Reflections on Practice:

Integrating Creative Arts into INGOs to Promote Participation, Activism and Alternative Development Futures

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GCRF
Global Challenges Research Fund

Arts & Humanities
Research Council

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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Chapter Two

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Introduction

The 1980s saw a meteoric rise in the number of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), and by the turn of the century they were key players in the international development sector. For example, by the year 2000 over 35,000 INGOs were working internationally, disbursing between US$12-15billion a year (Edwards and Fowler 2002, p.1); and data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) puts this figure at over US$300 billion by 2016 (OECD 2018). The term INGO refers to a huge diversity of organisations, with variations in how they are funded, staffed, and managed — as well as their size, scale, level of operation, relationships, focus and activities. However, these organisations are broadly defined by the fact that they are self-governing, not-for-profit and operate across national borders — and in general raise funds in the Global North to combat poverty in the Global South (Newman 2012, p.100).

Alongside the increase in numbers and scale came an increase in critical focus on these organisations — raising issues of legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness (Lewis 2005). INGOs had evolved at the margins of international development,

offering alternative visions and practice to mainstream approaches to poverty eradication. But shifts in wider international development policy meant that INGOs were increasingly forming relationships with official donors, government and the private sector, and becoming more centrally involved in social service delivery. Today, academics and practitioners alike question whether INGOs should be focused on transforming mainstream development practice — through articulating and working towards an alternative development agenda — or whether their contribution is better focused as service providers, due to their technical expertise, reach and local knowledge, which enables them to deliver effectively a generally accepted development vision, most recently encapsulated by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (see, for example, Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin 2008).

For many INGOs, such as Christian Aid and ActionAid (for whom the authors of this chapter work respectively), these struggles have been internalised. For example, while direct service delivery is not part of our organisational agendas, we do manage large projects (for example on strengthening health systems, or building citizenship) funded by official sources, often conceptualised within a 'results-based management' approach. The idea of development as a 'technical endeavour' comes into tension with our more radical development visions. Both our organisations understand poverty as caused by inequalities of power, and thus tackling poverty means transforming power relations at every level. In ActionAid, participation and rights are central to practice, and the concept of 'development alternatives' is a key element in how the organisation views its contribution to development. Christian Aid emphasises its prophetic voice, understanding this as a commitment to expose the scandal of poverty and tackle the structures and processes that keep poor people

poor. It focuses on making connections between its stakeholders north and south, drawing on its theology to argue that 'your future is bound with my future', and working to create opportunities for solidarity and understanding across the globe.

Both organisations place emphasis on their role in contributing to debates as to what development can and should look like. They are active in challenging mainstream analysis and bringing different (grassroot) perspectives into a global forum. As part of their wider practice (although to differing extents) both organisations have historically engaged with participatory approaches, and more recently have engaged in different ways with participatory arts. As we explore in this chapter, there has been a range of motivations for this engagement, but there are common issues at stake for both organisations, as can be seen from our reflections on these experiences. Our organisations have complicated organisational structures and grapple with multiple influences from the funding we receive, the environments in which we operate and the publics with whom we engage, as well as the expectation our partners and programme participants have of what we bring. This means that rhetoric and ideas do not always translate neatly into practice.

Reflections on practice are influenced by who the practitioner is, and what practice they have experienced. In this chapter we (Kate Newman and Kate Carroll) start by identifying key moments in our own journeys with participation, identifying how these inform our understanding. This involves clarifying how we interpret fundamental concepts, not least *participation* and *the arts*. We then each explore a discrete experience within our own organisation to surface how some of the tensions and dynamics we have observed influence practice. We conclude by drawing together

our reflections and experiences, suggesting some implications for INGOs as they consider the role of participatory arts in their practice.

