



BOOK REVIEW

Challenging Global Development: *Towards Decoloniality and Justice*

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

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-30308-1>

“A Review of Decolonial Praxis in Development Studies”

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Received: January 11, 2026; Accepted: March 29, 2026; Published: May 21, 2026

Abstract: *This review critically assesses Challenging Global Development: Towards Decoloniality and Justice, edited by Henning Melber, Uma Kothari, Laura Camfield, and Kees Biekart (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), as a timely and provocative contribution to the decolonisation of development studies. The review employs a threefold analytical framework examining: (i) theoretical contributions to post-development and decolonial thought, (ii) epistemological innovations in research methodology and knowledge production, and (iii) practical implications for pedagogy, research ethics, and development practice. The edited volume brings together scholars from the Global South and North to challenge essentialist ontological assumptions underpinning mainstream development, particularly those embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals framework. Key strengths include the volume’s grounding in grounded alternatives, such as India’s Vikalp Sangam process, Zapatista self-rule in Mexico, and Indigenous resistance to extractivism in Latin America, and its attention to relational accountability, refusal, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty in research ethics. However, the review identifies limitations, including an underdeveloped engagement with degrowth and South-South cooperation’s contradictory relationship with decoloniality, as well as challenges in translating decolonial pedagogy within career-oriented university programmes. While the volume successfully deconstructs development’s coloniality, it leaves unresolved whether “development” itself remains a viable category after decolonisation. This review concludes that the book is an essential resource for scholars and practitioners committed to epistemic justice, though future work must more concretely address material reparations, redistributive justice, and the tensions between local autonomy and large-scale systemic transformation in an era of polycrisis.*

Keywords: *Decoloniality, Post-development, Epistemic justice, Pluriverse, Relational accountability*

1.0 Overview of the Contents of the Book

Challenging Global Development: Towards Decoloniality and Justice, edited by Henning Melber, Uma Kothari, Laura Camfield, and Kees Biekart, represents a significant intervention in contemporary development studies, published as an open-access volume in Palgrave Macmillan’s EADI Global Development Series (Melber *et al.*, 2024). The book emerges from a moment of profound global crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, escalating geopolitical tensions, and the deepening ecological emergency, to interrogate the

foundational assumptions upon which development discourse and practice have been built. As the editors note in their introductory chapter, these multiple and interlinked crises demand more than incremental adjustments; they require a fundamental reconsideration of what development studies might look like when approached through the lenses of decoloniality and justice.

The volume is structured into fourteen chapters, bookended by a substantive editorial introduction and concluding



reflections, including a documented EADI Roundtable discussion. The organization moves progressively from theoretical deconstruction towards grounded alternatives and practical methodologies for decolonial research and pedagogy.

Chapter 1 (Biekart, Camfield, Kothari, and Melber) sets the stage by framing the volume's central concerns: the need to move beyond North-South dichotomies, the urgency of decolonising knowledge production, and the cultivation of new forms of solidarity rooted in mutual recognition rather than paternalistic aid relations. The editors draw on key thinkers including Mignolo (2011), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), and wa Thiong'o (1993) to articulate a vision of development studies that acknowledges its colonial entanglements while actively working towards epistemic freedom.

Chapter 2 (Juan Telleria) offers a provocative ontological critique of development thinking. Telleria argues that while development studies has internalised political and epistemological critiques over the past fifty years, it has neglected critical reflection on the ontological assumptions that sustain development logics. Drawing on Heidegger's distinction between ontic, ontological, and fundamental ontology, Telleria identifies three essentialist assumptions underpinning mainstream development: the belief in a universal human essence, theoretical individualism, and universalism. Through an analysis of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he demonstrates how these assumptions impose important limitations on understanding and addressing global issues.

Chapter 3 (Aram Ziai) focuses specifically on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), arguing that they reiterate the promise of "development" while legitimising the capitalist world order. Ziai challenges the claimed successes in poverty reduction as statistically manipulated and highlights how the SDG narrative neglects the global economic structures more relevant to poverty than Official Development Assistance. Drawing on three empirical cases, Enda Graf Sahel in Senegal, the Dongria Khond's resistance to mining in India, and Zapatista self-rule in Mexico, Ziai illustrates post-development alternatives that embody different models of politics, economy, and knowledge outside Western frameworks.

Chapter 4 (Ashish Kothari) presents the Radical Ecological Democracy (eco-swaraj) framework emerging from India's Vikalp Sangam (Alternatives Confluence) process. Kothari describes how this network of grassroots initiatives, ranging from sustainable agriculture and renewable energy to decentralised governance and craft revival, embodies systemic alternatives to development predicated on economic democracy, ecological integrity, direct democracy, cultural

diversity, and social justice. The chapter's "Flower of Transformation" diagram visually articulates how these interconnected spheres constitute a holistic alternative to the dominant growth-oriented paradigm.

Chapter 5 (Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni) places Africa's elusive development within the *longue durée* of structural adjustments dating to the fifteenth century. Rather than focusing narrowly on the Washington Consensus-driven Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s and 1990s, Ndlovu-Gatsheni identifies five phases of structural adjustment: mercantile enslavement, physical colonisation, Cold War coloniality, neoliberal structural adjustment, and hyper-globalisation. Drawing on the work of Rodney (1972), Amin (1972), and wa Thiong'o (2016), he demonstrates how Africa's position within the contemporary global order has been systematically constrained by these successive waves of external adjustment.

Chapter 6 (José Castro-Sotomayor and Paola Minoia) introduces the concept of ecocultural identity as a framework for pluriversal transitions. Drawing on research from Latin America on territorial justice, Indigenous movements, and environmental governance, the authors argue that post-development practitioners must depart from culturalist and anthropocentric notions of identity, embrace place-based embodied experiences, and attend to nonhuman voices and agency. The chapter engages with Indigenous concepts such as Kawsak Sacha (living forest) and Sumak Kawsay (buen vivir) to illustrate alternative ontologies of territory and territoriality.

Chapter 7 (Helena Zeweri and Tessa Farmer) examines the challenges of implementing decolonial pedagogy in area studies programmes within US higher education, specifically focusing on Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) and South Asia. The authors explore how the entanglement of area studies with US imperial policy, from Cold War funding to post-9/11 security logics, makes decolonisation an ethical as well as epistemological problem. They offer practical reflections on curricular design, including the centring of subaltern voices, attention to South-South relations, and pedagogical strategies for moving beyond deconstruction towards reconstruction.

