

# *Knowledge and power: changing the education of the next generation of development practitioners*

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# Knowledge and power: Changing the education of the next generation of development practitioners

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## Abstract

This research explores barriers to the academic space in which development knowledge is codified, legitimised and taught. It also speaks to these questions more broadly. Focus group discussions with representatives of 32 civil society organisations in Sierra Leone, 2 follow-up workshops in Sierra Leone and 24 semi-structured interviews with senior academics in the UK and North America were conducted to explore: who determines what knowledge is deemed important for students and future development practitioners to know; and how to identify barriers that limit the contribution of a wider range of stakeholders.

Racism is identified as a key factor in how knowledge is valued. Additional factors in terms of time, logistics and the structuring of academic space are also significant. Drawing on the work of power analysis scholars, we propose a three-step framework for curriculum analysis, which identifies (1) key stakeholders in knowledge production and curriculum design; (2) spaces of power (open/invited/claimed/created/closed) within the academy and (3) the interplay of forms of power (visible/hidden/invisible) that facilitate or limit access to these spaces.

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## KEYWORDS

decolonising the curriculum, development studies, knowledge hierarchies, power analysis, power cube, Sierra Leone, southern knowledge

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Do development studies degree programmes challenge current structural inequalities or reinforce them? Development studies has faced increasing calls to ‘... move beyond its complicity with Western knowledge and power’ (Kothari, 2005:85) and academics have faced accusations of ‘silenc[ing] the Third World subaltern’ (Kapoor, 2008: xii). These questions reflect the broader ‘Decolonising the Curriculum’ (DtC) debates that are challenging all aspects of the established ‘Academy’. De Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015) argue: ‘Institutions of higher education have played a central role in perpetuating the violences of modernity.’ (2015: 30) Meanwhile, Grosfoguel asks, somewhat provocatively: ‘How can we overcome Eurocentric modernity without throwing away the best of modernity as many Third World fundamentalists do?’ (Grosfoguel, 2008:1) In this research, we explore these challenges to development studies from the viewpoints of two groups of key stakeholders: representatives from 32 civil society organisations based in the ‘global South’; and senior academics in universities in the ‘global North’ who have authority over programme design.<sup>1</sup> These groups reflect the authors’ own positionality. Murray Davies is the Programme Director of an International Development degree programme at a university in the ‘global North’. This work has also benefitted from a review and contributions from Chernor Bah, Minister of Information and Civic Education, Sierra Leone and founder of Purposeful, an international non-profit organisation founded and headquartered in Sierra Leone, Mulhern, a senior staff member at Purposeful and Lamin and Williams, Sierra Leonean independent scholars.

The objectives of the research were:

- To investigate how knowledge and ideas from ‘local’ and ‘international’ actors are prioritised and legitimised within the development space, resulting in implicit and explicit knowledge hierarchies.
- To ask ‘local’ practitioners who have experienced these knowledge hierarchies what they think the next generation of development practitioners needs to know and understand.
- To identify the barriers within development studies, and the academic space more generally, that prevent or limit a broader range of stakeholders from contributing to the education of the next generation of development practitioners.

### 1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual underpinning of this research utilises two theoretical constructs. Firstly, Burawoy’s disciplinary division of labour, designed with reference to sociology, is relevant in framing the competing interests of stakeholders in development studies. Burawoy bases this division on two fundamental questions: ‘Knowledge for whom? (Whether for academic audiences or extra-academic audiences); Knowledge for what? (Whether instrumental knowledge concerned with means or reflexive knowledge concerned with the discussion of ends).’ (Burawoy, 2014:136). In Burawoy’s model, *public* sociology transcends the ‘academy’ and has relevance for multiple publics. *Professional*

<sup>1</sup>A note on nomenclature: the authors acknowledge that terms such as ‘global South’ and ‘global North’ are subject to debate. We use them here throughout for clarity, due to common usage. When we speak about ‘local’ actors or practitioners, we are referring to the people and organisations who are from the communities and countries about which development studies centres its teachings. Conversely, we consider ‘international’ actors and practitioners as people who are generally from the global North, who do not have the same lived experiences of the communities and countries they serve but because of where they are from and often, the educational opportunities they have been afforded, they are considered as ‘experts’ in different development themes, topics or even geographic regions. In our experience, their knowledge is usually given precedence over those who are ‘local’.

sociology ‘... supplies true and tested methods, accumulated bodies of knowledge, orienting questions, and conceptual frameworks.’ Policy sociology is knowledge in the service of the goal of a particular client. The role of critical sociology is to ‘... to examine the foundations - both the explicit and the implicit, both normative and descriptive - of the research programs of professional sociology.’ (Burawoy, 2005: 9–10). Kothari identifies Burawoy’s division as being ‘particularly useful to those wrestling ... with identifying coherent yet diverse development studies.’ (Kothari, 2005:6).

Table 1 illustrates Burawoy’s Disciplinary Division of Labour, indicating how the different types of knowledge can be mapped (Burawoy, 2014: 136). As indicated in Table 1, Burawoy characterises both professional and policy ‘sociologies’ as forms of ‘instrumental’ knowledge, with ‘... puzzle solving in professional research ... and problem solving in [policy sociology] that takes for granted the goals and interests of the client.’ Critical and public sociologies, on the other hand, are characterised as ‘reflexive’ as they question and evaluate the underlying ‘assumptions, values, premises’, both within the discipline and in the broader public debate (Burawoy quoted in Kothari, 2005:6).

Burawoy’s disciplinary division of labour provides a useful classification for identifying which types of knowledge are currently validated within the academic space, and which are not. This is particularly significant in development studies, where we are trying to achieve concrete ends in terms of justice and equality – the ‘practice’ of development, while simultaneously reflecting on and critiquing the development project itself – the reflexive approach to development ‘theory’. However, Burawoy’s disciplinary division of labour has faced various criticisms – two of which are of particular relevance when we transpose Burawoy’s original focus on the discipline of sociology to development studies.

Firstly, his model is criticised for failing to: ‘... go far enough in helping us provincialize sociology in America by comparing it to sociology in other countries.’ (McLaughlin & Turcotte, 2007: 816). This criticism does not, for example, acknowledge Burawoy’s detailed explorations of sociology at work in South Africa (see Burawoy, 2010). Nevertheless, this criticism is mitigated in our framework by an explicit doubling of the  $2 \times 2$  grid to distinguish between actors from the global South and the global North (see Figure 2).

In addition, McLaughlin and Turcotte (2007: 815) argue that Burawoy’s model does not reflect the larger institutional context for knowledge production and that it: ‘... does not allow us to theorize how Burawoy’s four ideal types relate to each other, nor how individual tasks or the discipline as a whole are linked to external institutions and audiences.’