Kate Newman: Learning about participation through practice

It is 1998. I have just returned to the UK from two years living in Mexico and working with adult learners who did not complete primary education as children. In working with them, teaching maths, I have noticed how much they use maths in their daily lives, and how much easier it is for them to engage with the formal concepts if I relate them back to their daily practice. Maths is in everyone; the challenge in this context was to support people to identify the knowledge that they already had, to value it and build confidence in it. On my return to the UK, I take up my first role in an INGO, trying to make sense of my experience in Mexico and contribute to ActionAid's work on *Reflect*, a participatory approach to adult learning and social change. These are my formative years. I become immersed in discussions about participatory adult learning and social change, thinking about how to work with people's current knowledge in order to build self-confidence by encouraging people to reflect on what they know, and to use this knowledge to engage in new ideas and activities in order to further local development and hold others to account. I am convinced that everyone holds important knowledge and experience, and the foundations of development practice have to start with the people that are living in poverty.

Over the next eight years I work with the *Reflect* team, thinking about participatory practice and what is needed for this to be truly empowering. We grapple with questions around who the facilitators are, their educational background and local

status; we consider how agendas are set, and what the roles of local, national and international NGOs are in this process, and we consider how local level processes can/should link up to wider processes of change at national and even global level. I decide to explore this further through study, and embark on a doctorate focused on the challenges and dilemmas in integrating participatory and rights-based approaches to development (Newman 2012). Through my research I develop the concept of a 'rights-based policy process' and argue that if INGOs are to be truly empowering of the communities they interact with, organisational design needs to enable this. The role of INGOs needs to become about facilitating grassroots voices in articulating and campaigning for their own development visions. As part of this, I identify the need for honesty and humility in recognising the trade-offs between supporting a truly grassroots participatory process (bottom-up) and pushing a specific organisational analysis and agenda (top-down). I conclude my thesis by suggesting that organisations need to identify where they have had success in being the radical actors so many critics of INGO practice expect them to be, and to build from this. Moreover, I suggest that they need to act together to transform global power relations by re-situating their role and position in international development and taking general publics in the Global North beyond the 'transaction frame' (Darnton and Kirk 2011) to build transformational engagement in development. After completing my doctorate, I leave academia and return to the world of INGOs. Working for Christian Aid excites me, in particular, because of the way it views partnership with its diverse stakeholders — namely as a process of mutual accountability, learning and transformation — which informs how it works with supporters in the UK, and within its international programmes.

Kate Carroll: My journey with participation

I became interested in participatory approaches when studying the response of the governments of Botswana and Uganda to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In Uganda there were few central resources and the government encouraged a bottom up, civil-society response. NGOs and community groups were active in promoting methods such as community theatre as part of a process to develop information campaigns and to help organise a coherent response to the crisis. In Botswana, conversely, where there were relatively greater resources, the state managed the response — largely through formal (English-medium) education. I was interested in the differences between these approaches, and in particular in what appeared to be the additional impact on civil society of the peer-to-peer interventions in Uganda. Here the community-owned strategy shifted behaviours: individuals deepened their own knowledge through collective reflection in their own languages and through a range of mediums. Organised groups connected to each other in solidarity, creating and sustaining momentum for shifts in power and practice.

The idea that participation results in more sustainable changes and the potential for arts to facilitate change was a motivating factor in my decision to volunteer at ActionAid, an organisation with a history of participatory methods. Kate Newman and I met when I joined ActionAid's *Reflect* team in 2004. The team supported a global network of practitioners to share and reflect on their knowledge and practice. At that time the organisation was in flux, moving towards becoming a federation of over 40 affiliated members with a headquarters in Johannesburg (Jayawickrama and Ebrahim 2013). The team's work — which had largely been helping national coordinators and trainers to support local-level facilitators — was shifting as

expectations of those facilitators were changing; they were now expected to be conversant in analysing and challenging power nationally and globally (Newman 2012). Kate and I connected on pieces of work that both cemented and moved the approach forward. In 2005, the team mapped the organisations' participatory practices. There were many rich examples of how knowledge, generated through a variety of participatory approaches, could flow between different geographies to influence power at different levels, and how different tools (role play, theatre, video) could be used not just for communication, but also for joint reflection and analysis (ActionAid and GCE 2007).

