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Thinking race, thinking development

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ABSTRACT *This paper challenges the dominant 'colour-blind' stance of development, arguing that the silence on race is a determining silence, which both masks and marks its centrality to the development project. The aim of the paper is to set out a basic framework for exploring this further. Noting many continuities with colonial formations, it identifies three critical dimensions of development which need to be interrogated: its material outcomes; its techniques of transformation; and its modes of knowing. Its analysis of race emphasises the diversity of understandings and the fluidity between them which underlie both their potential for transformation and their resilience. Following Omi and Winant's work on the USA, development is suggested to comprise a process of racial formation, made up of a vast range of diverse and contradictory racial projects which link the meaning of ethnic, racial and national identities to material entitlements.*

Talking about race in development is like breaking a taboo. Concerned with economic growth and the 'war on poverty', development is determinedly colour-blind. While privately many will admit that race has 'got something to do with it', publicly there is almost total silence. The contrast with gender is striking. There is virtually no analysis of development institutions by race, showing how many people of what racial origin occupy which places in the hierarchy. There are very few programmes of anti-racism or racism awareness training. There is no analysis of differential outcomes of development policies by race. Race is rarely even mentioned in development studies, although some feminist writers offer honourable exceptions to this rule.[1] Even the powerful critiques of 'Eurocentrism' or 'neo-colonialism' in development rarely address issues of race directly. Finally, in 2001, racism did make an explicit entry into global development discourse, with the UN-sponsored World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa. This entry was not auspicious, however. On the one hand the source documents show a distinct tendency to identify racism as a problem *within* regions, marking off-limits consideration of relations *between* North and South.[2] On the other hand, the two major attempts to shift this focus, the demand for reparations for slavery and the condemnation of Zionism, resulted in the withdrawal of the US and Israeli delegates from the conference, which provided an easy pretext for Anglo commentators to deny legitimacy to the agenda of racism itself.

The hiddenness of race in development makes seeking to discuss it a bit like

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breaking a code. Certain terms in development discourse, such as 'tribalism', 'ethnicity', 'tradition', 'religion' and, perhaps pre-eminently, 'culture', may do some work at some times, in standing in for race. But as with any charge of structural bias or discrimination, the method of de-coding is itself contested. Who decides when an event should be characterised as 'racial' or 'gendered'? If claims that they were 'just a joke' can dispute the meaning of even explicit racist remarks, then any assertion of racial content in 'normal', apparently unmarked development processes is sure to provoke controversy. Also, there is the real danger, as Marnia Lazreg points out, that in making race an issue one actually reconfirms essentialist notions of racial difference.[3] This is far from my intention. With Omi and Winant I regard race as a socio-historical construct, which operates simultaneously as an aspect of identity and as an organising principle in forging social structure.[4] While race has the reality of other 'social facts', what it means in a given context is polyvalent, contested and open to change. In the end, it is not national background, ethnicity, sex or skin colour but the geopolitical interests of nation states, international capital and regional power blocs that are at issue in development. What this paper argues, however, is that the means employed to achieve these ends are deeply implicated in tactics drawn from the imagery and practice of race.

The virtual absence of discussion of race in development makes 'breaking the silence' a daunting prospect. However, as feminist critiques have argued, the failure of development to take gender explicitly into account does not indicate the absence, but rather the unquestioned hegemony, of patriarchal perspectives. My argument on race is allied to this: rather than indicating its irrelevance, the silence on race is a determining silence that both masks and marks its centrality to the development project. The breadth and complexity of development makes exploring the significance of race within it a massive task, which a single paper cannot hope to accomplish. My aim therefore is more modest: to make the case that the politics of race in development at least deserve consideration, and to suggest some tools for examining this further. The paper is in four parts. In the first I describe some personal experience that has made me believe race is an issue in development. The second seeks to define development, since its ambiguity and the absence of boundaries around it are part of what makes it difficult to trace the passage of race within it. The third section introduces what is meant by race and some key conceptual tools for exploring its significance. The final section considers how these tools may be applied in the context of development.

Why race in development?

