# Development Studies Beyond its Colonial Legacy: What Lessons does History Hold?

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# Abstract

Over the past few decades, the decolonisation debate has shed light on the legacy of colonialism in development studies, including challenging the tendency to favour Western knowledge in academia. The research for this bachelor thesis aimed to contribute to this debate and to the understanding of how development studies can address its colonial legacy. The research problem this study sought to address was: 'What can development studies learn from the colonial period, and why should history be addressed?' This problem was pursued by examining various perspectives and theories from colonial and post-colonial history with attention to key issues within contemporary development studies. The scholars reviewed for this study disagreed on when development studies began, but most saw the colonial heritage as central in the founding of the new academic field. Actors argued that there are aspects of history that one may build on rather than seeking to remove the whole historical legacy of development studies. The process of decolonisation in academia was found to cover several distinct themes, yet disagreement remained about what is a remnant of colonialism. The study concluded that increased attention to voices that have been previously forgotten in the establishment of development studies is needed. In addition, there is a need to acknowledge the remaining hierarchy between countries, and the lack of a balanced 'global development' through which all societies experience a form of development. Without aiming to find 'closure', the thesis contributes to the debate about decolonisation and the transformation of development studies by stressing how history may fill in gaps in the understanding of how to decolonise academia and minimise the potential negative effects of the process.

# Introduction

The colonial legacy of development studies is a fundamental but underrecognised theme in academia. Even though one can easily find traces of its dark history in contemporary development studies, it is a topic kept away from the curriculum. According to Eric Allina, there is no consensus on European colonialism's impact the impact on development in Africa, the Americas, and Asia (Allina, 2017). However, scholars have recently raised debates about the potential remnants of colonialism, and if they are worth continuing (Kothari, 2019). Followers of, for example, post-development theory, argue that they prefer to clear out the current development discourse, meaning that they find Western perceptions of history less relevant than alternative voices for progress (Sachs, 1992). The debate is created by the marginalised speaking against the dominant development discourse and by calling for decolonising academia. Others argue that there is no need to address colonial history in development studies curricula, since they question the value of doing so for addressing future issues (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022). My research for this bachelor thesis aims to contribute to the debate and understanding of how development studies can address its colonial legacy. My research problem is: 'What can development studies learn from the colonial period, and why should history be addressed?' I will approach this problem through a historical analysis that will examine the possible effects of colonialism within contemporary development studies and discuss how to approach them. The research questions that will guide my research are:

1) What was the colonial period's impact on development studies?
2) Why should the colonial period be addressed in development education?
3) How can decolonisation of development studies be done?

To answer my research questions, I have used literature found in books, podcasts, reports and brochures that mainly belong in the fields of development studies and history. Numerous of the sources are from authors used in my time studying for a Bachelor of Science in International Environment and Development Studies. However, I will also present lesser-known narratives, notably by the officers in former colonial regimes. Uma Kothari informed my approach to colonialism in a period when decolonising academia is a hot topic. Her interviews with British colonial officers provide interesting angles for development studies as they represent a past connected with exploitation and horror. Their memories are an opportunity to look into lessons of the past in an academic field that mainly considers the

future. Thus, the colonial period's connection to development studies became the focus of my research. I was also interested in reviewing the suggestions of student bodies such as the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH). Thereby I contribute to analysing how development studies connects to its own history from the view of different institutions, ideas and individuals associated with development studies. I will review development studies through such concepts as imperialism and colonialism, coloniality, neo-colonialism, and decolonisation.

In this bachelor thesis, I will argue for why development studies should focus on history, as historical contexts are crucial to deeply understand the cultural, political, and economic circumstances of different countries. Development studies should also underline the need to remain critical of all literature that presents the past, especially literature that rejects the colonial legacy of development studies, which in turn reflects the society in which development studies is being practised. There is a need to make space for new stories of marginalised voices, one of the main topics of the decolonisation debate. This is especially important for drawing adequate lessons from history. The process of decolonising academia has the potential to improve the curriculum, including creating a learning space that is more inclusive and equitable and, therefore, responsive to the needs and experiences of historically marginalised communities. Yet, some reject such notions of history and development.

In the following, I will first present the colonial legacy and its potential impact on development studies, while considering that development studies are also be shaped by other factors. Then I will discuss how the colonial period, as a foundation for development studies, should be addressed in contemporary education. I will argue that there are several benefits and risks of including more history in development studies curricula. The conclusion sums up the main arguments and points at future challenges in the decolonisation of development education.

