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Decolonising Development: Academics, Practitioners and Collaboration

Eric Herring

*Professor of World Politics, University of Bristol
Bristol, UK*

Email: eric.herring@bristol.ac.uk

Latif Ismail

*CEO, Transparency Solutions
Mogadishu, Garowe, Hargeisa, Nairobi
Email: atif.ismail@transparencysolutions.com*

Yasmin Maydhane

*Member, Senior Management Team, Somali First
Mogadishu, Garowe, Hargeisa, Juba
Email: yasmin.maydhane@gmail.com*

&

Sandra McNeill

*Deputy CEO, Transparency Solutions
Mogadishu, Garowe, Hargeisa, Nairobi
Email: sandra.mcneill@transparencysolutions.com*

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Abstract

This article explores how academics and practitioners can collaborate to decolonise development in relation to Somalia/Somaliland. It does so through theoretical synthesis followed by an inductive thematic empirical analysis and collaborative autoethnography of the Somali First initiative to promote Somali-led development. The initiative has been run by Somali social enterprise Transparency Solutions and the University of Bristol since 2014. The article argues that underpinning the initiative with commitments to sustainable development as a global issue and to locally led, simple, complicated and complex change has been vital to ensuring that it contributes to decolonising development in Somalia/Somaliland. It argues further that the decolonisation of development in this case has been advanced through long term partnership grounded in a shared purpose and complementary capacities; maximisation of funding for and control of funding by Somali entities; decentring English and centring Somali linguistic diversity; promoting a locally led approach; and employing co-production. It concludes that scaling up or transfer of the approach set out in the article would involve reinterpretation by local actors to suit the context to be an effective contribution to decolonising development.

Keywords: *decolonisation, development, academics, practitioners, Somalia, Somaliland.*

Introduction

There is increasing academic and practitioner interest in the notion of “decolonising development” (e.g. Wainwright, 2008). This is rooted in a move towards applying decolonial thinking to scholarship, practice and education (Smith, 2012). The purpose of this article is to explore what decolonising development means in relation to Somalia/Somaliland. It also aims to contribute more general arguments about how to decolonise development. The article does so by combining theoretical synthesis, inductive and thematic empirical analysis, and collaborative autoethnography (Chang, Ngunjiri, Hernandez, 2013), and using them to understand and draw conclusions from the ongoing collaboration between Somali social enterprise Transparency Solutions (TS) and the University of Bristol (UoB) since 2014 through their Somali First (SF) initiative to promote Somali-led development. This article is the first scholarly study to explore what decolonising development might mean in the context of Somalia/Somaliland, the contribution that academic-practitioner collaboration might make to that process and what broader insights might be derived from this case.

The decolonising development perspective problematises a sharp dichotomy between colonialism as violent exploitation on the one hand and international development projects as benign humanitarian assistance for progress on the other. It does so by demonstrating the usually ignored colonial origins of development scholarship and practice. It also does so by showing that this colonial past produces ideas and practices that legitimise a present that is still colonial in treating the global South as the site of the presumed legitimacy of supposedly benign global Northern trusteeship and development interventions (Escobar, 1995). The key word here is “presumed”; just because interventions can be legitimate and benign does not mean that they necessarily are. An attitude of trusteeship – of insisting paternalistically that the interests of the global South must be managed until the global North decides it is capable of behaving in an appropriate manner – reinforces the presumption. We define “colonial” and “coloniality” as hierarchical relations of domination and subordination in any social sphere, including knowledge production, mindsets, identity narratives, economics and politics, which can be exploitative and repressive and yet rationalised at times by the colonised as well as the colonisers as benign and even altruistic, which treat the colonial as superior and progressive and the colonised as inferior and reactionary, and which are legacies of the era of formal empire. We define “decolonial”, “decoloniality” and “decolonisation” as overcoming coloniality so that relations in any social sphere are equitable, mutually beneficial and inclusive. Equity rests on the notion of fairness; evaluating the fairness of any arrangement requires the kind of free, full and open dialogue that is antithetical to colonialism and inherent to decoloniality. Mutual benefit does not have to mean the same benefits but that all parties involved benefit in ways that they value (often in a diffuse, indirect way as opposed to a transaction or a deal); it contrasts with the one-sided exploitative and extractive nature of colonialism. Inclusion is indispensable to decoloniality, as it addresses the danger that one form of colonialism could just be replaced with another, possibly more internal, colonialism (Herring et al., 2020f). We endorse the definition of “inclusive development” provided by Hickey et al. as “a process that occurs when social and material benefits are equitably distributed across divides within societies, across income groups, genders, ethnicities, regions, religious groups, and others. These benefits necessarily comprise not only economic and material gains but enhanced well-being and capabilities as well as social and political empowerment being widely experienced” (Hickey et. al., 2014, 3). To draw these threads together, by “decolonising development” we mean rejection of the colonial perspective on social progress encapsulated in the assumption that the global North is developed and a model for the global South to emulate under the hierarchical guidance of the global North, in favour of an equitable, mutually beneficial and inclusive approach to social progress grounded in acceptance that all societies are a long way from enabling this generation and future generations to live the lives they value in ways that allow nature to flourish.

The scholarly decolonising development literature tends to operate at a relatively high level of abstraction whereas the practitioner literature in this area tends to focus, as one might expect, on much more concrete matters. This article seeks to show how the two can be integrated for the benefit

of both. The body of the article is structured around five sections. The first section provides a statement of the methods used. The second section provides an overview of the origins of SF. The third section sets out the two commitments that we argue underpin SF's contribution to decolonising development. They are a commitment to treating sustainable development as a global issue, and a commitment to locally led, simple, complicated, and complex change. The fourth section consists of an overview of projects carried out under the SF remit in the last seven years to show the empirical basis of the research and to illustrate aspects of SF's decoloniality. The fifth section indicates some of the main practices developed during those projects and explains how they advance SF's goal of contributing to the decolonisation of development. The article concludes with some observations on the meaning and significance of its main arguments.

Methods

As stated in the introduction, the article employs three methods - theoretical synthesis, qualitative empirical analysis that is inductive and thematic, and collaborative autoethnography.

The theoretical synthesis draws on key contributions to thinking about the theory and practice of decolonising development, global sustainable development, and processes of change (locally led, simple, complicated and complex). These literatures address the nature of the issue under consideration (post-imperial but still colonial development), its underlying causes, and ways of acting that address the issue rather than avoiding or exacerbating it. The theoretical synthesis is aimed at ensuring a coherent approach to relating the local all the way up to the global and to relating SF's everyday practices to historical processes.

The article uses a qualitative inductive empirical approach to identifying a set of themes (Boyatzis, 1998) that capture key practices through which SF has sought to decolonise development in relation to Somalia/Somaliland. This method requires extended immersion in the relevant data so that patterns can be identified and then labelled as themes which are then reviewed and adapted, adopted or discarded. It also involves an iterative process of relating the data to the deductive theoretical synthesis.