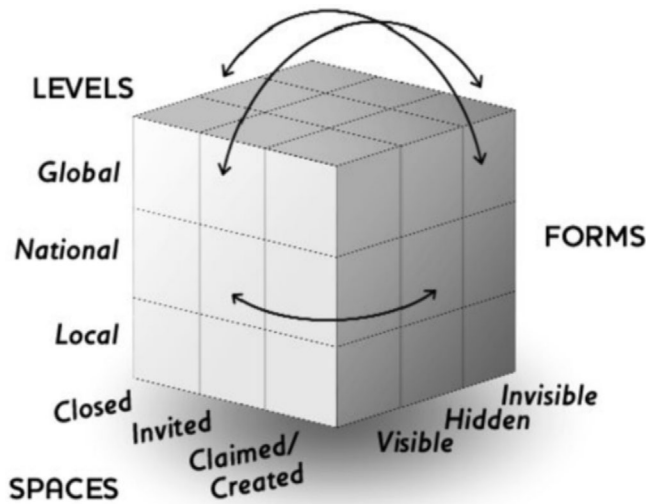
We needed a conceptual framework that could reflect how these actors experience spaces of power. Gaventa draws on Lefebvre to explore the links between space and power in more detail: ‘Space is a social product ... it is not simply “there”, a neutral container waiting to be filled, but is a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control, and hence of domination and of power’ (Lefebvre 1991: 24, quoted in Gaventa, 2005). We wanted to understand how and why these spaces of power in knowledge production have been created, and what maintains or destabilises them. Conceptualising these spaces of power, which are best understood not as categories but as a flexible and non-static continuum, forces us to uncover the political and historical drivers involved in these maintenance or destabilisation processes. Figure 1 and Table 2 serve to introduce Gaventa’s ‘power cube’ as a way of thinking about these different forms, levels and spaces of power.

Conceptualising spaces of power (closed, invited, open) explicitly allows us to consider where contestations of power might take place, indicating ‘the potential arenas for participation and action’ (Gaventa, 2011). Who has the power to ‘gatekeep’ these spaces is illustrative of where power lies. We can then explore how forms of power can

**TABLE 1** Disciplinary division of labour.

	Academic audience	Extra-academic audience
Instrumental knowledge	Professional	Policy
Reflexive knowledge	Critical	Public

**Source:** Burawoy, M. ‘Preface’ *Current Sociology* Volume 62 Number 2 Monograph 1 March 2014 p. 136.



**FIGURE 1** The Power Cube. *Source:* John Gaventa, [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net) (Gaventa, 2011) accessed 20/12/23.









**TABLE 2** Description of selected facets of the power cube.

Spaces of Power	Description
Closed	Decisions made with little broad consultation or involvement. Examples: Bureaucrats, experts, elected representatives
Invited	Groups/individuals are invited to participate by various authorities
Claimed/ Created	Spaces claimed by less powerful actors from or against the power holders, or created more autonomously by them. Examples: Community groups, or riots/demonstrations
Forms of Power	Description
Visible	Contests over interests visible in public spaces, which are presumed to be relatively open
Hidden	Barriers preclude the entry of certain actors and issues. Examples: 'smoke-filled corridors'/corruption; agenda setting
Invisible	Internalisation of powerlessness or lack of awareness – 'learned disempowerment'

*Source:* Adapted from John Gaventa, [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net) (Gaventa, 2011) accessed 20/07/23.

interact with other facets of the power cube to maintain spaces as closed or open. For example, can we see where invisible power has led to learned disempowerment or internalised shame (women accepting a lower status, people living in poverty accepting that poverty as the natural way of things). We can explore whether learned disempowerment has allowed powerholders to maintain closed spaces of power.

As Gaventa explains: 'Each dimension of the powercube is constantly interrelating with the other, constantly changing the synergies of power.' (Gaventa, 2011.) Reflecting on this, we have made some adaptations to this initial conceptual framing and developed a three-step conceptual framework for this research. Firstly, rather than utilising Burawoy's model as a way of analysing different typologies of knowledge, we approach it rather as a way of identifying and mapping the actors themselves who create and develop knowledge from different perspectives and via different routes. Figure 2 illustrates this – with a separate acknowledgement of stakeholders and knowledge producers from both the global North and the global South.

<b>GLOBAL SOUTH</b>	<b>Academic</b>	<b>Extra Academic</b>
<b>Instrumental</b>	<b>Professional</b> 	<b>Policy</b> 
<b>Reflexive</b>	<b>Critical</b> 	<b>Public</b> 
<b>GLOBAL NORTH</b>	<b>Academic</b>	<b>Extra Academic</b>
<b>Instrumental</b>	<b>Professional</b> 	<b>Policy</b> 
<b>Reflexive</b>	<b>Critical</b> 	<b>Public</b> 

**FIGURE 2** STEP 1: Identifying and Mapping Stakeholders. *Source:* Table created by Murray Davies, adapted from Burawoy, M. 'Preface' *Current Sociology* Volume 62 Number 2 Monograph 1 March 2014 p. 136.

Figure 3 then separates out Gaventa's (2011) spaces of power to illustrate how the space for curriculum design can be accessed or denied.

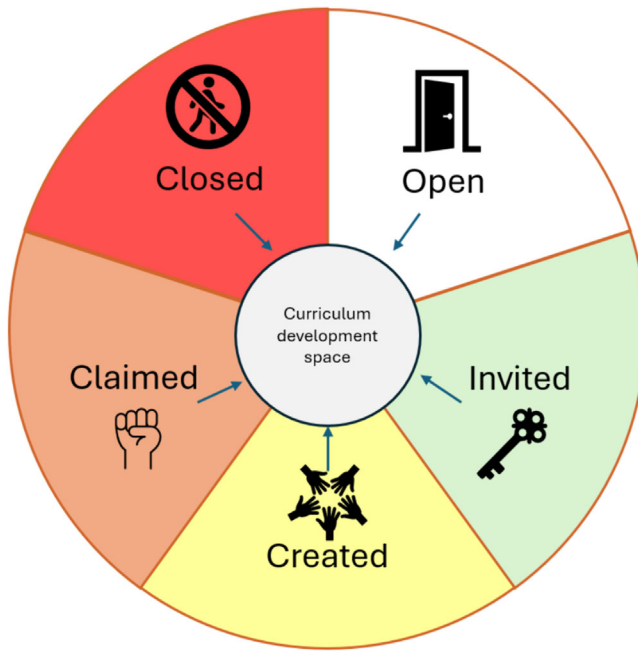
The third step in this analytical framework is to identify and map the forms of power that operate to maintain or destabilise these spaces of power. Figure 4 indicates how each of the individual stakeholders experiences the spaces of power, and how a variety of forms of power can serve to open or close such spaces or empower actors to claim or create their own.

## 2 | METHODOLOGY






This research took a qualitative approach, rooted in an interpretivist understanding and recognising that social phenomena can be both self-constructed and multifaceted. The research objectives and methods were informed by the Freirean approach of dialogic learning between equals (Freire, 1973, 2018). The intention was to engage with a broad range of stakeholders, both academic 'gatekeepers', and assumed 'end users' of academic research (the latter of whom are rarely credited with the role of knowledge holders or producers).