## Decolonising development studies: Findings and discussion

### What is the colonial impact on development studies?

#### Defining imperialism, neo-colonialism, and colonialism

Colonialism and imperialism are often used interchangeably; however, colonialism refers specifically to the practice of establishing and maintaining colonies in foreign lands. It

describes the practice of an empire, country or company seeking to extend its influence over other territories and civilisations. This can involve the settlement of people from the colonial power in the territory. The goal of colonialism is to acquire control by exploiting the territory's natural resources and labour, and imposing on the colonising local population's culture, economy, and policies. Colonialism has existed for a long time, yet it is mainly associated with the European establishment of colonies in the 16th century (Knudsen et al., 2022). It is related to exploitative and oppressive practices and has significantly shaped global politics and economics throughout history (Knudsen et al., 2022). This era dispossessed local beliefs, ideas and knowledge that did not support the colonial regime. This way, the colonial powers imposed their beliefs, and dismissed the cultural production in the colony (Quijano, 2007). One could say that colonialism is a type of imperialism, yet not all forms of imperialism involve the establishment of colonies.

Imperialism refers more broadly to the extension of a country's power and influence over other territories. Therefore, imperialism began in the 17th century when the Portuguese, Spanish, English, French and Dutch took control of American and Asian territories and, to a lesser extent in Africa (Allina, 2017, p. 28). Imperialism was an economic system where the imperial powers invested in the colonies to extract sources of raw materials (Allina, 2017). Around the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the 'scramble for Africa' began. European countries and non-state actors fought to control new territories in this era called 'high' imperialism. All colonial rule was advanced by violence or threat, even though the countries ruled differently (Allina, 2017). As the era ended not long ago, many remember a time of colonialism with horror.

Neo-colonialism is defined as a system where the old European colonial powers retained political and economic control over their former colonies after they gained formal national independence (Berg et Hagen, 2020). Neo-colonialism is often criticised as a form of indirect imperialism, as it leads to the exploitation of weaker nations for the benefit of the superior country. Anibal Quijano argues that European countries romanticised European legacies after colonies reached independence (Quijano, 2007). The introduction of 'development' became a disguised vision for countries to become as powerful as Western European societies, and then it was made as a competition for power in the cold war (Allina, 2017). For the former colonial powers to maintain a form of relationship with their colonies, they indirectly continued the policies made during the colonial era through development work. This way, independence was supposed to be seen as an act of altruism (Kennedy, 2016). For example, in Africa after

the second world war, the colonial policies led to the increased production of raw materials, e.g., sugar, cocoa and cotton (Allina, 2017). This structure paved the way for economic dependencies and the colonial labour division is still visible today (Ziai, 2017). Neo-colonialism can also happen through actions related to economic aid, investment, or military support, as well as the use of international institutions and agreements to exert influence (Allina, 2017).

## Defining Development Studies

Development studies is a field of study focusing on structural and institutional changes in contexts where countries are engaged in transformations towards a vision of their own future (Chambers, 2016). Based on this definition, one may distinguish between an empirical and a normative aspect of the field. The empirical aspect covers how the institutions, governments, aid agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), departments, or people do or have done for the field of study. This includes activities such as teaching, consultancy, and networking. However, the normative aspect is more complex (Chambers, 2016). It consists of the values that drive future visions, such as ethics and responsibility. These individual and collective understandings of positive changes depend on factors such as ethics, bias, blind spots, and educational and professional backgrounds. In other words, they can lead to infinite understandings of the development needed for a specific society. Development studies are open to new interpretations, but discussions are necessary for change (Kothari, 2019). The normative and empirical aspects of development studies have changed over the years, reflecting the theories and ideologies dominating the academic field at a specific time (Chambers, 2019). This way, one can trace the perspectives and issues to the genealogy of development (Kothari, 2019).

When development studies emerged is a subject of debate. Some scholars argue that it began during the last stages of colonialism, from around 1875 until the end of imperialism (Allina, 2017, pp. 28, 38). Yet, as both eras underwent several changes, their remnants in development studies may come from different processes. For example, the colonial powers' investments on labour, infrastructure, trade, and commodities in the colonies were drivers of the industrial revolution (Allina, 2017). However, the previous officers from colonial regimes interviewed by Kothari remember that new tasks were given to the employees in the time leading up to independence (Kothari, 2019). Supporting this claim is Robert Chambers, who said that during his years as a colonial officer in Kenya, he prepared the colonies for self-governance

(Chambers, 2019). They mention that the colonial administration slowly started to initiate development policies that were supposed to prepare and benefit the people living in the former colonies. One of the policies was the Colonial Development and Welfare Act made by the British in 1940 (Allina, 2017, p. 39). This act funded the British Colonial Research Committee to increase involvement in 'development' in the colonies, mainly as economic and social change following European norms. Therefore, he claims that projects started to resemble contemporary development work (Chambers, 2019).