In 2005, I joined The Knowledge Initiative unit. The unit had a broad remit of identifying and supporting knowledge flows into and around the organisation, including sharing learning on participatory methods. The challenge of ensuring knowledge from participatory approaches flows effectively across a large federation, and outside to influence power, remains an important issue for me to this day. How can we ensure that those actors not involved in the participatory process engage with the outputs of such projects? This question is particularly pertinent for our case studies in this chapter, as we explore, in Uganda and Bangladesh, whether creative arts methodologies have the potential to somehow unlock thinking in a different way to other participatory approaches.

Shared experiences

While our formative interaction with participation took place at ActionAid, we also worked together as part of the 2-year *How Wide are the Ripples*? project (Beardon

and Newman 2011). This experience consolidated much of our earlier reflections on how grassroots participatory practice can influence wider processes of change. Here, we considered how the knowledge and information generated through local participatory work supported by INGOs can inform wider organisational discourse and learning. In the initial research, we uncovered the practical challenges of 'moving information across national and cultural borders and of interpreting and using it outside of its original context' alongside deeper questions of 'culture, accountability and power. It is not just a question of whose voices can be heard, but of whose knowledge and opinion counts' (Newman and Beardon 2011, p.12). As we researched further, it seemed that participatory communication processes (including arts-based methods) could also go some way to addressing these challenges.

As part of this project, organisations such as InsightShare discussed how they used participatory video to bring together diverse voices to reflect, for example, on the experience of climate change in order to develop policy recommendations. The Institute of Development Studies highlighted how it had used Digital Story-telling to unpack 'pathways to empowerment' for women in various contexts. Collectively, we reflected on a range of communication approaches which attempted to balance a participatory approach with the need for concrete outputs that could be shared with others not involved in the initial process. We considered whether a focus on generating a 'product' might actually undermine the participatory nature of the process, and how much structure needed to be put around an initiative to ensure its output could be useful not only as part of the initial intervention but also in other contexts. We wondered about the role of 'sense-making' in the process of translation between contexts, whether the well-grounded principles of participation which

operate at the local level can be replicated as ideas and outputs travel through an organisational system, and what space there was within organisations to learn from local practices in order to inform organisational positions on, and understandings of, development pathways, building outwards from local perspectives to articulate a global development agenda.

Making meanings

The concept of *the arts* is unpacked in several contributions to this book. For us, as staff in INGOs, we are interested in art in relation to how it can contribute to our broader goal of shifting power and eradicating poverty. The way this happens will differ in different contexts and at different times (below we give some examples). However, invariably, this means that, for us, art is understood as an approach, or a method, with outputs that can be expressive (dance, theatre, movement), visual (photos, painting) or descriptive (prose, poetry). Working with art can be a way to recognise and value grassroots cultural practices, to unearth different knowledges and to build relationships in different ways. It can also be a way of bringing different perspectives into development debates. This involves focussing on both the process and experience of 'doing art' as well as the output or product, that is, 'the piece of art'.

Linked to our particular interest in art is the concept of *participation*, a buzzword whose widespread usage often obscures fundamental differences in approach and understanding (Cornwall and Brock 2005). Participation is used by some to describe a process of consultation — at worst, simply to rubber stamp a previously identified initiative — while others use the same language to describe an empowering

approach to challenge prevailing biases and bring diverse knowledges to the fore (cf. Arnstein's ladder 1969 or 'instrumental' versus 'transformative participation' in Newman 2012, p.25). Our understanding of participation is deeply political, influenced by our individual experiences and by the discussions about power we encountered as staff in ActionAid. We argue that for an approach to be understood as participatory it is important to go beyond the methods and tools used, and think about the frameworks, philosophy and behaviours that underpin the practice. Thus *participatory arts* cannot just be about including people in arts-based practice, but also need to be cognisant of how multiple knowledges are enabled to surface, and how meaning is made. Central to this is an awareness of the underlying power dynamics in a given context. This includes asking: what art, whose art, and for what purpose is the art being made? The challenge of achieving this within an INGO includes recognising the tensions between the ideals of participation and how these can be practically worked with by a global organisation with complex organisational needs. As we now turn to consider our recent organisational experiences, these earlier insights and learning encourage us to explore critically how our organisations have engaged with the arts.