The rationale is illustrated in Figure 5:

For the first part of the research, we designed a series of Focus Group discussions (FGDs) with representatives of 32 civil society organisations (CSO) in Sierra Leone. We ran one pilot Focus Group of eight members, then four further Focus Groups of between six and eight members, with most respondents representing different civil society organisations. The FGDs introduced participants to the development studies degrees that students can take in the U.K. and explored what type of knowledge the FGD participants, reflecting on their experiences in the development space, thought it was important for students to know. Questions focused on (i) benefits and limitations of 'local' development knowledge; (ii) benefits and limitations of 'international' development knowledge; and how these 'local' and 'international' sources of knowledge differ in practice; (iii) how 'local' and 'international' actors worked together in achieving good outcomes (or obstacles to this happening);

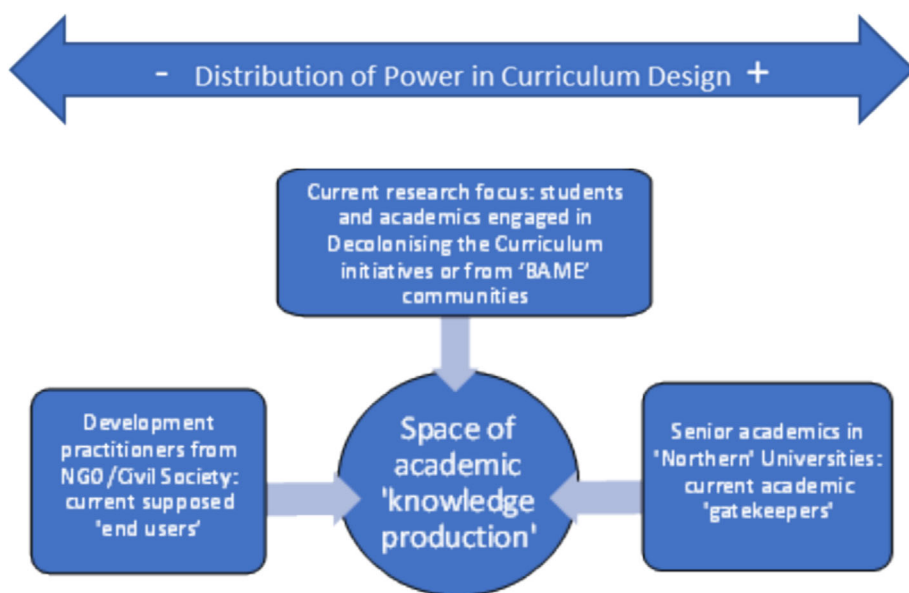


**FIGURE 3** STEP 2: Identifying Spaces of Power. *Source:* Created by Murray Davies, adapted from John Gaventa, [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net) (Gaventa, 2011) accessed 20/07/23.

Forms of power that enable access to the spaces of power	Cooperative					
	Invisible					
	Hidden					
	Visible					
	Spaces of Power	Closed 	Created 	Claimed 	Invited 	Open 
Forms of power that deny access to the spaces of power	Visible					
	Hidden					
	Invisible					
	Cooperative					

**FIGURE 4** STEP 3: Identifying and Mapping Forms of Power. *Source:* Created by Murray Davies, adapted from John Gaventa, [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net) (Gaventa, 2011) accessed 20/07/23.

(iv) what this means in terms of how we design our development studies programmes and what we think development studies students – possible development practitioners of the future – need to know and understand.



**FIGURE 5** Initial choice of Stakeholder Respondents. *Source:* Created by Murray Davies.

We then ran a further two workshops to reflect on the initial findings of the research with the respondents and used an educational tool (Mentimeter) to ask questions on the specific content of development studies degree programme curriculum content.

Key informant interviews constituted the second part of the research. These were minimally-structured conversations of between 60 and 90 minutes duration. The initial identification of possible respondents was achieved through purposive sampling. Murray Davies's current role as the director of a development studies programme and previous experience working in the development/humanitarian sector aided this process. She conducted detailed discussions with 24 respondents. The majority are senior academics at leading universities in the U.K., from both the global 'North' and 'South', but also include leading figures in both small-scale 'local' Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and large International NGOs (INGOs). These latter respondents helped to triangulate the Focus Group data. The list of respondents can be found in Table 3. Dialogues were transcribed, then thematically coded, using the constant comparative method (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### 3 | FINDINGS

#### 3.1 | Racism and the devaluing of local knowledge through control of resources

The research began by exploring how different producers or owners of knowledge – whether local CSO practitioners or international development practitioners – experienced the development space. We then asked respondents to reflect on how this should inform our education programmes for the next generation of development professionals.

Critics of development studies have highlighted the role of race and the silencing of 'the Third World subaltern' (Kapoor, 2008: xii) as key barriers to the spaces in which knowledge creation is validated. A respondent in the key informant interviews, a professor of development studies, commented: 'Race is clearly a form of power and

**TABLE 3** Semi-structured interviews – list of interlocutors.

Code	Role	Institution	Region
Respondent A	Executive Director	Large Regional Humanitarian and Development Organisation	Horn of Africa/ East Africa
Respondent B	Executive Director	Large national NGO	West Africa
Respondent C	Director of Policy and Advocacy	International Non-Governmental Organisation	Global
Respondent D	Founder	Knowledge Exchange Programme	North America and Europe
Respondent E	International Development Consultant		Latin America
Respondent F	Director	Graduate School of International Development	Europe
Respondent G	Development Studies Editor	Large Commercial Publisher	Europe
Respondent H	Lecturer in Education	School of Education U.K. University (1)	U.K.
Respondent I	Associate Professor	U.K. University (1)	U.K.
Respondent J	Professor of Development Studies	U.K. University (1)	U.K.
Respondent K	Local Counsellor, PhD student and development activist	U.K. University (1)	U.K.
Respondent L	Lecturer in Development Studies	U.K. University (1)	U.K.
Respondent M	Professor of Geography (Environment and Development)	U.K. University (1)	U.K.
Respondent N	Professor of African Politics	U.K. University (2)	U.K.
Respondent O	Professor of Development Research	U.K. University (3)	U.K.
Respondent P	Professor of Development Studies	U.K. University (4)	U.K.
Respondent Q	Lecturer in Economics	U.K. University (5)	U.K.
Respondent R	Senior Knowledge Exchange and Learning Associate	U.K. University (5)	U.K.
Respondent S	Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Politics	U.K. University (6)	U.K.
Respondent T	Professor of Sociology	North American University	North America
Respondent U	Senior Learning manager	Large West African NGO	West Africa
Respondent V	Director of Research	U.K. Development Studies Research Institute	U.K.
Respondent W	Associate Lecturer in Development Studies	U.K. University (7)	U.K.

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Code	Role	Institution	Region
Respondent X	Researcher and Senior Manager	U.K. University (8)	U.K.

**Source:** Created by Murray Davies.

exclusion ... and I think development studies has ignored race for way too long.’ (Respondent P, British Professor at UK University.) A respondent in the Focus Groups commented: ‘For the most part, those people who are going to, quote unquote, “benefit” from the project are the last ones involved in designing it.’ (FGDP10) Those working in development reported that, if their contextual knowledge did not fit established ‘Western’ ways of knowledge production and validation, it could be overlooked or even deliberately excluded.

Respondent A (Executive Director of African Non-governmental Organisation) explained that her mother experienced the devaluing of her own community work and therefore felt her knowledge was not of equal value, although it has since been recognised internationally:

She did amazing work on the ground, but it was not translated into reports, documents ... all the things the West loves. It has to have an external evaluator: a white person to give it a stamp of approval.