However, Dane Kennedy warns in his book *Decolonisation: A Very Short Introduction* that the years leading up to independence were a violent process, and therefore, 'development' became an excuse for the colonial ruler's loss of power (Kennedy, 2016). The justification of colonialism and racist rationales through 'the white man's burden' referred to the supposed moral obligation of European powers to bring civilisation and enlightenment to who they considered 'uncivilised' people of the world. This idea was based on the belief that non-European peoples were inferior to Europeans and needed to be 'uplifted' and guided towards progress and enlightenment (Desai, 2017). Indeed, Allina mentions the reorganisation of imperial boosters who claimed the inferiority of societies outside of Europe. This promotion of differences between the colonial powers and the colonies were to maintain control and a hierarchy of peoples. SAIH argue that this racism continued into 'development', a topic that must be challenged as it is consciously or unconsciously in individuals' minds and in social and cultural structures.

On the 20th of January 1949, the Global North was introduced to the concept of development by US President Harry Truman in his inauguration speech on the 20th of January 1949 (Haslam et al., 2017, p. 4). He criticised the colonial powers by stating that the 'old imperialism- exploitation for foreign profit- has no place in our hearts'. This is another trace of 'development' as a newer form of colonialism. Development' continued the colonial legacy by deciding the vision for the future on the newly independent countries' behalf. Modernity was directly linked to progress by industrial- and scientific advancement and skills that the global north would provide the global south (Haslam et al., 2017). The difference from colonial times was that in his time, the locals were supposed to initiate the Western path towards modernity (Chambers, 2019).

From after the second world war until the 1960-s, theories criticising the relationship between the global north and the global south appeared, such as the social and economic dependency

theory. This theory of post-colonialism and post-colonial critiques to the agenda (Hopper, 2018). Radical and Neo-Marxist critics studied 'world systems' and how 'under-developed' and 'developed' countries were created by historical processes driven by capitalist systems, while modernisation theory focused on the state of 'non-development' (Desai, 2017). Dependenistas claimed that capitalism increased inequality and halted economic development in the global south. An accusation that development was not for the countries to 'catch up' but to maintain an economic structure that enabled the global north to exploit the global south (Hopper, 2018).

Furthermore, Harriss explains that when international development studies had become an official field of study at the University of East Anglia by the early 1970-s, it was a field mainly fronted by the British. It was established as an 'external critique' of development policy and practice and the international political economy context (Harriss, 2019). The scholars were influenced by dependency theory, a framework for understanding the economic relationship between the global north and the global south. Development studies took the form of a multi- and interdisciplinary field of various other disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, and agricultural economics (Harris, 2019). With a diverse spectrum of specialisation within other studies, it was created as a reaction to decolonisation and the rise of modern development aid after the second world war (Eggen, 2021).

## Coloniality

SAIH's brochure also introduces 'coloniality', which refers to the continuation of colonialism in society, such as power relations and attitudes to knowledge (SAIH, 2020). According to Quijano, the coloniality of knowledge includes epistemology, education and the formation of subjectivity (Mignolo, 2007). Mignolo states that there is no modernity without coloniality. Just as the concept of 'development' itself, modernity is disguised as salvation while the coloniality behind it, represents oppression and exploitation (Mignolo, 2007). Concerning academia, coloniality relates to who has the power and resources to participate in research and have knowledge considered valid in modern science (SAIH, 2020). Even though there is a growing acceptance that there are various understandings of modernities, former colonies are set back by their limited ability to control their 'vision' due to the current global international economic order (Hopper, 2018). Coloniality is when non-Europeans are seen as 'the others', while the North is a solution-maker when there is a need for transformation (Ziai, 2017).

Some reject coloniality altogether. Olufemi Taiwo state that colonisation in Africa is just a small chapter in a long book of Africa's history. For example, he mentions that modernity did not appear in Africa through colonisation but through Christianity. Due to the lack of representative history, it is easy to misunderstand what Africa as a continent was like before the Berlin conference, a meeting that divided Africa between the colonial powers in 1884 (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022) (Sæbø, 2019). When the colonists came, they forestalled the process that had begun or prevented changes the locals wanted. Therefore, one could say that just because something existed or appeared in the colonial era does not mean it is related to colonialism (Abel-Magied et al., 2022). This simplifies colonisation as a single process experienced the same way in each country. Africa's recovery from the period differs, so one decolonisation project is impossible for every formerly colonised country. In this view, decolonisation is a concept made by ex-colonial powers who generalise the global south and think 'developing countries' need to gain agency again. However, this clearly only victimises those countries. In addition, one should stop accusing colonialism of every problem that arises for colonies. He agrees with Faloyin by saying that if development studies should decolonise, however, colonialism is not to be blamed for every issue addressed in development studies (Abel-Magied et al., 2022).