Chapter 8 (Lauren Tynan), writing as a Pairebeenne Trawlowlway woman from lutruwita/Tasmania, challenges the adequacy of university human research ethics processes that enable researchers to extract knowledge, publish it, and become experts. Tynan theorises relational accountability, refusal, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty as frameworks for moving beyond data collection towards ethical engagement with Indigenous knowledges. She proposes understanding data as knowledge and the field as a place of relations, not a research location for fly-in-fly-out extraction. The chapter



includes practical reflections on authorship, copyright, and co-authorship as sites of decolonial practice.

Chapter 9 (M. Teresa Armijos, Luis David Acosta, Eliza S. Calder, and colleagues) presents a collective, polyvocal narrative exploring disaster risk research through decolonial methodologies. Drawing on a participatory action research project connecting volcanic disaster survivors from Guatemala, Ecuador, and Colombia, the authors share personal reflections on what it means to produce knowledge by learning to feel “with the other” rather than studying the other. The chapter incorporates visual art, embroidery, and storytelling as legitimate modes of knowledge production, challenging conventional hierarchies between researcher and researched.

Chapters 10 through *13* offer epilogues that reflect on the volume’s themes from different perspectives. Alfredo Saad-Filho (*Chapter 10*) highlights the contested nature of development and the limitations of middle-range theories, proposing that post-development approaches inevitably replicate the forms they critique. He outlines challenges to thinking about development amidst multiple, overlapping, system-wide crises, including economic stagnation, democratic erosion, and environmental collapse. Emma Mawdsley (*Chapter 11*) examines South-South Cooperation’s relationship with decoloniality, noting the lack of dialogue between degrowth movements and post-development scholars, while identifying both achievements and contradictions within contemporary SSC. Caitlin Scott (*Chapter 12*) critiques the managerialisation of development, examining how the aid industrial complex’s increasingly rigid systems of upward accountability constrain decolonising efforts. Lata Narayanaswamy (*Chapter 13*) reflects on the centrality of coloniality to academic conceptualisations of development, challenging researchers to recognise their own role in the discipline’s persistent ahistoricity before proposing solutions.

Chapter 14 documents the EADI Roundtable “Re-casting Development Studies in Times of Multiple Crises,” featuring contributions from Uma Kothari, Henrice Altink, Alfredo Saad-Filho, and Melissa Leach. The roundtable engages with the challenges facing development studies as a field, including the co-optation of radical ideas, the materiality of decolonisation (including repatriation and reparations), and the need for new solidarities in an era of intersecting crises.

Throughout the volume, the editors and contributors maintain a consistent focus on moving beyond critique towards construction. While acknowledging the danger that decolonial discourse may be co-opted into the mainstream, becoming what Kothari warns could be “a more acceptable, palatable version of a radical anti-colonialism”, the book nevertheless insists on the urgency of imagining and enacting

alternatives. The inclusion of diverse voices, including early-career researchers from outside Europe and North America, Indigenous scholars, and practitioners, reflects the editors’ commitment to reshaping not only what development studies studies, but who produces its knowledge and from what positionalities.

2.0 Objective of Reviewing the Book

The objective of this review is to critically assess *Challenging Global Development: Towards Decoloniality and Justice* (Melber *et al.*, 2024) as a contribution to the ongoing project of decolonising development studies, examining its theoretical innovations, methodological interventions, and practical implications for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. To evaluate the volume’s assertions, analytical frameworks, and practical utility, this review employs a critical thematic analysis approach that integrates qualitative assessment with comparative contextual analysis. Three specific evaluative criteria are employed: (i) theoretical contributions to decolonial and post-development scholarship, examining how the volume engages with and extends foundational works by Escobar (1995), Mignolo (2011), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), and Quijano (2000); (ii) methodological and pedagogical innovations, assessing the volume’s proposals for decolonising research ethics, curriculum design, and knowledge production practices as articulated by contributors including Tynan (*Chapter 8*), Armijos *et al.* (*Chapter 9*), and Zeweri and Farmer (*Chapter 7*); and (iii) practical relevance and political implications, examining the volume’s applicability for development practitioners, policymakers, and activists seeking to enact decolonial alternatives within and beyond the aid industrial complex (Scott, *Chapter 12*; Mawdsley, *Chapter 11*).

This review seeks to determine the volume’s effectiveness in addressing what the editors identify as the central challenge confronting development studies in the current conjuncture: moving beyond the “dead ends” of critical research that excels at identifying problems but struggles to articulate viable alternatives (Biekart *et al.*, 2024, p. 5). The COVID-19 pandemic, the escalating climate emergency, and the return of great power rivalry have revealed the fault lines of global inequality more starkly than ever, yet as Kothari notes in the EADI Roundtable, “when no environmental crisis, health crisis, war, poverty, or economic crisis is deemed alarming enough to fundamentally change the structures and systems that create and maintain inequalities, we clearly need new tools to counter these deep injustices” (Kothari, 2024, p. 238). The volume positions itself as a response to this impasse, offering not only deconstruction of development’s coloniality but also constructive pathways towards pluriversal futures.



A central objective of this review is to assess whether the volume successfully navigates what Tuck and Yang (2012) have identified as the central risk of decolonial discourse within academic settings: the tendency for “decolonisation” to become a metaphor evacuated of its material demands for the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. As Kothari (2024, p. 241) explicitly acknowledges in her roundtable contribution, drawing on Tuck and Yang, “decolonisation is not a metaphor, giving back land, objects, and resources are hugely significant.” The review therefore examines the extent to which the volume’s contributors move beyond symbolic or epistemological decolonisation towards engagement with what Kothari terms “the critical, material work of redistribution and reparation” (p. 242). This includes assessing the volume’s treatment of repatriation of stolen cultural objects, demands for reparations for slavery and colonisation, and the material dimensions of extractive capitalism that continue to structure North-South relations.

Furthermore, this review aims to evaluate the volume’s success in amplifying voices and perspectives that have historically been marginalised within development studies, particularly those of Indigenous scholars, early-career researchers located outside Europe and North America, and practitioners working at the grassroots level. The editors explicitly state their intention to “bring in new voices” and to support “the emergence of a new generation of scholars able to challenge ‘normalised coloniality’ in its globalised context” (Biekart *et al.*, 2024, p. 3, citing Langdon, 2013). The review assesses whether the volume achieves this aim, examining the positionalities of contributors, the nature of their epistemic commitments, and the extent to which the volume’s structure and editorial framing amplify rather than domesticate radical perspectives.