I first became concerned with race in development while undertaking my PhD research. As a white person in 1980s Bangladesh, I found myself in a position of marked racial privilege which, in typical middle-class liberal fashion, made me profoundly uncomfortable, even as I benefited significantly from it. Again and again, and without my conscious intention, my whiteness opened me doors, jumped me queues, filled me plates, and invited me to speak. It was unnerving how quickly even a person like me, with well established 'hang-ups' over my

own privilege, could become used to being called 'Madam'. It seemed to me then that, as it was for currency, so it was for people: simply crossing a border radically inflated exchange values. Just as pounds sterling could buy far more in Bangladesh than in Britain, so quite an ordinary individual could suddenly find him or herself in command of a handsome salary and benefits package, a mansion and a domestic staff—and come to believe it theirs by right.

This general pattern was underlined by a number of particularly gross examples: the British man who explained that his family had left for home because there were 'no children' in Bangladesh for his to play with; the expatriate club serving aid and embassy staff, which held a 'pyjama party' one week, and the next a 'Bengali party', in which the 'fancy dress' consisted of the clothes that Bangladeshis wear. The disparagement of Bangladesh and all things Bangladeshi was the common currency of talk in the bar at expatriate clubs. While the economic contrasts between expatriates and the Bangladeshis they worked among were most striking, these did not stand alone. Rather, they were the material expression of a symbolic structure of difference, which was part of the 'taken for granted' meanings of the aid community's culture. What I was seeing went far beyond individual acts of prejudice or discrimination to a whole system in which advantage and disadvantage were patterned by race.

And of course, this same structure underpinned the enterprise of my PhD itself. Imagine for a moment that a 22-year-old Bangladeshi who speaks a smattering of English could stay 18 months in Britain and then return to write a PhD in Bengali on people in Britain. Which is subsequently used as a teaching resource on British society in British universities. The idea is laughable. And yet that is exactly what I did in reverse. The whole situation is structured in and through racial advantage. The texts on women in Bangladesh with which I was debating were mainly written by white expatriates and, even when written by Bangladeshis, took as their frame the questions and assumptions of the aid community. While in daily life I was acutely aware of my colour, and academically concerned with the politics of Western representations of 'the other', my own work was nonetheless underwritten by that same privilege, and the authority of my class, nation, colour and education which made it 'natural' that I should be the analyst of other people's lives.

Fast forward 10 years or so, and the setting is South Africa and a seminar given by a black South African woman who had clearly been active in the struggle against apartheid. I felt there was some theoretical confusion in her talk and after the seminar went to discuss it with her. Quite politely, but very firmly, she made it clear that this was not welcome, that in fact it was I who needed to reconsider. While neither of us spoke of it, shot through our encounter were the racial politics of a younger white woman assuming the right to correct an older black woman. This is something that I do frequently 'at home' in my British university in the course of teaching often older black students. But the different context changed the rules of the game. In post-apartheid South Africa it was I, as a white person, who bore the burden of silence. In our British university, it is instead the third world students who find themselves on 'the wrong side', and so have to bite their tongues.

Again, the significance of this carries far beyond this immediate example.

Education and development are closely linked together—witness the fact that the vast majority of development studies courses are still taught in first world universities. Year after year African, Asian and Latin American bureaucrats, practitioners and even some activists come to be taught about their countries' problems by people from the North. This is something which clearly needs reflecting on. The point to note here, however, is that this relationship of tutelage extends far beyond the institutions of formal education. It is in fact a dominant idiom underlying much of what is said and done in development. And why is this so familiar? It is, of course, a classic way in which colonial racism imagined black–white relations.