For themes to remain at the end of the research process there must be a coherent fit between the data, the theoretical synthesis and the third component of our methods, namely, the interpretations generated through our collaborative autoethnography, which combines reflection, interpretation and extended group working. By "autoethnography" we mean the qualitative study of the self in a manner that relates autobiographical data to social context to interpret the mutual constitution of the self and social context. Building on this, by "collaborative autoethnography" we mean qualitative collaborative self-study by a group that relates data on its practices to social context (Chang, Ngunjiri, Hernandez, 2013, 17-18). Using this method, the group reflects on its intersubjective production, reproduction and alteration of always open, incomplete and contested social meaning in its contextualised practices. It is particularly suited to engaging with the theory and practice of decolonising development due to its focus on dialogue, community-building, changing power relations and promoting social transformation.

Our use of collaborative autoethnography indicates a choice of an interpretive measure of fit as opposed to a social scientific one of rigour in coding data in relation to the themes. The latter is an equally valid approach, but we chose the former because our priority was to encapsulate seven years of intensive reflection as well as adaptive collaboration in ways that resonate with our lived experiences and the role of affect as well as rationality. All human representation involves narrative – the storytelling that gives our representations in any form meaning. This is explicit in collaborative autoethnography, where individual and collective perspectives on the collaboration and the subject matter are negotiated. Hence in this article we challenge narratives that are colonial both in substance and in how they were produced, and we explain how we avoid coloniality in our own work through practices that promote equity, mutual benefit and inclusion. For example, in development, coloniality is often evident in an extractive form of knowledge production, where the external development researcher or practitioner assumes themselves to be entitled to do their work by their self-ascribed

humanitarian motivations; assumes that the people they frame as the “beneficiaries” have a duty to give them data or other forms of cooperation because it is for the good of the beneficiaries; and feeds negative stereotypes of the beneficiaries that reinforce colonialism. In contrast, in our projects, knowledge is always co-produced by Somalis and international partners, with Somali partners central to agenda-setting and project management, and with associated efforts to challenge colonial narratives.

We aim to show in this article how our team has been able to contribute to decolonising development in Somalia/Somaliland through its underpinning commitments, projects and practices. A full exposition of our collaborative ethnographic process would require a much longer piece of writing. Our aim here is to set out the origins of and then the outcomes from that process.

Origins

SF has its origins in a UoB seminar in 2013. Latif Ismail is a former child refugee from Somalia’s civil war who ended up in the UK, obtained joint British citizenship, earned a degree from the University of East London in Development Studies and helped to establish TS and became its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in 2001. As an MSc student in International Security at the UoB in 2013, Ismail was taught by Herring, then Reader and now Professor of World Politics there. When Herring presented ideas to the class for a project on collaboration between academics and practitioners on transforming insecurity, the discussion led Herring to travel to Somaliland with Ismail to work together on that project. This and subsequent visits led Herring, Ismail and other colleagues to see the under-appreciated potential for academic-practitioner collaboration on locally led development in Somalia/Somaliland. Over time, the broader decolonial framing came into focus. Herring has made many visits to Somaliland but has not gone beyond the airport zone in Mogadishu for security reasons. Ismail relocated from the UK to Somalia/Somaliland and divides his time between Mogadishu, Hargeisa and Garowe. When we named and launched SF in 2014, we established a long-term team with a focus on going beyond delivering specific projects to reflecting on their contribution to our goal of promoting locally led development, developing strong inter-personal relations and bonds within the team and engaging in open-ended reflections that would result in research publications about the process only when we had a shared view that our thinking was coming into focus. Through our collaborative autoethnographic reflections we arrived at the realisation that promoting locally led development was part of a wider commitment to decolonising development. Another premise of SF is that all have capacities and insights to bring to bear for mutual benefit in a decolonial non-hierarchical way, as opposed to the colonial notion of the external academic researcher as the primary voice.

Shortly after SF was conceived, we established a Senior Management Team (SMT), with two Co-Directors - one Somali (Ismail) and one British person (Herring). Having equal Co-Directors symbolises and structures into our collaboration a decolonial non-hierarchical relationship between scholars and practitioners (of course, we have also had to implement that, as we discuss in the section of the paper on ‘Practices’). Although thus far both Co-Directors have been male, the gender balance of the current SF SMT - two females and two males - reflects our commitment to inclusion characteristic of decoloniality, Ismail and Herring plus Yasmin Maydhane and Sandra McNeill. Maydhane was born and raised in Mogadishu, and has a BSc in Human Rights, Social Anthropology and International Human Rights Law, a Graduate Diploma in Law from BPP University and an MSc in Global Diplomacy and Governance from SOAS University of London. She has worked on human rights issues in Somaliland and more recently South Sudan. McNeill has a degree in Politics and History from Bristol Polytechnic. A frequent visitor to Somaliland, she was TS Director of Business and then Deputy CEO. Ismail and McNeill have been made Honorary Research Associates of the UoB. The fact that all four have had similar academic training has been a major asset in connecting scholarship and practice. The team is not composed of people who are solely academics or solely practitioners, as all combine both roles. Nevertheless, Herring is primarily an academic and Ismail, Maydhane and McNeill primarily practitioners.

Within a year it became clear that SF was accumulating a portfolio of projects and networks in Somalia/Somaliland that would require sign-off from the University's senior team. As the internal correspondence escalated up through the layers of management, there was a consistent pattern of excitement about the potential value of SF to support Somalis in addressing their challenges and to contribute to the University fulfilling its mission of high quality, innovative and socially engaged scholarship. This excitement was accompanied by a requirement to satisfy the University's due diligence regarding reputational, regulatory, political and physical risks. The University was willing to allow these issues to be addressed on the evidence. It could have vetoed at the outset any relationship with entities in Somalia/Somaliland based on a colonial caricature of corruption, terrorism and limited state capacity or insisted on a hierarchical relationship with Somali entities in a subordinate position. That it did not do so is indicative of the open-minded confidence of a large, progressive institution actively seeking decolonial opportunities. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - recently replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – has advised against all travel to all of Somalia/Somaliland, except Hargeisa and Berbera, for which in the last few years it has advised against all but essential travel (UK FCO, 2020). Given a fair hearing, we were able to explain how, in combination, TS and its sister company Horn Risk Management (HRM) would manage risks relating to involvement with Somalia/Somaliland and travel to Somaliland. As we built up a track record, the University gave permission for students as well as staff to travel to Somaliland and stay for extended periods of time. Not only did the University senior team sign off our activity, it decided to send a strong signal to the rest of the University, academia more generally, the upper reaches of government and business in Somalia/Somaliland and the international community that it endorsed our work strongly. It did so at the start of 2015 by awarding TS official Strategic Partner status for long term cooperation (something it gives only exceptionally and usually for much larger entities), with associated Strategic Priority status for SF. This status has been accompanied by commitment of the University's own resources: most of the University staff time spent on SF is funded by the University itself. The University has secured funding from some of the SF projects but this is the exception and generally most or all of the funding goes to entities in Somalia/Somaliland. Association with the success of SF is assisting the University in its performance in competitive UK research assessments which have financial rewards from the UK tax payer but this has never been the University's primary focus. The UoB Engaged University Steering Group gave the team its annual Engagement Award in 2015 – less than a year after SF was conceived. This validation further communicated the institution's backing for SF's decolonial approach.

