Symposium: Geographers and/in development
Edited by David Simon

Debating geographers and/in development

David Simon
Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 OEX, England; e-mail: d.simon@rhul.ac.uk

This deliberately provocative set of interventions arises from a session by the same name at the annual conference of the Association of American Geographers in Seattle on 14 April 2011 and reflects closely each panellist's contribution there. The session drew a large audience and generated such animated discussion in view of the topicality of the subject matter that we felt the issues deserved broader exposure among geographers. My thanks go to my coconvenor, Ed Carr, and the other panellists for providing such stimulating contributions and then delivering and editing their manuscripts rapidly.

By virtue of the very nature of their subject and regardless of their immediate motivations, geographers concerned and/or engaged with development—not all of whom would regard themselves as development geographers—have long grappled with dilemmas of positionality, modes and terms of engagement, ethics, data mining, 'pure' versus 'applied' research, or 'making a difference'. All of these constitute dimensions of 'impact' in today's increasingly instrumental higher education lexicon and therein lies one aspect of their topicality. There are no easy answers and most of us have found a workable modus vivendi for ourselves but are forced to reexamine assumptions or practices periodically as a result of changing circumstances or specific experiences.

This panel's composition deliberately reflects some key elements of diversity, including age and gender. Most relevantly to this symposium, two of us were born and partially or wholly formally educated in Africa, two in the USA, and one in the UK; three of us are based in US institutions, one in the UK, and one now in the Netherlands but previously the UK and Singapore; four of us have extensive experience in Africa and three in parts of Asia; while one is currently working on secondment in a bilateral development agency and another has substantial consultancy experience for bilateral and multilateral agencies and NGOs.

This symposium took shape against the backdrop of recent research on aspects of the archaeology of development: in particular the motivations of a particular religiously and/or politically identified cohort of early 'development pioneers' who had escaped or survived the Holocaust (Simon, 2009). Although there has been a marked increase of interest in, and engagement with, spiritual and religious dimensions of development over the last decade, many development practitioners and volunteers from both the Global North and South have always been inspired by religious convictions or spiritual precepts. It often relates to doing something more

active than giving charity—itself an ancient religiously grounded practice in many traditions. Parables about teaching hungry people to fish rather than giving them a fish, and if you save one life you save the world, illustrate this well, as do the origins of powerful contemporary international movements such as the Jubilee 2000 debt relief campaign. The increase in high-profile celebrity campaigning on aid and development issues by the likes of Bob Geldof and Bono has added a highly personalised and often emotive dimension to such giving (eg, Harrison, 2010).

Just as the motivations for development have shifted over time, so too have there been changes in conventional wisdom and accepted or 'best' practice within particular disciplines, institutional and geographical settings, epistemic communities, or communities of practice. However, the dilemmas and ambiguities surrounding these practices and motivations remain and recur, precluding complacency. It was four of these recurring issues that prompted the conference session. First, Ed Carr and I have both had to address our positionalities and motivations in very personal ways as a result of his current secondment to USAID and my advisory work for UN-HABITAT. Such concerns also drove an extensive e-mail debate in the USA during 2010 spawned by an exchange between Ed Carr and Ben Wisner about the ethics and practices of getting one's feet dirty in development work. Kathleen O'Reilly and Ed Carr's contributions below take forward this debate from diametrically opposing, but mutually respectful, perspectives.

Second, many academics and researchers in poor countries—even those with degrees from Northern universities—continue to feel marginalised and exploited by some Northern colleagues who engage with them as junior colleagues and gatekeepers at best, while that foreign education is often less than fully relevant to their professional contexts (Tevera, 1999). Expatriate academics from the global South may also feel marginalised in different ways within Euro-American academia and experience ambivalent—even contradictory—subjectivities, as Nanda Shrestha (1995) articulated so provocatively in one of the earliest such autobiographical essays (see also Cline-Cole, 1999). Conversely, there are many very real difficulties and challenges in setting up and sustaining genuine North–South partnerships, especially in view of often radically different contextual factors and expectations, as well as restrictions imposed by Northern funders (Simon et al, 2003). However, as Ian Yeboah argues, expatriates working in Northern institutions may have distinct leadership advantages as bridge builders and funding fixers.

