Introduction

Innovations in Translation, Advocacy, and Engagement in Global Development

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Introduction

Academic social science or policy-oriented research documents have generally been the predominant modes of communication for engaging with the complex and contentious set of processes known as 'global development'. For the purposes of conducting serious empirical analysis that informs policymaking, implementation strategies, and evaluation protocols—much of it concerned with discerning the optimal use of public money for public purposes—this is perhaps as it should be. But it has long been recognized that development influences and is influenced by all aspects of human life, and that, as such, social science is but one representational option among many for conveying the myriad ways in which development is conceived, encountered, experienced, justified, courted, and/or resisted by different groups at particular times and places. In an earlier edited volume, *Popular Representations of Development*,[1] we brought together authors exploring the ways in which various genres within popular culture—novels, films, television, social media—had portrayed the phenomenon of development, comparing and contrasting the particular insights these media convey vis-à-vis mainstream social science. It was an original, instructive, and well-received venture, which generated strong sales, numerous citations, favourable reviews, and many seminar invitations.

Encouraged by this response, we considered the merits of a follow-up effort, and what its distinctive contribution would entail. Our deliberations led us to a conviction that there was both an intellectual and a practical rationale for a new volume on the topic. First, the intellectual context, extending the themes explored in our earlier book. As mainstream social science (including global development) has once again become strongly quantitative and economics centred, there is nonetheless an enduring sense that what is measured (and thus 'valued', 'managed', and

[1] Lewis et al. (2014).

prioritized) may have become too narrow, that the powers of prediction claimed by some areas of economics and management may have overreached, and that the human dimension is in danger of being lost. Reflecting this concern, there is currently renewed interest in conversations between science, social science, and the humanities around the roles of different kinds of knowledge, stories, and data in apprehending the human condition, and how they might be more fruitfully integrated.[2]

For example, Morson and Schapiro (2017: 9, 13) argue that the humanities have something useful to offer economics to get it back on track; as they rightly assert, 'to understand people one must tell stories about them. There is no way to grasp most of what individuals and groups do by deductive logic'. More positively, 'the humanities could supplement economics: with stories, a better understanding of the role of culture, and a healthy respect for ethics in all its complexity'. For economist Thomas Piketty (2013), most prominently in his famous study of capitalism and inequality, nineteenth-century novels provide useful illustrations of processes and trends to which, he argues, mainstream economists need to pay closer attention. Similarly, innovative game theorists have explicitly argued that novelists such as Jane Austen effectively pioneered the field, in the sense that Austen 'theorized choice and preferences, prized strategic thinking, and analyzed why superiors are often strategically clueless about inferiors' (see Chwe, 2013). In South Africa, soap operas embedded with financial management messages have also been shown to positively alter viewers' debt and gambling behaviours (Berg and Zia, 2017).

In the reverse direction, Greenblatt (2018) deftly assesses the full corpus of Shakespeare's plays to derive a careful, mechanisms-based account of tyranny—of how those clearly unfit for political leadership nonetheless rise to and retain their hold on power, despite amply displaying 'infantile psychology and unquenchable narcissistic appetites'. More than 400 years have passed since *Richard III* and *Macbeth* (for example) were penned, but it is hard to imagine that the most comprehensive contemporary social scientific or historical inquiry into the dynamics of tyranny—or, for that matter, the passage of another 400 years—would yield qualitatively different conclusions from those Greenblatt discerns in Shakespeare. And classically, of course, 'the theatre' has been deftly deployed as a metaphor for understanding the necessary performativity of politicians (Geertz, 1980) and lawyers (Balkin, 2018).[3]

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[2] Even on economic grounds alone, the arts and humanities themselves make an important material contribution to society. Kabanda (2018) makes a compelling case for the performing arts as both an important (if 'largely invisible') tradeable 'commodity' and a universal realm in which rich and poor alike find and express meaning.

[3] Numerous authors have also weighed in on the various rendering of complex legal matters in Shakespeare (e.g. Yoshino, 2012).

