

# The donor neo-colonialist complex (II)

by Juliet Hunt

15 January 2020



Tailings in the Ok Tedi River (Credit: Dete Siebert Earthworks)

Cloistered by inequality

Protected by accident of birth

Bestowed the gift of privilege

Blinded by arrogance

Believing we know better

We tally up our expertise across the globe

Dash from place to place

And rarely turn to witness the wake.

The justifications come too easily

Believing our own rhetoric, so willingly

Taking offence, too readily

We convince ourselves the system cannot change

The critics are nasty or deranged,

Count the benefits

And tell ourselves that they count, for something.

So we tinker at the edges

Get the best deal we can

Convince ourselves of usefulness.

We are applauded for small gains

As we catch a crumb from the table of large donors

And deliver it so proudly

To those we call our partners.

No matter that the powerful

Set the rules and break them.

The policies may seem right and sweet,

But the fruits are bitter and indiscreet

For local people

Favouring donor whim, not wisdom.

Addicted to innovation

The jargon changes annually.

We all get on board, so knowledgeably

We laud what seem to be new approaches.

But when we see the tried and true

So blinded are we by jargon and new

Do we need “infocrapics” to see the value

Of older and local approaches?

Or is it a connection to a University

That will help to push us through?

So if our local partners have been

“Thinking politically and working strategically”

Over all these many years,

No point in claiming it to be so

It needs a white person to get the dough.

And if our partners have been

“Engaging with men on primary and secondary prevention”

For decades now,

Good luck persuading those in the know

For that brand of new,

It seems you must work with a sporting group or donor NGO.

And if our partners have done the research

And used it for years to prove their point,

Little chance that they can lead the way

Or share their findings with those who count.

You need a consultant to lead such work now,

Where are the voices of those on the ground?

*This poem was inspired by Sarah Garap's [post](#) 'Time to do development differently',*

*and the travails of so many in the region.*

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Link: <https://devpolicy.org/the-donor-neo-colonialist-complex-ii-20200115/>