The review also seeks to identify gaps and limitations within the volume’s treatment of key themes. Following the approach of Ngowi and Jesse (2024) in their review of the *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, this review employs comparative contextual analysis to assess the volume’s geographical coverage, theoretical inclusivity, and attention to emerging paradigms. Specific questions guiding this assessment include: To what extent does the volume engage with feminist decolonial scholarship (Lugones, 2010; Vergès, 2021) and the intersectional dimensions of coloniality? How adequately does it address the role of South-South Cooperation and emerging powers such as China, India, and Brazil in reproducing or challenging colonial matrices of power (Mawdsley, *Chapter 11*; see also Bond & Garcia, 2015)? Does the volume substantively engage with degrowth and ecological economics as frameworks for post-development transformation (Hickel, 2020; Kallis *et al.*, 2018), or does it remain largely within the orbit of post-development as articulated in the 1990s? And finally, how does the volume address the tension between

local autonomy, central to the pluriversal imaginary, and the need for large-scale, coordinated action to address global challenges such as climate change, pandemic response, and financial regulation?

A further objective is to evaluate the volume’s accessibility and practical utility for different audiences. While the book is published open access, a deliberate choice by the editors to make it fully accessible, the review assesses whether its theoretical sophistication and disciplinary framing render it primarily a contribution to academic debate or whether it offers actionable insights for practitioners working within development organisations, policymakers in national and multilateral institutions, and activists engaged in grassroots struggles. This includes examining the volume’s treatment of what Scott (2024, p. 215) calls “the aid industrial complex”, the managerial and bureaucratic systems that constrain decolonial efforts within mainstream development institutions, and whether it offers concrete strategies for navigating or transforming these constraints.

Finally, this review aims to situate the volume within the broader landscape of decolonial scholarship in development studies, identifying its distinctive contributions as well as its points of convergence and divergence with related interventions. Key comparative reference points include the *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (Kothari *et al.*, 2019), which provides a comprehensive inventory of alternatives from around the world; the work of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives network; and critical assessments of the SDG framework by scholars such as Hickel (2016) and Esteva (2014). As such, by locating the volume within this intellectual genealogy, the review seeks to clarify its specific contribution to the field and to identify directions for future research and practice.

Ultimately, this review aims to assist scholars, students, policymakers, and practitioners in evaluating the volume’s worth as a resource for understanding and addressing the challenges of decolonial transformation in development. As the editors argue, the stakes could scarcely be higher: the multiple crises confronting humanity, ecological, economic, political, and epidemiological, cannot be adequately addressed within the frameworks that produced them. Whether development studies can reinvent itself as a field capable of supporting genuinely transformative change, rather than merely administering the symptoms of a colonial-capitalist system in crisis, is the central question animating this volume and, accordingly, the central focus of this review.

3.0 Importance of the Arguments and Justifications

The arguments and justifications advanced in *Challenging Global Development: Towards Decoloniality and Justice* are



of considerable significance for advancing both scholarship and practice in development studies, particularly at a moment when the field faces what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, p. 42) terms a “pedagogy of unlearning” as part of epistemological decolonisation. The volume’s central contention, that development studies must undergo a fundamental ontological and epistemological reckoning rather than merely incorporating decolonial rhetoric into existing frameworks, constitutes an important intervention in debates that have too often remained at the level of symbolic recognition rather than structural transformation (Tuck & Yang, 2012). The importance of the volume's arguments can be assessed across four interconnected dimensions: its critique of essentialist ontologies underpinning mainstream development; its documentation and theorisation of grounded alternatives; its methodological innovations for decolonial research; and its implications for institutional practice and policy.

3.1 Ontological Critique and the Limits of Development Thinking

Perhaps the most significant theoretical contribution of the volume is Juan Telleria’s (2024) ontological critique of development thinking (Chapter 2). While development studies has internalised political critiques (from dependency theory to postcolonialism) and epistemological critiques (from post-development to feminist standpoint theory), Telleria argues that it has neglected critical reflection on the ontological assumptions that sustain development logics. Drawing on Heidegger’s (1962) distinction between ontic, ontological, and fundamental ontology, Telleria identifies three essentialist assumptions underpinning mainstream development: the belief in a universal human essence, theoretical individualism (the assumption that development occurs at the level of the individual rather than society), and universalism (the claim that essential human characteristics are present in every human being regardless of historical or cultural context).

The importance of this argument lies in its demonstration that the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, despite its progressive rhetoric of “leaving no one behind,” remains tethered to these essentialist assumptions. As Telleria (2024, p. 26) shows, the SDGs’ grounding in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reproduces an ontological framework in which “the individual person and its essential characteristics have a theoretical priority in the conceptualisation of the whole framework.” This has two significant political consequences: first, an excessive focus on the individual at the expense of collective, structural, and historical dimensions of inequality; second, the elimination of political debate between different ways of understanding economic, political, and social issues, since development becomes framed as the self-evident realisation of a pre-given human essence.

This argument resonates with longstanding critiques of human development approaches advanced by scholars such as Gasper (2004) and Deneulin (2006), who have questioned the philosophical adequacy of the capabilities approach’s universalist assumptions. However, Telleria’s intervention goes further by situating this critique within a broader decolonial framework that challenges the very onto-epistemological foundations of Western modernity. As Mignolo (2011, p. xvii) argues, “the rhetoric of modernity is Salvation (Christianity, civilization, development, market, democracy) and the logic of coloniality is the hidden agenda.” Telleria’s ontological critique makes visible this hidden agenda by demonstrating how development thinking’s essentialist assumptions foreclose rather than open debate about the global futures we might collectively desire.

3.2 Grounded Alternatives and the Pluriversal Imaginary

A second major contribution of the volume is its documentation and theorisation of grounded alternatives to development, particularly in the chapters by Ziai (2024), Kothari (2024a), Castro-Sotomayor and Minoia (2024), and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2024). Unlike earlier post-development scholarship that was sometimes critiqued for offering “critique but no construction” (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000, p. 182), this volume provides detailed empirical accounts of alternatives that are already being practised by communities around the world.