Such exchanges between seemingly contrasting epistemological modes of inquiry and representation are far from new. We see this recent trend as a continuation of earlier traditions of spirited conversations between the humanities, sciences, and social sciences—exemplified in discussions about relations between 'two cultures' (Snow, 1993), rhetoric and economics (Hirschman, 1991; McCloskey, 1998), literature and law (Posner, 2009), and literature and social science (Coser, 1972; Spradley and McDonough, 1973; Berger, 1977)—a tradition we were interested in extending and applying to the world of global development through our previous volume.[4] Our first aim with this new volume is therefore to continue to contribute to and sustain this intellectual debate, but taking it further, in particular extending the range of representational forms considered in our first volume to include theatre, music, photography, video games, radio, and journalism, among others, as well as offering new insights in relation to novels and blogs.[5]

The second dimension of this new volume is its engagement with development policy and practice. At the level of general public policy, there is new enthusiasm for behavioural science, 'big data', 'nudges', 'artificial intelligence', and randomized control trials.[6] Such approaches enable policy professionals to make bold new claims about how to engage with complexity, but at the risk of compounding the problem by over-relying on technical and instrumental approaches to problem solving. For example, at the time of writing, the Covid-19 pandemic is highlighting these kinds of tensions between expert researchers, policymakers, and citizens in finding supportable and implementable solutions. Epidemiologists are on a steep learning curve as they study the new (and mutating) virus, and in this complex and rapidly evolving field there is inherently a diverse range of expert views about what practitioners and politicians should be doing to protect populations. The necessarily 'unsettled' nature of current scientific advice has lead certain politicians for their part to selectively appropriate and instrumentalize advice that suits their own purposes, even as many expert models have been accurate enough in conveying risk and generating policy advice that, when heeded by political leaders and citizens, has helped save lives.[7] Faced with advice that can be experienced as confused and confusing, it is perhaps not surprising that many citizens are dismissing scientific advice altogether or complying only when it is consistent with what they already planned to do. Citizens might be better placed to adhere to prevailing scientific advice—or, more ambitiously, to appreciate the necessary

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[4] See also Jasonoff (2017: 9), who uses four major novels by Joseph Conrad as the anchor for both a new biography of Conrad and 'a history of globalization seen from the inside out'.

[5] A wide range of new work continues to emerge on these topics, including Cooke and Soria-Donlan (2020), Bailey (2021), and Marsh (2021), suggesting that interest in our broad theme is intensifying.

[6] See, among many others, Leigh (2018).

[7] Available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/09/deadly-virus-britain-failed-prepare-mers-sars-ebola-coronavirus.

uncertainty that accompanies policy advice based on science that itself is learning as it goes about the problem it is confronting; but that they should comply with the advice anyway!—if it was conveyed to them in mediums and by people they find more compelling. We argue that our approach to 'broadening the canvas' is increasingly important as a constructive complement to high-stakes policy deliberation, in no small part because artistic mediums may resonate far more directly with how marginalized communities—e.g. migrants, refugees, those who are illiterate—convey their experiences to themselves and others,[8] and because a defining feature of the most complex problems is that they do not lend themselves to technical solutions.[9]

When it comes to the specific world of global development, we suggest that there is an increasing need to think in new ways about policy and practice. The concept of 'development' has expanded from an earlier emphasis on economic/technical concerns, from narrow Cold War geographies of the 'Third World', and from an emphasis on wealthy countries helping poor ones, to become one of the central organizing ideas of our age. Today, the idea of development speaks increasingly inclusively about how the world is changing more broadly, and to questions of who wins and who loses from such change (Gardner and Lewis, 2015), as well as to broader, philosophical questions of social justice and the 'good life' (not just in relation to people but also nature and the planet more generally). For example, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) now apply to all countries; thinking about poverty has widened to embrace 'quality of life' issues; and more nuanced conceptualizations have evolved with regard to democratization, poverty, and governance. As such, the ways we go about 'doing' development must also be expanded, going beyond the conventional modalities to include the role of culture, narrative, and emotion, responding to critics of development who point to continuing problems of 'solution driven aid'—i.e. aid that pays insufficient attention to local histories, diversity, cultures, contexts, and practices (Booth, 2018).