Third, and reflecting the previous issue closely, many countries in the Global South nowadays seek to restrict entry to foreign researchers and to impose conditions on such entry in an effort to reduce exploitative data mining and promote some local 'ownership' of the outputs of such research, as well as to ensure some training and capacity building for local students and researchers, as Ed Carr argues. However, such visa systems are sometimes abused through use as political filters, while the regimes imposing them may become dictatorial, repressive, and in extreme cases murderous and antidevelopmental. This raises dilemmas about how foreign scholars and practitioners should engage, especially if their work is not supportive of, or acceptable to, the powers that be. In other words, it is not only engagement with Northern donors and agencies that can become problematic. This issue suffuses several arguments in the debate and also more generally feeds oft-heard postcolonial anxieties about crises of representation, some of which resonate in James Sidaway's piece.

Finally, higher education funding cuts in many parts of the world are imposing increasing stress on systems already under pressure. This process has been longstanding in the Global South since the advent of structural adjustment policies in the 1980s but is perhaps now selectively being reversed under the post-Washington Consensus.

Its principal impact has been to drive lecturers to teach multiple shifts or give private lessons, and researchers to undertake consultancy and to join Northern-funded projects (but often at lower 'local' salaries) in order to make up for income shortfalls—and often leading to the inequities addressed by Yeboah.

Radical budget cuts and restructurings are much more recent in the USA and UK, in particular, and have resulted in increasing pressure to 'follow the funds'. Even more pronounced, though, is the advent of the 'impact agenda' in terms of which state funds are being allocated ever more selectively in line with current government or funding agency priorities. These are increasingly instrumental, with the subjects of research having to be more applied and 'relevant', and applicants having to demonstrate 'pathways to impact'. Impact is now to be an important component of the British university sector's Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2014.[1] Geography as a discipline is actually well placed in this respect, and for reasons already identified above, critical development geography more so than most subdisciplines. Accordingly, this symposium will hopefully contribute to a greater appreciation of the broader relevance to the discipline of critical development geographies and geographers.

[1] Predominantly teaching institutions are likely to lose some or all of their current research funding as a result, following the withdrawal of state funding for arts and humanities teaching from 2011. Intrasectoral differentiation among institutions will therefore inevitably increase. The position of teaching institutions in the USA may be less fraught at present.

The ends of development geography

James D Sidaway
Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies, University of
Amsterdam, Nieuwe Prinsengracht 130, 1018 VZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands;
e-mail: j.d.sidaway@uva.nl

Amongst other things, my scholarly interests include spaces and geopolitics in Africa and Asia. Hence I am always being asked to teach development geography. In all the universities where I have worked, I have contributed to such courses. For me, as an academic it is not simply that, as Joel Wainwright (2008, page 10) has said, ''We cannot *not* desire development.'' For, in addition, it seems that development is something that I cannot refuse to teach. That has led me to investigate the complex history of the field. In particular, how did development geography (or the variety of terms used to describe such courses) emerge from and rework prior categories and approaches of colonial and tropical geography (Power and Sidaway, 2004)? In the context of this symposium, it is not hard to discern ways in which such questions are relevant. Investigating origins and patterns; specifying the geopolitics in which development was entangled (decolonisation, US and other Western powers, the Cold War, the birth of the Third World, revolution, and latterly the war on terror) provides plenty of classroom material. All that whilst tackling the dynamics of agrarian or industrial change, finance, or popular cultures.[3]

Development studies, then, is a sterling vehicle for an education that blends liberal arts with understandings of economics and political science and on the way must tackle thorny issues such as power, gender, 'race', and cultural difference. It frequently has practical utility too.[4] But, for this university teacher, it primarily becomes part of an education in geography that requires numeracy, literacy, and cartographic and critical thinking through nuanced engagement with the world. So even though my first choices might be to teach political geography, geographic thought, or the geography of Europe or the Middle East, I find myself routinely asked to teach more general classes on development. Since I have now been doing this for over two decades, allow me two anecdotes and a brief reflection on some issues that have cropped up.

Anecdote 1: In the mid-1990s I was contributing to a course on 'The Third World' at the University of Birmingham, England. As part of a wider discussion about the history and legacy of cultural studies at that university, I recall an iconoclastic colleague asking me a question along the lines of 'you're also teaching about race then?' He had my course in mind. Initially I stumbled to recount the other many things that development articulates. His question was prescient, however, and my response becomes a qualified 'yes, along with much more' through accounts of how axes of

[3] I have always considered literature and cinema vehicles to bring the lives, politics, and subjectivities of development to students. *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (Kapoor, 1985) as a representation of pollution accompanying development in India, *Season of Migration to the North* (Salih, 1969 [1966]; Zohar, 1993) or *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (García Márquez, 1970 [1967]) as meditations on postcolonial conditions, or *The Quiet American* (Greene, 1955) for an account of a Yank abroad, earnestly full of theories and practical ideas, but not as smart as he thinks he is and who ends up with his head blown off in Vietnam.