ActionAid International: Building and Articulating Development Alternatives

ActionAid is a civil society federation made up of autonomous members' organisations in 45 countries working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. ActionAid works to strengthen the capacity and active agency of people living in poverty and exclusion, especially women and the most marginalised, helping them to assert their rights. It works directly with communities, people's organisations, women's movements, groups and networks, social movements and

other allies to overcome the structural causes and consequences of poverty and injustice. Guided by feminist and human rights-based principles and approaches, ActionAid seeks to shift and transform power, through empowerment, solidarity, campaigning and the generation of new and different ways of thinking — what we define as 'alternatives'.

The motivation for the organisation's engagement with participatory arts was our work around developing these 'alternatives'. The 2007/8 financial crisis had motivated ActionAid and its partners to develop options for a different sort of global operating system: one based on human rights and feminist principles. However, like many others, ActionAid struggled to find a voice. We were good at critiquing policies, but less strong at presenting the 'alternative' system we would rather see in their place. In order to address this, we developed a process to work out our definition and articulation of 'alternatives'. We embarked on an organisation-wide survey, generating a set of framing statements that defined how we understood dominant ideologies and alternative models, subsequently developing short working papers to flesh these out. Our intention was then to share these insights with communities, young activists, academics and people's movements in order to critically interrogate our alternative visions. In so doing, we wanted, collectively, to generate new visions and understand the barriers to, and opportunities of, shifting power, in order to ensure that these alternatives could become reality. However, in practice, this work was very difficult to set in motion. As we sought to develop 'alternatives', we felt that they would be perceived as too ActionAid owned. It was clear that we were trapped by our INGO lens, paradigm and language. We recognised that we needed a more open and iterative process, in order to make alternative concepts more visionary,

relevant and interactive: an approach that, in turn, better fitted ActionAid's theory of change.

A different approach emerged when Ruth Kelly, a former ActionAid UK staff member, now at the University of York, secured funding for a pilot with ActionAid Bangladesh and Uganda (see Chapter Thirteen in this volume). The hypothesis of this project was to test the extent to which creative arts methodologies could enable participants to 'unlock' alternative visions. The creative arts as a device to generate 'alternatives' in Uganda and Bangladesh brought together artists, academics and activists in two workshops. In the first, the artists and activists experienced different creative arts methods aimed at helping them shed their performed roles and identities. They took part in exercises and processes that gave them space to imagine alternative futures. The group was then given funding to create a piece of art that represented their vision. All emerging collaborations were powerful. Some related to personal struggles, others to the idea of 'development alternatives' (for example, a poem by Susan Kiguli in Uganda offered a vision of hope and peace for Uganda, a piece of installation art by Shohrab Johan in Bangladesh encouraged reflection on what needed to change to promote a better balanced environment in Chittagong,). A second workshop was then held in each country to reflect and explore collaborations. Going to the second workshop in Uganda was useful to me (Kate Carroll), as it provided me with the space to observe and reflect on questions I had around the project. I wanted to know what was new and different about arts-based methods compared to the participatory methods that ActionAid uses through *Reflect* — particularly in its *Reflection Action* circles (see Archer and Newman 2003)
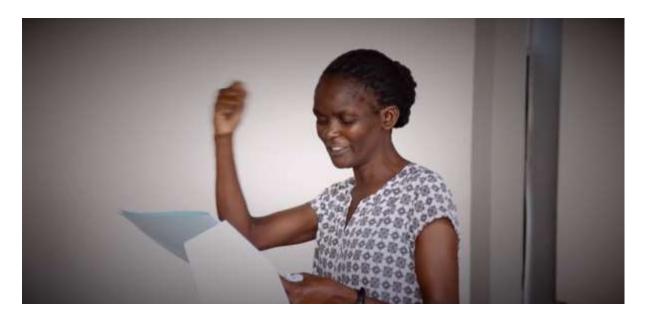
Fig 2.1 Susan Kiguli gives a moving performance of her poem which challenges the audience to believe in an alternative for Uganda. (Photograph by Emilie Flower).