(Respondent A)

Respondent A explained how, in conversation with representatives from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in the Horn of Africa, she faced, ‘... pure racism. It was made very clear to me that there was a delineation of what was appropriate for a [citizen of X – redacted], where they should be fitting in, and what was not appropriate.’ (Respondent A) Many of the examples of racism were given at this intersection, working with development practitioners from the global North. A respondent who is now the leader of another influential African Non-Governmental Organisation pointed out:

The irony is that these are people who talk about human rights, about justice, about equity ... and it's only international organisations, all foreigners, who are going to get this major contract ... Then they will submit grants to small organisations ... but they will control all the resources, all the power, all the capacity.

(Respondent B)

A senior knowledge exchange associate in a leading UK university characterised actions in the development space as often limiting the contribution of certain types of practitioners, depending on where they were from and where and how they were educated.

There's an idea that there are international experts who can transcend the constraints of time and place go all over the world and impart expertise. And then there's the ‘local consultant’ who has embedded local knowledge, ... local consultants should have just as much space and opportunity to act internationally as someone born in the UK or France or the USA.’

(Respondent R)

In the FGDs, there was a clear recognition of the differentiation between the actors:

There may be a Sierra Leonean who has that knowledge, educational background, but you just don't want to pay that person how you pay ... persons coming from the UK or the US.

(FGDP:4)

Throughout the discussions, the questions of budgetary and resource control were identified as key mechanisms in facilitating the devaluing of local knowledge. This question of resources was identified by a number of respondents in the FDGs and in the interviews as underpinning much of the power imbalance that the respondents were identifying. It was this specific inequality that allowed budget holders to either privilege or deprioritise different sources of knowledge in practice. Colleagues in the FDGs highlighted the way many projects have not come to fruition due to a lack of openness and the ability to listen on the part of 'northern' actors who engage with communities from a position of power as budget-holders. One FGD respondent highlighted the establishment of an initial power imbalance that is enforced through the unequal distribution of resources: 'It's who has the money, controls.' (FGDP:3). FGD respondents explained that a tendency towards a 'one size fits all' approach and a lack of awareness of local context were significant drivers of devaluing of the knowledge of local colleagues. Again, budgetary control was highlighted as a key factor in facilitating this process: 'Sometimes those coming outside they are bringing the money, they want to dominate everything: dominance and dictatorship.' (FGD2/2:8).

The importance of International Development practitioners' knowledge of the local context was also raised in terms of what the next generation of development practitioners needed to know. In one of the feedback workshops, CSO representatives were asked to allocate 20 points between a range of subjects, indicating which subjects they thought were most important to include in a development studies programme in order to teach the next generation of development practitioners how best to approach questions of development. The results are shown in Figure 6.

It was informative to see that many respondents prioritised an understanding of the country in which one is working – both a historical understanding of the context and an understanding of the local culture. For example, one respondent explained: 'Whoever is coming to work in our country should have knowledge of who we are, who we were before, and how the [civil] war impacted us.' (FGDP:2) Another respondent, scoring local politics highly, commented: 'you need to have an understanding of how politics work in Sierra Leone to be taken seriously because you will run into a lot of roadblocks if you don't really understand the politics.' (FGD:2/1) A further respondent, scoring anthropology highly, argued: 'If you want to implement in certain communities you have to know their traditions, cultures and norms. For example, if I want to take female genital mutilation programme to certain localities there are certain cultural barriers that limit my intention.' (FGD:2/1) Development studies necessarily cover a global scope, but it is useful to consider how rooting learning in particular contexts and case studies can highlight the importance of this type of contextual knowledge to students of development.

Under the category of 'Other', it was also suggested that there needed to be an understanding or a specific course on 'International Development from a pan Africanist school of thought.' (FGDP:20) Another respondent seconded this and added, 'especially for those who are coming from the British perspective ... a new way of thinking, of addressing colonialism is necessary because they are taught that Britain was bringing all these fantastic things to the rest of the globe. And yes, but there's this flip side of it as well.' (FGDP:2/2).

### 3.2 | Rejecting the reification of 'southern/local' and 'northern/international' knowledge

Beyond these questions of racism and the deprioritisation of 'local' knowledge and 'local' actors, however, there was also an insistence among all respondents that a dichotomous approach to 'northern/international' and 'southern/local' knowledge and actors was too simplistic. There was a nuanced understanding that the reification of 'northern' and 'southern' knowledge was not a helpful dichotomy, because the reality, both on the ground and within the academy, is more complex.

## Which subject is the most important to include when teaching next generation of practitioners?



**FIGURE 6** Responses of Purposeful Workshop Attendees (May 2022) via Mentimeter. *Source:* Murray Davies's question and responses from Workshop 2 in Freetown, Sierra Leone via [Mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com) May 2022.

Some respondents highlighted an assumption that those in the global South all face the same problems, a misunderstanding picked up in the FGDs: 'Something that we [need in Sierra Leone] might seem so small for a Nigerian or Ghanaian.' (FGDP:7)

[Development] even varies within regions of the country ... So somebody in the rural area, maybe having the solar panels or electricity might be development. And for me, that's just given the basics. [For me] development should be regular trash collection.

(FGDP:3)

The tendency to an essentialisation of 'Southern knowledge' can reinforce this conflating of disparate issues from the huge variety of needs and priorities in the South. In addition to this, it is necessary to recognise that power imbalances exist in the global South, just as they do in the global North. There was a reflective awareness of this nuance within the Focus Groups:

As much as we say the global North doesn't have much of a sectionality lens, we can't be throwing stones at the glass house, because those of us who work in these spaces were educated, were more privileged. So, when we go to these domains ... we tend to perpetuate the same values that the global North does.

(FGD 2/1:4)

'Local' knowledge and traditional practices were also identified as sources of power imbalances. Ethnic rivalry represented one such aspect:

So, the issue on the ground is tribalism and regionalism, ethnicity and sexism you know, we know our issues as Sierra Leones and Africans. The list goes on, there are some big differences between the various tribes.

(FGD2/1:4)

These differences can be exacerbated by decisions on resource allocation by development practitioners if these nuances and divisions are not understood:

The worst thing is when an outsider comes and makes statements, but you don't even know the context of things. But you want to take one ethnic side against another ethnic side.

(FGDP:1)

Avoiding reification of knowledge as being 'northern' or 'southern' also allowed the blending of North and South to be seen in a more positive light. There was an acknowledgement from a number of FGD respondents regarding the role of gender within the communities as a key source of power:

For me there are some cultural mindsets that we all know needs to change. Take it like domestic violence. Back in the day, the man beating his wife was nothing ... but culture is fluid, right?

(FGDP:4)

This was one of the factors that was recognised as being of value in the coming together of practitioners from the North and the South:

For them who are in the international world they just believe that girls have the power, they have the strength to be whosoever they want to be and what they did was to convince us to believe in that.

(FGD2/2:5)

Respondents in the focus groups reflected thoughtfully on the knowledge and ideas that had been brought into the communities by development partners from international organisations and tended to eschew dichotomous approaches to ideas and sources of knowledge, recognising instead where they could offer value:

So, nobody's saying everything that comes from the outside is bad. The best possible scenario is when you're able to take what you've learned here and what you've learned here and localize it to the best situation for our own country. You see the possibilities in other places, can we take that and use it instead and transform it in Sierra Leone.