The politics of development

In the discussion above I have taken the understanding of development as read. In order to explore the significance of race in a more systematic way, however, it is necessary to define more precisely the key elements of development itself. While it likes to present itself as philanthropy, the implication of development in global power relations is beyond question. Its present form was forged in the era of the Cold War and it has continued to serve as an occasionally recalcitrant handmaiden to global capitalism thereafter. If diplomacy can be seen as a continuation of war by other means, so also can development. The subordination of 'developing nations' implicit in the imposition, for example, of externally designed structural adjustment policies is difficult to deny. But to see the power of development only in the brute force of domination is seriously to underestimate its effectiveness. On the contrary, the secret of development's power lies in its capacity to enlist others to its own agenda, so that they want what it claims to offer. As Mitchell remarks, 'hegemonic ideologies always offer significant claims to those they are directed against'.[5] While modernisation theory guaranteed the continued intervention of the North in the South therefore, it also provided a symbolism of nationhood. As Robertson states, having a development plan and planning commission constituted a kind of signature for newly independent, ex-colonial states.[6] The process here is analogous to the way Nikolas Rose observes that modern states secure the governance of their citizens. While legal and policy sanctions on misbehaviour clearly exist, critically, Rose argues:

> a citizen subject is not to be dominated in the interests of power, but to be educated and solicited into a kind of alliance between personal objectives and ambitions and institutionally or socially prized goals or activities.[7]

Whereas for most of the second half of the twentieth century the dominance of development was virtually unassailable, there are now signs that its hegemony is beginning to break down. The meaning of development is gradually coming to be more fixed, it is losing its chameleon capacity to comprehend and express the panorama of hopes and aspirations of people and social movements for greater social justice, a better life. In the Comaroffs' terms, development is shifting from an unquestioned hegemony to an identifiable ideology, as the challenge of oppositional groups calls forth the agency of dominant states to buttress their power.[8] In place of animating the global *conscience collective*, development is

increasingly being identified as a project of Western capitalism. While the *content* of development visions has always been diverse and contested, what is new is the rise of serious resistance movements which dispute the *symbolics* of development. Radical environmentalism offers one example of this. Mies and Shiva's depiction of development as 'violence, dispossession and desire' disrupts all the conventional associations of development and relocates it in an unfamiliar ideographical terrain.[9] The anti-globalisation movement is another example. Most pressingly, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, and its readiness through the Al-Qa'ida network to use terrorism to make its voice heard, challenges the basic validity of a development vision. Critically, this puts together what development seeks to keep separate, the implication of humanitarian intervention in the foreign policy, and particularly military, operations of Western powers.[10] The Anglo-American bombing of Afghanistan in response to the attack on the World Trade Center ironically confirms this critique.

In political terms it is thus no longer possible, as once perhaps it was, to sever 'the aid industry' from its wider context of Western-inspired global capitalism and the geopolitical interests of dominant states. However, development should not simply be reduced to these issues. Development does have some degree of relative autonomy, in its distinctive concerns with poverty, welfare, inequality and accountability. This is consistent with the genesis of 'development' as a concept, which emerged in the 19th century as a counterpoint to 'progress', 'to ameliorate the perceived chaos' that progress caused.[11] The relationship of the Christian missions to colonialism can serve as an analogy here. Just as the various missions differed considerably in theology and politics, over time and across space, so aid-related agencies are a diverse and heterogeneous group. The broader capitalist project certainly shapes their identities, but does not simply determine them. As the Comaroffs remark with respect to the missions in colonialism in Southern Africa, 'Agency ... is not merely structure in the active voice.'[12] On the one hand, the missions were deeply implicated in and active agents of colonialism, particularly through their ideological and education work. On the other hand, the missions also provided some of the fiercest critics of colonialism and a means for its transformation—at times through the voice of missionaries themselves, but more significantly through the mission schools in which came to be educated the nationalist anti-colonial elite.

Colonialism and development

The language of development is rooted in the colonial encounter, both literally and metaphorically.[13] This, combined with the centrality of colonialism to recent thinking on race in international contexts makes it an important entry point for an exploration of race in development. V Y Mudimbe identifies three critical aspects of colonialism: 1) territorial expansion and the domination of physical space; 2) the transformation of consciousness; and 3) the integration of colonised economy and history into Western economy and master narrative.[14] As with most of the recent studies of colonialism, Mudimbe casts it not simply as a military, political and economic enterprise, but also in Foucauldian terms as a discursive regime of power/knowledge. As Edward Said argues in *Orientalism*, this