Development, as an intensely public space, is ideal ground on which to pursue these bigger questions of epistemology—to weigh up the merits of different logics of enquiry and new measures of experience. At the same time, however, this volume also explicitly aims to highlight and investigate how newer areas of development practice actively draw on unconventional and innovative modes of engagement such as the use of video games, theatre, or photography in order to reach new audiences or bring new messages, and/or to reflect changing realities and ideas. A critical exploration of these new frontiers of practice connects with our first aim but also takes the agenda initially developed in our *Popular Representations of Development* volume a significant step further, moving from simply

[8] For two recent highly acclaimed illustrations, see the graphic novels by Bui (2017) and Gharib (2019).
[9] On this issue, see, among others Andrews et al. (2017).

considering alternative representations of development to thinking about more transformative forms of 'doing development differently'. As such, we hope this volume will help push the debates beyond the epistemological towards the more practical, in the process engaging broader professional audiences and everyday citizens beyond academic social science.

The Structure of This Volume

In the conclusion to our *Popular Representations of Development* volume, we identified three broad issues that we felt were important for future research agendas to consider in relation to the existence of alternative forms of knowledge about development. These were:

(1) How popular representations of development can successfully compete with or (in some cases) even supersede social scientific representations from the perspective of both conceptual and empirical representation;
(2) The political economy of popular representations of development, including the differences between 'independent' vs 'mainstream' media, and the way that popular media productions shape debates;
(3) The extent to which popular representations of development represent alternative critiques that allow for the articulation of views that would be unacceptable in more orthodox mediums or forums.

This volume explicitly follows up on this agenda. We propose that the three above issues can be thought of more simply as respectively corresponding to processes of 'translation', 'advocacy', and 'engagement', and have organized this volume into three eponymous parts each presenting four contributions illustrating the key topics pertaining to each of these issues.

Translation

The first, translation, can be viewed from both the perspective of content and audience. One of the issues that clearly emerged from our previous exploration of more popular representations of development processes is that media such as novels, films, TV series, or blogs generally have a much greater reach than standard academic or policy outputs. This in itself is a reason for taking them seriously, whether with regards to their positive impact—e.g. influencing and mobilizing public opinion to act in relation to a crisis—or negative consequences—e.g. stereotyping, promulgating 'fake news', etc. On the other hand, a particular medium can also influence the nature of content, intrinsically offering or stressing different

viewpoints and interpretations, as well as allowing for different forms of connection to an audience. This is something that is less considered, and is the focus of the four 'Translation' contributions to this volume.

We open with our own contribution on the way that the experience of development, as well as understandings of and responses to it, can be uniquely rendered via music. This has been a medium of choice through which marginalized populations all over the world convey their (frequently critical) views, while in the Global North music has also long played a prominent (if notorious) role in portraying the plight of the South's 'starving millions' as an emotional pretext for soliciting funds for international aid. We discuss the overlap between music and development in five specific domains: the tradition of western 'protest' music; musical resistance in the Global South; music-based development interventions; commodification and appropriation; and, finally, music as a globalized development vernacular. In doing so, we highlight the way that music offers different communicative modalities in and through which development debates are conducted, and how this, in turn, may lead to key stakeholders of development, such as the poor, finding said debates decidedly more open, authentic and compelling.

Chapter 2's contribution, by Danny Hoffman—himself a former professional photographer turned academic—contrasts the work of two photographers who take up, in very different ways, the subject of African dumping grounds. Dakar-based photographer Fabrice Monteiro and South Africa's Pieter Hugo have each produced well known and critically acclaimed bodies of work on the subject of accumulating African waste. In doing so, they build on a longer tradition of trash as trope in African image production, a tradition that uses the visual iconography of garbage to educate publics and to make political claims. Both artists employ an activist camera, seeking to use their work to catalyse action around environmental issues on the continent. But the different approaches to visualizing trash in Monteiro's *The Prophecy* and Hugo's *Permanent Error* reflect a broader divide over how photography communicates urgent issues in global development and what photography has to offer in the particular discourses of African environmental and economic futures. The two projects point towards different interpretations of the environmental and social politics of waste, and each calls for a different response from the audiences of their work.