It is a commonly held assumption that there is something about an arts-based process that is more disruptive/less inclined to draw consensus or a 'focus' as compared to other participatory methods. My experience during this project was that whilst there was indeed disruption — and the facilitators allowed time for this to play out and for tensions to emerge and unravel — this is not unique to an arts process. Productive disruption in this case was the result of skilled facilitators and because there was no concrete output required. That said, the participatory arts processes I witnessed during the workshop did seem to be able to unlock a greater range of visions of the future in a more collective way than ActionAid's 'alternatives' work had generated hitherto. Perhaps this was due to the added value of having artists — and their way of thinking — as participants. The artists' perspectives and the products that they developed collectively, in solidarity with activists, added a layered richness to the creation process. And to those not part of the reflection process, the 'art

product' was a very powerful engagement tool — listening to Susan's poem, for example, very much felt like a call to action.

The second question that emerged for me during my engagement with this project was how ActionAid could usefully, and pragmatically, draw on what emerged from this participatory arts project for its own programme of work. ActionAid's strategy is always generated with partners and allies, and there are some areas of work that communities may prioritise that are not within our remit and where we do not feel we can add value. How could ActionAid work with the diversity of thinking it was seeking to generate through this participatory-arts-based work while also remaining aligned with its core mission? There was some convergence between what came out of the workshops in Uganda and Bangladesh and ActionAid's overall objectives. However, there were many discussions that were not development focused and so trickier for the organisation to work with. Other participatory processes where consensus is required face similar challenges. Should we give boundaries to the artists' and activists' work, in order that they produce something that will definitely be connected to development? During these workshops, the project chose not to do this, and the artists involved said this felt incredibly liberating. However, from the point of view of an INGO, this generates difficulties in accountability, if the funding is premised on delivering development outcomes. Whilst alternatives may emerge, how can INGOs add value to a multiplicity of ideas and knowledge?

Christian Aid: Building global solidarity through the arts

Christian Aid is the international development agency of 41 sponsoring churches. It was founded by the churches of Great Britain and Ireland to help refugees in Europe at the end of the Second World War. Over the past 70 years its remit and reach have

evolved, and the organisation now works with around 800 partner organisations in close to 40 countries worldwide, managing an annual budget of around £100million. Each country office determines its own strategy, objectives and partnership portfolio, based on the specificities of the national context, with reference to a global strategic framework, which puts partnership at the heart of its practice.

Christian Aid's values, analysis of poverty and approach to poverty eradication are based on our relational approach to theology. We divide our time between long-term development programming, humanitarian response work and policy, advocacy and campaigning action, working with, and through, national and local partners, coalitions and alliances. We differ from many other big INGOs because of our engagement with our Great British and Irish constituencies. Through our church links, we have direct connections to groups of supporters across these countries and our work with them is seen as central to our broader approach to programming. In our work with our diverse constituencies we emphasise standing alongside our partners and supporters, with a focus on dignity, equality and justice, and working in solidarity, to enable mutual transformation and to learn and grow together.

Our approach has benefits. We are grounded in the analysis and action of our partners and careful not to take their space or over assert ourselves. However, it also brings limitations, particularly when we are looking to develop synergies and operate at scale across the global Christian Aid partnership. In reality, we sometimes struggle in making the very connections we strive for, because each part of Christian Aid responds directly to the group of stakeholders it interacts with most. The desire to be respectful, and to build outwards from our partners' agendas also creates

challenges as we strive to manage multiple accountabilities, and respond to the influence of our donors and the needs of a whole organisational strategy. This has influenced our thinking and engagement with participatory arts, as I now explain.

Using creative approaches to capture the impact of our work

It is 2016 and I (Kate Newman) have been asked to develop a multi-country impact assessment in order to understand Christian Aid's work on governance. Governance is central to the organisation's country programme interventions and includes work on empowerment and voice, alongside work focused on institutional strengthening and responsiveness. But, I am told that our supporter-facing department struggles in communicating governance to our supporters, that the work is intangible and complicated and that I should think about how to capture this work and make it meaningful in ways that can be shared directly with our supporter audiences.