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explodes the conventional division between pure and political knowledge, and demonstrates the significance of cultural production to the 'brute' facts of colonial expansion.[15] In addition, it moves beyond seeing the power of colonialism in simply negative terms as domination or exploitation, to recognising it as a creative force which actively constructs identities and subjectivities. These constitute not simply its object, the colonised other, but also the colonial self 'at home'.[16]

Mudimbe's first point concerning the physical domination of space is an important corrective to the tendency in the critical literature to discuss colonialism—and development—primarily in discursive terms. What is most striking about development, and what matters most to people in 'developing societies', is its *materiality*. First and foremost, development is a transformative practice. It is about the construction of roads, of hydroelectric and irrigation projects, of mines and oil-fields, of schools, hospitals and factories. It is also about the constitution of the means to achieve these: bureaucracies, corporations, businesses and non-governmental organisations. It is about, in and through these means, the extension and greater integration of markets and state structures, the extraction of raw materials, the expansion of science and technology, environmental degradation, the movement of populations and the transformation of the means and relations of production.

The second critical component of development comprises its *techniques of transformation*, the institutions, techniques and processes by which change is to be brought about, of which the central symbol and tool is the development plan. The conceit that this apparatus is 'merely technical' is a powerful constituting myth of development.[17] In fact, however, these techniques offer a critical means whereby development achieves Mudimbe's third characteristic of colonialism: the disassociation of colonised societies from their own histories and reintegration within the Western economy and master narrative. As Rose argues, planning depends on 'processes of "inscription"' which do not simply describe the world, but selectively highlight some aspects and exclude others, as they reorder and represent the world in the form of individual items of 'data' which can be collated and compared. To govern a people, Rose claims, it is necessary:

> to isolate it as a sector of reality, to identify certain characteristics and processes proper to it, to make its features notable, speakable, writable, to account for them according to certain explanatory schemes.[18]

Far from being neutral, these processes both embody a particular understanding of the way the world is, and actively constitute the world in their own image. 'The developing world' that they make 'speakable' and 'writable' is a residual category, apparently geographical, but in practice a catch-all term, comprising societies which are highly spatially and culturally diverse, whose unity lies in being 'not the West'. This unity is not simply inert, however, but animated by a common policy focus: the constitution of these societies as a 'development problem'. Like colonialism, development's claims for transformation lie in 'bringing into relationship' what is 'naturally' separate.[19] In fact, as Mitchell argues forcefully with respect to the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) operations in Egypt, the 'forgetting' of certain (eg military) forms of

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engagement is as significant to the framing of development as the assertion of 'new' (aid) relationships.[20] The second aspect of how development is framed, Rose's 'explanatory schemes', therefore, is the centrality of agency, of 'our' question 'what is to be done?' to/for/with 'them'. Abstracted from their 'home' context selected dimensions of the societies of Africa, Asia the Pacific and Latin America are therefore relocated within a larger whole, in which 'we' supply the ultimate reference point. As Crush states

> Not only are the objects of development stripped of their history, but they are then reinserted into implicit (and explicit) typologies which define a priori what they are, where they've been and where, with development as guide, they can go.[21]

This anticipates the final dimension of development, its cultural constitution as a 'mode of knowing'[22] or a set of regimes for the production of knowledge. As Mudimbe and others argue, the structure of colonial thought turns on the central motif of self/other, subject/object. Development similarly rests fundamentally on notions of difference, between here and there, now and then, us and them, developed and developing. The dynamics of this are contradictory. As Bhabha puts it: 'Colonial power produces the colonised as a fixed reality which is at once an "other" and yet entirely knowable and visible.'[23]

While colonial power appears all-embracing, in fact it has a fundamental flaw. Whatever explanatory method is used, Mudimbe states: 'all express otherness in the name of sameness, reduce the different to the already known, and thus fundamentally escape the task of making sense of other worlds.'[24]

The tragic consequences of this are now being seen in the global terrorism of Al Qa'ida, and its violent assertion of an otherness that will no longer be ignored.