Ashish Kothari’s (2024a) presentation of the Radical Ecological Democracy (eco-swaraj) framework emerging from India’s Vikalp Sangam process is particularly significant. Drawing on a network of over twenty regional and thematic “confluences” organised across India since 2013, Kothari demonstrates how initiatives in sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, decentralised governance, craft revival, and community-led conservation collectively embody what he terms the “Flower of Transformation”, five interconnected spheres of transformation comprising economic democracy, ecological integrity, direct and delegated democracy, cultural diversity and knowledge democracy, and social well-being and justice (Kothari, 2024a, pp. 60-61). The importance of this framework lies in its insistence that alternatives to development cannot be reduced to single-issue interventions but must address the systemic interconnections between ecological, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of social life.

The importance of these grounded alternatives is further underscored by Ziai’s (2024) demonstration, through case studies of Enda Graf Sahel in Senegal, the Dongria Khond’s resistance to mining in India, and Zapatista self-rule in Mexico, that post-development practices are not merely theoretical possibilities but existing realities. Ziai (2024, p.



47) shows that communities such as the Dongria Khond do not simply reject development in toto but practice what Matthews (2019, p. 111) describes as “the picking apart of development, taking what is useful and discarding what is not”, a selective engagement that includes wanting roads, schools, and hospitals, but on their own terms (e.g., local schools with Adivasi teachers speaking Kui, not boarding schools in foreign languages). This nuanced understanding challenges both neoliberal triumphalism and romanticised anti-development positions, offering instead a pragmatics of decolonial transformation grounded in the lived experiences of communities.

Castro-Sotomayor and Minoia (2024) extend this pluriversal imaginary through their concept of “ecocultural identity,” which troubles the tendency to conceive identity solely in cultural terms without meaningful consideration of the ecological dimension that intersects with but also encompasses sociocultural identifications. Drawing on Indigenous concepts from Latin America, including *Kawsak Sacha* (living forest) as articulated by the Kichwa people of Sarayaku, and *Sumak Kawsay* (buen vivir), they argue that post-development practitioners must attend to nonhuman voices and agency. As Gualinga (2016, p. 2) has stated, *Kawsak Sacha* “serves as a viable economic model” in which “a living forest is an alive and conscious subject of law.” The importance of this argument for development studies cannot be overstated: it challenges the anthropocentrism that has pervaded even critical development thinking and opens space for what Abram *et al.* (2020) term the “Humilocene”, an epoch of humility in which humans recognise their interdependence with the more-than-human world.

3.3 Methodological Innovations for Decolonial Research

The volume’s contributions to decolonial research methodology are particularly significant, especially in the chapters by Tynan (2024) and Armijos *et al.* (2024). Lauren Tynan’s (2024) theorisation of relational accountability, refusal, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty offers a powerful challenge to conventional university research ethics processes, which she argues enable researchers to take knowledge, publish it, and become experts. Drawing on the work of Wilson (2016), Simpson (2014), and Tuck and Yang (2014), Tynan proposes moving away from concepts of “data collection” and “fieldwork” by understanding data as knowledge and the field as a place of relations rather than a research location for fly-in-fly-out extraction.

The importance of Tynan’s argument lies in its demonstration that ethical research practice requires more than bureaucratic compliance with human research ethics protocols. As she writes, “relational accountability teaches that stronger ethical research is not necessarily found through stricter human research ethics policies at the university.

Stronger ethics is found through relationships, which is a relational practice of research” (Tynan, 2024, p. 148). This resonates with the work of other Indigenous scholars who have articulated research ethics grounded in Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, including Smith (2012), Kovach (2009), and Martin (2008). The practical implications are significant: researchers must advocate for stronger research protocols, ongoing relations of accountability, and genuine engagement with Intellectual Property, copyright, and co-authorship.

Armijos *et al.* (2024) offer a complementary contribution through their polyvocal, affective narrative of research with volcanic disaster survivors in Guatemala, Ecuador, and Colombia. The chapter’s distinctive methodological innovation lies in its willingness to centre emotion, vulnerability, and embodied experience as legitimate modes of knowledge production. As the authors state, decolonising research “requires changes in the way in which knowledge is produced from ‘the outside’ in academia. Knowledge needs to feel” (Armijos *et al.*, 2024, p. 189). The chapter’s use of art, embroidery, and storytelling as research methods, including the creation of a quilt stitched together from fragments contributed by participants across three countries, demonstrates what Fals Borda (2009) terms *sentipensar* (thinking-feeling) as a methodological orientation. This approach challenges the Cartesian dualism between reason and emotion that has structured Western scientific rationality, offering instead what Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 17) describe as “radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought.”

3.4 Implications for Institutional Practice and Policy

The volume’s arguments carry significant implications for institutional practice and policy, particularly as elaborated in the chapters by Zeweri and Farmer (2024), Scott (2024), Mawdsley (2024), and the EADI Roundtable (Kothari *et al.*, 2024). Zeweri and Farmer’s examination of decolonial pedagogy in area studies programmes in US higher education reveals the structural constraints on decolonial transformation within institutions that remain embedded in what Chatterjee and Maira (2014, p. 7) term the “imperial university.” The importance of their analysis lies in its refusal of easy solutions: decolonising curricula cannot be reduced to diversifying syllabi or including more subaltern voices, but requires structural changes in how universities are funded, how knowledge is valued, and how career pathways are structured. As they note, many students pursuing area studies degrees are oriented towards careers in development, national security, or policy, trajectories that may be incommensurable with a decolonial project that



centres Indigenous sovereignty and land back (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Caitlin Scott's (2024) critique of development management as a form of "colonisation by bureaucratisation" is similarly important for its refusal to treat decolonisation as merely a matter of diversifying leadership or changing organisational language. Drawing on the work of Power (1999) and Shore and Wright (2015), Scott demonstrates how the results agenda, audit regimes, and standardised project management frameworks constitute technologies of governmentality that extend colonial power relations. The importance of this argument lies in its insistence that "the increased standardisation of ever more invasive tools and technologies for planning and management in the international aid sector amount to a kind of colonisation by bureaucratisation" (Scott, 2024, p. 215). Efforts to "localise" aid or to remove racist language from organisational documents, while potentially valuable, do not address the fundamental epistemic and institutional structures that reproduce colonial hierarchies.

Finally, the volume's engagement with reparations and repatriation as material dimensions of decolonisation marks an important departure from much decolonial discourse in development studies. As Kothari (2024b, p. 242) argues in the EADI Roundtable, "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." This framing aligns with demands from the Caribbean Reparations Commission (CARICOM), which since 2013 has advanced a ten-point plan for reparations including formal apologies, debt cancellation, and investment in public health and education (CARICOM, 2014). The importance of centering reparations within development studies lies in its insistence that decolonisation cannot be reduced to epistemological or cultural recognition but must address the material legacies of colonial extraction.