Underpinning Commitments

Our work on decolonising development is underpinned by theoretically grounded commitments to sustainable development as a global issue and to processes of locally led, simple, complicated and complex change. We explain in turn what we mean by these two commitments.

A Commitment to Sustainable Development as a Global Issue

A vital component of decolonising development is abandonment of the framing that the developed North is helping the developing South to catch up, as if the North has arrived at where the South needs and wants to be ("international" development). This has long been recognised as a colonial way of thinking (Escobar, 1995). This framing must be replaced by one in which development is seen as a global issue (Horner, Hulme, 2017) because development has been fully realised nowhere. Development in the form that we have seen it so far has failed billions of people, especially but by no means exclusively in the global South while being environmentally unsustainable; these facts alone require that development and how we measure it be transformed so that it is focused on sustainability (Hickel, 2020). On the Social Progress Index which covers a wide range of measures related to basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing (including environmental ones) and

opportunity, Somalia ranks 159th out of 163 countries assessed (SPI, 2020). By sustainable development we mean the enhancement of lives, livelihoods and inclusion for current and future generations so that they can live the lives they value in ways that allow the natural world to flourish (Herring et al., 2020a,e; Tikly, 2020, p. 57). This would be the realisation of decolonial development. The fact that we think it is necessary to preface “development” with “sustainable” shows that the current colonial development norm is one of unsustainability. There are powerful forces in the world determined to profit from unsustainable development for as long as they can, and they exploit the fact that everyone is implicated in that system to varying degrees and in varying ways. It follows that an exclusive focus on locally led development in Somalia/Somaliland is insufficient to decolonise development because apparent progress there could contribute to or be undermined by global unsustainability. Current unsustainability is rooted in the neoliberal global capitalist system of production and consumption. The structure of incentives in this colonial system, in which environmental damage is not counted as a cost, makes unsustainable actions profitable: for example, banks lent \$2.5 trillion in 2020 to environmentally destructive activities (Portfolio Earth, 2020).

Sustainable development is in essence the realisation of the decolonial project. Likewise, advocacy of sustainable development is doomed without addressing the main barrier to its realisation, namely coloniality and its primary contemporary manifestation, neoliberal consumer capitalism. Neoliberal ideology claims that individuals and companies pursuing self-interest in capitalist free markets has been the path to prosperous and equitable development. This ideology does not match reality: markets are not free but heavily influenced by many actors – states, international organisations, corporations and social movements. Neoliberal capitalism has produced major shifts in power and wealth from labour to capital and from industrial capital to finance capital, accompanied by extreme inequality, unsustainable over-consumption by some, failure to meet the basic needs of many, a climate crisis and mass extinction (Hickel 2017). The growth of the economies of the global North and then of East Asia and India was enabled by extensive state intervention, subsidy, regulation and protectionism against foreign competition; poorer countries must be allowed to use these instruments among others to establish a decent life for their populations, but this time within the earth’s limits (Chang 2003; Chang, Grabel 2014). Markets and the profit motive play important roles but must be regulated so that they do not generate socially and environmentally destructive outcomes and so that extremes of inequality that undermine community and democratic accountability are curbed (Chang 2010; Hickel 2017). Rather than prioritise neoliberal consumerist economic growth which can only achieve unsustainable prosperity for some, development should aim to operate within the space of a just social foundation and a safe environmental ceiling (Raworth 2018). The underlying purpose of this decolonial development would be to ensure that people of this and future generations have the capabilities and opportunities to live the lives they value while still allowing nature to flourish (Sen 1999).

The world cannot delink sufficiently ever-increasing growth of the monetary value of goods and services from resource consumption and environmental degradation (Hickel, Kallis, 2019). In other words, the “green growth” envisaged by the UN Sustainable Development Goals is not achievable. The evidence points to the need for degrowth (reduction in the monetary value of economic activity) and reduced inequality to curb the unsustainability-generated excesses of the rich while inclusively and equitably meeting the needs of all (Jackson 2017; Hickel, 2019). On the former point, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic shows that dramatic policy shifts are possible in an emergency. Better to do them in a planned way, with social investment to make the transition a positive and just one. On the latter point, the current system of growth-based capitalism is producing increasingly extreme inequality and unsustainability, not sustainable development for all. Recall that the world is awash with wealth, hidden by legal and criminal means by the richest people, facilitated through legal regulatory structures and omissions by the governments of the richest countries. The carbon emissions of the richest 1% of the world’s population (63 million people) are double those of the poorest half of the world’s population (3.6 billion people) (Oxfam, 2020). In 2017 eight people had the same amount of wealth (\$48 billion) as the poorest half of the world’s population (Oxfam, 2017). How the COVID-19 pandemic has been handled has resulted in the loss of \$3,500 billion in

income for workers globally in the first three quarters of 2020 (ILO, 2020, 1), but in merely the first two months of the pandemic, the world's twenty five richest billionaires became \$255 billion richer (Ponciano, 2020). The ability of Somalis to decolonise their development needs to be seen as part of the wider struggle to decolonise the world from the current system of growth-based, unequal and unsustainable capitalism.

Deeper integration into the dysfunctional neoliberal capitalist system will not lead to decolonial, sustainable development for Somalia/Somaliland. Equally, Somalis cannot isolate themselves from these forces; they experience them in myriad ways, such as the impacts of the climate crisis and COVID-19 as well as the global system of inequitable distribution of wealth. Discovery of hydrocarbons in Somaliland and off the coast of Somalia has fuelled fantasies of easy riches and becoming "like Dubai" (a phrase we sometimes hear), bolstered by a sense of unfairness at possibly being denied hydrocarbon-fuelled wealth due to a climate crisis mainly caused by others. However, because of weak governance, Somalia/Somaliland can expect to suffer not only the "resource curse" of increased poverty, corruption, repression, conflict and environmental degradation as predatory actors do whatever they can to obtain that wealth. They can also expect to suffer from the "presource curse", whereby these negative impacts occur in the scramble generated merely by the anticipation of future hydrocarbon wealth (Frynas, Buur, 2020).

SF has sought to relate its projects to decolonial, sustainable development as a global issue in various ways. We have threaded such thinking through the work, either as a general consideration of projects with a substantive focus on other matters, or as a central consideration e.g. the *Dan Wadaag* project on stakeholders in the oil sector, the project on COVID-19 and sustainable development, the Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures (TESF) project on education and sustainability, and a set of projects on land degradation and climate action. We have engaged governments and private sector actors on relating their activities to these concerns and opportunities. Throughout we retain an understanding that sustainable development is inherently political and a matter of inclusive citizenship that is both local and global (Hickey, Mohan, 2005; Elgert, 2008). The fact that the TS-UoB collaboration is aimed at promoting development rather than abandoning it as irredeemably tainted by colonialism reveals its commitment to a "critical modernist" approach to development (Hickey, Mohan, 2005); it aims to support development while seeking its decolonial transformation.

