Chair, University of St Andrews

Katy Jenkins, Committee Member, Northumbria University

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Raksha Pande, Treasurer, Newcastle University

Charlotte Ray, Committee Member, Consultant

Gemma Sou, Secretary, University of Manchester

DEVELOPMENT GEOGRAPHIES RESEARCH GROUP

Dear Development Geographies Research Group,

Welcome to our 2020 newsletter, once again created by our brilliant Secretary, Dr. Gemma Sou and the first newsletter for the newly named '*Development Geographies Research Group*'. 2020 is proving a difficult year and, first and foremost, we hope that you are all faring OK during the coronavirus pandemic and with all that it means for our personal and professional lives.

In this newsletter you will find a piece written by *Professor Uma Kothari* about personal experiences of solidarity that have shaped her academic work, our first draft list of *resources on decolonising development*, which may inform your research and teaching, an obituary to the late and fantastic *Professor Sylvia Chant* by Professor Cathy McIlwaine, a reflection on *fieldwork in Nigeria* during the covid19 outbreak by Chidinma Okorie, DevGRG's travel grant recipient, and much more.

2020 has also brought a resurgence of campaigning around *Black Lives Matter*, following the murder of George Floyd by police in the USA. You can find [our full statement of solidarity](#) on our website, including the work we will be doing within DevGRG in response.

For our work, Covid19 has meant postponing our event on *Safety, Wellbeing and Fieldwork*, as well as all we had planned for the 2020 annual conference. However, myself, Charlotte Ray and Katy Jenkins continue to work with the *Gender and Feminist Geographies Research Group* and the RGS to change practice on care and funding (more below). Aysegul Can has been running our UG dissertation prize and remaining flexible to changed exam board dates, Shreyashi Dasgupta has been developing a *new schools prize* to widen participation in the prize and update its format, Cordelia Freeman has been figuring out how to

recast our PG travel award and tweeting all things DevGRG, whilst Raksha Pande has continued as Treasurer and Anna Laing has been prepping for how DevGRG can better engage with decolonising development agendas. We say farewell and good luck to our Secretary, Gemma Sou, who is leaving the UK for a Vic Chancellor Research fellowship at RMIT University in Melbourne. Many thanks to all of the committee for their generous work throughout the year.

Our AGM will go online this year and is planned for [Wednesday September 2nd 2- 4pm](#). Please email me directly to register. We have a number of ideas to discuss and will need a new Chair in 2021, when I step down. We'd welcome new faces at the AGM and for future committee roles, including (and as always) BAME applicants.

With best wishes,

Dr. Jessica Hope, Chair, Development Geographies Research Group, jch31@st-andrews.ac.uk

D **evelopment as Solidarity: Stories of hopeful, creative and convivial encounters by *Professor Uma Kothari***

Over the years, in a modest way, I have contributed a critical voice to development debates. I am conscious, however, that despite significant advances made by postcolonial, decolonial and feminist critiques, development discourse continues to create disparities, undermine notions of unity and bedevil attempts at achieving social justice.

Consequently, and revitalised by the current protests around 'Black Lives Matter', I am drawn once more to ideas around solidarity and to the power of history and stories to forge a reformulation of 'development as solidarity'.

Contemplating what such a reconsideration of development might mean requires recognising the multiple, intimate and public, spaces in which solidarity can emerge and the various ways in which solidarity can be expressed: by individuals and collectives and amid the rhythms of everyday life as well as at critical, spectacular moments. Solidarity can also occur serendipitously, by design or some



Dr. Jessica Hope



Professor Uma Kothari

combination. Irrespective of which of these diverse forms they take and in which spaces they are manifest, acts of solidarity are always political.

Here, I reflect on three stories of hopeful, creative and convivial encounters that have helped me to reflect on how, when and where solidarity might emerge. Although personal, historical reflections and stories are rarely invited in academia, they have thoroughly shaped my academic work, political engagements and understandings of solidarity.

A postcolonial moment

In 1955, my parents, Tara and Shanti, spent six months driving overland from London to Mumbai in a second-hand Morris Minor. In Egypt, on the outskirts of Ismailia, they lost their way and suddenly, in front of them a roadblock appeared. Armed men, Egyptian soldiers, commanded that they stop and surrounded the vehicle. The soldiers brandished their guns and with terse instructions, demanded that they wind down the car windows. They had entered a militarized zone adjacent to the Suez Canal.