In sum, the arguments and justifications advanced in *Challenging Global Development* are important because they refuse to treat decolonisation as a metaphor, insist on the reality of grounded alternatives already being practised by communities around the world, offer concrete methodologies for decolonial research that centre relational accountability and emotion, and connect epistemological critique to material demands for redistribution and reparation. The volume thus positions itself within what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, p. 30) calls the "decolonial turn", a movement that "does not only seek to deconstruct

Eurocentric knowledge, but also to construct other knowledges that have been silenced and marginalised."

4. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Book

Challenging Global Development: Towards Decoloniality and Justice presents a compelling and timely intervention in development studies, yet like any edited volume of this scope, it exhibits both significant strengths and notable weaknesses. This section evaluates the book's contributions across multiple dimensions, theoretical rigour, empirical grounding, methodological innovation, geographical and thematic inclusivity, accessibility, and practical applicability, while identifying areas where future scholarship might build upon or challenge its arguments.

4.1 Strengths

Theoretical Rigour and Conceptual Innovation

One of the volume's primary strengths is its theoretical sophistication, particularly its willingness to move beyond epistemological critique to engage with ontological questions that have been neglected in development studies. Telleria's (2024) distinction between ontic, ontological, and fundamental ontology, drawn from Heidegger (1962), provides a framework for understanding how development thinking's essentialist assumptions impose limitations on addressing global issues. This represents an advance over earlier critiques that focused primarily on development's political economy or discursive construction (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994) without interrogating the ontological presuppositions that make development thinkable in the first place. As Telleria (2024, p. 23) argues, "ontological research focuses on the conditions of possibility of the existence of an object", a question that development studies has largely failed to ask about its own object of inquiry.

Similarly, the volume's engagement with the concept of the pluriverse (Escobar, 2020; Kothari *et al.*, 2019) across multiple chapters represents a significant conceptual contribution. Castro-Sotomayor and Minoia (2024) extend this framework through their concept of ecocultural identity, which bridges the gap between cultural and ecological dimensions of identity that have too often been treated separately in development discourse. Their argument that "all identities are ecocultural because we are made of, part of, emerging from, and constantly contributing to both ecology and culture" (Milstein & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020, p. xix, cited in Castro-Sotomayor & Minoia, 2024, p. 98) challenges the anthropocentrism that pervades even critical development thinking. This conceptual innovation opens space for what Abram *et al.* (2020) term the "Humilocene", an epoch requiring humility in the face of nonhuman agency and interdependence.



Grounded Empirical Documentation of Alternatives

A second major strength is the volume's extensive documentation of grounded alternatives to development, moving beyond the critique of development to offer constructive examples of alternatives already being practised. Kothari's (2024a) account of the Vikalp Sangam process in India, which by 2022 had organised over twenty regional and thematic confluences bringing together initiatives in sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, decentralised governance, craft revival, and community-led conservation, provides compelling evidence that alternatives are not merely theoretical possibilities but existing realities. The "Flower of Transformation" framework (Kothari, 2024a, pp. 60-61), with its five interconnected spheres of economic democracy, ecological integrity, direct and delegated democracy, cultural diversity and knowledge democracy, and social well-being and justice, offers a holistic framework for understanding how these diverse initiatives might coalesce into systemic transformation.

Ziai's (2024) three case studies, Enda Graf Sahel in Senegal, the Dongria Khond's resistance to Vedanta mining in India, and Zapatista self-rule in Mexico, similarly demonstrate the diversity of post-development practices. Particularly valuable is Ziai's nuanced treatment of the Dongria Khond's selective engagement with development, showing that they do not simply reject roads, schools, and hospitals but demand these on their own terms: local schools with Adivasi teachers speaking Kui, solar electricity rather than hazardous high-tension wires, and roads that are not tarred to prevent the influx of mining trucks (Taptati *et al.*, 2018, cited in Ziai, 2024, p. 47). This challenges both neoliberal triumphalism and romanticised anti-development positions, offering instead what Matthews (2019, p. 111) describes as "the picking apart of development, taking what is useful and discarding what is not."

Methodological Innovation and Polyvocality

The volume's methodological contributions, particularly in Chapters 8 and 9, represent a significant strength. Tynan's (2024) theorisation of relational accountability, refusal, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty offers a powerful alternative to conventional research ethics frameworks that treat ethics as bureaucratic compliance rather than ongoing relational practice. Her argument that "stronger ethics is found through relationships, which is a relational practice of research" (Tynan, 2024, p. 148) aligns with Indigenous research methodologies articulated by Wilson (2016), Kovach (2009), and Smith (2012), while extending these insights to the specific context of development research. Her practical recommendations, including co-authorship with knowledge holders, transparent protocols for intellectual property, and the decentring of the "lone wolf researcher" (Kanngieser *et*

al., forthcoming), provide actionable guidance for researchers seeking to practice relational accountability.

Armijos *et al.* (2024) push methodological innovation further through their polyvocal, affective narrative that includes visual art, embroidery, and storytelling as legitimate modes of knowledge production. The chapter's inclusion of watercolour paintings by Pablo Sanaguano (Figures 9.2-9.5), which respond to the words of disaster survivors, demonstrates what Fals Borda (2009) terms *sentipensar* (thinking-feeling) as a methodological orientation. The authors' willingness to centre emotion and vulnerability, including Tynan's account of crying after her first research trip, and Lina Zambrano's narrative of childhood memories of the Armero disaster, challenges the Cartesian dualism between reason and emotion that has structured Western scientific rationality. As they state, "decolonising research requires changes in the way in which knowledge is produced from 'the outside' in academia. Knowledge needs to feel" (Armijos *et al.*, 2024, p. 189).