A Commitment to Locally Led, Simple, Complicated and Complex Change

If development is to be decolonised, more is required than demonstrating that development is colonial and should be decolonised. That analysis must be linked to an understanding of how change happens and a commitment to taking actions which contribute to that change. This is vital because many of those in the development industry who accept that the system is colonial tell us they do not know how to change it. From the outset we have sought to relate our projects to the dynamics of change. Funders of development projects often require those it funds to set out a theory of change, in perfect English and using development jargon, that specifies what change the project will bring about and how it will happen. What we set out here is broader, namely a more generalised theorisation of change. This is because, with all of our projects, we have two things in mind – the changes that the project is meant to generate directly (the usual subject of a theory of change for a funder), whether it be change in knowledge or change in practice, and the contribution of the project to the processes of change we are seeking to encourage towards the overall project of promoting the decolonisation of development.

We employ distinctions between locally led, simple, complicated and complex change. The distinctions between simple, complicated and complex change are standard elements of complexity theory (e.g. Patton, 2011: 104-110) (as is chaotic change, but we are setting that aside as it is not a process of change we are trying to promote or a context in which we work). However, usually the analysis then focuses on complexity thinking (e.g. Ramalingam, 2013). Instead, we relate them to locally led change and consider all four equally, as that is an important part of achieving our objectives.

If change processes are to be decolonised, the change agents must be primarily local, as must the selection of goals and the means to achieve them. Far too often we hear the opposite from the international development world – that external actors know what people need, that people locally should listen and be grateful, and that local actors are incapable of change and so it is up to those external actors to drive change. In the section on 'Practices' later in the paper, we elaborate upon locally led change and its role in decolonising development.

The theory of change related to simple change is that, if you follow the agreed procedure, you can be confident of controlling the outcome. It applies to situations where there is certainty about what can be done and consensus that it should be done. The task orientation is the creation and implementation of 'to do' lists and standardised procedures. Simple change in our projects usually means establishing new working practices for many activities – for example, risk assessments, risk management, due diligence, providing a guide for people we bring to Somaliland, addressing funder and regulatory requirements for payments involving TS as an entity based in Somalia/Somaliland, and managing project data. This is a vital element of success. Indeed, it requires constant attention and modification as contexts and institutions change and as staff leave and are replaced.

Being effective in delivering complicated change is also vital. The theory of change here is that, if you combine sufficient societal support and enough coordinated expertise, you have a reasonable likelihood of controlling the outcome. For example, working with HRM in Somalia/Somaliland to enhance aviation security or develop a system of logistical and security support for research projects has required extensive coordination of technical security expertise combined with building political support to implement the improvements.

Complex change requires an exploratory and adaptive approach where control of the kind needed to deliver complicated change is unattainable. In those circumstances, the fact of high levels of disagreement is embraced as central to how change happens; the task itself gets renegotiated and redefined along the way. This means that simple scaling up or transfer of practices from other contexts is likely to fail in relation to recognising and addressing locally defined needs: external impositions of this kind are ineffective and colonial. For example, in the TESF project we do not have a settled view of what transforming education means, what sustainable futures means or how the two relate. We are working with around twenty partner organisations to explore that on the basis of rules of interaction aimed at realising potential in unanticipated directions: we are inviting the partner organisations to co-produce the entire process from designing the call for proposals onwards.

Our projects generally have elements that span all the types of change discussed. The goal is to make them complement each other. For example, carrying out simple changes to facilitate UoB professional services starting to deal with entities based in Somalia/Somaliland is about more than just technicalities. Those simple changes opened a pathway for many colleagues to launch projects in Somalia/Somaliland, either focused on there alone or as part of multi-country work aimed at specific complicated changes, such as coordinated action on land degradation and climate change. To try to unlock complex change towards decolonising development in Somalia/Somaliland, we have prioritised changing interaction rules. In other words, we have been as interested in how things are done as what is done, which helps to explain why we have taken on such a diverse range of projects: we can see ways in which they can be shaped to advance global sustainable development. We are involved with instances of efforts to bring about complicated change with this in mind, without seeing those projects as a means of controlling progress towards that larger goal. We accept that global decolonial development involves messy and uncertain processes that require adaptation as part of building societal support for that goal, within and beyond Somalia/Somaliland. The same dynamics can be seen in relation to National Development Plans: such documents treat development as an outcome that can be controlled by sufficiently complicated planning. While there is an element of truth in this, it is at least as equally true that there are so many factors in play, from rival political authorities through to financial crises, the climate crisis and COVID-19, that outcomes have an inherently unpredictable aspect. The response need not be either fruitless efforts to control the uncontrollable or abandonment of pursuit of objectives, but to see decolonial development as a matter for continuous cycles of acting, evaluating and adapting in a process which can be at least influenced.

Projects

In this section of the paper we provide an overview of SF projects and related activities in Somalia/Somaliland and indicate ways in which they have contributed to decolonising development. In the seven years since SF was established, the team has secured funding for thirty-eight projects plus numerous contracts for TS's sister company HRM. In addition, we have provided *pro bono* policy support to government and the private sector many times, and TS has channelled some of its profits into humanitarian and development activities through its charitable arm the Transparency Foundation. The substantive focus of the projects has been diverse due to principle and pragmatism. The principled reasons are that all sectors of development need to be decolonised and working across all sectors enables us to make connections and build networks which further that goal. The pragmatic reason is that a diverse portfolio helps to "keep the show on the road" as funder priorities and governments change. We have submitted many funding bids that were unsuccessful and worked with many people on funding ideas that never resulted in a bid or self-funded project. Nevertheless, they were valuable for the relationships and learning that resulted from them and which often led to successful funding bids or productive *pro bono* activities. A fully worked out collaborative autoethnography would explore these: here we flag them as a significant part of our process.

One category of funding we have received has been academic funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) - in SF's earlier years, organised as a group of separate Research Councils. It is the main UK national level funder of academic research and it requires projects it funds to devote part of their resources to benefitting society beyond academia. Furthermore, the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is also Official Development Assistance (ODA), which means that academic research funded through it must be of benefit to poorer countries on the ODA countries list, which includes Somalia/Somaliland. UKRI funding is excellent for decolonial work because it explicitly endorses and rewards decolonial principles of equity, mutual benefit and inclusion and decolonial practices such as local leadership and co-production. We used this funding stream to develop the idea of SF. We have made numerous other decolonial uses of this funding. With academic collaborators from physics and materials science, we designed and piloted a nuclear security system for Somalia/Somaliland that is low cost, technically innovative (adapting a cosmic ray science app to crowdsourced radiation detection) and compliant with international regulations (Herring et al., 2020g). The design is ready for implementation should it be funded. This project is decolonial in responding to an intense desire expressed by Somalis to investigate historic claims of nuclear waste dumping and to be able to monitor their own environment. Our UKRI-funded research projects on COVID-19 and sustainable development (Herring et al., 2020a,e) and COVID-19 and education (Herring et al., 2020b,c,d) had numerous decolonial features: they were initiated in part due to needs expressed by Somali entities; Somalis participated throughout in shaping the content and direction of the research; 100% of the funding went to Somali entities with UoB providing its input *pro bono*; participation was highly inclusive (illiterate people, ethnic and clan minorities (including *Gabooye* treated as low caste workers), women, youth, refugees, internally displaced persons, small informal traders, rural agriculturalists and nomadic pastoralists) who were paid well for their time (\$25 for an hour or less of their time every time they participated); and we published versions of the research in Somali and the Somali Maay dialect (Herring et al., 2020a,c,d) with many Somali co-authors named so that credit for knowledge production was not colonised. Through our UKRI-funded TESH project (TESH, no date) we are providing twenty government, education, private sector and civil society actors across South Central, Puntland and Somaliland with funding, administrative support and training to develop their own practical and academic projects on education and sustainable development. This is the opposite of a colonial approach, which would be extractive, exploitative and externally driven. The purpose of TESH is explicitly decolonial, and UKRI has funded our multi-country consortium (UK, Netherlands, India, South Africa, Rwanda and Somalia/Somaliland) to learn about and showcase how to decolonise development.