The third and fourth contributions are in many ways mirror-images of each other. Chapter 3 is an account written by playwright Mark Ralph-Bowman of his experience writing and producing a play called *With You Always* which he had based on an academic book that he had copy-edited—an academic volume titled *Aid, NGOs and the Realities of Women's Lives: A Perfect Storm*. Contributions to the latter volume explored the difficult-to-unravel intersection between the real, lived experiences of women on the ground in the Global South involved either as recipients or distributors of 'aid' and 'development', and the rhetoric describing

that reality to and in the North. It fundamentally challenged his (widely held) notion that 'doing no harm' with overseas aid was easy considering the clear visibility of poverty and underdevelopment, and the seemingly straightforward possibilities linked to food and material distribution. These experiences inspired him to write a play that also drew on his own experiences living in Uganda and Nigeria in the 1970s, insofar as the dynamics described in *Aid, NGOs and the Realities of Women's Lives* seemed to imply that very little had changed since then.

Chapter 4's contribution, by Hilary Standing, explores the dilemmas, challenges, and pitfalls that she encountered as an academic writing a novel, *The Inheritance Powder*, that drew on her real-life research, as well as the novel's subsequent journey into publication and reception. She particularly considers the broader representational questions that arose in this process, including her choice of a particular style of representation and the conventions that went with it, her politics and positionality as writer and how these differed from her work as an academic, and her relation to narrative viewpoints, the 'audience', and the role of commercial publishing as a gatekeeper of representations. She is especially concerned with the role of research and adherence to some kinds of empirical truth, exploring what novels 'do' differently—considering for example the role of humour, the 'irrelevant', the individual, and the particular (expanding on the idea of the freedom of fabrication), as well as what an academic has to learn about storytelling and audience.

Advocacy

In Part II of this volume, we are less interested in advocacy as it relates to instrumentally choosing a particular form of representation in order to seek to influence more efficiently, but rather to the potential reasons underlying said efficacy. The first of the four contributions to this part of the book, Chapter 5 by Duncan Green and Maria Faciolince, considers the nature and reasons for the popularity of the former's 'From Poverty to Power' (FP2P) blog. One of the world's most read global development blogs, with an annual readership of over 300,000, it is cited by government officials, academics, students, and aid workers all over the world. The chapter analyses the FP2P story, including its readership, the most read (and most controversial) blog posts, and the use of reader polls and guest posts, before then exploring some of the challenges of blogging within a large bureaucratic institution (Oxfam), and drawing potential lessons for academic and non-governmental organization (NGO) blogging.

Chapter 6, the second in this part, by Jolene Fisher, begins by describing the story behind the first development-oriented video game, 'Food Force', launched by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in 2005. The downloadable

PC game, which was aimed at children aged eight to thirteen, took players to a ficti-tious island to teach them about the challenges of addressing hunger crises through six different emergency aid missions. The game, which was downloaded over six million times and played by approximately ten million people, was considered a hit and significantly conscientized people to the issue of hunger. Since then, almost forty digital games have been created specifically as tools for global development, including one called 'Half the Sky Movement: The Game',[10] which has been played by over one million players. Fisher explores how the narrative of this game rein-forces a mainstream, neoliberal approach to development by framing poor women as responsible for overcoming social, cultural, and economic obstacles in order to change their lives for the better, arguing that such a narrative increases the bur-den placed on these women, while erasing the root causes of women's poverty and the expectation of state-based support. As such, Fisher highlights the poten-tially problematic nature of the content of popular forms of representation such as role-playing video games which rely on a number of non-explicit presuppositions.