[4] Here an analogy with physics may be useful. Physics betrays its origins as natural philosophy. It must be about the universe, but is both theoretical and experimental or, to put this in other terms, it is abstract and empirical. A physics education should not be wholly either, unless it is in that applied branch of the subject, known as engineering. In view of the aspirations described in note (1), perhaps English literature or film classes might be good analogies. Neither requires that all their teachers or students will be great novelists or directors though both teach critical and practical skills of broader utility and both may be enhanced by and ask important questions of practitioners.

difference framed development and mobilised those who reworked their meanings (Prashad, 2008).

Anecdote 2: In the early 2000s I was teaching another class on 'geographies of development' at the National University of Singapore. There another sharp colleague asked: 'What is so special about development anyway? Surely these are just economic geographies!' It is true that Singapore ceased to frame change through development (Lee, 2000). In other words, social change and economic life there are not primarily seen as being about 'development',[5] any more than they are in, say, Belgium or the USA. Contrast this with how parallel processes and things are narrated as 'development' in Tanzania or Honduras, for instance. Such differences raise issues about significant intellectual divides (Jones, 2000; Murphy, 2006). My response now refers to the importance of understanding development as a way of seeing, mobilising, and acting. Development is a discourse, apparatus, and aspiration, the geography of which rewards critical scrutiny.

Development, then, is rewarding to study. Moreover, today's geographies of development are hard to keep up with. Amongst the challenges today—and one in which geographers are well placed to contribute—are new maps of development as economic and social change proceeds (Sidaway, 2012). China in Africa, the roles of the Persian Gulf sultanates, or Korean investment in Mongolia are without the "overtones of charity and empire" (Bunting, 2011) that is the baggage of Northern development agencies. But amidst these fresh agendas, the historical geographies of development demand salutatory recognition of how we got here.

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[5] The partial exception (though scale means it hardly applies in Singapore) is the notion of 'regional development'. A fuller account of the overlaps between invocations of development is beyond the scope of this short piece. But consider, for example, how New Deal strategies for Appalachia may have informed Cold War US development policies for the Americas, such as Kennedy's Alliance for Progress.

Insider – outsider collaborations in sub-Saharan African development discourse: easing tensions within the academy

Ian E A Yeboah
Geography, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056, USA; e-mail: yeboahie@muohio.edu

This intervention calls for a crossing of boundaries between insider and outsider geographers generating knowledge on sub-Saharan Africa. I advocate insider – outsider collaboration in generating holistic rather than reductionist knowledge about the region. This necessitates transitioning beyond the competitiveness and tension that structure power relations within the academy (Cline-Cole, 1999). I use the insider – outsider binary only as a convenient heuristic dichotomy since individual positionalities confer a combination of insider and outsider attributes on all intellectuals.

A quarter century ago, knowledge generation on development was dominated by Western intellectuals or Africanist outsiders to sub-Saharan Africa. Subsequently, there has emerged a corps of African intellectuals working in academic institutions in the global core (especially the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada). The positive side of this demographic change is that the region and its developmental issues have become more central in academic research. Despite this changing demography, very limited collaboration exists between insiders and outsiders and there seem to be two parallel tracks of knowledge generation. We are therefore missing an opportunity to get knowledge generation right.

