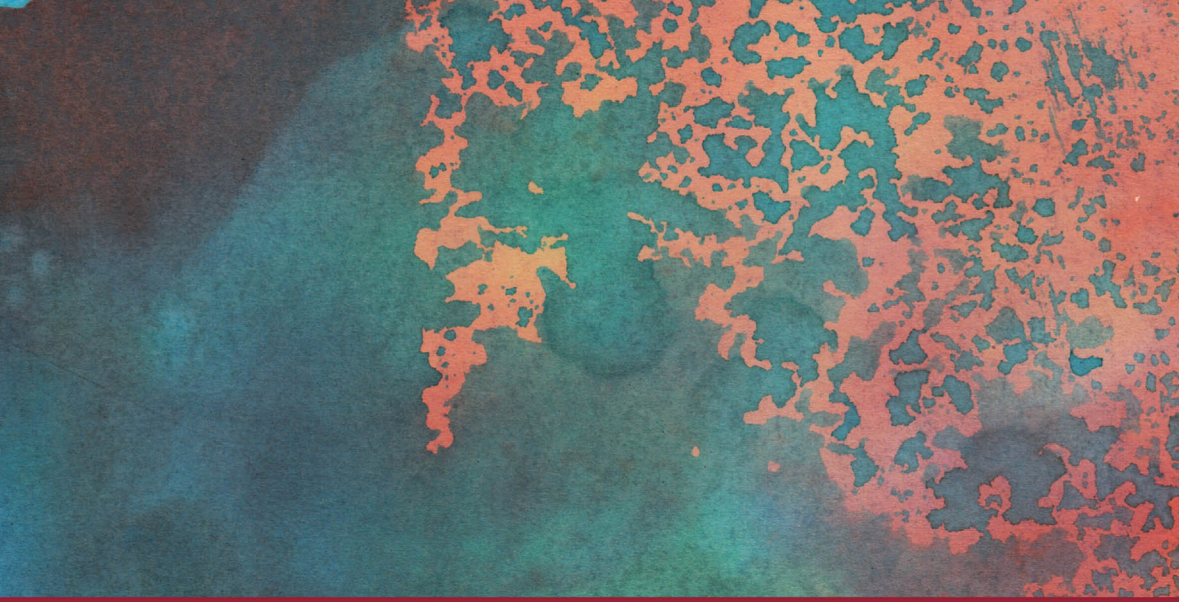
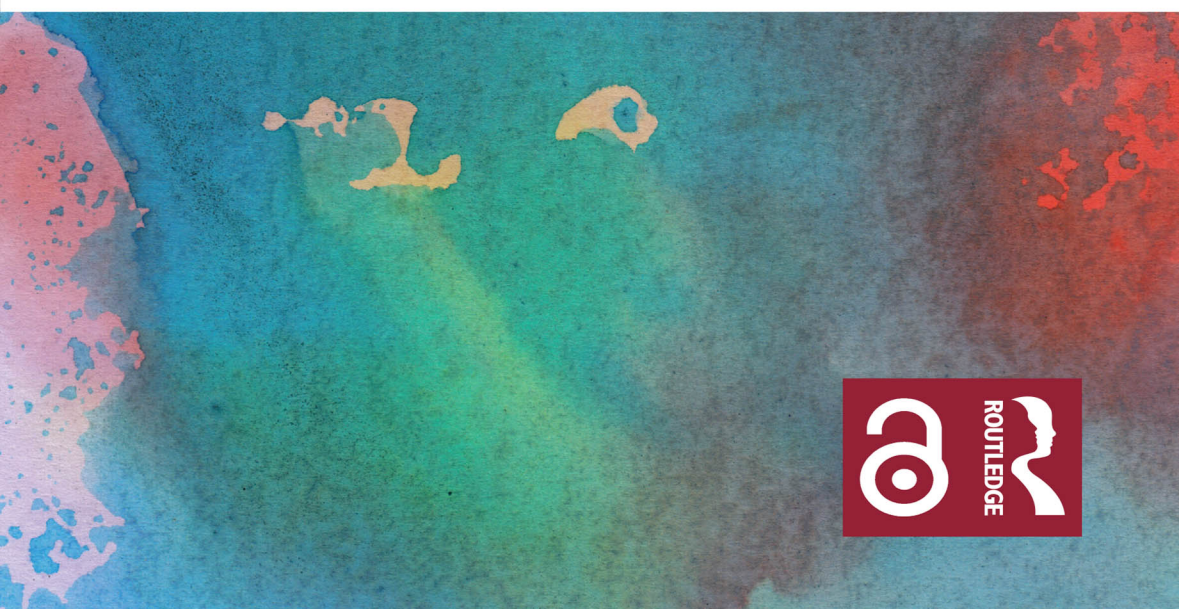