The hard expressions of the recruits softened as it became apparent that though the identity of the travellers remained unclear, they posed no danger. “Nasser, Tito, Nkrumah, Nehru or Sukarno?”, they enquired, reciting the names of the leaders of the then nascent Non-Aligned Movement that had been born at the Asia-Africa Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in April that year. There, Third World leaders had shared their problems in maintaining their independence and opposing colonialism and neo-colonialism. Upon hearing the reply, “*Nehru*”, the soldiers greeted my parents with broad smiles pointing to their chests and saying “*Nasser*”. Like these Egyptians, my parents had formerly been subjects of the British Empire and subsequently asserted their right to independence. The soldiers laid down their guns and warned them about the safest route to take to avoid the escalating tensions.

My parents had been caught in the midst of an emerging global crisis that was entangled in multiple connections and informed by a burgeoning collective imaginary. A momentary postcolonial solidarity was solicited between them and the



My parents, Tara and Shanti, on their road trip, 1955

soldiers, chiming with that being forged by the leaders of newly independent states.

The power of assembly

On 15 February 2003, over 9 million people turned out in hundreds of cities around the world to protest the United

States and UK push to invade Iraq. My son Jay, nine at the time, went on the demonstration in London wearing a homemade T-shirt on which he had printed '*Bush and Blair don't you dare*'. It was his first time participating in such a protest. Despite this extensive opposition, the war against Iraq went ahead. My son had been cold, hungry and tired on the long march, and felt it had all been fruitless. I too had felt like this in the 1970s when participating in various Anti-Apartheid and CND protests.

I attempted to explain to Jay that he had participated in an act of solidarity by going on the demonstration. Even though its demands were not achieved, it would nonetheless generate some positive and progressive effects. If Judith Butler had already published her 2015 work,

Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly, it would have helped me console my son. In it, she speaks of the power of assembly, of the expressive dimension of physical bodies coming together and experiencing a solidarity based on shared, embodied experience. She writes, '*showing up, standing, breathing, moving, standing still, speech, and silence are all aspects of assembly...that puts livable life at the forefront of politics*' (2015: 71).

Decolonisation and objects that matter

Recent calls to decolonise through *Rhodes Must Fall* and other campaigns for the removal of offensive, colonialist statues have reopened critical debates about the role and forms of memorialization, heritage and history, and cultures of collection and curation. Out of such debates and the processes they engender, new forms of solidarity may emerge.



My son Jay enjoying his first protest.
February 2003

In November 2019, Manchester Museum, in partnership with The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, established '*The Return of Cultural Heritage project*'. It began to return sacred artifacts that had been appropriated through past colonialist violence. As the representative of a Native Title Aboriginal Corporation declared, "*The repatriation of our sacred cultural heritage items is a fundamental part of the healing process ...[for]...locked deep within these items is our lore; our histories, our traditions and our stories*".

Through returning these objects, Esme Ward, Director of Manchester Museum, has striven to encourage new solidaristic connections, as part of the museum's duty to foster 'thinking about our common humanity'. Development interventions have long involved the appropriation of material things, linking aid with trade, accumulation through dispossession and brutal expulsion. I have only recently become attuned to the significant role of material culture in addressing such past injustices.

Reflecting on these stories and histories, I am reminded that a forgetful past and an unobserved future challenge the potential for solidarity. For me, development must be reconceived as solidarity. Admittedly, contesting deeply embedded dominant, colonialist discourses is arduous, yet forging solidarity may be a lot easier than we think.

Having a better understanding of solidarity in all its forms will enable us to recognise when and how it can be enacted. We can all engage in acts of solidarity.