(FGDP:2)

Perhaps the development studies conversation needs to be reframed in terms of comparative development. During the FGDs, a respondent explained that he had just completed a global health course online:

I came to realise we have the same problems ... I was amazed that the same issue we have, they have in the US, the UK, they have in India. So, solutions can be around the same thing, but we have to modify ... the steps that we take to execute those things are different.

(FGD1/1:1)

These ideas can be challenging in the face of systematic undervaluing of local ideas and occurrences of outright racism within the development space, but the issue is not to dismiss one source of knowledge or the other, or even to reverse hierarchies in this space. It was interesting to hear calls for this type of recognition from the respondents in the key informant interviews, many of whom, as senior academics in the global North, could be presupposed to approach such questions from a different perspective. Just as the respondents in the FGDs argued for a more nuanced and complex characterisation of what can be seen as ideas and knowledge from the global South, so too did the academics from the global North, who argued that an essentialisation of ideas, actors and knowledge from the

'global North' also represented an inaccurate understanding. One Professor of African Politics argued that 'southern' authors might be added to reading lists with the sincere intention of diversifying the voices within the curriculum, but sometimes this oversimplified approach can serve to embed, rather than challenge, existing power hierarchies. He argued that it can be the case that some of these authors '... don't live in the global South at all, but are deeply privileged and now live in the global North, and are exactly the same as you and I, that they're professors in a university in the global North.' (Respondent N, British Professor at UK University) The limitations of this type of characterisation were also highlighted by a Professor of Development Studies: 'The whole idea that the forms of knowledge can be divided between southern knowledge and northern knowledge is absurd ... a very poor attempt to classify forms of knowledge.' (Respondent P).

The next stage of the research findings shifted focus from how knowledge is valued in the development space in the global South towards an investigation of how knowledge creation and legitimation takes place within the 'Academy' in the global North.

### 3.3 | The structure of the academic space as a barrier to knowledge sharing

The loosely structured key informant interviews engaged with a range of respondents, some of whom were leading development initiatives in the global South – and were themselves citizens of countries in the global South – and some of whom were leading academics in the global North – citizens of a range of countries from both the global North and global South.

This third theme in our findings presents reflections on how these respondents experienced the academic space – both from outside and within. Long-established spaces can seem axiomatic and therefore immune from questioning, so a number of respondents expressed the value of being asked to reflect on the spaces of power in which they worked.

Foucault characterises educational institutions as generators, maintainers and modifiers of 'discourse' (Foucault, 1971). Discourses, in Foucault's analytical framework, are about what can be said and thought: about who can speak, and with what authority. Educational institutions can be characterised as generators of discourse in which 'modern validations of, and exclusions from, the right to speak are generated' (Ball, 1990:2–3). Being in the position to write a 'body of knowledge' into the curriculum has far-reaching consequences.

What you teach ... creates the basis for accepted knowledge, authoritative knowledge. Everybody in development and humanitarian aid looks at academia for guidance, credibility, authoritativeness. We look up to you for the credibility to substantiate our arguments. So academia is, in a way, the ultimate validation of whatever we do in development.

(Respondent C, Italian Senior INGO Professional)

Respondent D argues that work by innovative change makers within communities is immensely valuable, but 'because of entrenched inequalities [they] have not been able to access academic institutions for their knowledge to be credited and have not been put into journals so their knowledge can be validated' (Respondent D). A Bangladeshi academic, returning to his home university, questioned why some professors in Bangladesh did not focus on publishing journal articles or books. His colleague replied: 'You want to publish in the local newspapers. That is how you get your ideas out ... to become a name within Bangladesh' (Respondent G). Valuable local knowledge, if not packaged following an accepted 'northern' approach, might not be accessible to those teaching development studies programmes elsewhere.

The academic space in the global North contains a number of formal and informal institutional norms and rules that can serve to protect and close the academic space to a broader range of stakeholders. Respondent D has

worked closely with communities on high-profile knowledge exchange projects with Ivy League universities in the United States. She argued:

Imagine if we actually created equitable spaces for lots of different knowledge to come together. There is not one lived experience leader I know who believes they know it all. But actually, it's the other side where we assume there is a threat to our existence if we are saying that communities have the knowledge and wisdom to create change ... actually, we need everybody.

(Respondent D)

It is useful to return to our adaptation of Burawoy's conceptual framing of the disciplinary division of labour here (see Figure 2). By mapping specific actors in knowledge production, (rather than forms of knowledge) we can identify which stakeholders and knowledge producers are currently validated within the academic space, and which are not. This also focuses attention on the questions: knowledge for whom? Knowledge for what? This provokes us to consider which audiences (academic or extra-academic) we are creating our knowledge for and the extent to which these involve an instrumental focus on the means to achieve 'development' or a reflexive approach that asks us to consider what development goals we should be trying to achieve. A co-created space of knowledge creation has to balance the needs and incentives of both instrumental and reflexive forms of knowledge, both inside and outside the academy.

The late Caribbean development academic Norman Girvan wrote an excellent essay on power imbalances and development knowledge in which he explored the knowledge hierarchies that are apparent in development thinking. He argued: 'The hierarchy is conceptualized both as a set of epistemic/ideological systems, with international (northern) knowledge at the top and local (southern) knowledge at the bottom; and as an institutional hierarchy of knowledge centres with northern centres in the dominant positions.' (Girvan, 2007: 2). The authors are not entirely convinced by the reification of 'northern' and 'southern' knowledge for reasons given in the preceding section, but Girvan's point about the institutional hierarchy of knowledge centres is sound. Respondents in this research raised the significance of the structuring of academic space in both the global South and the global North, in terms of its impact on the ability to create knowledge that can be passed on to the next generation of development practitioners. Inequality of resources, for example, means that scholars in the South have less time to pursue their own research agendas. Limitations of resources mean that some think tanks need to bring in money by consulting on the research agendas of others, and scholars in the global South with outstanding potential might have fewer opportunities to produce excellent work if they are given huge amounts of teaching (Respondent S). This can happen in the North or South (there is an uneven distribution of resources within global North universities), but is evidently more likely in the South, as pointed out by a Professor of Development Studies in the UK:

It's just a matter of fact that resources in the world are unevenly distributed. And the capacity to generate good scientific knowledge is maldistributed throughout the world. And that's just one aspect of the fact that everything else is maldistributed throughout the world.

(Respondent P)

Not all barriers are deliberate or malign. Some barriers to the academic space are a reflection of the more quotidian realm of logistics and costs, as was also highlighted in the research findings.

### 3.4 | The barriers of time, money and logistics: 'This is just really hard to do'

One of the most commonly referred to themes in the research was the time and money needed for established academics to challenge the status quo and to open the academic space to a broader range of partners, in part because

the structures are not in place to do so – a reflection of the intentional and unintentional, formal and informal institutions and norms. A number of academic respondents flagged how much additional work it takes to create new spaces of knowledge exchange, as reflected in the experience of this research. Even without taking into consideration entrenched power structures, the day-to-day reality of enacting these intentions can be very difficult in practice. An international development consultant in Colombia, with broad experience of academia in the global North and extensive experience of working cross-culturally, explained:

A lot of this is politics ... but a lot of this is that it is just quite hard. It takes a lot more energy and effort ... It's not just a change of mindset, it's actually significant investment of resources. And I think that is the main reason that people who want to [open spaces of knowledge exchange and discussion] don't do it, is because most people are massively pressured for time and money.