Routledge Explorations in Development Studies

YOUTH VOICE AND PARTICIPATORY ARTS IN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

The May Group



ROUTLEDGE

'This volume provides an important reflection on youth engagement through participatory arts processes and projects in order to explore the wider connotations of epistemic justice and epistemic freedom within systems and networks. It introduces a range of case studies to better understand how interrelationships between young people, civil society organisations, NGOs/INGOs, cultural organisations and wider government bodies generate and reflect questions of power. It is an essential read for any individuals or organisations who seek to work with and for children and young people.'

Ananda Breed, *Professor of Theatre and Director of Research in the School of Creative Arts, University of Lincoln, UK.*

'This original and thought-provoking book is organised around reflections arising from the many and varied projects incubated under the umbrella of *Changing the Story*. Central to these is the notion that "Transrational voice … has the potential to support … ecologies of action". Through the concept of the transrational, this book sets out examples of how young people – always an asset, never a problem – can use arts-based processes and products to make interventions into the often unjust and oppressive *status quo* that has historically limited their capacity to "name their own world". The book ends by asking: "… how can we build ecologies of action that enable transrational voice to contribute to epistemic justice and transformative change?" I suggest that the insights offered by the groundbreaking research described in these pages will only change the story when policymakers take it down from the shelf and turn them into action'.

Tim Prentki, *Emeritus Professor of Theatre for Development, University of Winchester, UK.*

Youth Voice and Participatory Arts in Global Development

Youth Voice and Participatory Arts in Global Development looks at how arts-based methods can promote youth voice and engagement in global development.

This book argues that engaging young people's diverse voices, ideas and knowledges in matters that affect them is vital in enabling them to become – and be recognised as – active citizens, developing more inclusive societies and ensuring that development programmes remain accountable to the young people they aim to benefit. We draw on youth-led participatory research projects from across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, which used a range of art forms and engagement mechanisms, including participatory filmmaking, street art and the intersection of formal and non-formal education. Through this process, we develop the conceptualisation of transrational voice for epistemic justice and demonstrate the unique role that arts-based methods play in enabling this broad conceptualisation of voice that accounts for the multiple dimensions of young people's knowledges and experiences.

This book will be of interest to researchers within international development, arts and youth studies, as well as to development practitioners, and anyone interested in promoting epistemic justice with and for young people.

The May Group consists of:

Alyson Brody is an established gender and social inclusion researcher and consultant, with a background in social anthropology. She is the Former Head of BRIDGE, a gender and development research and policy programme at the Institute of Development Studies.

Paul Cooke is Centenary Professor of World Cinemas, University of Leeds, UK. The films he has produced have been shown at over 100 film festivals and have won over 50 awards.

Lou Harvey is Associate Professor in Education at the University of Leeds, UK. Their research has focused on various educational settings, including higher education, informal arts-based education, adult migrant language education and social circus.

Katie Hodgkinson is a Lecturer in Education in Global Development at the University of Leeds, UK. Her research primarily examines youth engagement in formal and non-formal education for social justice and peacebuilding in conflict-affected contexts.

Faith Mkwananzi is a research fellow at the Centre for Development Support at the University of the Free State, South Africa. Her work is interdisciplinary and located at the intersection of (higher) education and global development.