A second category of funding we have accessed has been that provided by the international donor community for humanitarian and development purposes, both nationally (the UK, USA, Denmark) and collectively via the European Union (EU), United Nations (UN) and Somalia Stability Fund (SSF). The projects have ranged across many topics. For Somalia they have included the political economy of roadblocks (*isbaaro*), public education about the Federal Parliament, citizenship education (the *Wakiil* project), peace and reconciliation, stabilising newly recovered areas, preventing and countering violent extremism, access to justice, aid supply network analysis and evaluation of the impact of the UN Development Programme. In Somaliland they have included security sector reform, dialogue among oil sector stakeholders and evaluation of biometric verification of cash and voucher assistance. Projects that have spanned Somalia/Somaliland include ones on training and mentoring social researchers, improving EU civilian capabilities to support sustainable peace, understanding links between conflict and dryland degradation, accountability, peace and reconciliation, legal aid and empowering adolescent girls. The main decolonial threads running through these projects have been the articulation rather than subordination of Somali perspectives, priorities and leadership and the promotion of networking among Somalis, with non-Somalis in supporting roles. For example, the SSF-funded High Quality Research Support (HQRS) programme was Somali led and supported by UoB: it trained fifty-one non-academic policy researchers from South Central, Puntland and Somaliland, and resulted in fifty-one individual research papers and three group research papers, covering many socio-political issues in Somalia/Somaliland, with the topics all selected by the Somali trainees (Odowa, Herring, Ismail, 2016; TS, no date). Too often training is provided without participants being given an opportunity to apply their skills: it is during the application of skills where much of the real learning takes place. Endless rounds of ineffective capacity building are a marker of coloniality: this project demonstrated how to break that cycle.

A third group of projects has been funded commercially by Somali entities, usually with *pro bono* input from UoB. For example, we have supported HRM in enhancing and managing security for the airports of Somaliland and then Puntland. The decolonial dimension of these activities has been to support the development successes of Somalia/Somaliland, including challenging their marginalisation in the international community's thinking about development and disrupting the sweeping colonial narrative of Somali economic failure.

We have used our own resources to provide *pro bono* policy support to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), Government of Somaliland (GSL) and other governmental bodies such as the Benadir Regional Administration (BRA) on a range of policy issues without taking sides between them. For example, we have provided *pro bono* analytical and research support to the BRA COVID-19 Task Force. In addition, TS, through its charitable arm the Transparency Foundation, channels some of its income into humanitarian, development, education and citizenship projects, some in Somaliland and some in South Central; UoB support for these projects takes the form of *pro bono* staff time. We have an open door and welcoming attitude to representatives of the FGS and GSL, are always keen to support their efforts to lead their own development and are increasingly developing our relations with the Federal Member States with a view to collaboration. This approach is decolonial in that UoB, as an outside entity, premises its involvement on not being partisan in local politics and not being perceived as partisan. In general, TS and UoB work hard to avoid any misperception of partisanship. As indicated earlier, we maintain a mix of projects that are South Central and/or Puntland only, Somaliland only, or which have activities that span these places. It is impossible to completely control the exact mix of our activities due to the unpredictability of success and failure on funding applications and in the amounts of funding. The mix also depends on changing degrees of interest among those in government and whether we have, or can bring on board, relevant expertise. We have the constant challenge of reassuring that the preponderance of projects (or a sub-group of projects) in one geographical area or a preponderance of monetary value of projects in another geographical area is not evidence of bias. When political tensions and suspicions are high, this can be particularly difficult.

Practices

In this section of the paper we discuss in turn the main practices in our work on decolonising development in Somalia/Somaliland, namely: long term partnership grounded in a shared purpose and complementary capacities; maximising funding for and control of funding by Somali entities; decentring English and centring Somali linguistic diversity; promoting a locally led approach; and co-production.

Long term Partnership Grounded in a Shared Purpose and Complementary Capacities

Long term partnership grounded in a shared purpose and complementary capacities is an element of decolonising development because it is premised on equity and mutual benefit. Long term partnership enables a shared purpose to survive beyond a specific block of funding. The reverse also applies: a shared purpose beyond a specific funded project is the basis of a long-term partnership. A team that is assembled in pursuit of a grant is likely to fall apart as soon as the funding ends or before it ever does anything if the grant application fails. The shared purpose must be emotionally engaging – a mission – and it must draw on the complementary capacities of the partners. Emotional engagement of this kind is an important dimension of decoloniality because it acknowledges the negative affective impact of relations of domination and subordination and the lightness that accompanies an equitable relationship.

Two types of emotional engagement experienced by individuals as they engaged with SF have generated that sense of purpose and realisation of the existence of complementary capacities.

The first type of engagement has been the revelatory emotional impact of non-Somali academics visiting Hargeisa and seeing how safe it is despite the FCO's travel advice. There has not been a single terrorist attack in Somaliland since 2008 whereas there have been dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries from terrorism in the UK in the last decade. The fact that we sometimes encounter resistance to the logical conclusion that Somaliland is safer from terrorism than the UK is evidence of a colonial mindset, in which there is a prejudice that Somaliland must be more dangerous than the UK, followed by a searching around for a rationalisation of that prejudice. Somaliland is also safer from terrorism than Nairobi, which is the standard destination for "internationals" (more on this problematic term in the Conclusion) working on Somalia/Somaliland. Many non-Somali academic staff and students have trusted our explanation of why they could be safe in Hargeisa and have felt a powerful emotional impact from seeing for themselves the truth of this rather than the colonial narrative. By visiting they moved from trust in our explanations to personal experience. This then played an important role in them returning to the UK, validating our claims and assisting in the expansion of our network and roster of funded and *pro bono* projects.

The visitors we have brought to Somaliland have also seen the scale of need among most of the population and how much will have to be done to improve their situation. Witnessing this can generate a "white saviour complex" (Bandyopadhyay, 2019) in which the white visitor thinks they can save the benighted, grateful and helpless dark-skinned masses. Resistance to being "saved" then results in the disillusioned white saviour resentfully blaming "failure" of their schemes on the backwardness of those ungrateful societies. Avoiding this racist perspective requires a second emotional response, namely an intense and humbling sense of respect for the capacities of people in Somalia/Somaliland. With few resources and despite the consequences of civil war and state collapse, Somalis have found ways to survive and even flourish. Their biggest commercial success is their telecommunications sector, which provides free mobile banking using only basic (non-smart) phones and which has the lowest mobile data cost in Africa and the seventh lowest globally (Cable.co.uk, 2020). Focusing in on TS, academic visitors are consistently impressed and become excited at the realisation that their academic expertise can be complemented by TS's skills in facilitation, research and connecting research to policy practices and the private sector. They realise that they lack the capacity to operate in Somalia/Somaliland without TS. They do not have to pretend to become instant experts on Somalia/Somaliland – TS brings that expertise to the table. They also usually find co-

production liberating – instead of being the experts with the answer, academics can explore agenda setting and project creation with Somali colleagues in an open-ended and non-colonial way.