Chapter 7, by Emily Le Roux-Rutledge, explores new forms of advocating for and representing women's empowerment, one of the key development issues of the last two decades. More specifically, her chapter seeks to understand some of the popular representations of women and development that are made available through the medium of radio, doing so by examining the BBC's *100 Women* se-ries. Launched in 2013, following the infamous gang rape of a female student on a Delhi bus, the BBC's *100 Women* series tells the stories of 100 women each year, during what is called the BBC's 'women season'. Content goes out on various plat-forms, including the BBC World Service, which reaches a weekly global audience of 269 million—75 million of whom listen in English. In 2015 and 2016 half of the content featured women who came from the world's lowest income or least developed countries; Le Roux-Rutledge analyzes this content, drawing conclu-sions about how such stories shape understandings of women, empowerment, and development.

In Chapter 8, Ben Jones explores the *The Guardian*'s 'Katine' project, funded by the newspaper's readers. This involved collaboration between journalists, aca-demics, and an NGO to carry out and document a range of development initiatives in Katine village, Uganda. This chapter draws on his experience as an involved academic, and points to some of the ways in which Katine offers an alternative way into thinking about and 'doing' development, but also the potential pitfalls of such novel forms of advocacy. He particularly highlights how the public scrutiny appearing on the website was a difficult experience for the NGO, and pushed it in directions it was not always comfortable with. This was partly due to the fact that, since *The Guardian* was funding the project, the pieces produced by Guardian

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[10] See also the book by Kristoff and WuDunn (2010) with the same title, and companion children's edition.

journalists pushed the project in different directions. Both the NGO and the newspaper struggled to discuss their complex relationship in project documents, or on the project website, which Jones suggests was due to the fact that their relationship transgressed ideals of NGO expertise and journalistic values of objectivity and autonomy.

Engagement

Finally, we conceive the third issue, engagement, particularly from a perspective that explores how certain artistic mediums and representations can challenge more dominant, technocratic ones and the issues that they obscure, but also how the these can also facilitate new and better forms of engagement with stakeholders of development, including in particular the recipients of development aid, whose voices are frequently ignored or discounted.

In the first contribution to this part, Shahpar Selim engages with wider discussions about the neglect of the arts in engaging with climate change, focusing on the role of cultural resources in informing climate struggles and local initiatives to mitigate the phenomenon in Bangladesh. She begins by pointing out how Bangladesh's climate strategy has generally been to build institutional strength and capacity in climate change, to mainstream climate thinking across sectors, and to reach out to the most climate vulnerable populations with climate adaptive solutions. Structural and non-structural responses have been designed in ways that are mindful of local cultural contexts, but technical specialist knowledge has always held priority. She then goes on to argue for considering the importance of culture within climate change policymaking and programme design, and more specifically, enhancing the space for including putative 'non-expert' cultural resources in the form of paintings, theatre, poetry, songs, and literature, which she contends are a repository of local knowledge and practices. As such, she maintains that in order to build implementable and measurable progress towards adaptation or mitigation there is a need for policymakers and technical experts to engage with the broadest possible understanding of climate change, with culture being a powerful tool in advocacy that, if heeded, could multiply programme results and outcomes.

Chapter 10's contribution, by Caroline Sage, explores the ways in which contemporary arts festivals in Nigeria and Nepal not only encourage alternative representations and narratives of development, but also provide spaces for contestation and the deliberation of ideas about the country's future development. In particular, such festivals provide alternative narratives—to the seemingly dystopian visions of the future prevalent in Nigeria, to the 'lost Shangri-la' trope so often associated with Nepal—with many in fact overtly seeking to enhance their respective citizens' 'capacity to aspire' to something better. In so doing, the creative arts scene

in both countries establishes itself as an important driver of change and development. Sage contends that despite the fact that attendees to such festivals are mainly the cosmopolitan intellectual class and the political elite, the contemporary arts festivals in which she has participated actually draw as much on hybrid combinations of local as well as global ideas and influences; by characterizing them solely as representative of an elite cosmopolitan ecumene, we miss how they also constitute spaces that help to define a national image and ultimately a 'more developed' imagined community.