Inés Soria-Donlan is Research Manager: Creativity, Partnerships & Impact at the Horizons Institute, an interdisciplinary research incubator to address complex challenges at the University of Leeds, UK. She has worked with participatory arts approaches across the cultural and research sectors since 2013.

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Youth Voice and Participatory Arts in Global Development
The May Group

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Youth Voice and Participatory Arts in Global Development

The May Group

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Preface

The May Group

This is a book about the co-production of knowledge. At every stage of the projects that led to its conception, we have consciously worked collectively and collaboratively, with co-production functioning as an empirical, theoretical and methodological lens. And so, when we first came together to start planning this book and agreed to follow a similarly collaborative approach, the question of how we would name and claim authorship arose. We were conscious of how many of the institutions in which we are based are structured by individualist, capitalist, colonialist, competitive, accumulationist logics, the very logics our various projects attempted to challenge and refuse. We therefore decided to commit to collectivity (following Grande 2018), both as a refusal of the individualist inducements of the systems in which we work and necessarily continue to be complicit and as a commitment to creating something new, to working in a future-oriented, decentred and decolonising mode that acknowledges our entanglements with each other in the process of knowledge creation, and which fundamentally destabilises Global Northern/Western conceptions of the bounded individual.

We then had to decide what to call ourselves. While this particular discussion took place in a shared physical space, this was an unusual occurrence for us: generally, our conversations and collaborations took place across different working contexts, institutions, countries and hemispheres. Although we could not always share space, we always shared time, and this particular time was a beautiful day in May, a month of spring and autumn, the seasons of change and becoming. So we decided upon The May Group, and in doing so named ourselves not only for the season but also for a modality, an openness to possibility, a refusal of finalisation and closure and a recognition of contingency, partiality and hesitation. We have taken great pleasure in this creation, in working as this new scholarly collective. And while the project of writing this book must necessarily come to an end, who we are, how we reflexively situate ourselves and our knowledge – what we may become – remains open. We look forward to our future unfurlings.

The May Group consists of:

Alyson Brody (she/her) is a social anthropologist. She obtained her PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. This

focused on issues of internal migration and women's economic empowerment in Thailand, with an emphasis on women from the Lao-speaking region of Isan. Her work used participant observation methods, surveys and life story analysis and has been published in a number of academic journals and books. Since then, Alyson's career has focused on undertaking research and publishing evidence-based resources to support inclusive social development processes, with a focus on promoting gender equality and social inclusion. The Former Head of BRIDGE, a globally respected gender and development research programme based at the Institute of Development Studies, she provided strategic leadership, worked collaboratively with a wide range of bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental development actors and wrote groundbreaking policy-oriented publications online resources and journal articles aimed at supporting policymakers and practitioners to integrate gender equality and social inclusion across their work. She has also run a successful gender and social inclusion consultancy ('Gender Equality Innovations'). Alyson was employed as Postdoctoral Researcher by the University of Leeds from 2020 to 2022, undertaking a critical analysis of youth-focused projects within Changing the Story to identify synergies and key learning and then going on to lead an evaluation of youth-focused research from across the national portfolio of research for the GCRF for the PRAXIS project.

Paul Cooke (he/him) is Centenary Chair in World Cinemas at the University of Leeds, UK and a specialist in participatory research, with a particular interest in the use of participatory video and other forms of arts-based participatory practice. He has led projects in 18 countries, including the UK, Germany, South Africa, Nepal, Iraq, India, Bangladesh and Colombia. The films he has produced have been shown at over 100 film festivals and have won over 50 awards. From 2016 to 2022, he was Principal Investigator of the AHRC/GCRF-funded network plus project 'Changing the Story: Building Civil Society with and for Young People in Post-Conflict Settings'. His work seeks to generate new knowledge by bringing diverse disciplinary approaches to bear on a range of global challenges. In 'Changing the Story', he led an interdisciplinary team of academics, arts practitioners, INGOs and community-based organisations to explore how young people can most effectively lead community-development initiatives in order to be able to take ownership of their own development pathways. Central to this was the concept of 'downward accountability' and how this can support the enhancement of youth voice. He currently leads the UKRI/MRC programme 'Create', which is exploring the use of arts-based practices in mental health research, as well as a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with the INGO Hope and Homes for Children, which is seeking to develop practical approaches to the issue of 'downward accountability'.