My thinking turns to participatory video (PV), and the potential benefits PV can bring by putting the choices about what to film and what story to tell into the hands of participants. I remember the discussions we had about PV in the *How Wide are the Ripples* project and the challenges we identified about what happens when the output, the final video, is watched by audiences beyond those immediately connected to participants in the PV process. I think about what I know about communication: about the importance of understanding the audience with whom you are trying to communicate and of being clear about what you are trying to say (in this case our supporter base, on the one hand, and our approach to governance on the other). I come up with what I think might be a new way of making a film: employing UK-based professional documentary filmmakers to film and produce the video, but

under the direction of the participants themselves. I wonder if this approach would mix the best of the arts (i.e. working with 'artists' to produce a high quality professional output that has the best chance of communicating to audiences beyond those connected to the immediate participants) with the best of participatory practice ('handing over the stick' [Chambers 1994, p.1255] and putting participants in charge of the process, so as to ensure that the film authentically reflects what they wish to communicate). I ask myself, what might the short-comings be?

Discussions with Christian Aid's team in Central America lead to the identification of work in Guatemala, supported by two partner organisations (Metafora and Caja Ludica). Responding to the current context of violence and political oppression, these organisations have been working with the arts to create space for active citizenship. They use the arts directly to encourage participants to share their views and experiences and find their voice. A key part of the partners' work is to engage with policy makers to encourage the development of cultural policy and to fund the development of community cultural centres: physical centres where people can meet, discuss and connect through art. Beyond this, they support participants to use art to reclaim public spaces. Project participants read poetry on buses and talk about art in market places: these are places where violence is high, but bringing the arts to these places disrupts the environment and enables new conversations to happen. Together, the aim of such interventions is to 'strengthen and repair our social fabric which has been damaged' (ThisIsChristianAid 2015). There is a specific focus on young people here, who are frequently stigmatised and excluded. Through art, however, they can find their voice and participate. Art is understood as a tool for social transformation.

We agree that this work is a good example of how we work with the tricky concept of governance, and what our practice can look like in reality. I commission two UK-based freelance consultants (one professional documentary maker and a second with a background in international development) to work with participants from Metafora and Caja Ludica to develop a 'participatory documentary video'. The country staff choose the partner to be involved in the film. The partner chooses the location and the participants, who in turn decide what to show the filmmaker. While the professional works the camera, he is directed by the participants who choose what he should shoot, whom he should talk to and what story he should tell. These same participants watch the rushes and are active in guiding the editing throughout the initial rough-cut process.

This approach, we hope, will enable programme participants to tell the story they want to, while drawing on the expertise of a professional filmmaker, based on a belief that the professional quality of the film will make it more palatable to a UK-based audience of supporters. Moreover, focusing the film on young people's participation presents an opportunity to connect younger supporters into our global movement. We hope that sharing the work of young people in Guatemala might inspire active engagement from young people in the UK — as activists in the UK and as members of civil society globally. The filmmaking process goes really well. The participants, partner organisation and Christian Aid Guatemala all note how the process helped them reflect on what they had been doing, to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of their work and to systematise their knowledge. In

addition, they use the outputs in their national advocacy efforts to encourage greater investment in implementing cultural policy.

In reflecting on this experience, I see the value of participatory arts at multiple levels. The governance programme itself brought many benefits at a personal level, in terms of individual self-esteem and personal development, and to young people as a group though encouraging participants to connect in new and different ways with each other, thereby avoiding getting caught up in violence. The approach also encouraged young people to connect as members of a city, helping them to reclaim public spaces and use them in different ways. It built their confidence and supported them to speak out and challenge power, instead of being passive recipients of government policy. Beyond the immediate project benefits, the videomaking itself also brought with it new insights. It became a process for learning and reflecting, deepening understanding of the actual processes used in the work and making meaning from practice. And the generation of a high-quality film output, owned by those involved and capturing the stories they wanted to tell, was a powerful tool for national advocacy and getting further support for the work.

But despite these insights, the process fell short of my hopes for it, and there were challenges in sharing this work with a UK audience. The response from Christian Aid's communication staff in the UK was that the film (at 9 minutes) was too long and did not clearly articulate the impact of the work. They suggested that there was too much focus on the process of the work and not enough on the tangible changes achieved. The art 'product' was deemed un-useable. I was disappointed and frustrated.