## Why should the colonial period be addressed in development education?

### Defining the decolonisation debate

Decolonisation is a concept with two meanings. Firstly, the concept can describe the period after the second world war with the struggle for independence and withdrawal from forced occupations (Peace Direct, 2021). Secondly, it is a term that involves the political process of challenging and overturning the legacies of colonialism (Peace Direct, 2021). This can take many forms, but it generally involves efforts to dismantle the systems of power and oppression that were put in place during the colonial period. According to SAIH, decolonisation promotes alternative and marginalised voices when discussing visions for the future. It challenges the superiority of 'Western' structures, ideas, knowledge, laws, and perceptions that were considered the optimal solutions for the present and future generations (SAIH, 2020). It also involves a reassertion of indigenous cultural practices and values, as well as efforts to repair the damage done by colonialism. For example, addressing the disparities in wealth and opportunities that continue to exist between colonisers and the colonised. As the colonial period was a defining moment for contemporary development, it is

challenging to see it as a project with an ending. One can argue that the decolonisation is an approach to address the ongoing effects of colonialism and promote greater justice and equality for all people. However, there is no specific answer or solution of how to proceed with the decolonising process, and one could argue that there is no definite vision of a decolonised future (SAIH, 2020).

According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, the debate on decolonising academia, started only a few decades ago as a bottom-up movement against elitist universities excluding people from higher education. As students became more diverse, new perspectives were introduced and revealed class, religion, sexual orientation, race, gender, and other forms of discrimination in academia. He underlines how these problems in academia reflect social issues. At the same time, a top-down movement pressured universities to adjust to the global economic and political system, capitalism (De Sousa Santos, 2019). Decolonising the university seeks to challenge and transform how knowledge is produced and disseminated within the academy. This can involve a few strategies, such as diversifying the curriculum to include the perspectives and knowledge of marginalised groups, engaging in collaborative research with communities outside the university, and challenging the dominance of Western epistemologies and methods. Decolonising the university aims to create a more inclusive and equitable space for learning that is responsive to the needs and experiences of historically marginalised communities. The negative examples of the colonial period's influence on society can be addressed in a decolonising process of academia that reflects on society, such as increased attention to alternative voices and their history (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022).

### Understanding the colonial legacy

According to Harriss' chapter in Kothari's book, the main challenge for contemporary development is still to renew itself with a historical understanding that complements reality. In other words, teach history that does not support only one view of the past. This is one of the main topics of the decolonisation debate. By addressing the colonial legacy of development studies, one may contribute to the debate by challenging the common misunderstanding of single trajectories (Harriss, 2019). Kothari underlines that one must acknowledge that either contemporary development or the colonial period is good or bad. It is not to say that the colonial period was not a tragic crime against nations (Kothari, 2019). Still, as author and senior editor at VICE, Dipo Faloyin explains, the remnants from that time are both positive and negative. There is no need to 'strip away' all traces of Western influence

from the colonial period. The question is whether one should remove the remaining effect or if one can build on it (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022).

Both Taiwo, Faolyin and Kothari's previous colonial officers agree that there is a potential that history from colonial perspectives can make development studies' curricula support reality. History lessons could help separate the knowledge of civilisations. Thus, cultures are respected, and each path for the future becomes distinctive for each country. It is as Harriss explains through a quote by Dudley Seers and Leonard Joy

"(…) Unless one is fully aware of the context within which governments have been trying to develop their countries, it is easy to fall into the trap of assuming, usually implicitly, that analyses and prescriptions derived from the experience of rich countries are also applicable to countries which are not merely poor, but poor in a very unequal world." (Harriss, 2016, p. 25) In other words, history gives a degree of respect to the ex-colonies because there is an increased awareness of their situation. This knowledge contributes to the breakdown of the hierarchy between the dualism of recipients and donors (Kothari, 2016).

Furthermore, the historical contexts would promote rightful views of countries that have previously been colonies. Faloyin also argues that the colonial period must be addressed as it defined much of modern Africa. With 'modern Africa' he means the period from the Berlin conference in 1884-1885 up until today. However, he underlines that it does not mean that Africa has no agency, and that 'modernity' did not exist before the colonisers arrived. There were urban centres, nomadic tribes, politics, and culture before that time (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022). Yet, the period ended in several countries only recently and drastically changed the continent. Notably, when the state borders were created, 10% of all ethnic groups were broken up (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022, 18:00). Therefore, he argues, there is clear evidence that history should be taken into consideration when the development of the countries are concerned. One can only understand the states correctly with an adequate understanding of colonialism in academia.