Attention to Materiality and Reparations

A further strength is the volume's insistence on the material dimensions of decolonisation, moving beyond symbolic or epistemological recognition. Kothari's (2024b) roundtable contribution, drawing on Tuck and Yang (2012), argues forcefully that "decolonisation is not a metaphor, giving back land, objects, and resources are hugely significant" (p. 242). Her discussion of repatriation initiatives, including the Manchester Museum's return of sacred objects to Aboriginal communities in Australia, and the agreement between Germany and Nigeria for the return of Benin Bronzes, demonstrates how object repatriation can contribute to "truth-telling about our Nation's history" and the healing of "spiritual hurts and the intergenerational trauma that still exists today" (p. 244, citing a Traditional Owner). While these examples remain marginal to mainstream development discourse, Kothari's insistence on centering them within decolonial development studies represents an important corrective.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2024) macro-historical analysis of five phases of structural adjustment in Africa similarly foregrounds material extraction and dispossession as central to understanding development's elusiveness. Drawing on wa Thiong'o (2016), who identifies "four journeys of capital: slave trade, slave plantation system, colonialism and global debt slavery" (p. 84), Ndlovu-Gatsheni demonstrates that Africa's contemporary position within the global order has been systematically constrained by successive waves of external adjustment dating to the fifteenth century. This *longue durée* perspective challenges the tendency in development studies to treat underdevelopment as a problem of domestic policy failure rather than the outcome of centuries of extractive relations.



4.2 Weaknesses

Geographical Imbalance and Limited Engagement with Asia

Despite the editors' stated intention to "bring in new voices including those of early-career researchers located outside Europe and North America" (Biekart *et al.*, 2024, p. 3), the volume exhibits a noticeable geographical imbalance. While Latin America features prominently, reflected in the strong presence of scholars working on Indigenous movements in Ecuador, Colombia, and Guatemala, particularly in Chapters 6 and 9, and Africa receives significant attention through Ndlovu-Gatsheni's historical analysis (*Chapter 5*) and Ziai's case study of Enda Graf Sahel in Senegal (*Chapter 3*), Asia is relatively underrepresented. Kothari's (2024a) chapter on India is a notable exception, but there is minimal engagement with alternatives emerging from China, Indonesia, the Philippines, or other Asian contexts. Similarly, the Middle East and North Africa (SWANA) region is addressed primarily through the pedagogical lens of Zeweri and Farmer's (2024) chapter on US higher education rather than through grounded case studies of alternatives within the region itself.

This geographical imbalance has both empirical and theoretical consequences. Empirically, it limits the volume's ability to document the full diversity of post-development alternatives globally. As Byrne *et al.* (2019) note in their review of peace and conflict studies, a Eurocentric or Latin America-focused perspective can miss significant insights from other regions. Theoretically, it risks reproducing the very hierarchies of knowledge production that the volume seeks to challenge, albeit in different form, overrepresenting some regions while underrepresenting others. Future editions or related volumes would benefit from more systematic inclusion of case studies from Southeast Asia, South Asia beyond India, and the Pacific Islands, where Indigenous and community-led alternatives to development have been well documented by scholars such as Kothari *et al.* (2019), McMichael (2014), and Connell (2007).

Limited Engagement with Feminist and Intersectional Decolonial Scholarship

A second weakness is the volume's relatively limited engagement with feminist decolonial scholarship and intersectional analysis. While Lugones (2010) and Vergès (2021) are mentioned in passing in the editorial introduction and Narayanaswamy's (2024) epilogue gestures towards intersectionality, there is no sustained engagement with the extensive body of feminist decolonial theory that has developed over the past two decades. Scholars such as María Lugones (2010), Françoise Vergès (2021), Rita Segato (2015), and Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997) have articulated critiques of the "coloniality of gender" that challenge both mainstream development's gender blindness and earlier post-

development scholarship's failure to adequately theorise gender. As Lugones (2010, p. 745) argues, "the coloniality of gender does not only affect women; it affects all gendered beings, and it introduces a distinction between humans and non-humans that is central to the coloniality of power."

This absence is particularly striking given that several chapters, including Tynan (2024) and Armijos *et al.* (2024), centre Indigenous women's voices and experiences. Yet the volume does not explicitly theorise how gender, race, class, and coloniality intersect in the production of development knowledge and the experience of development interventions. As Cockburn (2013) argues in the context of peace studies, understanding gender as a structuring dimension of violence and peacebuilding is essential for sustainable transformation. A more systematic engagement with feminist decolonial scholarship would have strengthened the volume's analysis of how colonial matrices of power operate across multiple, intersecting axes of difference.

Underdeveloped Engagement with Degrowth and Political Economy

While the volume engages substantively with post-development and decolonial theory, its engagement with degrowth and ecological economics, which have emerged as significant frameworks for thinking about alternatives to capitalist development, is relatively underdeveloped. Mawdsley (2024, p. 207) notes this as a missed opportunity, observing "the lack of dialogue between the degrowth movement and scholars debating post-development, decoloniality, and the pluriverse." This is a significant limitation, given that degrowth scholars such as Hickel (2020), Kallis *et al.* (2018), and Demaria *et al.* (2013) have articulated critiques of GDP growth as a development metric, proposed frameworks for ecological and social transformation that overlap substantially with post-development concerns, and engaged with debates about global inequality and climate justice.

The volume's relative silence on political economy is also noteworthy. While Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2024) provides a powerful historical analysis of structural adjustment, and Scott (2024) critiques the managerialisation of development, there is limited engagement with contemporary debates about the political economy of global capitalism, including the role of finance, the dynamics of accumulation, and the possibilities for post-capitalist transformation. Saad-Filho's (2024) epilogue gestures towards these questions, arguing that "the limitations of middle-range theories" (p. 196) and the need for "grand theories starting from first principles" (p. 197) such as Marxist theory, but his contribution is brief and does not systematically integrate political economy analysis throughout the volume. This may reflect a broader tension within post-development scholarship between culturalist and



materialist analyses (Kiely, 1999; Ziai, 2004), but the volume does not explicitly address this tension.

Accessibility and Practical Applicability

A further weakness concerns the volume's accessibility and practical applicability for non-academic audiences. Despite the editors' commitment to open access publishing, the volume's theoretical sophistication and dense academic language may present challenges for practitioners, activists, and policymakers seeking actionable guidance. As Beriker (2008) notes in the context of conflict resolution studies, theoretical complexity can limit a text's relevance for those working in the field. While chapters such as Tynan (2024) and Armijos *et al.* (2024) offer concrete methodological guidance, and Kothari (2024a) documents specific initiatives, the volume does not include a dedicated chapter synthesising practical recommendations for policy or practice.