Prof Uma Kothari, Global Development Institute, The University of Manchester

Reflections on fieldwork experience in Nigeria by *Chidinma Okorie*

In July 2019, I won the DevGRG Travel Grant to support my fieldwork in Nigeria. This involved interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with Commonwealth scholarship

Manchester museum returns sacred artifacts to Indigenous Australians, November 2019

administrators and Nigerian UK-educated Commonwealth scholars in Lagos, Abuja and Ibadan. I received the grant 7 months before my travel, and so I had plenty of time to prepare and plan fieldwork. Being my meticulous self, I ensured that all necessary boxes were ticked prior to commencing the fieldwork: Completing the risk assessment and gaining ethical approval from my University. I had already contacted my participants ahead of time, some of them up to even one year in advance. I prepared the participant information sheet, consent forms, interview guide and had my recorder and all necessary fieldwork tools ready and handy.

My fieldwork took place in 3 different cities in Nigeria, therefore I decided to design a schedule of activities to keep me on track. In short, I diligently planned for this fieldwork. However, several unexpected things happened, which ultimately made my fieldwork in Nigeria a memorable one. Facing and dealing with challenges are to be expected during fieldwork and below I have shared a handful of these experiences with you. Despite these setbacks, I managed to complete all of my scheduled interviews and focus groups, some face-to-face and the rest online. Here are some of the lessons I gained through this fieldwork experience.

Weather

In February 2020, I left the UK for Nigeria, but couldn't land in Lagos due to poor visibility caused by harmattan fog. This resulted in a flight diversion to Ghana where I spent 4 days before eventually arriving in Lagos. This disrupted my fieldwork plan. When I eventually landed in Nigeria, my planning started to pay off. For example, I had researched the weather/climate in Nigeria when planning fieldwork, in terms of extreme heat and risk of dehydration or sunburn. Therefore I always had drinking water and sunscreen with me - these are simple measures but are invaluable. However, one thing I did not predict and which I learnt is important to consider when travelling to Nigeria or neighbouring countries between November and February, is the likelihood of harmattan fog, which can cause flight delays. In fact, regardless of where your fieldwork takes place, it's always important to check the weather conditions and consider how this might affect your fieldwork plan.

Preparation and pandemics



Finally landing in Lagos



Conducting interviews at the University of Abuja, Nigeria

Fieldwork comes with its own challenges and surprises. Therefore, I factored in time delays and appointment cancellations when designing my fieldwork activities. Therefore, when they did occur I was able to adjust accordingly and so it was not a problem. However, the one thing I did not see coming was the lockdown enforced in Nigeria (and in many countries around the world) as a measure to curb the spread of Covid-19. I was left with no choice but to adapt and conduct the rest of my interviews online.

Power cuts

The irregular power supply (Nigeria still experiences constant power cuts) and poor internet connectivity sometimes disrupted conducting the interviews online. To mitigate this, I ensured there was a back-up power supply and subscribed to multiple network providers. However, it must be said that these mitigating measures were quite expensive.

In spite of my months of meticulously planning for my fieldwork, and as you can imagine, I did not factor in a 4-days flight diversion or a pandemic. The ability to adapt and adjust to working in challenging and changing times has been the most important skill I have developed through this experience. Special thanks to the RGS-IBG Development Geographies Research Group for awarding me the travel grant to support my fieldwork. To the reader of this article, thanks for reading and I hope you find it useful in some way.

Chidinma Okorie, Doctoral researcher, Geography and Environment, Loughborough University

Professor Sylvia Chant Obituary by Professor Cathy McIlwaine

The development geographer Sylvia Chant, who died aged 60, challenged the idea that households headed by women were automatically more likely to live in poverty than those headed by men. When she began her research in the 1980s, much other research and policymaking portrayed

households headed by women in the developing world as deviant and poverty-ridden. Sylvia argued that it was not necessarily poverty in itself that disadvantaged women in cities of the global south, but rather their multiple household responsibilities and obligations in relation to men.

Her fieldwork in Mexico, Costa Rica, the Philippines, and the Gambia showed that measuring the incidence of poverty through measuring the number of households headed by women was inaccurate. In her books [Women-headed Households \(1997\)](#) and [Gender, Generation and Poverty \(2007\)](#) she demonstrated that such households were more numerous than is usually assumed, but also could provide women with autonomy and freedom. She recounted numerous stories of how women who headed households and their daughters were much more likely to go out to work as they were free from the control of husbands and fathers who often forbade women from entering the labour market. Even though these women were able to make their own decisions, she also highlighted the dangerous tendency for them to take on multiple responsibilities inside and outside the home, balancing domestic and paid work.