Spending time with Somalis who visitors can see are dedicated, honest and generous, who serve the public interest, and who live modestly and spread the material benefits from their work to many helps to disrupt the widespread colonial narrative of Somalia as the most corrupt country in the world. Destabilising that colonial narrative is a significant element of SF's contribution to decolonising development. Since 2007 when it first started to issue reports on Somalia, Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index has rated Somalia as being perceived as the most corrupt country in the world (TI, no date). The Index reinforces the perception that it claims to merely report. Furthermore, TI's claim of a perception is routinely reframed as an assessment of the reality – Somalia supposedly is the most corrupt country in the world and is not just perceived that way. There is corruption in Somalia/Somaliland, and that corruption causes serious problems (Harun, 2020) but the tag "most corrupt country in the world" licences a colonial attitude of sceptical scrutiny that is racist when it becomes an assumption that Somalis in general are corrupt. The concept of corruption can usefully be disaggregated into petty theft, grand theft, speed money (bribes to remove bureaucratic barriers) and access money (the often legal buying of special privileges for elites so that they exercise undue influence over regulation or pay little or no tax) (Ang, 2020). The fact that global North narratives about corruption focuses almost exclusively on the first three of these and not on the fourth which is rampant in the global North, is evidence of a colonial mindset because it obscures the problems of the global North and frames the Global North as the exemplar to which the global South should aspire. Whereas corruption in Somalia/Somaliland is trivial in global impact, the UK provides legal protection to many of the tax havens in which \$7 trillion dollars – 10% of all global wealth is concealed, with \$1.6 trillion of money laundering each year, or 2.7% of the global economy (FACTI Panel, 2020). A succession of leaks of documents has shown the UK banking system, with limited opposition from the UK Government, to be among the world's biggest centres of money laundering, fraud, tax evasion, tax avoidance and concealment of proceeds of crime (BBC News, 2020; Oxfam, 2017). Decolonial thinking recognises that corruption is a global problem, even if the mix varies from place to place.

Maximising Funding for and Control of Funding by Somali Entities

SF's work to maximise funding for and control of funding by Somali entities is a major component of its decolonial work because it challenges the hierarchical relationship around power and money that is inherent to colonialism. Somalis often lament that they see little of the aid money that is allocated to their country, with large amounts of it going to organisations abroad; this practice, legal and normal in the aid world, is seen by many Somalis as corruption. If development is to be decolonised, the proportion of funding going to entities in the global South must be maximised, as must its control of that funding. It can be tempting to qualify this assertion with: "as long as those entities will make good use of the funding and control it for the benefit of the people in that country". At one level this is reasonable, based on arguments about responsibilities to taxpayers for value for money and responsibility to the people that the funding is meant to help. However, it can open the door to colonial paternalism, because the default is an assumption that entities in the global North are those best placed to decide and will make better use of the funding if they judge the entities in the global South to not be up to the job. It leads to a hierarchical power relationship in which the global North entity is the prime contractor and the global South entity the sub-contractor. In 2015 the Grand Bargain among some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations in the world covering the bulk of such aid set a target of 25% of humanitarian funding globally to go "as directly as possible" to local and national actor by 2020. Ten of the 62 signatory organisations self-reported meeting this target by 2019 (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2020, 13). This is a contribution to decolonising humanitarian funding but with a long way to go.

We have increased funding and related control for Somali entities in various decolonial ways, which we now explain.

First, some funders permit the Somali entity to be the prime contractor and UoB to be the sub-contractor. This is the case with the SSF. In our HQRS project which trained Somali social researchers and mentored them in their research, the prime contractor was the Observatory of Conflict and Violence Prevention (OCVP), a Somali entity with its headquarters in Hargeisa. UoB (and TS) were sub-contractors: this overturns the usual colonial power and position relationship. In a powerful reversal, any funds that came to UoB had to be approved and disbursed by OCVP. We have been unable to find a single other case of another Somali entity being the prime contractor and a global North entity being the sub-contractor, even though we have been able to use this approach often in SF; to decolonise development, this must become normal.

Second, UoB as an institution has been supportive of maximising funding for and funding control by Somali entities. For example, in our project on COVID-19 and sustainable development (Herring et al., 2020a,e), UoB endorsed 100% of the funding going to TS, which meant UoB funding its own participation. UoB has supported with enthusiasm numerous *pro bono* contributions by its staff, as discussed earlier in the 'Projects' section. The usual measure of success – maximising income for UoB – is actually a measure of failure in relation to the goal of decolonising development.

Third, when the rules require the non-Somali entity to be the prime contractor, we have maximised the scope and flexibility for the Somali entities within that funding to make the power relationship as decolonial as possible: we explain this further below in our discussions of locally led and co-production approaches.

Fourth, we have broadened and maximised the proportion of funded roles carried out by Somalis: decoloniality requires that societies are primary actors in their own development. SF projects use TS for graphic design and translations into standard Somali and Somali Maay dialect; they also book flights for UoB staff visiting Hargeisa through HRM. This builds institutional capacity, skills and experience. When allowed, we have provided payment per session to project participants. Sums that are small to a funder – for example, \$25 for an interview – can make the difference to whether a family can eat or pay rent. In our COVID-19 projects, forty participants received eight such payments. Projects where desperately poor people are expected to give time and energy without payment to privileged – and paid - people has been normalised; however, it is a colonial, extractive process that should end. Projects are often supposedly for the benefit of underprivileged people, but those specific underprivileged people involved are unlikely to see any benefit, whereas the direct benefit to the privileged people in income and status is guaranteed. We found no evidence that payment to participants skewed our process or findings.

Fifth, we have sought and sometimes secured overheads for TS, which are usually calculated as a percentage of the cost of staff time, in order to challenge the extractive colonial dimension of projects and to facilitate building of the independent capacity that is a requirement of realising decolonial development. The money in the UKRI GCRF is double counted as ODA and funding for UK Higher Education (HE). This creates a zero-sum game: the more money to the ODA country, the less for UK HE. GCRF funding awards 80% overheads for the UK HE institution but only 20% for the entity in the ODA country. Overheads for UoB are even counted in UK official statistics as aid to Somalia/Somaliland. We have been able to partly redress this imbalance through our other measures set out above (for example, the more staff time, the more overheads).