In terms of the effect on those colonised, the Comaroffs locate the crucial transformation not in the transfer of knowledge itself, but in modes of knowing. Before colonisation, for example, the Tswana had no word for their own culture. But the confrontation with the missionaries required a new self-consciousness, a term for what they were and what was theirs: Setswana. The point is not, therefore, that colonisation made Setswana minds into carbon copies of their colonial masters but, rather, that even in combating this, even in the forms of their resistance, the Tswana had to represent themselves in new ways, use new forms of argument and adopt new strategies of engagement, and so found their consciousness irrevocably transformed. This clearly echoes the way that development offers new ways of situating self and nation that can contest, as well as confirm, Western dominance, but that nonetheless enrols its subjects within a hegemonic form.

While the continuities with colonialism are striking, the ultimate character of development is post-colonial, recasting the colonial formations in new ways. This involves a transformative process, in which imaginative geographies shift to comprehend a new world order in which the real power no longer lies with sovereign nation-states but with international capital. This derives from and gives rise to technological means and cultural logic very different from those which characterised colonialism proper. Most significant for an exploration of race in development, post-colonialism means that 'the geography of race is becoming more complex'.[25] This is reflected in a new self-consciousness within some UK

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development circles, where 'the whiteness of faces and Britishness of passports' is found an 'embarrassment' where formerly it would have passed without notice.[26] Similarly there is some shift in the tenor of bar-talk in expatriate clubs, as more of their members experience the racial divisions of development as a conscious and problematic issue. But the major significance of post-colonialism is the contradictions it spawns *within* the former colonies. As Stuart Hall describes, this involves: 'the persistence of many of the effects of colonisation, but at the same time their displacement from the coloniser/colonised axis to their internalisation within the decolonised society itself.'[27]

The politics of race

To explore the significance of race means examining the three dimensions of development identified above: its material outcomes; its techniques of transformation; and its modes of knowing. The breadth and complexity of development make this a massive task. As Omi and Winant argue: 'Racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded.'[28]

The meanings of race in development will therefore be multiple, as are the social contexts in which development takes place. To fall into a single definition of race is to get caught in the logic of racism. What is offered here, then, is not a comprehensive judgement on the significance of 'race' in 'development', but rather some tools through which to explore some of this complexity.

The following story illustrates some of the dimensions of racial thinking. In 1994 I went to Zambia to visit a student of mine who was doing fieldwork there for her PhD. When she heard I was coming to Zambia, this (black) South African student invited me to stay with her family. I began my trip with a visit to a (white) cousin of mine who has settled in Johannesburg. It was a couple of weeks before the first ever multiracial elections, and as we talked over the situation, my cousin said: 'You have to remember, Sarah, that a black man is not just a white man with a brown face.'

Over the next weeks in rural Zambia and then visiting the family in the Transkei, this sentence went round and round in my head. How could my cousin think like that? What was it, in the way he interacted with black people, or in the terms of their exchange, which meant he could only see this difference? Talking things over one night with the South African student, I mentioned what my cousin had said. Quite unexpectedly, she threw back her head and laughed: 'I should hope not! The last thing we need is for the black men to be like the white ones!'

These three positions express three basic paradigms in understanding race. The first, conservative position, is a robust assertion of difference, which it sees as essential, given for all time, as literally written into the body. For my cousin this was not simply an ontological position, but had direct implications for how he managed his black employees, whom he regarded collectively as fundamentally different from himself. The second, liberal, position seeks to deny difference, and to claim that it is 'colour-blind'. The orientation here is individualist and reformist, wishing to challenge policies or forms of behaviour that evince racial

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bias. The third, structural, position again asserts difference, but with a very different spin. This is the radical self-assertion of the marginalised, which disrupts the conventional associations, and reclaims and refigures a stigmatised status, in movements such as 'Black is beautiful'. Ambivalent as to the ultimate locus of difference, it nonetheless points to the way this structures institutional practice, leading consistently to unjust outcomes.