Sophie Harman's Chapter 11 deals with a specific popular representation, the feature film *Pili*, about the everyday risk of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania, which she was involved in producing. The film was based on the stories of the cast of women who acted in the film, and Harman explores how the film impacted them as well as audiences more broadly. While 'impact' is more often than not conceived in educational terms or through the promotion of change, Harman argues that an underexplored aspect is affect: the emotions, thoughts, or experiences of the audience engaging in such representations. She reflects on the feedback she received on this from a range of audiences who watched *Pili*, including policymakers in the UK and global health hubs in Geneva and New York, everyday film audiences in the UK and Tanzania where the film is set, as well as those who participated in the production of the film itself in Tanzania, including those who were the subject of its representation. In so doing, she highlights how the impact and affect of popular representations can overlap and differ across a range of audiences, arguing that it is critical to take this into account when thinking about the universal appeal, authenticity, and impact of popular representations of development.

Finally, we close the volume with Chapter 12 by Patrick Kabanda, which considers 'the arts in the economy and the economy in the arts'. A powerful voice against integrating more artistic forms of expression within the realm of development is one contending that such endeavours represent something of a luxury, and in a field where decisions and investments frequently have literally life and death consequences, it is neither efficient nor ethical to devote resources to them. (Indeed, in 2016 such an argument was invoked when the UK government's Department of International Development, under pressure from coverage in the popular press, withdrew its financial support for a women's music initiative in Ethiopia, as we discuss in our contribution to this volume.) Through a set of contemporary cases from Zambia, Colombia, and the Philippines, however, Kabanda shows not only the value-added of less technocratic development initiatives, but also how they can in fact constitute the basis for significant economic gain, and that ultimately much of what we consider to be stone-cold economic transactions are in fact grounded in more artistic human expressions. Taking such expressions seriously suggests that in turning to less conventional forms of 'doing development' we are not facing potentially negative cost–benefit transactions but rather the possibility of engaging in more holistic, inclusive, and locally legitimate development practices.

Concluding Reflections, Future Directions

In putting this volume together, our aim was to further the agenda that we laid out in our previous book on *Popular Representations of Development*—that is to say, to try to frame and open up popular representation as an important new field of study that has to date been largely neglected by those engaged in research on global development. We do not claim to bring specialist knowledge to the subject that those more versed in media studies, literary theory, film studies, or post-colonial studies can bring (although of course some of our contributors are certainly able to do so). However, we very much hope that this collection will contribute to the opening up of new avenues for investigation and pose new questions across these boundaries and disciplines.

We believe this to be essential, as the current moment has seen an explosion in communication that is not only more frequent and intense, but also more diverse in form and content. Understanding the power, potential, and pitfalls of new mediums is essential in order to understand whether they are better purveyors of fundamental messages about development, or whether they contribute to making it more difficult to highlight these. Either way, it is clearly critical to engage with them and not remain entrenched in old ways of seeing and doing things. To this end, we hope this volume will stimulate further research into popular representations of development in ways that go beyond simply mapping these out to actively seeking to harness them, in order to engage the enduring challenges of global development with twenty-first century mediums and sensibilities.

Certainly, the possibility that broadening the canvas could challenge narrow-minded or fixed perspectives is becoming increasingly recognized (Nossel, 2016).[11] For example, in an article in the Cinema Journal Negar Mottahedeh (2018: 150) describes how he had been shocked by the 'black-and-white overlay' applied to the world by the use of the polarizing 'axis of evil' rhetoric in Goerge W. Bush's post-9/11 State of the Union address. In response he organized a film festival—which he called Reel Evil—for his students at Duke University, featuring films from North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and other countries that had been singled out in the speech. In the same piece, however, he wonders, on the basis of an interview with Bush in the *New York Times* (21 March 2017),[12] whether the former president's new interest in painting might be enabling him to see the world differently.

There are also other promising signs of such moves to diversify our understandings of the world more broadly. There are active ongoing debates in many universities about taking steps to 'decolonize' the curriculum, and these have

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[11] Suzanne Nossel (2016: 103) makes the argument that 'Art has the ability to change our minds – inspiring us to take on different perspectives and to reimagine our worlds'.