Insider knowledge generation is often conducted by members of the study population (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Kanuha, 2000) who share identity, language, kinship, ancestry, experience base, time culture, and knowledge culture with the group (Asselin, 2003; Innes, 2009; Moran, 2007). By implication, outsider research is the opposite of this. This binary of knowledge generation has, however, been questioned (Moran, 2007) and increasingly the ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in experiences of subjects, and providing accurate representations is what is advocated. The value of knowledge is assessed on the basis of the objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of research (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

Insider geographers are often native to sub-Saharan Africa, have lived the reality of various towns and villages of the region for a substantial part of their lives, and speak native languages. They tend to have both a breadth and a depth of grounding in development issues and may even have attained part of their tertiary education from an institution on the continent. Their knowledge generation is often empirically oriented since they are more interested in pragmatic developmental issues of people of the region. They are often on shoe-string research budgets with only occasional research grants. Their limited research funding is an indication of the ease with which they can access people, institutions, and communities in the region and their difficulty of acquiring research funding in the West. They are in touch with the grassroots of various communities since they still have kin who depend on them for a living. They often visit their ethnic communities for both familial reasons and research. These insider expatriates have become the global African intellectual diaspora who teach and research Africa outside the region. They, however, tend to have limited interaction with sub-Saharan African governments, development agencies, and donors. Effectively, though they are insiders, they have become marginal to development policy and decision making on the region since this is the preserve of governments of the region and development agencies. Generally, sub-Saharan African governments respect the intellectual foundations of these insiders, but they do not see them as the purveyors of development funds.

Outsider geographers of sub-Saharan Africa are foreign born but have very deep experiences of the continent on specific issues. They have commitment to the region and often couch their knowledge generation in theoretical perspectives. They are connected to funding agencies and practitioners in the global core and therefore most of their research is funded by research grants. Because they are not native to Africa, they make selective collaborative contacts with intellectuals living in the region. These collaborations offer outsiders a semblance of access to research subjects. Outsiders are the principal purveyors of research funding and their engagement with practitioners in development agencies in the West means they may act as conduits to development funding for African governments. Although many of their collaborators have been educated in the global core, their individual research output has been restrained by the general economic, political, and social malaise (or survival concerns) that residents of most countries face (Tevera, 1999). Collaborations between sub-Saharan African-based intellectuals and outsiders provide these locally based collaborators with 'expert' funding and publication credit. Because of their connectedness to funding agencies and policy agencies, many outsiders have become gatekeepers in decision making on sub-Saharan African policy, research funding, and publication. These attributes of outsiders sometimes lead to characterisations of careerism.

The tensioned space between insiders and outsiders (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) generating knowledge on development issues of the region is manifest in who gets research funding, attachments to development agencies and policy thinktanks, who attends sessions organised by whom at professional meetings, and even in whose work is cited in 'international' academic publications. My assessment is these binary alternatives of outsider and insider narrow the range of knowledge generation on sub-Saharan African development issues. This is why I call for collaboration between insiders and outsiders to occupy the hyphen between insider–outsider 'third space' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) rather than the simplistic either/or dualities in generating knowledge on sub-Saharan African development.

The way to work within the third space is by insider–outsider collaborations in knowledge generation. By so doing, we will mitigate boundaries between the two groups. We have to take advantage of the maturing of the academy to construct knowledge of development issues of the region (Cline-Cole, 1999). Insider–outsider collaborations will ease the tensions and provide knowledge based on both lived reality and experience. Such collaborations should be both deep and broad, empirically set within theoretical concepts and utilise research funds in more efficient ways. They should also involve grassroots participation in research and link the work of Western practitioners and policy makers, and incorporate both sub-Sahaharan African and Western intellectual capabilities, globally, in an effort to build capacity. Insider–outsider collaboration will ensure knowledge generated on sub-Saharan Africa and her people will stand a better chance of being utilised in policy formulation. After all, our careers as intellectuals should be based on solving problems of poverty, disease, environmental degradation, infant mortality, and joblessness in sub-Saharan Africa rather than building our careers per se.

Development is seductive

Kathleen O'Reilly

Department of Geography, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-3147, USA;
e-mail: koreilly@geos.tamu.edu

Vandhana does not have a latrine of her own. Her husband passed away during the implementation phase of a latrine-building programme taking place in her village in northern Rajasthan, India. Even though her husband had filled out the subsidy request form, she did not get a latrine because he was no longer living during the construction phase of the project and the form was in his name. Vandhana's family and her husband's brother's family live in the same walled compound, with each brother having one room and a kitchen area for his own family. The living brother's family has a toilet and they use it. Although the living brother is uncle to Vandhana's seven children, they do not use his toilet. Instead, they all defecate in the open. Vandhana may live within 15 m of a latrine, but she and her kids use it only in an emergency.