(Respondent E, International Development Consultant, Latin America)

We all operate through cultural shortcuts and shared ways of working, whether in the North or the South. 'How much more difficult is it to bring in someone with a different background, different ideas, different ways of working? But the value of that is a lot higher, in terms of getting different perspectives' (Respondent E). Formal and informal drivers and incentives can result in pressure to achieve results that are more easily measured, such as student numbers, graduate outcomes and National Student Survey scores. These are important factors but have the potential to crowd out less tangible indicators. Within academia, these pressures are evident:

I don't think people understand the difficulty ... the work, the time, energy ... we need to develop these partnerships, is it considered by the department, by the institution, in terms of how much work it takes to put those things together?

(Respondent M, American Professor, UK University)

An increasing number of universities are grappling with these issues, but the level of success is open to question, perhaps because of the time it takes to engage with these questions at a deeper, granular level of power analysis. The decolonisation agenda within the academic space can face criticism for being '... very managerial, inclined towards guidelines, checklists, toolkits.' (Respondent O) There was a broad recognition that a more nuanced conceptual understanding of this agenda is needed:

The institution goes, we'll put a committee together ... we'll put in a series of policies, boom, we're done. So, your questions about knowledge hierarchies are incredibly important, because knowledge hierarchies are going to be constantly changing ...

(Respondent M, Professor, UK University)

These findings reflect the initial concerns that motivated this research in the first place. There is a recognition that development studies, and, indeed, other disciplines, need to reflect deeply on the question of whether they are challenging current structural inequalities or reinforcing them. The findings, however, also drew attention to the importance of moving away from dichotomous understandings of this question. Viewing the findings through the lens of power analysis facilitates an understanding of the nuance and complexity that exists within both the spaces of development and academia. It also helps us to question the concepts we use to understand how spaces for knowledge exchange are created and maintained. Power analysis stops us from trying to avoid this complexity when we consider what we think the next generation of development practitioners needs to know if they are to challenge, rather than reinforce, these current imbalances of power.

## 4 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this research have indicated three initial themes: racism and the devaluing of local knowledge through resource allocation; the unhelpful reification of 'southern/local' and 'northern/international' knowledge; the structuring of the academic space and the concomitant barriers of time, money and logistics which are reflected in the incentives within that space. These themes serve as useful guides to understand both the conceptual basis and the empirical delivery of development studies in order to ensure that it illuminates and challenges, rather than reinforces, power imbalances and structural inequalities. Here, we reflect on these themes, looking firstly at racism, then turning to reflections on the structuring of the academic space. Finally, we consider how we might move beyond the reification of 'northern' and 'southern' knowledge in the design and delivery of development studies.

### 4.1 | Devaluing of local knowledge and racism – reflections on power

The first theme to emerge from the findings was the question of race. The findings echo some of the more recent decolonial literature, particularly in the area of development studies. Sriprakash et al. (2020) for example, working in the field of Education and Development, assert that the 'next generation of development policy actors and researchers are often being trained with little understanding of the various racial formations that have shaped both the field and the specific development contexts being studied.' De Oliveira Andreotti et al describes how a racial framing can determine how 'local' knowledge has been assimilated (or not) into the European cannon:

'Non-European epistemologies and ontologies are translated into universalised European epistemological parameters as inferior, less evolved, primitive, erroneous or eccentric 'culturally tainted' derivatives.'

(2012: 385)

Power analysis was considered an appropriate conceptual framing for this research because the analysis of different spaces of power demonstrates the need for a historical understanding of how these parameters were created over time. Maldonado-Torres argues that the 'darker side of modernity' must be recognised in order to reject decontextualised teaching and understanding. He defines this 'darker side' as the fact that modernity depends on coloniality for its existence. If this darker side is not acknowledged, '... what results is a kind of universalism located in a "spaceless" realm. This spacelessness prompts the emergence of an epistemically neutral subject who speaks from Europe (or America/Canada) as a privileged epistemic site, adopting "a universalistic perspective that does away with the significance of geopolitical location."' (Maldonado-Torres quoted in de Oliveira Andreotti, 2011: 386) This reinforces the paramount importance of developing a political and historical understanding of context, as highlighted by the nature of the subjects that those in the FGDs chose to prioritise in a Development Studies programme. By centring a local understanding of the politics and history of (in this case) Sierra Leone, respondents were cautioning against these 'universalised European epistemological parameters.' (de Oliveira Andreotti, 2011: 385).

In his seminal work *Power: A radical view*, Stephen Lukes reflects on how power has developed as a concept. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) initially questioned the idea that power was only evident in concrete decisions, and suggested power had a 'second face', namely that power could also manifest through limiting what is added to the decision-making agenda, limiting it to uncontroversial matters '... by influencing community values and political procedures' (Lukes, 2005:6). Lukes goes beyond this second face to call for a three-dimensional view of power, in which he argues that we must go beyond the study of overt 'actual behaviour' and understand how bias within systems is not solely due to individually chosen acts, but '... by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions, which may indeed be manifested by individuals' inaction' (Lukes, 2005:26).

John Gaventa's 'power cube' approach to social change (Figure 1 and Table 2) builds on Lukes's dimensions of power, moving beyond actual behaviour and overt conflict to reflect Lukes's assertion that '... the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent [actual] conflict from arising in the first place' (Lukes, 2005:27). Gaventa (2011) discusses how 'hidden' power can influence agenda setting, determining what is seen as legitimate to debate. In addition, 'invisible' power can use socialisation and norm-setting to influence individuals' own views of themselves, just as we saw reflected in some of the comments regarding the experiences of racism in the development space.

Using the lens of forms of power (visible/hidden/invisible) encourages an understanding of the forms of power that have maintained or destabilised these spaces. Several respondents highlighted the way in which knowledge needed to be 'structured' in order to access the academic space and be seen as legitimate, and how, working cross-culturally, racism seemed to be a driving factor. An example is the way the contributions of a 'local' expert can be circumscribed in a way that does not happen to an 'international' expert. Both the formal and informal structuring of space was impacted by these experiences of racism; 'a white person to give it a stamp of approval'. In terms of forms of power, accounts of how racism made respondents *feel* – both in terms of the validity of their own knowledge and how they were situated in a wider knowledge creation context – were impactful. The invisible power of being able to feel that one has a right to occupy a space of power is an aspect of power that is too often overlooked. Respondent A's mother was made to feel devalued through her experiences of racism, demonstrating the way in which stymying forms of 'invisible' power can close off spaces of power.

As noted by one FGD respondent, this 'devaluing' of local knowledge is also literal in terms of how local and international development practitioners are paid. In September 2022, Purposeful decolonised their pay scale (Bransky & Bah, 2022:14). They recognise that they do so from a place of privilege, which includes access to flexible funding, but also from a place of intention and understanding that hierarchies of salaries perpetuate the very systems and inequalities which much development teaching seeks to address.