These three paradigms do not comprehend the full range of interpretations of race. They do, however, illustrate a number of important points. First, they show how vitally the meaning of race is contested. As Winant comments, our ability to recognise race is so fine-tuned that it appears like second nature, but when we come to delineate the principles behind this, they disappear.[29] The contemporary literature on race demonstrates conclusively that it is not biology, but society, that decides the content and significance of racial categories.[30] Second, while the three paradigms in this story appear quite distinct, in fact people easily slip from one to another. Arguing further with my cousin revealed internal tensions with his former set of more liberal, egalitarian values. The radical black South African (Xhosa) became racially essentialist on the subject of 'the Zulus'. I found my own perspectives to shift between radical, liberal and visceral essentialist, when I was suddenly in unfamiliar territory and feeling vulnerable to attack. This confirms Ruth Frankenberg's observation that, even in the course of a single piece of dialogue, individuals move between and selectively employ a range of different discourses on race. She therefore introduces the term 'discursive repertoires' to describe 'the way in which strategies for thinking through race were learned, drawn upon, and enacted, repetitively but not automatically or by rote, chosen but by no means freely so'.[31]

Ann Laura Stoler takes this one step further, as she demonstrates that this 'borrowing' and redeployment is also evident within and between the discourses themselves. Distinguishing her position from those which claim a radical disjuncture in the conceptual history of race, Stoler maintains to the contrary that it is precisely the tension between 'rupture and recovery' in the 'promiscuous and polyvalent' nature of racial discourse and its effects that its power and resilience lies. She therefore argues, following Foucault, that what is interesting 'is not so much modern racism's break with earlier forms, but rather the discursive *bricolage* whereby an older discourse of race is "recovered", modified, "encased," and "encrusted" in new forms'.[32]

The final point that these paradigms show is that understandings of race are irreducibly political. They do not only arise from and imply different political positions, but are often used directly to motivate towards particular distributive outcomes. This duality is the foundation of Michael Omi and Howard Winant's analysis of 'racial formation', the socio-historical process through which paradigms and categories of race are forged. Racial formation arises through a vast web of diverse, historically situated 'racial projects' which link the imaginary of race to the institutional and organisational forms through which it is embedded in social structure. Thus:

> A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.[33]

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The notion of racial projects brings together systems of *meaning* with the allocation of *entitlement*, as does development. What that meaning is, and who benefits from the entitlement it confers, is an open question. Of itself, Omi and Winant make clear, identifying a 'racial project' need not imply racism. On the face of it, for example, development might appear as a massive affirmative action programme, offering special opportunities to those disadvantaged by national background. This would be a racial project, but clearly not a racist one. Rather, they suggest:

> A racial project can be defined as *racist* if and only if it *creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race*.[34]

Racism, then, is to be judged again according to this dual measure: the *kind* of meaning attributed to race and the *outcomes* in terms of structures of domination. Unlike some other theorists, Omi and Winant do not see racism as an exclusively white phenomenon. Significantly, they maintain that an attempt simply to reverse the roles of racially dominant and racially subordinate would itself be racist. However, they do point out that different forms of racism lead to a variety of racial projects, some of which are much more menacing than others.

Race and development

The analysis set out above offers some important guidelines for the study of race in development. In the first place one should expect to find the meanings of race diverse and contested. The United Nations reflects this, defining racial discrimination as:

> any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.[35]

As Frankenberg shows, paradigms of race do not exist in isolation from one another, but rather are part of a common fund from which present meanings are drawn. This suggests the need for great caution in attaching a label to a person or institution on the basis of a particular statement or practice, focusing instead on points of contradiction and disjuncture between more and less discriminatory views and practices. Paradoxically, however, Stoler's argument also indicates the need to listen with a special ear to development discourse, to ensure that any 'recovery' from or resonance with racial discourses are consciously registered. I use the term 'consciously' advisedly, because I suspect that such imagery and configurations are already absorbed and internalised at an unconscious level.