Scott's (2024) critique of development management is valuable for its analysis of the constraints on decolonial transformation within the aid industrial complex, but her chapter does not offer detailed strategies for navigating or transforming these constraints. Similarly, Zeweri and Farmer's (2024) chapter on decolonial pedagogy raises important questions about the structural contradictions faced by educators working within career-oriented university programmes, but it does not provide a systematic pedagogical toolkit. The volume would have benefited from a concluding chapter that synthesises practical recommendations across the various contributions, addressing, for example, how to design decolonial research protocols, how to navigate institutional constraints on decolonial pedagogy, and how to build solidarity across North-South divides in practice.

Absence of a Synthesis Chapter and Thematic Gaps

As an edited volume, *Challenging Global Development* suffers from a common weakness in the genre: the absence of a synthesising editorial chapter that draws together the diverse contributions, identifies points of convergence and divergence, and articulates an agenda for future research. While the editorial introduction (Biekart *et al.*, 2024) provides an overview, and the epilogues (Chapters 10-13) offer reflections from different disciplinary perspectives, the volume lacks a final chapter that systematically integrates the arguments, addresses tensions between chapters, and identifies priorities for future work. This fragmentation slightly undermines the book's coherence, leaving readers to integrate findings independently (cf. Ngowi & Jesse, 2024, on the *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*).

Several thematic absences are also notable. The volume does not substantively engage with digital technologies and their implications for decolonial development, including the role of digital platforms in extractive data practices, the potential for digital technologies to support alternative economies, or the politics of artificial intelligence in development governance. Similarly, while the volume addresses climate crisis and ecological sustainability (particularly in Chapters 4, 5, and 6), it does not systematically engage with climate-induced displacement, loss and damage finance, or the politics of climate adaptation. And while the volume gestures towards the need for new forms of solidarity, it does not offer sustained analysis of how solidarities might be built across diverse social movements, including labour, environmental, feminist, and Indigenous movements, in ways that do not reproduce colonial hierarchies (cf. Conway, 2013).

Despite these weaknesses, *Challenging Global Development* represents a significant contribution to decolonial scholarship in development studies. Its strengths, theoretical rigour, empirical documentation of alternatives, methodological innovation, and attention to materiality, outweigh its limitations. The volume would have been strengthened by more systematic engagement with feminist decolonial scholarship, degrowth and political economy frameworks, and geographical contexts beyond Latin America and Africa. Nonetheless, as a resource for scholars, students, and practitioners committed to epistemic justice and decolonial transformation, the volume is an essential and timely contribution to the field.

5. Recommendations for Future Readers and Reviewers

For scholars, students, practitioners, and policymakers engaged in development studies, decolonial theory, and social transformation, *Challenging Global Development: Towards Decoloniality and Justice* (Melber *et al.*, 2024) serves as an invaluable resource that both consolidates existing critiques and opens new avenues for research and practice. However, given the volume's theoretical complexity, geographical imbalances, and thematic gaps identified in the previous section, this final section offers recommendations for future readers and reviewers, organised around four dimensions: (i) strategies for engaging with the volume's theoretical contributions, (ii) complementary readings to address identified gaps, (iii) recommendations for practitioners and policymakers, and (iv) directions for future research and reviewing.

5.1 Recommendations for Engaging with the Volume's Theoretical Contributions

Readers less familiar with decolonial and post-development scholarship may find certain chapters challenging due to their theoretical sophistication and dense academic language. As Beriker (2008, p. 154) notes in the context of conflict



resolution studies, “theoretical complexity can present challenges for practitioners or general readers who lack a robust academic background.” To address this, future readers are advised to approach the volume strategically, perhaps beginning with the editorial introduction (*Chapter 1*) and the epilogues (*Chapters 10-13*), which provide accessible overviews of the volume’s central arguments before tackling the more theoretically demanding chapters.

Specifically, readers new to decolonial theory would benefit from consulting foundational texts that inform the volume’s arguments. Mignolo’s (2011) *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* provides an accessible entry point to the concept of coloniality and the decolonial option, while Escobar’s (1995) *Encountering Development* remains essential reading for understanding the post-development critique of development discourse. For readers interested specifically in the ontological critique advanced by Telleria (*Chapter 2*), Heidegger’s (1962) *Being and Time*, particularly the sections on the ontological difference, provides philosophical grounding, though readers may find Dilthey (2010) or Taylor (1985) more accessible introductions to hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches to social inquiry.

For readers seeking to deepen their understanding of the grounded alternatives documented in the volume, Kothari *et al.* (2019) *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* offers an encyclopaedic inventory of alternatives from around the world, organised thematically and geographically. The Global Tapestry of Alternatives network (globaltapestryofalternatives.org) and India’s Vikalp Sangam process (vikalpsangam.org) provide ongoing documentation of grassroots initiatives, including many not covered in the volume. Similarly, readers interested in the Zapatista case study (Ziai, *Chapter 3*) should consult Marcos (2005), Kerkeling (2006), and the EZLN’s own communiqués, which provide deeper insight into the movement’s political philosophy and governance structures.

5.2 Complementary Readings to Address Geographical and Thematic Gaps

The volume’s geographical imbalance, with strong coverage of Latin America and Africa but relatively limited engagement with Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East, suggests the need for complementary readings. For readers seeking to understand post-development alternatives in South and Southeast Asia, the work of Escobar (2011) on territorial struggles in the Philippines, McMichael (2014) on agrarian transitions, and the contributions in Kothari *et al.* (2019) on Asian contexts provide valuable resources. For the Pacific Islands, Hau’ofa’s (2008) *We Are the Ocean* and Teaiwa’s (2014) work on nuclear testing and Indigenous sovereignty in Kiribati offer important perspectives on decolonial alternatives in Oceania.

The volume’s limited engagement with feminist decolonial scholarship represents a significant gap that readers should address through supplementary reading. Lugones (2010) “Toward a Decolonial Feminism” provides a foundational critique of the coloniality of gender and should be considered essential reading alongside the volume. Vergès (2021) *A Decolonial Feminism* offers a more recent synthesis, while Segato (2015) provides detailed analysis of gender, violence, and coloniality in Latin American contexts. For readers interested in the intersection of decolonial feminism and development, Harcourt (2017) and Cornwall, Gideon, and Wilson (2008) offer relevant contributions.

The volume’s underdeveloped engagement with degrowth and ecological economics similarly suggests the need for complementary readings. Hickel (2020) *Less is More* provides an accessible introduction to degrowth arguments, while Kallis *et al.* (2018) offer a comprehensive research overview. For readers interested in the intersection of degrowth and post-development, Demaria *et al.* (2013) and Kothari, Demaria, and Acosta (2014) directly address the convergence between these frameworks. The recent special issue of *Development* on “Degrowth and Development” (2021) provides additional resources.