Among the considerations to be taken into account when reflecting on how the next generation of development practitioners should be educated, should be their own journey of consciousness. Students must be supported to question and analyse their own positionality in this work. Course content and types of assessment can be structured in a way that encourages this reflexivity. A Freireian approach argues, '[e]ducation either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world' (Schuall, 1973: 4).

Using a power analysis lens when examining our findings on race and racism, we can obtain a deeper understanding of the variety of forms of power that serve to close the academic space to certain stakeholders. By understanding this, we can begin to identify how this might happen in the creation of development studies programmes, and what needs to be done to address it.

## 4.2 | Reflections on the academic space as a barrier to knowledge sharing

The second key theme in the findings was how the structuring of the academic space acted as both a driving and constraining influence on behaviour. Dowbiggin and Goodson's (1990) historical analysis of the codification of two subjects (Geography and Psychiatry) at their early stages provides some critical insights for the designers of development studies at this stage of the discipline. This study identifies the 'patterns of structuralization and distributions of power' that determine how society 'selects, classifies, transmits, and evaluates the knowledge it considers to be public' (Dowbiggin & Goodson, 1990:105). Of particular interest to this research is how types of knowledge are 'authorized through patterns of resource allocation, status distribution, and career prospects' (Dowbiggin & Goodson, 1990:105). Academics are accused, in that analysis, of sacrificing their responsibility to true stakeholders for power and status as a body of knowledge. This is also taking place within a system of higher education which is viewed as increasingly neoliberal (Giroux, 2014; Mintz, 2021).

The visible power of how promotion criteria are designed can create incentives that result in tangible toolkits but do not go deeper to recognise and encourage less tangible work thinking about the nature of spaces of power, or identifying hidden limitations or the internalised disempowerment of invisible power that result in the closing of that academic space to important stakeholders. Creating an open space of power which includes a range of perspectives can mitigate ahistorical and apolitical assumptions in development studies. (This space would be 'invited' in the nomenclature of Gaventa's power cube, although framing it as such in this context reflects the current power imbalances rather neatly.)

In Freire's radical vision, elites are in the position of naming the world. The more the elites speak without hearing the voice of others, the more they grow 'accustomed to power and acquire a taste for guiding, ordering and commanding' (Freire, 2005: 133–4).

Clearly, those of us who want to work as professional academics must demonstrate a range of skills, including high levels of specialist knowledge and critical analytical ability. This is what the academy is for, and undermining these requirements would mean an undermining of the academy, which would be to the detriment of society overall.

However, we need to consider how space is structured for actors with other, equally valuable, experience. As an organisation, one of Purposeful's values is 'many ways of knowing', which seeks to challenge traditional practices around knowledge generation and the monitoring of programmes, centring lived experiences, observation, deep listening and storytelling. A possible fruitful line of enquiry is to consider how we expose students to a variety of 'ways of knowing' that complement, or perhaps contradict, the published, peer-reviewed papers and chapters of books that comprise the gold standard in academic teaching. Understanding power, exploring the historical roots of our subject, and teaching about political spaces and structures of knowledge can help in this endeavour, as can teaching contextually through case studies. Although harder to achieve in practice, making space for the voices of both practitioners and academics from the 'global South' could represent a parallel complementary 'gold standard' in terms of access to knowledge.

We need to consider how the 'front door' of a university is made visible in a way that provides public actors in the development space with a clearer understanding of how this space can be accessed, in order to work together as actors in knowledge production. By presenting the questions of development studies design to stakeholders who are rarely, or never, asked their opinions regarding what students of development should know, this research hopes to begin the co-creation of a space of knowledge exchange in curriculum design.

### 4.3 | Moving beyond a reification of 'northern' and 'southern' development towards a political and historical understanding of development

These findings reflect a need for a more multifaceted approach to decolonising development studies. We need to uncover the history of the informal and formal institutions that have developed over time in order to structure the current spaces of power in which knowledge is validated. We also need an understanding of the forms of power that have served to open or close these spaces to a variety of stakeholders – i.e., a political understanding of our disciplines. What is necessary is a way of conceptually mapping this *historical* and *political* understanding of our disciplines.

Realistically, we must acknowledge that there is an element of zero-sum calculation when it comes to designing our development studies curricula. We only have so much time to cover academic material. Respondent S (Senior Lecturer, UK) explained he had struggled to balance his reading list and commented: 'It's just that you have eight weeks to give students a comprehensive overlay of the academic literature, which is also sufficiently diverse.' However, replacing 'male, pale and stale' academics does not automatically 'decolonise' a reading list. Dambisa Moyo, for example, is a Black Zambian economist included on many reading lists in development studies programmes. She worked at the World Bank and Goldman Sachs, is on the Board at Chevron Corporation and has previously served on the Board of Barclays Bank, among others (Chevron, 2022). We have reflected on what this inclusion means in

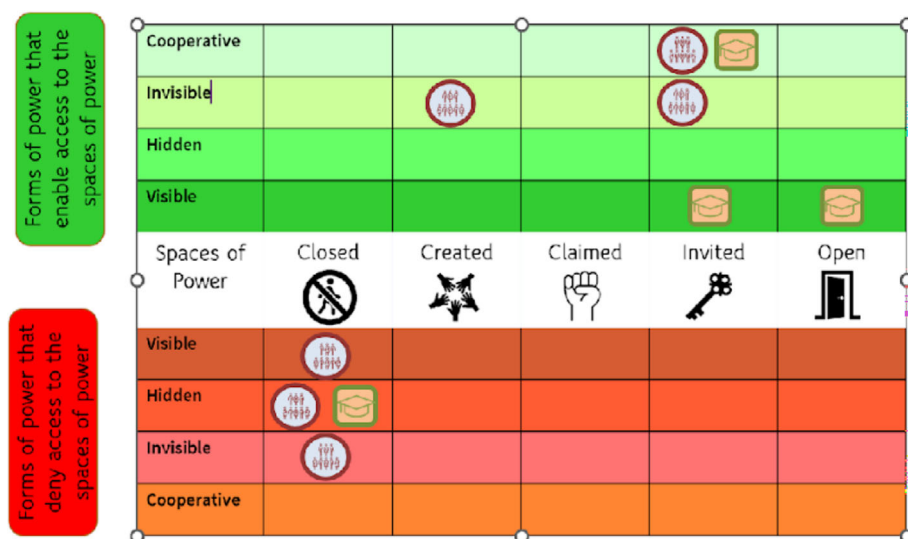
terms of knowledge hierarchies, decolonisation and what we teach students of development. It could represent a step forward in 'Decolonising the Curriculum' given that Moyo is a Black Zambian economist. However, her embrace of the private sector and her neoliberal approach (however one regards her work) comes from a more 'northern' tradition than many radical thinkers, who might be from the global North or South (see Moyo, 2010). The work of Robert Chambers, on the other hand, has arguably achieved more in terms of participation, inclusion and equality, even though he ticks each one of the 'male, pale, stale' boxes. His Participatory Rural Appraisal approach was designed to '... enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan, and to act' in a way that was, at the time, radically decolonising of the development space (Chambers, 1994: 953).

