'Poverty, Inequality and International Development: an exhibition of Photography from the 2018 GRP International Development Annual Photography Competition. City Arcadia Gallery, Coventry 1-4 May 2018. Curated by Dr Jonathan Vickery.

The GRP-International Development Annual Photography Competition attracted many high quality submissions this year. With images from around the world, it testifies to the global reach of Warwick students as well as its diverse international academic community. The Annual Photography Competition serves to include the many students who do not study Development, as well as communicate the issues central to Global Development that concern us all.

The countries represented on our panoply of images include Nepal, Myanmar, Cuba and Vietnam, just to name a few. Every year a selection of photographic submissions are exhibited in Millburn House (on the Warwick Science Park). This year, the GRP-International Development also funded a public exhibition in Coventry city centre – at the City Arcadia Gallery, curated by Dr Jonathan Vickery (Centre for Media and Cultural Policy Studies).

The City Arcadia Gallery is a small contemporary art gallery run by a city artists association, Artspace Partnership Coventry. It is an old converted shop in the 1960s shopping centre, the City Arcade. The location means that the Gallery is visited by many passers-by (from shoppers to students to homeless people) that otherwise wouldn't visit, but is also near other university initiatives in the city, such as the Coventry University's Fab Lab.

This year's GRP-International Development research theme was 'Poverty, Inequality and International Development', and the context was apposite to this neglected part of the city. Last year's theme – Gender and Development – also attracted wide-ranging submissions (the winners you can see on the poster for the Gallery exhibition). This year's Photography Competition opened with a challenge – How can images of development (of people, of places and spaces, of activities or organisations) teach us about the nature of global poverty, and how it is being resolved or can be solved in the present or future?

From this followed questions that also concern the many researchers in the GRP-International Development network. How is poverty entangled with colonialism and its legacies? How do gender and other vectors of inequality cut across our approaches to poverty? What are the limits of global governance to poverty – and how can we use visual media to stimulate the need for alternative paths to sustainable development?

When people think of International Development, they often think of poor people in dysfunctional places. Or more accurately, they think in terms of global media representations of poor people in dysfunctional places. We all tend to understand "the world out there" with the aid of images we retain in memory – and this "cultural archive" of readily available images tends to flow from global media, and tends to be encoded or embedded with meanings and values, which in turn

condition our perceptions of particular a people or place. Places of poverty or "developing" countries can also be places of profound cultural richness. "Poor" countries are often culturally highly developed and culturally productive places – which must provoke us to re-think our understanding of poverty and how it can effect society, economy and culture in very different ways.

The GRP-International Development Annual Photography Competition is part of the careful thinking being undertaken in its many research projects. Visual representation is an under-researched area, and this exhibition has flagged up some significant issues to be considered: How do we define and represent poverty visually? And how do we do this without voyeurism or other forms of visual exploitation? How are images and narratives of poverty represented both by, and to, media audiences? How can the visual archives of global media be countered by more "engaged" forms of visual research? How is poverty concealed or invisible when presented photographically? This exhibition allowed a particularly powerful form of public engagement – accessible to all – and also generated some important research questions.