The apparently explicit and intentional notion of 'racial project' is at first difficult to reconcile with the determinedly 'colour-blind' character of development. As the discussion of racial paradigms shows, however, 'colour-blindness' does not exist *outside* the domain of race, but is one of the distinctive approaches to it. In fact, colour-blindness comprises the dominant 'official' racial paradigm in the contemporary West, subscribed to by most in the centre and centre-right of

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politics, as well as by some on the socialist left. The great value of the notions of 'racial formation' and 'racial projects' is that they bring the idea of an overall process with a hegemonic outcome together with recognition of a set of diverse and contradictory specific projects that constitute it. The diversity and indeterminacy of development clearly lend themselves to such an approach. Following Omi and Winant's lead, therefore, development as a whole may be regarded as a process of racial formation. Within this, some explicit racial projects may immediately be distinguished. An example is the nationalist policy in Malaysia, where Malay citizens were designated 'sons of the soil' and so accorded numerous advantages over the Indian and Chinese communities. Much more characteristic, however, is the absence of any explicit racial marking. Just as development before 1970 spoke little about gender, and yet had clearly gendered outcomes, so the challenge is to trace the implicit racial character of formally colour-blind development discourse and practice. As with gender, this will take two forms. On the one hand it will mean uncovering the ways that race is embedded within the techniques of transformation and modes of knowing. On the other hand, it will mean analysing the material outcomes of the development project in a way that takes ethnic, racial and national difference into account.

In viewing development as a process of racial formation it is important to embed this in other dimensions of social difference such as gender, age and class, since these are intrinsically related. Most immediately this can be seen at the level of experience. Race, age, class and gender are not inhabited as distinct, but as composite identities, in which the different aspects are experienced simultaneously and the tensions within and between them feel internal. Furthermore, the logic of regarding development as made up of a series of racial projects itself demonstrates the need for a more inclusive approach to social difference. For it views racial identity not as external, already existing social categories which development over-writes, but rather as actively constituted in and through development intervention. Crucially, this questions the framing of development as something that happens 'out there', and resists the identification of 'social divisions' as a 'beneficiary issue'. Instead, it places the apparatus of development and its personnel as a central problematic. This has clear parallels with the work of gender and development in critiquing development claims of universalism and impartiality. But the connections go much deeper than this. They are not simply external and analogous, but internal and constitutive. For the central device for producing difference, the distinction between self/other, subject/object, is not specific to race, or class, or gender, but rather serves to signify them all. Furthermore, the connections are so intimate that one form of difference frequently stands in for another. Thus 'nature' is 'raped', 'savages' are 'child-like', 'Muslim fundamentalists' are 'irrational', and the elite must speak for the poor.

This offers one thread whereby the colour-blindness of development begins to unravel. For this binary representation of difference is rooted of course in the 'colonising structure' of which Mudimbe writes. It sustains a whole pattern of positive versus negative, dominant versus marginal associations. Although some of these are suppressed (such as backward, primitive, savage) in formal development discourse, they still lurk there, unsaid. In fact, as Pigg points out in the Nepali context, national development workers may be much less shy than the

international staff conscious of political correctness of using just such explicit terms of the villagers whom they see as 'ignorant and superstitious'.[36] International etiquette means that the crude modernisation view of 'third world' societies as backward, passive and tradition-bound, static and inert, awaiting the penetration of development from the West, is no longer 'sayable' in polite society. But it nevertheless lurks within the 'discursive *bricolage*' of development. And as such it can inform the framework within which intervention takes place.

Conclusion

This paper poses a direct challenge to the 'colour-blind' stance of development, suggesting that this depends on being unable to see one's own colour, and thus naturalising the privilege to which it gives rise. As Omi and Winant argue, 'To oppose racism one must notice race'.[37] As throughout I have drawn analogies with the work of gender and development, it is fitting to close with some cautions from that experience. First, there is a real danger of essentialism,[38] which the sensitivity of race makes it particularly vital to avoid. Second, the critical issues in development remain power and poverty. While race, like gender, may provide one 'lens' through which to approach these, it should not become a blinder, serving to screen out other dimensions of injustice, nor a mirror, rendering the world's poor, once again, as simply a reflection of its own fractured image.