Development's stories are linear tales of progress, but examples like Vandhana's show that linearity is confounded by social messiness like premature death and by social complexities like the family politics of resource use. The unity of 'family' is as mythical as that of 'household' (Folbre, 1986), 'community' (Guijt and Shah, 1998), 'women' (Kandiyoti, 1988), or 'NGO' (O'Reilly, 2007), yet these tropes are played and replayed in development discourses as the foundations for intervention. Social complexities run in opposition to the linear stories that development donors want to tell, the tropes they rely on, and the technical solutions they want to provide. In Vandhana's case three separate targeted interventions between 2001 and 2011 failed to secure her a toilet. The intricacies of social relations, like those in which Vandhana is embedded, complicate development plans in ways that render intended outcomes barely imaginable, let alone guaranteed (eg, the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people in the world without toilets by 2015). Knowing more about Vandhana's situation does not disentangle her from the social relations of power that prevent her from building or using a toilet.

Development discourses deliver a consistent promise that, if we knew just a bit more, if we would tweak this or that technical solution, success is imminent. Language like 'learning by doing' and 'lessons learned' suggests that development planners need more information, and that the needed information is obtainable and clarifying. Development is seductive because it offers a future promise that we *can* learn enough to change people's lives. This seduction operates in two ways. First, development's promise remains always in the future: that is, there will come a point when we *will* know enough, and then development interventions will deliver on their promised positive outcomes. Meanwhile we must work toward the goal of gaining the necessary knowledge. Second, a claim to be able to change lives is a claim to power (Li, 2007), so to pursue knowledge for the same reason is also a claim to power. If the will to know is deployed to gain knowledge for controlling others, then the will to know is also a will to power. Although the will to power may be couched in terms of 'doing good', it remains a desire to know the world in order to manipulate people's behaviour, and their relationships to their government and their environment.

Development geographers are called upon to make our research relevant and to deploy our findings in ways that will make a difference. Calls for relevancy hint that our work is not relevant if it is not useful to development or other experts, despite the fact that planners require social, political, and economic complexities to be reduced to problems to which they can offer solutions (Ferguson, 1994). More significantly, calls for relevancy insinuate that development scholars should claim power that is rightfully

ours by making our work legible to well-funded donor institutions. Their giant budgets make it appear as if lives *really* could be changed. This, too, is a seduction playing on the will to know and the will to power: that is, development geographers should gain and use our expertise to influence the spending of deep-pocketed aid agencies, thereby extending our power over the lives of those affected by such projects. Career ambitions and a desire that our work should matter mean that we are ready to be seduced— seduced by the wealth of institutions that seek to reorganise human–environment relationships and alter flows of resources both in the Global North and the Global South. This aspect of development's seduction is all the more ironic when we consider that often those who know the most about development are project 'beneficiaries' who have felt its negative impacts (Li, 2007).

Development geographers need not be seduced by development's promises of access to power through knowing. We can refuse to provide easy answers to which technical solutions can be applied. We should continue to demonstrate how social complexity confounds development interventions. We must question all that appears natural, commonsense, and disassociated from power, and we must do it reflexively. Development scholars have the option to do what those doing research in development institutions cannot: question whether or not development interventions should be happening at all.

If you are uncomfortable, you are probably doing it right

Edward R Carr
Department of Geography, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208, USA;
and United States Agency for International Development, EGAT/ESP/GCC, Rm. 3.07-030B
RRB, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20523, USA; e-mail: carr@sc.edu

Engagement with international development is fraught with tension. On one side lies a seductive belief in improvement (see Kathleen O'Reilly's essay above) that carries with it an inherent politics of etic judgment that, at its worst, can become a teleological justification for the lifestyles and foreign policy of places like the United States and Europe. On the other is an extractive intellectual industry, where academic research and writing have no impact on development policy and practice, and therefore serve only to further the career of the researcher who gains from those he or she researches. It is not possible to engage development and remain unsullied by one, the other, or both. I see the job of the development geographer as walking between these extremes, balancing the risks of each. Therefore it is incumbent upon each of us to evaluate critically the path we walk between them.

It is very difficult for the contemporary development geographer to make such a critical evaluation. Critical development studies are often based upon a surprisingly thin understanding of the object of research. I can count on the fingers of one hand the development geographers who have worked *in* a development agency.[6] Yet without an understanding of mundane bureaucratic moments such as budgeting, contracting, and monitoring and evaluation it is simply impossible to understand why agencies do what they do, or reliably to identify points of intervention that might change practice in the world.