SAIH argue that decolonisation should be addressed in academia because the process creates a democratic space for new voices that can lead to decreased inequality and sustainable development. It is also an opportunity to recognise remnants of colonialism and understand their effects. By presenting decolonialism to students in development studies, they gain a foundation for the knowledges and perspectives presented to them throughout their academic and professional path. It will teach them to remain critical and reflect on how they may

contribute to the debate (SAIH, 2020). For example, due to different backgrounds and variations of development as an academic field, its definition and opinions are strongly influenced by personal biases. Kothari explains before presenting the interviews that there are several ways in which the interviewees could become unreliable sources. There could be memories they have forgotten, and they could be influenced by nostalgia, different understandings of social norms and a wish to promote the positive work done during the colonial period (Kothari, 2019). Indeed, all perspectives involved in shaping development studies are strongly influenced by the actor's academic or professional background. Therefore, there is much diversity in the different knowledges and experiences in academia. Whatever one decides is the beginning and definition of development studies, it is evident that the colonial period is a crucial chapter in its history, and awareness should be raised of the effects of the era. This could potentially lead to a decolonisation process of development studies.

## How can decolonisation of development be done?

This section will discuss the suggestions of how decolonisation can be put into action and initiatives that have been tried out. Over the last decade, Kothari mentions three themes that have been central in the debate:

1) A wish to change the language in development studies. Specifically, a need to replace 'international'- with 'global' development.
2) Increased acknowledgement of perspectives from the global south, calling for a pluriverse.
3) An increased awareness on decolonising knowledge, research, and other parts of development studies.

These interconnected topics will be addressed when discussing how decolonisation of development studies is being done or can be done.

### From 'International' to 'Global Development'

To address how one can decolonise development studies, Harriss first mentions the need to replace 'international' with 'global' development. To decolonise development studies, Ziai mentions how post-development theory may contribute to 'redefining development'. With this theory, one can criticise Eurocentric discourses and practices that refuse to think beyond 'development' as a destination of capitalist values, privatisation, and unlimited exploitation of

nature (Ziai, 2017). Boaventura de Sousa Santos observes that the contemporary Global North are experiencing modern problems with no modern solutions. Western ideas and theories that dominate the academic field seem inadequate for the global south and the whole world (ALICE CES, 2012). He states that the North have little to teach the world as its dominating understanding of development does more harm than good for modern, global issues (De Sousa Santos, 2014).

Economist Kate Raworth writes about the modern addiction to economic growth. She observes the obliviousness actors in power have of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) though it remains a measure of development's success. As a result, it deprives other factors of society's values crucial for progress, such as human well-being, and environmental- and economic sustainability. With a focus on economic growth, the consequences include increased inequality of income, increased consumption, and a larger middle class. The pressure on the planetary boundaries intensifies, and the global south pays the price (Raworth, 2017). With this embedded in international development studies, students are studying limited and outdated Western ideas, and theories for the development historically made for the global south. De Sousa Santos argues that it is now time for the North to learn from the global South (De Sousa Santos, 2014). For students to critically see issues where Western knowledge see opportunities, or the reversed. The dominant development model rejects the need for 'development' in the global North (Ziai, 2017). Therefore, there is a wish to move beyond development and make space for a pluriverse.

### Calling for a pluriverse

To widen students' understanding of the world, Eurocentric critical theory should take a step back, and let alternative voices formulate ideas for a decolonised future (De Sousa Santos, 2014). One approach is the pluriverse. A pluriverse is a space with multiple worlds where global voices draw alternatives to sustainable development. Ziai wrote in his book *Post-Development 25 years after The Development Dictionary* that after the *Pluriverse* was released, there has not been significant progress. He argues that other followers of post-development agree that the myth of catching up with the global North has faded, even with the appearance of a sizeable middle class in the global South (Ziai, 2017). Even though decolonisation would benefit international development studies, it would be a mistake to state that non-European voices have had little impact on development of academia and practice. Amartya Sen, Mahmood Mamdani, and Paul Prebisch are all examples of key non-European

contributors to the field (Kothari, 2016). As democracy is an essential factor for decolonisation in academia, the diversity of voices would increase the alternatives for development.

The 'map' of the world becomes entangled through the terminology used in development studies today. Dualisms such as, e.g., the Global North vs. the Global South, or the West and the East, are inadequate ways to understand development in the world. Some countries that one may consider as a part of the 'south' are situated north of the equator and the other way around (Allina, 2017). However, the names are not simply used on geographical terms, but also to illustrate the colonial power dynamics that remain between countries (SAIH, 2020). For example, when migrant workers are in the North, the South is inside the North (Allina, 2017). They are too broad to cover the diversity of political systems, economies, cultures, and values that exists in the world (Hopper, 2018). Therefore, using this terminology is not only wrong, but they become a continuation of colonialism in contemporary development studies. The confusion connected to the words contributes to the generalisation of societies and tars them with the same brush.

