CHAPTER 14

EADI Roundtable: Recasting Development Studies in Times of Multiple Crises

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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.

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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

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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.

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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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