[12] Mimi Swartz, "'W.' and the Art of Redemption', New York Times, 21 March 2017, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/opinion/w-and-the-art-of-redemption.html.

gained further momentum following the #BlackLivesMatter movement and the outcry that followed the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis. In addition to raising important questions about the ideas and identities of scholars on course reading lists, the debate also engages with the narrowness of what is considered acceptable forms of representation of knowledge. A recent student-led study conducted in the London School of Economics (LSE)'s Department of Media and Communications, for example, documented a range of views among students and led to the drawing up of ten 'decolonising the curriculum principles' (see Salih and Banaji, 2019). The sixth of these directly addresses the issue of diversifying the types of reading and media on course reading lists, and included the point that 'diversification in the content of readings through the recognition of other media such as songs, poetry, fiction, comics and animations, and film will work to enrich how we think about things'.[13]

But at its best, an exchange between the arts and development does more than just call more compellingly for change—diversify the range of perspectives being considered, subvert 'single stories',[14] or present key ideas in innovative forms— vitally important as these all are. If the arts achieve all these things and more—if a truly 'better', more just, locally authentic outcome is actually attained—a prosaic reality of development is that, come Tuesday morning, a team of people still has to show up and make things work in this brave new world they've helped create. Succeeding in resistance or advocacy is one thing; making the greener trains run on time—reliably, affordably, safely, for everyone, every day—is another. The political cliché bears repeating that one campaigns in poetry but governs in prose.

The best artistic works, however, can powerfully remind us of this reality—i.e., they can also anticipate and inform the 'prose'. Doing so is one of the many compelling contributions of *Hamilton*, perhaps the most influential new musical of recent years (at least in the Global North), which creatively retells the story of American independence (e.g., by casting non-white actors to play the founding fathers) through the life of a senior bureaucrat, Alexander Hamilton (a poor immigrant who became the first US Secretary of the Treasury). Or more accurately, Hamilton's story is told by his nemesis, Aaron Burr (Thomas Jefferson's Vice-President), and equally importantly by his wife Eliza Hamilton, whose painstaking work on his behalf—in obscurity, for fifty years after her husband's death (killed by Burr in a duel)—is how Alexander, over time, became revered. The full scope of *Hamilton* encompasses not just a creative retelling of complex events, but an incisive and compelling reflection on how stories get told, by whom and to whom; the visceral power of actively contributing to and experiencing change (of 'being

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[13] Also available at https://www.lse.ac.uk/Events/2019/03/20190306t1830vHKT/Decolonising-the-Curricula

[14] On this point, see Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's famous TED talk, available at https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.

in the room when it happened'); and ultimately on coming to terms with success, of being equally committed to doing the less glamourous follow-up work if one's initial goal is to be fully realized. As journalist Alissa Wilkinson astutely concludes:

> Art alone doesn't change the world; it just ploughs the soil. Hamilton is a show about revolution, and a show about the trouble with revolution: After you've turned the world upside-down, you have to figure out what comes next. You have to figure out your laws, your economy, your foreign policy. You also have to figure out who matters, who makes the rules, and – maybe most importantly – who tells the story. Every culture war is about who gets to define the terms and control the narrative, and that's no different now than it was in 2016 or 1812 or 1776.[15]

So understood, *Hamilton* is an illuminating development production, doing all this sophisticated rendering of complex change processes—political and personal conflict, history remembered and forgotten, failure and success, ambition, entitlement, comeuppance—in a three-hour show that has been seen live or on television by millions of people. Doubtless many equally insightful productions on corresponding dynamics in other countries have also been prepared. As a powerful complement to—not substitute for—scholarly research, we hope that such work can inspire a rising generation to expand the range of ideas explored by the development community, increase the diversity of contributors and responders that comprise this community, and enrich the mediums in and through which these ideas are shared, debated ... and ultimately enacted.

Acknowledgements

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[15] See Alissa Wilkinson, 'We got comfortable with Hamilton. The new film reminds us how risky it is', Vox, 2 July 2020, available at https://www.vox.com/21308627/hamilton-movie-review-disney-2020.

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