Decentring English, Centring Somali Linguistic Diversity

Addressing language use is a core component of decolonising development because it instantly marks inclusions/exclusions and hierarchies. In the case of Somalia/Somaliland, this means decentring English – removing it from primacy in terms of status and functioning - and centring Somali linguistic diversity. The official languages of Somalia are Somali and Arabic; the official language of Somaliland is Somali, with Arabic a compulsory subject in schools. While there is a legacy of some Italian speaking in the south and east from the period of direct colonial rule and a deep legacy of social division and exclusion due to Italian colonial manipulation of tribalism (Ahad, 2019), the main colonial language spoken in Somalia/Somaliland is English. Standard Somali is based on the Maxaa

dialect while a substantial minority in the south mainly speak the Somali Maay dialect and some minorities speak other dialects and languages, including variants of Swahili. The fact of linguistic diversity among Somalis means that centring standard Somali and erasing all other linguistic forms in our practices would be to replace external colonialism with internal colonialism in the form of "linguicism", i.e. discrimination based on language (Eno, Eno, Dammak, 2016).

SF has taken four steps towards decolonial decentring of English and centring Somali linguistic diversity. First, the normal working language of TS is Somali, and we often conduct meetings in Somali, even when members of the team, including senior ones, who do not speak the language are present. Ismail and Maydhane are native Somali speakers and fluent in English; the rest of the SF SMT are native English speakers and do not speak Somali. This practice underlines the point that nearly all outside experts lack a basic capacity. Positive endorsement by those non-speakers of sitting quietly for extended periods of time while waiting to be brought into part of discussion removes an important dimension of colonial hierarchy. As far as we know those academics have never experienced a meeting conducted in this way before. We are not aware of any other teams operating in Somalia/Somaliland this way. Second, we conduct research in multiple languages and dialects spoken by Somalis. We have always used standard Somali as well as English and now we also use Maay dialect and Arabic. We employ linguistically diverse Somali research staff and seek out research participants who mainly speak Maay and Arabic and have begun to work with Somalis who mainly speak Bravanese. Third, we are drawing attention analytically to Somali linguistic diversity in our research and publications. Fourth, we have begun to include translation budgets into grants where permitted so that an increasing number of our publications are in standard Somali and now also Maay dialect as well as English (Herring et al, 2020a,c,d). While we have made progress, we aim to implement such measures more comprehensively.

Promote a Locally Led Approach

Decolonising the notion of locally led development requires the concept of the local to not be restricted to the global South. For our team, Bristol is local too, and we have worked hard to develop UoB's capacity to contribute to co-production with its Somali partners. There are large literatures on the advantages of a locally led approach, on its potential limitations, and how to overcome those limitations. Regarding advantages, local actors tend to have a better understanding of the local needs and context and more legitimacy among the population than outsiders. Drawing on local capacities and the direct involvement of those who are meant to benefit can result in more sustainability, more cost-effectiveness and an exit point for external aid (McGuinness, 2012). We have found all these claims to resonate with the work of SF. Regarding sustainability measured in simple terms as an ability to continue (the deeper meaning of sustainability was discussed earlier in this article), this can be seen in the research capacities of TS. While international teams have come and gone, usually moving on to other locations, TS has expanded its staff and broadened its skill base which feeds back into its ability to take on more work. Even when some of our work is not locally led, we draw on the resources and links generated to promote a more locally led approach in subsequent work. Regarding cost effectiveness, key savings are on travel (and the global warming emissions associated with it), accommodation and security plus the less obvious saving of not having to learn basics about the context. An exit point for external aid to decolonial development requires a shift to commercial activities and to other domestic sources of income. TS has achieved this in some projects, while HRM is the primary locally led development success facilitated by SF through its domestic commercially funded airport contracts in Somaliland and then Puntland plus its other contracts which together support hundreds of jobs.

The most common limitations of activities that are labelled "locally led" are that they can be colonial by romanticising and homogenising the local, being tokenistic local rubber stamping of priorities decided externally, being captured by local elite factions to serve their own internally colonial purposes and can privilege one level of the local in another manifestation of internal colonialism (Ejdus, 2017; Juncos et al., 2018). The fact of TS's embeddedness in

Somalia/Somaliland, with a permanent presence in Mogadishu, Hargeisa and Garowe as well as Nairobi plus project-related staff in other locations means that romanticisation and homogenisation of the local has never been a feature of SF. Furthermore, this deep understanding of the fractures and alliances across elites and in particular locations has been crucial to preventing factional capture or capture at a particular level. For example, our HQRS project deployed Somali-only teams in South Central, Puntland and Somaliland to recruit participants on demonstrable merit only based on explicit criteria (Odowa, Herring, Ismail, 2016). The team was able to resist pressure to favour specific clans, institutions and territories. In general, SF has taken a pluralistic approach to the meaning of the local, as its meaning changes depending on context and political dynamics. Nevertheless, its commitment to the local is not indiscriminate, in that it favours one that is not internally colonial. This requires an inclusive civic politics based on equal citizenship over one based on exclusive and hierarchical measures of identity such as clan, while navigating the hybrid civic and traditional governance that has fragmented Somali political authority (Herring et al., 2020f)

Methods of promoting a decolonial form of locally led development include funding community engagement, using more local staff, investing in existing local structures, supporting local cooperation between diverse local actors and engaging communities regarding project outcomes (Christie et al., 2018). Funders of development projects are often unwilling to use those methods and claim that local actors lack capacity or are unreliable, so that the funders are merely fulfilling their responsibilities. While this can be true, it can also be rationalisation of unwillingness to relinquish power, position and money. This rationalisation can be deployed endlessly to perpetuate a colonial relationship, with short-term, underfunded activities that never deliver sustainable capacity. On top of this, the most able people in local entities are often recruited to work for external agencies, with their local employer unable to compete on pay, conditions and prospects. SF projects use the methods of promoting locally led development indicated above, including building in community engagement. Nearly half of the funding of the TESH project is dedicated to investing in and strengthening twenty local actors from government, education, civil society and the private sector. In the more skilled roles in our projects we have made a concerted attempt to not recruit Somali diaspora (for example, diaspora were not even allowed to apply to HQRS). The skills and experience we provide make brain drain less likely even if we cannot eliminate it.

Co-production

Co-production is decolonial because it involves acting with rather than for those who are meant to benefit. It is a diverse tradition (Facer, Enright, 2016, 81-88). In academia, it is usually associated with the notion of academics and non-academic stakeholders (either practitioners such as government officials or members of the general public) working together on knowledge production. Less commonly, it refers to academics and non-academics working together in the application of knowledge. The perceived benefits and potential pitfalls have much in common with those associated with locally led development – better grasp of context, more effective participation and so on but with the risk of tokenism and activities that claim to decolonise while actually reinforcing colonialism. Not only has SF used co-production extensively in its projects, SF itself is co-produced, by TS and UoB. The co-authors of this article are the four current SMT members – two Somalis and two British people – and across our five recent academic publications including this one, the overall ratio of co-authors has been approximately 2:1 Somali and non-Somali (Herring et al., 2020b,e,f,g). This pattern of co-authorship demonstrates a decolonial approach to co-producing knowledge.