Sylvia really engaged with the women – and to a lesser extent, men – whom she interviewed, and kept in touch with many of them years after her first encounters. Keen to work with other researchers, she co-authored and edited 11 of her 18 books, including four that we wrote together, of which the most recent was [Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South \(2016\)](#). She edited the [International Handbook of Gender and Poverty \(2010\)](#), whose more than 100 chapters came from 125 established and early career authors. At the London School of Economics, she was an inspiring and generous teacher, and her many PhD students, of whom I was the first, now work on gender and international development around the world.

Her ideas around women-headed households and wider gender inequalities helped shape the policy advice she gave international agencies including the Commonwealth Secretariat, UN-Habitat (the human settlement programme), the International Labour Organization, UN Women and the World Bank. For example, she co-authored the UN-Habitat flagship report [State of Women in Cities 2012/13](#) arguing for the acknowledgement that cities everywhere had large

numbers of female-headed households and that gender issues must be taken into account in urban planning if cities are to prosper moving forward. Her work in the Gambia with the [Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children](#) (GAMCOTRAP) had very immediate consequences with her work arguing for the elimination of female genital mutilation/cutting having contributed to its final outlawing in 2015.

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Born in Dundee, Sylvia was the daughter of Stuart Chant, a microbiologist, and his wife June (McCartney), a legal secretary. She grew up in London and attended Lady Margaret school in Parsons Green and, for sixth form work, Kingston College. She gained a geography degree (1981) at King's College, Cambridge, where she developed her feminist approach to her life and work.

This led to her PhD at University College London in 1984, supervised by Peter Ward and Alan Gilbert, studying the role of women in the construction of housing in Querétaro, Mexico. This was among the first studies that recognised women as key actors in self-build housing in poor urban communities in countries of the global South.

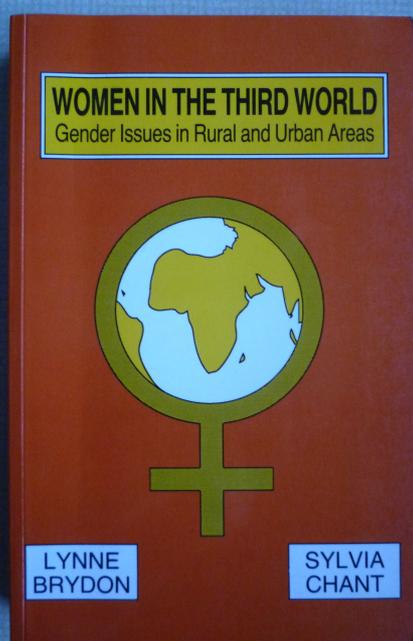
Following a postdoctoral position at UCL, and a year at the University of Liverpool, in 1988 Sylvia moved to the LSE. She worked in its department of geography and the environment and in conjunction with its gender institute (now department) for the rest of her career.

Her first book, [Women in the Third World](#) (1989, with Lynne Brydon) argued for the importance of analysing women's roles in rural and urban areas of the global south, drawing on the voices and interpretations from the grassroots rather than crude statistical analyses, and addressing women's socially constructed roles in an integrated way across the domestic, productive and international policy domains.

[Mainstreaming Men into Gender and Development](#) (2000, with Matthew Gutmann) argued for the importance of including men in gender and development debates and projects, suggesting that genuine feminist transformation would not be possible without such engagements, while ensuring that women were not re-excluded.



Sylvia working with the GAMCOTRAP in Gambia



Women in the Third World by Sylvia Chant and Lynne Brydon, 1989

Sylvia's research also shed light on countries such as Costa Rica and the Gambia where limited research on gender issues had previously been undertaken. In Costa Rica, she worked in the province of Guanacaste, traditionally associated with cattle ranching and tourism, to show that women's lives in small towns were dominated by short-term out-migration of men to work in seasonal agriculture and that it was women who were the bastions of households and communities. In the Gambia, in contrast to much research that focuses on sex tourism, she worked on gender and youth and how school enrolments alone did little to ensure that young women were able to develop personal freedom and decent employment in later life; this would only be possible with educational policies that integrated gender equity into curriculum development.