Lou Harvey (she/they) is Associate Professor in Education at the University of Leeds, UK. Lou's work in intercultural and peace education focuses on expanding the concepts of *voice* and *narrative* to engage with the communication of the unsayable, using methods and approaches at the intersection of

language and the arts and with a commitment to a collaborative and neuroqueer ethos. Lou's research has focused on various educational settings, including higher education, informal arts-based education, adult migrant language education and social circus. She is currently developing research into the potential of trauma-informed social circus practice to support student wellbeing and participation in UK schools. Lou co-founded the AILA Creative Inquiry in Applied Linguistics Network, led the AHRC International Research Network *Communicating the Unsayable: Learning at the Intersection of Language and the Arts*, led the Consolidating Learning strand of the ARHC GCRF project *Changing the Story* and was a co-investigator on three arts-based projects in South Africa led by Paul Cooke. Lou is a reader and writer of fiction, a choral singer, a thwarted foodie and a cheerful iconoclast with the eyeshadow of a much younger person. She is at her best in the sea.

Katie Hodgkinson (she/her) is a Lecturer in Education in Global Development at the University of Leeds, UK. Her work focuses on interdisciplinary and youth-led approaches to education, post-conflict society and global development. Her research primarily examines youth engagement in formal and non-formal education for social justice and peacebuilding in conflict-affected contexts. She also explores the role of youth in global development more generally, including how to make development processes accountable to young people. Katie conducted her PhD and a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship as part of Changing the Story and was a part of the project's management team. At the time of writing, she is leading an AHRC Follow-on Funding project, developing from Changing the Story, entitled 'Non-Formal Education for Youth-Led Change' and is Academic Supervisor on the abovementioned Knowledge Transfer Partnership with the INGO Hope and Homes for Children, which uses participatory methodologies to embed accountability to young people into organisational structures. She teaches and supervises students in the field of global development and education, with a particular focus on education in emergencies.

Faith Mkwananzi (she/her) is Researcher at the Higher Education and Human Development Research Group (Centre for Development Support) at the University of the Free State, South Africa. Her work is interdisciplinary and located at the intersection of (higher) education and global development. She has experience working in multi-cultural and multi-context project teams focusing on young people's education experiences and development perspectives, education in emergencies, peace education and inclusion/exclusion in education. To engage diverse stakeholders, she applies conventional and more creative participatory approaches in her research. She co-led two Phase Two projects in Changing the Story (see Appendix): an 'Early Career Researcher Project' in Zimbabwe and a 'Consolidating Learning Project' in Southern Africa. She was also part of a team that conceptualised the Transnational and Intergenerational Exploration of Ecological Heritage for the Phase Three Follow-on project funded by Changing the Story in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Inés Soria-Donlan (she/her) is an advocate for the freedom to create and experience art for all and the power of cross-sector, participatory approaches to create meaningful change. She has worked nationally and globally as a network builder, project manager, researcher, musician, producer, creative practitioner and, most recently, as a senior facilitator of challenge-led, collaborative research. Working across all art forms, her work focuses on the arts' role in supporting young people from diverse backgrounds to lead transformative change in organisations and communities. Having completed an MA in French Studies (2010) and PGDip in Arts Management, Policy and Practice (2013), she has worked across grassroots, international and research organisations, including Contact Theatre, the British Council and the award-winning University of Manchester project 'In Place of War'. She joined the University of Leeds in 2017, where she is currently Research Manager: Creativity, Partnerships and Impact at the Horizons Institute an interdisciplinary research incubator to address complex challenges. She was Project Manager of Changing the Story from 2017 to 2022, where she focused on ensuring the participatory approaches explored through its commissioned projects were mirrored in the project's management and governance. She is co-editor, with Paul Cooke, of *Participatory Arts in International Development* (Routledge, 2019) and Chair of the national charity South Asian Arts UK.