Co-production can be thought of as on a spectrum of increasing non-academic stakeholder influence (Bammer, 2019, 459). Academics informing stakeholders about the production or application of knowledge that is proposed, in progress or completed is not co-production because the communication is essentially one way from the academics to the stakeholders. When academics consult with stakeholders so that those stakeholders influence knowledge production or application, this qualifies as co-production and may have a major impact on what happens. A deeper form of co-production occurs when academics and non-academic stakeholders work together in partnership. UoB

and TS have partnered with numerous entities in Somalia/Somaliland in government, education, the private sector and civil society. Beyond that is co-production as empowerment, in which the academics are in a support role with the non-academic stakeholders taking the lead. For example, empowerment has been central to our HQRS researcher training project and to our TESH project on supporting Somali-led creation of projects on education and sustainability. The degree of co-production can also vary across types of project activity – initiation, design, implementation, output generation (such as publications, dissemination, application of findings and follow-on work). For example, in our COVIDDEV (COVID-19 and sustainable development) project, we provided our participants, many of whom were illiterate, with funding to engage in dissemination about our co-produced research in any way they chose (TS, no date). The value of thinking about the diverse forms of co-production is that it facilitates identification of opportunities to engage in it.

The traditional model of research impact is that knowledge production, such as publication of a research paper, is followed by social benefit. However, co-production generates social benefit during the process of knowledge production through partnership and empowerment, with research publications such as this one distilling the findings from that process; those publications can then have further social impact in a more traditional way. Furthermore, an adaptive approach (which we discuss in the section on complex change and which we call ‘problem-solving cycles’ of problem specification, acting, evaluating and adjusting) enhances co-production because it multiplies the co-production opportunities,

Engaged methods such as co-production are not necessarily less colonial in all respects than social science where the researcher who gathers data then disappears, never to be heard of again by their respondents (Huisman, 2008). This is because more engagement tends to create (indeed, can extract) an emotional connection so that when the project ends the participant can feel a sense of loss and abandonment. We address this through expectations management, that is, being as clear and accurate as we can about the benefits that we can and cannot deliver; making it clear that we are open to continuing contact; and the continuing presence of team members living in the same areas as project participants. Perhaps most importantly, we ensure that the resources generated from our work are mostly retained locally and channelled inclusively (for example, in scholarships for the underprivileged, financial support for refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, and employment and income for minorities). Due to our long-term commitment we link employment opportunities across projects through our ongoing relationships with past participants.

Conclusion

This world has been colonised by unsustainable development in a manner shaped by the preceding period of direct colonialism. This system also generates subject positions by which many people identify with that system: for example, this is as true of those Somalis who feel deep attachment to social categories that were deliberately remade by Italian colonialists to serve their exploitative enterprise (Ahad, 2014) as it is of contemporary scholars and practitioners of development who feel deep attachment to their humanitarianism but who can do so in ways that serve contemporary colonialism. For this reason, Somalis will not be able to liberate themselves from colonial development by a Somali-only approach. A simple binary of non-Somali outsiders from whom Somali insiders can liberate themselves may appeal but it is a dangerous mirage. Just as the problem is not just Somalis, the problem is not just non-Somalis. Unsustainable development is a global colonial phenomenon in which we are all enmeshed, simultaneously the colonisers and the colonised. This is not to argue that the colonial/non-colonial (and in general the insider/outsider distinction) is meaningless; it is contextual, relational (that is, produced in interactions) and multidimensional (Kusow, 2003). It follows that we need to identify the colonial dimensions of each context to challenge them. We need to guard against the temptation to obscure colonial practices in which we are implicated by highlighting those in which we are not. It is against these criteria that judgements can be made about whether we as a team can collaborate meaningfully to contribute to the decolonisation of development in relation to Somalia/Somaliland.

The shift from colonial to decolonial development in Somalia/Somaliland will be facilitated by an understanding of the mutually constitutive relationships between individual and collective narratives of Somali identity. An individual and collective narrative of a homogenous major clan-based Somali identity produces and rationalises inequality, erasure and discrimination that disadvantages clan, linguistic, caste and racial minorities (Eno, Kusow, 2014; Kusow, Eno, 2015). Social hierarchy based on a historically dubious Arab origin narrative has contributed to divide and misrule in Somalia (Kusow, 1995; Ahmed, 1995). Some members of minority groups have constructed counter-narratives which argue that their indigeneity – the presence of their ancestors on this territory – predates and therefore trumps the arrival of the ancestors of the major clans of today from southern Arabia (Kusow, Eno, 2015, 420-421). However, decolonial development requires a narrative of the fundamental equality of all in the present, rather than a hierarchy of worth based on a narrative of origin. Engaging with Somali linguistic diversity is a decolonial antidote to romanticising Somalis inaccurately as homogenous and provides an entry point for addressing the racial and caste as well as clan prejudice and discrimination that exist in Somalia/Somaliland (Eno, Kusow, 2014). We have sought to advance these agendas by including Maay dialect speakers, Bravanese language speakers, *Gabooye* treated as low caste workers and minority clan and ethnic group members in our co-production work (TS, no date; TESF, no date). We use the phrase “low caste” in its long-established social science meaning; it draws attention to a discriminatory social inequality to contest, not endorse, that discrimination (for the same usage see Eno, Kusow 2014, 105).

Approaching the decolonisation of development in Somalia/Somaliland as a matter of global as well as local citizenship opens avenues to challenging racist dynamics. Racism involves attitudes or behaviours that regard or treat racialised others as inferior or threatening due to their supposed inherent cultural or biological differences. Put this way, racism is a continuing feature of colonial development (Kothari, 2006). Racism can manifest itself in many ways, such as treating development project “failures” in racialised terms as evidence of the inherent inferiority, recalcitrance or dysfunctionality of the global South. Explicit personal racism is much less prominent than more subtle manifestations of colonial development thinking, such as under-valuing and under-rewarding the knowledge and skills of individuals and organisations from the global South, or the automatic valorisation of the global North. It can be seen in the presumption in favour of power and money being kept in the hands of global North actors as supposedly necessary to maximise effectiveness and minimise corruption. It can be that external control improves effectiveness and reduces corruption in particular cases. Nevertheless, it is colonial in multiple ways, including the very fact of external control and the prioritisation of externally defined and externally imposed measures of what constitutes effectiveness and what constitutes corruption. A radical shift to local control of development funding could result in much more sustainable development at much lower cost and with much less corruption (Lentfer, Cothran, 2017; Peace Direct, Kantowitz, 2020). Somalis need to challenge rather than internalise colonial narratives of corruption as endemic in Somali culture, and as something which requires the tutelage of the non-corrupt global North. Disrupting the colonial narrative of corruption opens the door to challenging colonial and often racist control of power, position and money in development projects.

Inevitably the question arises as to whether the kind of work we have done can be scaled up or transferred. At one level, the answer is yes to both questions. We have generated various propositions about how to decolonise development. For example, the promotion of locally-led development is colonial if it depoliticises development, if it treats it as a technocratic technique by which the global North can intervene more effectively in the global South, and if it sees the global North as “international” and the global South as “local”. Instead, promoting locally led development needs to be framed as linking the global and local politically, and the local needs to be understood as referring to specific relations and practices of development anywhere (Mohan, Stokke, 2008; Roepstorff, 2020). There are also simple and complicated innovations that can be used more, such as systems related to budgeting and coordination. However, when it comes to complex change and decolonising development through locally led processes, context is key. This means that scaling up and transfer of essentially unchanged projects, practices and commitments from other contexts is

likely to be colonial, ineffective or both. Instead, collaborations that decolonise development must reinterpret their meaning and content so that they are contextually appropriate.

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