Sylvia married Chris Mogridge, her second husband, in 2002; he survives her, along with her mother, June, and two sisters, Adrienne and Yvonne.

Professor Cathy McIlwaine, Department of Geography, King's College, London

This article was originally published in the Guardian, March 2020

Black Lives Matter Statement

The Development Geographies Research Group stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, with those denouncing the unlawful killings of black citizens in both the USA and UK, and with those working around the world to expose continuing and systemic racism.

As a research group, we are committed to building on the work of critical development geographers, (including by scholars of colour and by those from the global south), which has revealed where dynamics of racism, colonialism, inequality and injustice underpin development knowledges and practices, as well as explored (through decolonial frames) how we can systematically delink from structures of race, coloniality and modernity. Yet, we also recognise that our research group sits within the institutions that have been historically



Black Lives Matter Protest in London, June 2020. Al Jazeera

active and complicit in racism and that we could do more to combat white privilege within UK academia.

We have agreed upon a number of strategies as a starting point for more explicitly combating racism, inequality and intersectional forms of oppression/marginalisation within development geography and to offer more support to anti-racist and decolonising agendas. You can find details of how we are doing this below and on our website.

Currently, we are committed to:

- **Improving** how we advertise for committee members, to explicitly welcome and encourage applications from BAME researchers and those from the global south.
- **Collating** anti-racist research and teaching resources on our website..
- **Collating** resources on our website to support work on decolonising the curriculum and decolonising development research.
- **Revising** our schools essay prize to engage with the coloniality of cities and the built environment.
- **Dedicating** our 2020/2021 postgraduate event to responding to some of the challenges raised by BLM. We will invite proposals and expressions of interest from PhD researchers to join our committee as a PG Representative and run a funded event or online resource (this could be for PG students or academic staff). They will be fully supported in this by our committee.
- **Using** our Twitter account to promote the work of black and indigenous scholars from the global south and north.

We welcome input from our members, to continue this discussion and develop this work. *Please email our chair, Jessica Hope, directly with your suggestions (jch31@st-andrews.ac.uk).*



A graffiti artist spray paints a mural of George Floyd in Manchester city centre. Manchester Evening News

Event and Announcements

Our Annual General Meeting will take place online, Wednesday September 2nd, 2-4pm. ***All welcome!*** Contact Jessica Hope to register.

Join the DevGRG Committee!

Do you want to be part of the DevGRG committee? We are looking for people to fill several positions on our committee. In September 2020 we require a new Secretary and Website/Social Media coordinator. Our chair, Jessica Hope is all stepping down in August 2021 and we will need a new Chair. Get in touch if you fancy being part of the team. As always, we welcome committee members from all genders and ethnicities.

Prize Winners!

2019 Dissertation prize: ***Lucy Petty, Newcastle University***, "*Responsible Volunteering: A Viable Solution? A Postcolonial Reading of International Volunteering in Jambiani, Zanzibar.*"

2019 Travel prize: ***Chidinma Okorie, Loughborough University***. "*The Geographies of Nigerian Commonwealth Scholars and the Migration-Education-Development (M.E.D.) Nexus*"

School's Essay prize: ***Lara Archer, St Mary's School, Ascot***

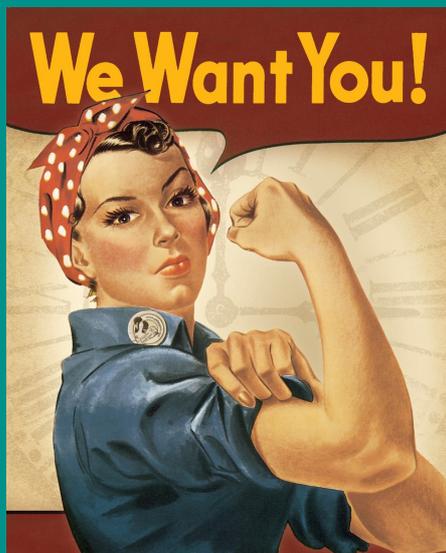
2020 UG Dissertation Prize: ***Rai Saad Khan, University of Oxford*** "*Lahore's Performative Statehoods: a study of the form and practices of statehood of the Walled City of Lahore Authority in Pakistan*"

& Highly Commended: ***Wafia Yahyaoui, QMUL*** "*Life is Expensive....Navigating Waithood in Oran, Algeria*"

All submissions were of an impressively high standard.