So many people have contributed to the work described in this book and the thinking that has developed through it: David Espitia, Antonia Bello Vélez, Jesús Antonio Campos Pérez, Eric Ngabonziza, Arlinda Shatri, Samjhana Balami, Trina Hoti, Rovithono Yhome, Jayden Keelan Matthews, Taahirah Hoosain, Leonard Nyiringabo, Lauren Wray, Ananda Breed, Ly Sok-Kheang, Chaya Herman, Keo Duong, Alejandro Castillejo-Cuéllar, Simon Dancey, Nita Luci, Emily Morrison, Peter Manning, Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, Stuart Taberner, Martin Keat, Mduduzi Ntuli, Bardhi Haliti, Lura Limani, Rina Krasniqi, Besa Luci, Charity Meki-Kombe, Samuel Kyagambiddwa, Kurtis Dennison, Vullnet Sanaja, Lulzim Hoti, Mark Waddington, Rreze Duli, Eric Kabera, Tali Nates, Hope Azeda, Mat Charles, Sayana Ser, Simon Wilson, Matthew Dunne, Lura Pollozhani, Alex Sierra, Sylvestre Nzahabwanayo, Reaksmey Yean, Kay Tisdall, Edwar Calderón, Alexandra Sutherland, Paul de Bruyn, Paul Routledge, Jane Healy, Eric Ndushabandi, David Stephens, Rajib Timalsina, Willis Okumu, John Mwangi Githigaro, Aylwyn M. Walsh, Michael Heneise, Wee Chan Au, Alexander Campos, Mirla Pérez, Jesús Flores, Glen Ncube, Linda Gusia, Henry Redwood, Jasmin Hasić, Tendayi Marovah, Helene Rousseau, Scott Burnett , Melis Cin, Tiffany Fairey, Seth Mehl, Andreana Drencheva, Kirrily Pells, Laura K. Taylor, Marlon Moncrieffe, Amrit Virk, Sreenath Nair, Marlies Kustatscher, Amanda Rogers, Paula Callus, Tony Evanko, Driton Selmani, Blerta Hocia, Laura Toro, Alex Ndibwami, Joshua Chikozho, Rajan Khatiwada, Antony Ndung'u, Vullnet Sanaja, Juan Manuel Gomez Serna, Laura Smitheman, Ashley Visagie, Nub Raj Bhandari, Edwin Cubillos, Chaste Uwihoreye, Jian Li Yew, Tina Ellen Lee, Chriszanne Janse

van Vuuren, Mary Drosopulos, Ruth Kelly, Emilie Flower, Linda Hoxha, Glen Ncube, Matabbeki Mudenda, Willard Muntanga, Aubrey Bango, Junaid Oliephant, Thandi Persensie, Delight Ndlovu, Iris Nxumalo, Suggest Mhlongo, Velma Mgiba, Behaviour Siankubi, Immediate Mugande, Johan Mutale, Olivia Mudenda, Primrose Munenge and Naison Mundia. There are many more people we could mention. Thank you to everyone who took part.