Notes

1 See, for example, H Afshar & M Maynard (eds), *The Dynamics of Race and Gender*, London: Taylor and Francis, 1994; E Crewe & E Harrison, *Whose Development? An Ethnography of Aid*, London: Zed,1998; U Kothari, 'Identity and representation: experiences of teaching a neo-colonial discipline', in Liz Stanley (ed), *Knowing Feminisms*, London: Sage,1997; B Matlanyane-Sexwale, 'The politics of gender Training', *Agenda* (Cape Town), 23, 1994, pp 57–63; C T Mohanty, 'Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses', *Feminist Review*, 30, 1988, pp 61–88; Mohanty, 'Cartographies of struggle: third world women and the politics of feminism', in C Mohanty, A Russo & L Torres (eds), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991; and A Ong, 'Colonialism and modernity: feminist re-presentations of women in non-Western societies', *Inscriptions*, 3–4,1988, pp79–93.
2 Documents prepared in advance of the Conference by 'regional experts' concerned the following issues: 'vulnerable groups' in Latin America (mainly people of African and indigenous descent); migrants and human trafficking in the Asia–Pacific region; ethnic and racial conflicts in Africa; and minorities, refugees and asylum seekers in Central and Eastern Europe. Other documents from the preparatory meetings, particularly from Africa, do, however, show long-running struggles to bring continuing international economic exploitation into the frame as a key factor contributing to racial and ethnic conflict within African societies. See http://www.unhchr.ch/html/racism/02-documents-cnt.html.
3 M Lazreg, 'Decolonizing feminism', in Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp 6–19.
4 M Omi & H Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, London: Routledge, 1986, p 67.
5 T Mitchell, 'Everyday metaphors of power', *Theory and Society*, 19(5),1990, p 552.
6 A F Robertson, *People and the State. An Anthropology of Planned Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
7 N Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, London: Routledge, 1989, p 10.
8 J Comaroff & J Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991, p 28.
9 M Mies & V Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, London: Zed Press, 1993.

[10] T Mitchell, 'The object of development: America's Egypt', in J Crush (ed), *Power of Development*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp 129–157.

[11] M Cowen & R Shenton, 'The invention of development', in Crush, *Power of Development*, pp 27–43.

[12] Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p10.

[13] Cowen & Shenton, 'The invention of development; F Cooper & R Packard, 'Introduction', in Cooper & Packard (eds), *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, London: University of California Press,1997, pp 1–41; and P Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

[14] V Y Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, Bloomington, IN: Indian University Press, 1988.

[15] E Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, 1985.

[16] A L Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.

[17] J Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticisation, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; Chatterjee, The Nation and its Fragments.

[18] Rose, *Governing the Soul*, p 6.

[19] A Gupta & J Ferguson, 'Beyond "culture": space, identity, and the politics of difference', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7, 1992, p 8.

[20] Mitchell, 'The object of development'.

[21] Crush, *The Power of Development*, p 9.

[22] Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*.

[23] H Bhabha, 'The other question: difference, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism', in R Ferguson *et al* (eds), *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, London: MIT Press, 1990, p 76.

[24] Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, pp 72–73.

[25] H Winant, *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p 19.

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[27] S Hall, 'When was the "post-colonial"? Thinking at the limit', in I Chambers & L Curti (eds), *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp 247–248.

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[29] Winant, *Racial Conditions*, p 37.

[30] See, for example, M Banton, *Racial Consciousness*, London: Longman, 1988; K Brodkin, 'Global capitalism: what's race got to do with it?', *American Ethnologist*, 27 (2), 2000, pp 237–256; '"Difference", cultural racism and anti-racism' in P Werbner & T Modood Tariq (eds), *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, London: Zed Books, 1997, pp 154–172.

[31] R Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, London: Routledge, 1993, p 16.

[32] Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, p 61.

[33] Omi & Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, p 56.

[34] *Ibid*, p 71 (italics in original).

[35] United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, article 1, paragraph 1.

[36] S L Pigg, 'Inventing social categories through place: social representations and development in Nepal', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34 (3),1992, pp 491–521.

[37] Omi & Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, p 158.

[38] See, for example, S Baden & A M Goetz, 'Who needs [sex] when you can have [gender]? Conflicting discourses on gender in Beijing', in C Jackson & R Pearson (eds), *Feminist Visions of Development: Gender Analysis and Policy*, London: Routledge, 1998, pp 19–38.