Olufemi Taiwo and Dipo Faloyin argue that there is a strong need to provide inclusive history in education in both the Global North and the Global South (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022). They agree with de Sousa Santos that one should change the terminology used in academia to decrease the removal the hierarchy of knowledge. For example, it is not common knowledge that in pre-colonised India, they were one of the biggest importers of high-quality textiles, and other industries. One can argue that they had begun the process of 'modernisation' before the British East India Company arrived and halted the development. The British wanted and succeeded in transforming India from and manufacturing country to a country selling raw products (Hickel & Sullivan, 2022). Because of the unawareness and Eurocentric education, Faloyin and Taiwo claim that international scholars and the public tend to view the African continent as 'stuck in the past' or 'less developed' than the rest (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022).

Gustavo Esteva wrote about the day all countries were divided into developed- or under-developed countries in his chapter in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992). On the day that Truman held his speech in 1949, the former colonies

' (…) ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others' reality: a mirror that belittles them and sends them off the end of the

queue, a mirror that defines their identity, which is really that of a heterogeneous and diverse majority, simply in the terms of a homogenizing and narrow minority.' (Sachs, 1992, p. 7)

This quote shows what the pluriverse would dissolve in a decolonising process. A pluriverse embraces unique situations from all over the world. However, for alternative voices to change development studies, they need to be taken seriously. According to Ziai, one of the main reasons why the pluriverse has not had the desired effect is because it is not fully recognised. The Western understanding of 'development' as a destination, a modern and industrial capitalist society, still dominates in development studies. His article suggests that this post-development approach may be used to criticise Eurocentric practices and discourses, power relations, and global inequality (Ziai, 2017). This is the view of modern theories, but this leads to the question of what the view of the Global South was during the colonial period.

The homogenising assumptions of the global South were noticed by those who had worked in the colonial administration. In the post-independence period, the new development field was especially attractive for those employed by the colonial administration (Harriss, 2019). The new line of work was similar to the work they had previously done. However, according to the ex-colonial officers Kothari interviewed, one of the main differences between colonial 'development work' and post-independence development was how contemporary development started to generalise Africa in all its diversity (Kothari, 2019). They argue that their expertise and 'tailor-made' development initiatives expressed a form of respect for the societies than today. Robert Chambers explained that his development work in Kenya included finding dam sites, planning efficient farming managing agriculture to avoid environmental damage (Chambers, 2019). The colonial workers had more freedom to decide on development initiatives, and thus their comments are based on individual experiences. In addition, there is a great difference between the experiences of the colonies, their struggle for independence and the aftermath (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022).

To decolonise development studies, one could break down the education employees in the colonial administration received. Both the interviewees and Harriss both mention the Devonshire course. In this 12-month course, they learned imperial history, social anthropology, local languages, and other subjects relevant for specialisation in the country they were being sent to (Kothari, 2016). The interviewees argue that one of the most important qualities the colonial administration looked for in its potential employees was specialisation and expertise. Kothari's interviewees suggest that development studies to focus

less on theoretical and technical skills, and more on practical skills, knowledge, and accumulated experience (Kothari, 2016).

De Sousa Santos mentions that individuals employed by the colonial administrations worked under challenging conditions, teaching, and organised educational work, such as spreading literacy. Some of their values were appropriate, and their actions for development were good. However, the educational system that was continued post-independence was modelled after the colonial power's system. Addressing colonial history would raise awareness of how Western knowledge was used to make colonial societies accept their status and benefit the colonial powers (De Sousa Santos, 2019). Still, Kothari's ex-colonial officers' critique can be interpreted to apply to all universities and to the development of all countries. Even though the interviewees focus on the development of ex-colonies, their advice can be integrated into contemporary development studies. In other words, they are relevant to one of the main themes in the decolonisation debate, the need for 'global' development.

## Increased awareness of decolonising development studies

In their decolonisation toolbox, SAIH suggests some practical tips and reflection starters for educators to use in the classroom. It is challenging to confront and challenge the deeply entrenched colonial ideologies and power structures that remain in education. According to Paulo Freire in his work Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1999), critical thinking is not just a change in a student's mind, but also affects society with increased social tips (SAIH, 2020). These brochures for teachers are one step towards decolonising education institutions. Their proposals on activities for the teachers involve an extensive range of activities, such as hosting workshops and conferences, conducting research projects, and implementing changes to institutional policies and practices. These tips spark reflection among students and aid professors in assessing their content, knowledge, and teaching methods (SAIH, 2020).