Though it was a book that brought me to critical development studies, James Ferguson's *The Anti-politics Machine* (1994) is exemplary of this problem. Ferguson's analysis of the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Thaba-Tseka project is constrained largely to the reports and field programmes that are the outputs of this complex process. And while there is no doubt that he is correct about the ways in which the discursive construction of Lesotho by CIDA and various other agencies bore little resemblance to events on the ground, without a link to the institutional practices and structures that are inextricably bound up with these discourses, his explanation for this mismatch comes to rest on a vague discursive determinism. Discourses of development are (re)produced in the often-byzantine interplay of policy, budget, programme, and contracting that currently happens outside the scope of analysis for the bulk of development geographers. Therefore, pointing out the problematic character of the discursive construction of Lesotho by both those associated with the Thaba-Tseka Project and the wider "development industry" is not in itself a productive intervention—we must know when this construction was mobilised, by whom, and to what end. This information cannot be inferred from an organisational chart or a history of organisational actions (eg, Peet, 2003).[7] Instead, it requires ethnographic attention in its own right.

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[6] Receiving a contract from a development agency as a consultant or subcontractor does not count, as in that case one is only seeing the end product of a long process of policy building, budgeting, programming, and contracting.

[7] It is not enough to diagram the internal structure of a development agency, as this structure is merely a container (re)produced by and productive of the lived experience of these structures, and the actual flows of information and decision making that take place in everyday meetings and e-mails. The actual flows often bear little resemblance to what one might expect from looking at an organisational chart. In understaffed agencies, as most are, it is startling the number of events and outcomes that are influenced by the simple issue of who has time to look over the documents or attend the meeting in question.

A very large proportion of critical development geography (and critical development studies more broadly) rests on this sort of incomplete analysis, resulting in critiques and questions that often have limited relevance to the experience of development practice. The mismatch of the products of such analysis with the experiences of those who occupy positions in development institutions is a source of the widening gulf between academic studies of development and the work of the development agencies we criticise and seek to influence (but compare O'Reilly's position on seeking such influence). This suggests that productive critical interventions require greater direct engagement with development agencies.

Why, then, have so few development geographers (especially critical development geographers) sought out such engagement? I think that it has something to do with an unachievable desire to unsettle development without unsettling ourselves. For example, limiting ourselves to the critique of development practice still invokes an ethics of engagement, for if these critiques come too late to be acted upon, or do not speak to the institutional context from which these practices spring, the end result will be writing accessible only by other academics and without benefit to those with whom we work in the Global South. This de facto extractive knowledge industry can hardly be seen as liberatory or progressive, and its existence should unsettle us.

On the other hand, holding ourselves apart from development practice out of a concern for being co-opted by (or used to legitimise) problematic political – economic agendas only makes sense if we treat development organisations as largely unchanging monoliths. This is a terribly ironic failure for a body of critical scholarship that otherwise spends so much time identifying and celebrating difference. Development agencies are not monoliths. For example, within these agencies are individuals deeply concerned about the rights of those affected by new forest carbon programmes, who object to the framing of development objectives in terms of economic growth, and who lament the historical amnesia that marks the cyclical reemergence of problematic and failed development initiatives. When we see development organisations as sites of contestation, unsettling questions arise. What is the point of critically informed scholarship if not to provide support to individuals in their struggles to reshape policy, budget, and programming into something more liberatory and productive? What good will the most progressive, community-level effort come to if it can be ploughed under by a single bad Country Development Cooperative Strategy (USAID) or Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (World Bank)? What is the point of studying development, if not to intervene?

We cannot unsettle development without unsettling ourselves, as development requires us to think about the ideas of change and progress, and our role in both. I wrestle with the 'closet modernist' that emerges, for example, when I find myself arguing that the application of critical social theory to situations nominally called 'development challenges' can result in different and arguably more productive empirical understandings of events in the world (eg, Carr, 2008a; 2008b; 2011; Carr and McCusker, 2009; Carr et al, 2009). I see this struggle as productive, forcing critical (re)evaluation of my own positionality, motivations, and expectations for such interventions. It is not a struggle that will come to a neat resolution. If indeed the path of the critical development geographer is between the equally untenable poles of uncritical teleological self-justification and self-promoting intellectual resource extraction, then it is a path that is constantly fraught with tension. If you are unsettled, it means you are paying attention to this tension and trying to address it. If you are uncomfortable, you are probably doing it right.

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