These examples have evidently been chosen to make a point and must not obscure a key issue in development studies, which is the historical neglect of academic work from the global South. Nevertheless, the point is a valid one: if we neglect to engage with a deeper understanding of the barriers to co-creation of knowledge at the complex level of power analysis, and the role of power in creating, maintaining or undermining these barriers, we can only be partially successful in 'decolonising' our curricula.

## 5 | CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to investigate the accusations levelled at development studies as a hierarchical 'set of epistemic/ideological systems' (Girvan, 2007) in complicity with 'western power' (Kothari, 2005:85) which silenced the 'third world subaltern.' (Kapoor, 2008: xii). This challenge exists within wider debates about the role of the Academy. Alfred (2004) frames universities as "part of the larger institutional system serving imperial objectives" (2004: 93). In de Oliveira Andreotti et al's 'Beyond-Reform' space, '... modernity is understood to be irrecoverable, as are universities, at least in their current form.' (2015: 34) Yet the findings of this research point to a less nihilistic framing of the academy. With many academic 'gate keepers' aware of these struggles, and engaged in these debates, it is challenging to conceptualise what is being offered as an alternative. Indeed, as de Oliveira Andreotti et al admit: 'In their efforts to create an extra-institutional, decolonial educational alternative, Dyke and Meyerhoff (2013) found that they both created valuable new spaces and reproduced many of the issues they initially sought to avoid.' (2015: 35) Many of the respondents working in development spaces in the global South were less uniformly dismissive, and more nuanced in their response to information and knowledge from both the global North and the global South.

One respondent argues that the tensions inherent within development will always be apparent. 'What we need is rules and thinking and analysis and theory that, to the best extent possible, mitigates that.' (Respondent E, International Development Consultant, Latin America). Through the adoption of a conceptual framework rooted in power analysis – it is possible to identify stakeholders and their varied approaches to knowledge and to investigate how historical and political drivers have combined to open, close or create spaces of knowledge generation and validation, and to acknowledge that these spaces and relationships are not static, but change over time. An initial mapping of some of the findings in this research in Figure 7 shows the importance of understanding forms of power beyond the visible. Burawoy's (2014: 136) disciplinary division of labour, used as a tool to map which actors have a place at the table, enables us to reconsider what the Academy can be. By mapping this (potentially inexhaustive) range of stakeholders explicitly, we can see beyond who we are including, to be reminded of who has yet to be considered. Here, we look only at the 'Public' actors (extra academic actors who evaluate the underlying assumptions of the discipline) from the global South and the 'Professional' and 'Critical' actors of the global North (Academic – both institutional and reflexive) as these are the subjects of our study. The task to map the forms of power that enable or disable access to spaces of power for the remaining stakeholders is ongoing. The relevance of hidden, cooperative and invisible power is evident across the experiences of actors as evaluated in this research. This demonstrates the necessity to view questions of stakeholder access through nuanced understandings of power, including the significance of invisible power.



**FIGURE 7** Mapping initial findings. *Source:* Created by Murray Davies, adapted from John Gaventa, [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net) (Gaventa, 2011) accessed 20/07/23.

Perhaps we need to embrace de Sousa Santos's 'ecology of knowledges' which recognises the plurality and interdependence of knowledges. In the meantime, we can consider his suggestion of what we need to '... move along: a general epistemology of the impossibility of a general epistemology.' (de Sousa Santos, 2007: 67).

The development studies curriculum will inform the thinking of the next generation of development academics and practitioners from the global North and those from the global South who study in global North institutions, who will either challenge or replicate the same institutional and epistemic power imbalances that contribute to poverty and inequality today. By 'epistemic power' we mean the way in which '... those in positions of power are responsible for the assumptions that underlie the selection and organisation of knowledge in society.' (Dowbiggin & Goodson, 1990: 105).

This challenge will not be easy. Each stakeholder group will have their own incentives, goals and priorities. Pushing back against a closed space of power is inherently difficult because the nature of power is often zero-sum. There are significant challenges, too, in the way that academic space is currently structured: the incentives and drivers of action; the increasing marketisation and competition within the sector. Students do not only enter higher education as a form of emancipation and self-realisation – they need and want to be equipped with skills that will enable them to pursue the career of their choice.

Development studies programmes cannot be simply a subversive endeavour. Students need to understand how current systems operate, how they have come to be the way they are and what are the drivers of continuation or cessation. They also need to understand their own positions and power in these systems. It is challenging for us to expose our students to the dilemmas of both development and development studies, but it is necessary for our students that we engage with both. Asking these questions about development studies takes courage, but it is riskier not to act. If our aim is to develop a rounded curriculum which simultaneously instils critical sensibilities and deep understanding in our students whilst also preparing them to excel in their chosen careers, then an approach which acknowledges the knowledge of all stakeholders in development is critical to this success, both now, and potentially even more so, in the future. Discomfort can also be a precursor to deeper understanding. Despite the potential discomfort, we owe it to our students to expose them to these challenges and to encourage them to critically engage with development narratives. We owe it to the communities they may go on to work with.

We began by asking the question: do development studies degree programmes challenge current structural inequalities or reinforce them? A power analysis approach necessitates a greater historical and political understanding in order to map forms and spaces of power. We argue that, by embracing this approach, development studies can indeed challenge structural inequalities. As a start, Murray Davies has created two new modules for the development studies programme based on the findings from this research: one building on students' understanding of the historical basis of the 'Western' development project and alternative 'development' approaches, and one focusing on the role of power in development, introducing students to the value of a power analysis approach in their work. There is also an enhanced use of teaching through case studies to highlight the importance of contextual understanding and an incorporation of reflexive assessment tasks. Both are informed by a diversified foundation of voices and stakeholders.

In their attempts to map pedagogical narratives around decolonization, de Oliveira Andreotti et al pose some final questions:

What other vocabularies, media, and collective spaces might enable us to change our relationship to modern modes of signification (e.g. logocentrism, anthropocentrism, allochronism)? How do we balance this with the demand to make ourselves intelligible to the institutions and social relations within which we operate?

(de Oliveira Andreotti et al, 2015: 36)

In the longer term, we envisage a 'knowledge exchange partnership'/'curriculum clinic' with a focus on *comparative development*, in which the knowledge, priorities and incentives of stakeholders can be explored through a dialogic learning approach. We are inspired by previous examples such as Edward Webster's SWOP Breakfasts in South Africa (Burawoy, 2010) and reflections on de Oliveira Andreotti et al's description of an educator as '... a cultural broker, negotiating between discursive systems.' (2012: 395). The first step towards this idea of a clinic is to continue to discuss with all stakeholders the barriers they face, the ways in which such a space could be attempted, and how the space could be structured to manage (potentially competing) interests and incentives.

Decolonising curricula takes time, money (in terms of resources and staff time), humility and sound political and historical understanding, both of the subject and the way in which spaces of knowledge creation have been structured and maintained over time. It cannot be done alone, it cannot be done quickly and the work will not be 'finished'. We argue that a systematic approach based on the more granular insights of power analysis can provide an excellent conceptual framework for a nuanced, collaborative and holistic approach to decolonising development studies.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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