Among the aspects suggested by SAIH, they mention the need for both educators and students to reflect on their position and knowledge. Experiential and social positions decide on the strengths and weaknesses everyone has in academia. They are often unrecognised by the person until it is challenged, yet it is apparent to those who experience the negative consequences of privileges. For example, include exercises in classes that require students to think; they can reflect on how they can help and, simultaneously, realise that they are a part of the problem. SAIH underlines that we all contribute to maintaining unjust power structures, no matter who the person is, such as skin colour, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. Even

though it is not our intention, there are internalised perceptions about Western domination within development studies. With this, SAIH connect white privilege and white ignorance to colonisation. To prepare for decolonisation, everyone must become aware of their own position, which requires a commitment to ongoing learning and reflection. As a result, there is a willingness to take concrete steps to promote change and a more inclusive and equitable educational system. They suggest that decolonisation would emphasise complex knowledge from around the world to provide multiple solutions in different contexts (SAIH, 2020).

It is crucial to provide literature that represents different views of a variety of actors from different time periods, and places, to create space for new voices. SAIH evaluates course content and assessment forms through several factors to decolonise the curriculum. When mapping and contextualising the course literature, universities should promote a historical, geographical and political analysis. This should reveal the political challenges in the subject area, and compare perspectives to ensure representativity and reflection (SAIH, 2020). In other words, universities should include information about current conflicts that force students to create an opinion of their own and have an opportunity to lose neutrality. Conflicts of discussion may relate to colonialism, imperialism, and racism; thus, representative history gives context to different positions and roles that students are to investigate. This is easier when one includes multilingual work, so one is open to all knowledges translated to English or the language of the course (SAIH, 2020). Some might argue that decolonisation will weaken academia due to previously untold forms of knowledge. However, this assumes that decolonisation will not teach students to read uncritically and form their own opinions.

To create a discussion on history's role in development studies, Vanessa de Oliveira has created an acronym 'HEADS UP' that stands for seven common problems that simplify global problems: hegemony, ethnocentrism, ahistoricism, depoliticization, uncomplicated solutions, and paternalism (Andreotti, 2012). These repetitive patterns of thinking and historical relationships may work as an educational tool that raises awareness of historical and social forces that drive development problems. To illustrate, one can imagine that a student is to discuss local or global initiatives that could potentially cause some of the global problems of 'HEADS UP'. Thus, students may use the tool as a checkbox or start a conversation around the initiative. For example, with 'Ahistoricism', Andreotti asks, "Does this initiative introduce a problem in the present without reference to why this problem exists and how 'we' are connected to the making of that?" The acronym makes students explore inequality, plurality and uncertainties from a critical yet optimistic angle (Andreotti, 2012, p. 2). To make the

most out of the discussions, SAIH encourages teachers to vary size of groups to create a creative and open space for dialogue. This way, students who are less skilled at forming arguments, or speaking the language of the class may share their view of history (SAIH, 2020). Not only will learning about history teach students about historical legacies and complicities, but also different stories from all over the world. In addition, it may also prepare students for the possibilities of new mistakes to be made through prediction (Andreotti, 2012). This argues that history can still be relevant for current and future crises that development students will address.

## Risks of decolonising academia

An increased focus on history can positively affect decolonising knowledge, research, and other parts of development studies, yet some underline the risks of poor decolonisation. In *Decolonizing the University* (2019), Boaventura de Sousa Santos explains how the decolonisation of universities should be executed through several dimensions to avoid negative consequences. One of the main points is that if history is to be included in the syllabus, it should be clear to the students that the results are consequences of struggle and historical contingencies. He warns that if history is glamourised, academia may not contribute to the decolonisation debate (De Sousa Santos, 2019). The field of study needs to prepare students for epistemological awareness and to understand how knowledge is formed (Chambers, 2017). This brings up a problem of what and whose history should be mentioned in the syllabus. If the perspective of women is not included, the intervention may do more harm than good. There is a significant possibility that the syllabus becomes discriminatory and strengthens patriarchy. Therefore, focusing on history and previous experiences may have unwanted results, especially if grown in a Eurocentric environment (De Sousa Santos, 2019). This is why decolonisation may be seen as a process, because it is linear and positive results will come with trial and error. One can argue that looking at past experiences, one can get inspiration on how to approach effectively.

SAIH suggests that as the discriminatory remnants of colonisation and imperialism cannot be fully removed from society, they can be challenged. The classroom is a place to increase awareness on the devaluation of discriminatory perceptions. They suggest that racism and colonial structures should be tackled with a top-down approach. This is so because the historical background has made them into deep structural societal problems. SAIH underline the importance of decolonising academia to address the lack of knowledge and possible

knowledges. One should emphasise inequality and various forms of discrimination at universities. Critical lectures will make students evaluate their own education, including the changes made in development studies (SAIH, 2020).