A year later I show the same film to a group of practitioners and academics who are active in the participatory arts environment. There are filmmakers, storytellers and expressive artists present. There are participatory practitioners, academics and INGO staff all in a room, thinking about the video they have just seen. All the comments made are complementary. They all appreciate the work in Guatemala, the way the film was made, and the final output. There is no critique, only applause. So why is this audience so different from the Christian Aid one? I think about how Christian Aid employs communication and marketing professionals to develop communication products for our supporters and think about their expertise and the potential biases they may bring. I question whether, although we use the language of 'authentic voice' and 'direct communications', we are ready to open our eyes to varied ways of telling stories with variable emphases on making meaning. And if we are not, where does this leave us in terms of building global solidarity movements and supporting transformational change? I consider what is needed for an arts output to be meaningful for different audiences and what the role organisations such as mine can play in this. How can we balance a commitment to multiple knowledges and diverse cultures, empowering processes and radical visions and what do we need to change in ourselves to do this?

Moving Forward: Learning and Insights for INGOs

The experiences from Guatemala, Uganda and Bangladesh suggest that the arts *can* bring value into a development process. In Guatemala the use of arts-based approaches served a development agenda focused on empowerment, active citizenship and confronting and reducing violence. Work in Uganda and Bangladesh

enabled participants to collectively explore new and different ways of thinking, and thus to forge alternative development pathways — rooted in their specific reality. These different experiences suggest that there is immediate value in bringing art, artists and participatory arts methods into development spaces that have previously been dominated by political, social and economic projects. However, while the organisational experiences of both ActionAid and Christian Aid suggest extensive value for those directly involved in the work, they also suggest that it is harder to identify whether and how such experiences can contribute to wider change — or how INGOs can build on individual projects within the broader project of international development.

ActionAid and Christian Aid are committed to shifting power relations in development, bringing radical and grassroots voices into mainstream development dialogue, creating space for alternative development visions to be articulated, and building global solidarity movements based on equal and respectful relationships. Our experiences with participatory arts suggest that aligning our aspirations with practice is not straightforward. Such ambitions suggest a need for change at scale. It is not enough to deliver a good intervention in a particular location. To achieve the changes we seek, work needs to impact on development visions and power relations at household level, locally, nationally, regionally and globally. Our experiences suggest that participatory arts can contribute to individual empowerment. They can influence policy and practice, and can create new ways of knowing, thinking and understanding. But we also need to be honest about the limitations of our experience.

Participatory art itself may not contribute to change at scale, if the outputs are not easily translatable across geographies. The fact that UK audiences were seen as unlikely to appreciate or respond positively to the Christian Aid film is a concern, as it suggests that the art product could not speak for itself. Through further engagement with staff working with UK audiences, it seemed that the film might work if an accompanying 'guide' was produced, and Christian Aid staff were active in facilitating discussion and identifying areas for debate. But this suggests that such art cannot be directly engaged with. Rather, it needs to be mediated and framed by the organisation that is showing it. What is the root cause of this? Is this due to the type of organisation that is seeking to use participatory methods? Do we need to unpack further whether our organisations in particular, and INGOs in general, have the right structures, processes and organisational space available to properly listen and respond to participatory practice? If there is a need to mediate and explain, how can we move beyond the default practice of 'cherry picking' — of only using certain examples from grassroots communities when they can illustrate ideas that are already known and positions that have already been taken? Participation used to elicit evidence that supports pre-existing organisational analysis is fundamentally different from participation used to inform the development of that analysis. If participatory arts products are not able to move freely from one context to another, but need to be mediated and introduced — as was the case with the Guatemala video — how can this been done in a way that prioritises the analysis and voice of the participants themselves, rather than simply reinforcing organisational interests and perspectives?