Finally, readers seeking to understand the political economy dimensions that the volume touches on but does not fully develop should consult Patnaik and Patnaik (2017) on the political economy of development in the Global South, Bond and Garcia (2015) on BRICS and anti-capitalist critique, and Shaikh (2016) on the dynamics of global capitalism. For analysis specifically focused on Africa, Shivji (2009) and Mkandawire (2014) provide essential perspectives on structural adjustment, neoliberal governance, and alternatives.

5.3 Recommendations for Practitioners and Policymakers

For practitioners working within development organisations, non-governmental organisations, and multilateral institutions, the volume offers both critical analysis of existing constraints and constructive pathways for transformation. However, as Scott (2024, p. 220) notes, “for the aid sector to move from universalist western frameworks of modernity and science to a pluriverse of practice, while continuing to be underpinned by colonial era inequalities and paradigms, is a difficult and challenging task.” Practitioners seeking concrete guidance should focus particularly on the methodological chapters (*Chapters 8 and 9*) and the grounded case studies (*Chapters 3 and 4*).

Tynan’s (2024) recommendations for relational accountability in research, including co-authorship with knowledge holders, transparent protocols for intellectual property, and the decentring of the “lone wolf researcher”, provide actionable guidance for practitioners engaged in



research, monitoring, and evaluation. Her emphasis on “refusal as an act of agency that prompts researchers to question how research is undertaken and who benefits” (Tynan, 2024, p. 151) is particularly relevant for practitioners navigating the pressures of donor accountability and results-based management. As Scott (2024, p. 221) suggests, “shifting funding directly to communities to further their own goals and managed according to their needs” represents one concrete strategy for decolonising development management.

For policymakers, the volume’s emphasis on material reparations and repatriation (Kothari, 2024b) carries significant implications. While development policy has largely avoided engagement with reparations debates, the growing recognition of historical injustice in international forums, including the UN’s Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001) and the Caribbean Reparations Commission’s ten-point plan (CARICOM, 2014), suggests that policymakers can no longer ignore these demands. Kothari’s (2024b, p. 245) observation that “debates around reparations also have a longer history but are little discussed in development even when considering decoloniality” points to a significant gap that policymakers should address through institutional commitments to restorative justice.

For activists and grassroots practitioners, the volume’s documentation of grounded alternatives, particularly Kothari’s (2024a) account of the Vikalp Sangam process and Ziai’s (2024) case studies of Enda Graf Sahel, the Dongria Khond, and the Zapatistas, provides evidence that alternatives are already being built. The Global Tapestry of Alternatives network, which grew out of the Vikalp Sangam process, offers a platform for networking, resource-sharing, and solidarity-building across diverse initiatives. Activists may also find value in the volume’s methodological innovations, particularly Armijos *et al.*’s (2024) use of art, storytelling, and collective quilting as tools for psychosocial recovery and political mobilisation.

5.4 Directions for Future Research and Reviewing

Future reviewers of this volume, or of subsequent editions, should critically assess the book’s evolving theoretical perspectives and explore how emerging paradigms for decolonial development might be integrated. Several directions for future research emerge from the volume’s limitations and the current conjuncture of intersecting crises.

First, future research should address the geographical imbalances identified in this review, particularly the relative neglect of Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East. Comparative studies of post-development alternatives across different regional contexts would help identify both common principles and context-specific innovations. As Connell (2007) argues in *Southern Theory*, social science has much to

learn from the Global South, but this requires systematic engagement with southern epistemologies and practices, not merely the extension of northern frameworks.

Second, future research should deepen engagement with feminist decolonial scholarship and intersectional analysis. While the volume gestures towards intersectionality, it does not systematically analyse how colonial matrices of power operate across gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, and other axes of difference. Research that centres the experiences and knowledge production of Indigenous women, queer and trans people, and people with disabilities would address this gap while also contributing to what Lugones (2010) terms “decolonial feminism”, a perspective that challenges both colonial modernity’s gender binaries and Western feminism’s universalist claims.

Third, future research should develop the dialogue between post-development and degrowth that Mawdsley (2024) identifies as a missed opportunity. The climate crisis demands urgent transformation of energy systems, consumption patterns, and economic structures, yet post-development scholarship has sometimes been cautious about engaging with questions of scale, technology, and political economy that degrowth scholarship addresses more directly. Conversely, degrowth scholarship has sometimes neglected questions of coloniality, race, and indigeneity that are central to post-development. A synthetic framework that addresses these intersections would be a significant contribution.

Fourth, future research should engage more systematically with digital technologies and their implications for decolonial development. As Björkdahl and Gusic (2018) argue in the context of peacebuilding, digital diplomacy and online activism are transforming conflict resolution landscapes. Similarly, the politics of data extraction, algorithmic governance, and artificial intelligence in development raise urgent questions about coloniality in digital form. Tynan’s (2024) discussion of Indigenous Data Sovereignty opens this conversation, but much more work is needed.

Fifth, future reviewers should assess how the volume’s arguments might be translated into institutional change within universities, funding agencies, and development organisations. As Zeweri and Farmer (2024, p. 133) note, “decentring a utilitarian approach to decolonising introductory area studies programmes is important, it cannot be seen as an intellectual endeavour that exists outside of the scope of students’ own material and economic realities, concerns, and aspirations.” Similarly, Scott (2024) raises questions about whether efforts to “decolonise” development management can succeed within institutions that remain structurally embedded in colonial-capitalist relations. Research that documents institutional change efforts,



identifies barriers and enablers, and develops practical strategies for transformation would complement the volume's primarily scholarly focus.

6.0 Conclusion

Despite its limitations, *Challenging Global Development: Towards Decoloniality and Justice* remains a pivotal and necessary resource for the field of development studies. As such, by offering comprehensive insights into the coloniality of development knowledge and practice, while also documenting grounded alternatives and proposing methodological innovations, the volume helps bridge the gap between critique and construction. As the editors argue in their introduction, the multiple crises confronting humanity, ecological, economic, political, and epidemiological, demand more than incremental adjustments. Whether development studies can reinvent itself as a field capable of supporting genuinely transformative change is an open question. This volume makes an essential contribution to that project, while also charting directions for the future research and practice that will be required to realise decolonial and just futures.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

We hereby declare that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the research and findings presented in this paper.

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