Mignolo and Walsh (2018) underlined that decolonisation is an option, not a mission. Although the process has clear benefits for development studies, it also involves radical change (SAIH, 2020). To spark change, the field of study must be dismantled and rebuilt, even without knowing if the result will meet all expectations. Stating that development studies is just a continuation of colonisation becomes an inadequate claim. Perceiving development as a good thing, and colonialism as bad could mislead the process of decolonisation. The dichotomy between development and colonialism may, firstly, continue the deeply established inequities of the colonial era. Secondly, the diversity of development actors today opens up the field for a broad spectrum of ideas and practice. Lastly, the separation between contemporary development studies and colonialism abandons the valuable lessons learned from problematic contexts, yet rare individual colonial practices that grew from local cultural contexts (Kothari, 2019). A decolonisation process may be painful, but a necessary action to minimise further pain. If decolonisation processes result in more inclusive production of knowledge with students from around the world and correct errors of history, education becomes fairer and more equal for everyone.

# Conclusion

In this bachelor thesis I have addressed how the colonial period was significant in the creation of development studies, and what lessons may be learned from this particular era and legacy.

Firstly, I tried to answer, "What was the colonial period's impact on development studies?" One impact the era had on development studies was the appearance of the contemporary usage of 'development' itself. Before the imperial period, many of the colonised countries had systems of governance, economy, and social organisation. However, the Western perception of development as a process towards 'modernisation' was halted by the colonisers, who exploited the territories, and imposed their ideas about what constituted 'development' and 'progress'. Some scholars argue that the increased awareness of coloniality as a current pattern in former colonies strengthens a view of them as weak. From Taiwo's perspective, the impact of the colonial period can only become a direct effect if it is identified as a colonial impact, instead of a development issue (Abdel-Magied et al., 2022). In other words, current issues in the Global South are not particular problems in countries in the Global North just because of the colonial period. The era's impact on development studies is then only seen as a small chapter instead of an important part of the foundation. Still, without addressing coloniality, Western theories and modernisation practices will likely continue to dominate the field of development studies.

After achieving national independence, development studies grew as a field of study focused on understanding and promoting development in previously colonised countries. Many of the early development scholars were Western academics who were heavily influenced by the ideas and values of the colonial period. Their work often focused on finding ways to 'improve' the colonised countries and bring them in line with Western norms and values, a potential consequence of the 'white man's burden'. The colonial period had a fundamental impact on development studies, both in terms of the ideas and theories that were made during this time, as well as the ways in which these ideas were implemented in the previously colonised countries.

Secondly, the section on the second research question discussed "Why should the colonial period be addressed in development education?" Over the last few decades, the debate on decolonising academia has received increased attention. Scholars and other actors involved in academia, especially development studies, have argued how a decolonised future would look.

The answer is that a specific answer simply does not exist. There are only relative understandings of what decolonising academia would achieve.

Development studies has evolved significantly since the colonial period, and many lessons can be drawn from that history. First, it is important to understand the historical context of the situation in countries around the world. Scholars argue for a representative version of history that complements reality and considers the unique cultural, political, and economic circumstances of countries or regions. Nevertheless, the colonial period was marked by a one-size-fits-all approach to development, with foreign powers imposing their own ideas and policies on colonised peoples without regard for their distinct needs and priorities. The colonial period is seen with a single trajectory, but it is also relevant to note that not all traces of Western influence are negative.

The legacy of colonialism continues to influence political, economic, and social conditions in many parts of the world, and post-development theory argues that 'development' will never be able to solve the problems countries face. Yet, there are scholars, including post-development supporters, who underline the benefits of adequate history lessons that represent the narratives of marginalised voices. Through these, one may be able to understand contexts of situations, avoid history from repeating itself, and understand how development studies came into being. In addition, studying the colonial period can provide insights into the processes and policies that have shaped development and development studies in the past and can help inform our understanding of current development challenges. Especially, one may learn from the perspective that the colonial period is crucial for the development of modern colonies. In other words, one can learn about current and future problems by looking at the past. A critical examination of the colonial period and the lessons it offers can help foster a more nuanced and critical understanding of the field. This will possibly raise awareness of decolonisation as a positive approach to development.

Thirdly, the last research question discussed "How can decolonisation of development studies be done?" This process for development studies involves rethinking and challenging the traditional frameworks, theories and approaches that have dominated. This can be done in several ways, for example, by changing terminology and concepts, incorporating the perspectives and experiences of marginalised groups by realising that there is a need for global development. As decolonisation is a democratic process, all narratives, especially marginalised opinions, are relevant. It is crucial to address historical and political contexts in

which development policies and interventions are implemented and recognising how these contexts can shape their outcomes. This will help broaden the view of students by exploring alternative knowledges and reminding them to stay critical. It would provide a more interdisciplinary and holistic approach to development, recognising the interconnectedness of social, economic, environmental, and political factors. Historical analyses in development studies would critically examine the power dynamics and inequalities that underlie development processes and work towards promoting more equitable and inclusive approaches.

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