Launch of the New School Prize! Watch this space....

DevGRG is running its annual essay competition in memory of David W. Smith, an outstanding scholar committed to researching cities in the Global South.





**NEW COMPETITION
COMING SOON!**

In early 2020 we will be launching a *digital mapping competition* with the theme: *Coloniality of cities and the built environment*. This competition will ask students from schools across the UK to create social media content that explores and explains how colonial rule continues to shape cities. The prize is being run by Shreyashi Dasgupta.

Prize: A *£100 voucher from Routledge Publishers*. All the entries will be compiled into an image based resource for archives and research and will be published on the DevGRG website and social media platforms.

Care and the Academy

The Development Geographies Research Group and the Gender & Feminist Geographies Research Group the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) continue to work to improve policy and practice on care and academic work, supported by the RGS.

We are delighted to announce that the RGS has changed its regulations, to allow for *claims to be made for care responsibilities within fieldwork grants*. The RGS is now working with DevGRG and GFGRG to encourage a wider take-up of UKRI Guidelines, which recognise care costs as a claimable cost within fieldwork funding (for example, to cover your child's travel and childcare costs whilst you are abroad on fieldwork or to cover a dependents care costs whilst you are away). Please get in touch with Jessica Hope if you can help us with this strand of our work.

Committee members have published on this issue over the past year. Published articles are below.

Hope, J., Lemanski, C., Bastia, T., Moeller, N., Meth, P. and Williams, G., 2019. Childcare and academia: an intervention. International Development Planning Review, pp. 1-15.

Jenkins, K., 2020. Academic motherhood and fieldwork: Juggling time, emotions, and competing demands. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers.



Shreyashi Dasgupta

RGS Microlecture by Shreyashi Dasgupta

In March 2020, our DevGRG postgraduate representative and PhD student at the University of Cambridge, Shreyashi Dasgupta delivered the RGS Microlectures 2020, organised by the Society's Younger Members' Committee. [*Shreyashi's talk \(available to watch online\) was titled – 'In search of a lost house in Bangladesh'.*](#) In this talk, she discusses her poignant but enriching journey in search of a house her grandfather left as a child during the Partition of India in 1947. This informal talk was based on her PhD fieldwork in Bangladesh and centered on themes of positionality, postcolonial geographies and self.

These 10 minutes microlectures give young researchers an opportunity to present their experiences from wide-ranging geographical journeys including their insights from the field.

Resources on decolonising development

Here we include a handful of resources on decolonising development, which may inform your research and teaching.

Acosta, A., Salleh, A., Escobar, A., Kothari, A. & Demaria, F. (Eds.) (2019) Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary. S.I., Tulika Books. This can be accessed online for free.

Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN). A network of academics working on decolonial theory and Africa-centred research.

Alternative Reading List Project at the University of Oxford. (Particularly the sections on colonialism & post-colonialism and race & ethnicity)

Asiyanbi, Adeniyi (2019) 'Decolonising the environment: race, rationalities and crises'. Blog by Sheffield University series.

Convivial Thinking blog, which is an open group of scholars who are thinking, working and writing on all issues related to post- and decolonial approaches in the context of development and development studies.

Oxford podcast series on colonialism. A lot of the episodes talk about decoloniality within and development context.



Join Us

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Twitter: @DevGeogsRG

www.developmentgeographies.org

“Post- and Decolonial Perspectives on Development” Working Group. Working group in the European association of development institute working on Post and decolonial perspectives on development. Includes webinar lectures

Sheffield University's event on 'Rethinking (de)coloniality: how useful are the terms 'global North' vs 'South' yesterday. Video of the event coming soon.

SOAS Learning and teaching tool kit to decolonise the University curriculum

Talk at the University of Sussex by Olivia U. Rutazibwa 'On babies and bathwater: decolonising development studies'