Further insight from ActionAid, where the participants in the Ugandan workshop were shown a video made by an artist involved in the parallel Bangladeshi project, is useful here. The video — which captured elements of the discussions in Bangladesh, through mime and sounds (rather than direct speech) and was therefore open to interpretation by the viewer — sparked a thought provoking and critical discussion of the artists' vision among the Ugandan participants. It seemed that interactions through the arts project *could* be empowering and help to build solidarity across countries. But here both sets of participants were actively involved in the same broader process. The idea of disruption was already ingrained in the participants' approach. The participants were therefore able to interact with the video as a piece of art, as well as think about what it meant to them in their context as they considered their own development pathways. Whether a UK audience would be open to such deep involvement and potential discomfort — to engage with art and make meaning in relation to their own concepts of development — depends on a range of factors, not least the previous messages they have been given about what development is and how it happens. It also depends on the extent to which INGOs take the risks needed to innovate in this space. This is made more complex still given the dual needs we have of our Northern stakeholders as both donors and activists.

A different concern is whether, by bringing arts methods into INGOs, we undermine the potential that art brings. Through engaging such methods, do we simply instrumentalise the arts within a development process? For the young people in Guatemala, art was freedom. They enjoyed its purity, the space it gave them to think differently, to express themselves freely and to talk about what they wanted to talk

about — rather than play the roles generally expected of them. By working with these methods, while holding on to our specific analysis of poverty and how we believe development happens, are we corrupting the very freedom of expression that art brings? Who decides what aspects of the work to highlight and what fits with wider organisational expressions of change? Might art be reduced to outputs and particular moments in the process, and in so doing, do we miss the wider potential of creative processes? For example, in Uganda the group often talked about a fantastic campaigning moment in 2014, when yellow pigs (yellow being the colour of the ruling party) were released into parliament to represent the greed of the politicians (Tumuhimbise 2014). This moment created debate. The use of humour grabbed the attention of the public and decision makers. As an activity, it was effective at generating discussion. But campaigns work because they have a clear message and target audience, focused on a specific moment. So how do we balance this with the artistic need for creative space and openness to whatever outcome is produced?

Returning now to the question posed at the start of this chapter about whether arts-based practices can bring new insights into the role of INGOs and their approach to development, we have two final reflections. Firstly, it is unrealistic to suppose that any single approach holds all the answers to development, or that the complex dynamics at work in development generally, and within INGOs specifically, can be addressed through one particular method or approach. What arts can bring to development, like any other participatory process, depends on who is using a particular artistic practice and why, along with the specific dynamics of the space involved. It is not a question of 'add an artist and mix'. In assessing arts' likely value, it is important to consider what the overall drivers of the process are, and the

individual expectations of those involved in delivering it, be they a participatory arts-based practitioner, a researcher or an INGO. Each actor will need to reflect on their own position and motivation, and their role in enabling a transformational approach. However, secondly, there is something special about the arts. On the one hand, the arts are about imagination. They allow people to step away from the present and view things differently. Art can disrupt and provide a different quality of space, enabling those involved to think about different alternatives. By involving artists and arts thinking in participatory development processes, we can generate different processes and alternative outputs, which can be shared in a different way from a report and, if handled sensitively, move more effectively between audiences than a report might do.

Power, Maury and Maury argue that if an organisation is to be truly empowering, it needs to 'work for the liberation of those at the bottom by drawing its own sense of direction and priorities from this group […] to adapt their internal structure, systems and culture to the complex and evolving struggles of those in poverty, including even if they cho[o]se to not be developed' (Power, Maury and Maury 2003, pp.26-7). As INGOs engaging with arts-based practice, we need to consider how brave we are willing to be and the extent to which we can create and protect space for free thought and risk not knowing what the outcome might be. To do this we need to work as facilitators and brokers of alternative visions, bringing diverse groups together across the world, working as translators as we engage with different audiences, recognising their needs, aspirations and reasons for working with us and building solidarity movements of intersecting communities around a common objective to shift power. Participatory arts are not a silver bullet for achieving change. Nevertheless, we can

learn from these experiences with the arts. It is through actively engaging in open-ended, disruptive efforts that we can play a role in shifting power and ensure that we align our practice with our organisational rhetoric, the ideals we espouse and the radical change we want to see.

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