1 Youth Voice, Epistemic Justice and Arts-Based Development

In discussions about the key development challenges we face globally, the position of young people often seems reminiscent of Schrödinger's Cat, in that they are frequently constructed as occupying two contrary positions at once. On the one hand, as Alyson Brody points out in her recent report on youth participation and the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) (to which we shall return later in this introduction), young people globally are frequently pessimistic about their futures. In 2020, a global International Labour Organization online survey of more than 12,000 young people aged between 18 and 29 found that 38% were uncertain of, and a further 16% were fearful for, their future career prospects. The survey also found significantly reduced mental health for over 50% of young respondents, whose education or work had been disrupted the most since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (ILO 2020). A Guardian study from 2021 focusing on a sample of young people aged between 16 and 25 living across Europe echoed these findings. In addition to the immediate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental health and education, young people mentioned concerns about the weakening economy, perceived political ineptitude and climate change (Butler et al. 2021). These voices and concerns reflect a much wider set of global trends that existed prior to the pandemic, the International Non Governmental Organisation (INGO) Plan International noting, for example, how young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults, with unemployment for young women being double that for young men. This is a situation exacerbated, the organisation argues, by hostile policy environments, particularly for young women, in around 90% of countries globally, as well as what it sees as frequently inadequate educational and training opportunities for young people (Plan International 2020). These challenges highlight how young people are continuously excluded from development agendas that affect them, an exclusion which overlooks the important contribution they themselves can make to addressing these issues. Coady (2017) points out that this form of inequity is related to broader socio-economic inequality. The exclusion of marginalised groups from contributing to knowledge and deriving meaning from their experiences is viewed by Fricker (2015) as an injustice of the *epistemе*, or what actually *counts* as knowledge. In the field of youth development,

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epistemic injustice can occur at a variety of levels, including in both development research and global policy frameworks. This oversight trickles down to the exclusion of young people from local and national policy development plans. As Fricker (2015) sees it, such oversight can prevent young people from contributing relevant epistemic materials, as their lived experiences could offer novel solutions to, or at least important insights on, global youth challenges.

All of this is further compounded by the perception of growing existential threats to young people, including, in addition to climate change already mentioned in the Guardian survey, endemic poverty, conflict and forced migration (UNDESA 2018: 1), with young people feeling that they are growing up in an era of 'permacrisis' and 'polycrises' (Turnbull 2022; Allouche et al. 2023). And it is not only the seriousness of these issues that are seen as concerning, but also their scale. A 2016 Department for International Development (DFID) report on young people and international development echoes comments by many agencies when it talks of 'a unique *youth bulge*' that the world is experiencing, 'where 1.8 billion people are aged between 10 and 24' (DFID 2016, our emphasis). Young people represent over a fifth of the world's population, constituting the largest generation of youth in history. Nearly 90% of these young people live in low-income countries, where they make up a significant proportion of the population, and their numbers are expected to grow. By 2030, a further 1.9 billion young people are projected to turn 15 years old (UNDESA 2020: 19). The UN's 2018 Global Youth Report neatly summarises the challenges this youth bulge presents:

> Despite their significant present and future numbers, young people are often faced with age-related challenges and barriers to participation in economic, political and social life, greatly hindering their own development and, by extension, sustainable development. Harnessing the potential of youth is dependent on protecting young people's health and well-being, guaranteeing a quality education and the freedom to participate, providing decent work opportunities, and addressing the myriad other challenges young people face.
>
> (UNDESA 2018: 14)

However (and returning for a moment to our Schrödinger's Cat analogy), as the above quotation also suggests, the scale of the youth bulge is simultaneously central to the other way in which young people are positioned in discussions about international development. Commentators also see enormous potential in the high proportion of young people of working age. Justin Yifu Lin, former Chief Economist at the World Bank, for example, describes the situation as a potential 'demographic dividend', with virtuous economic, social and political impacts:

> In a country with a youth bulge, as the young adults enter the working age, the country's dependency ratio – that is, the ratio of the non-working age population to the working age population – will decline.

> If the increase in the number of working age individuals can be fully employed in productive activities, other things being equal, the level of average income per capita should increase as a result. The youth bulge will become a demographic dividend.
>
> (Lin 2012)

Young people are, then, also seen by many commentators as a key societal asset. Whilst Lin's formulation might seem somewhat instrumentalist in its economic conceptualisation of young people, this can also have wider implications. It frequently provides the impulse for organisations and commentators to argue that young people be treated as equal partners with other members of society in order to address the major issues the world faces, from poverty to climate change. The 2016 DFID report, already mentioned, is explicit in this regard, referencing the United Nations Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted the previous year: 'For Agenda 2030 to be successfully realised, young people must be at the heart of implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Global Goals – without the full participation of young people we will not achieve sustainable development' (DFID 2016). And the UN would seem to concur with DFID's view, going further to argue that young people should be considered 'a positive force for development when provided with the opportunities they need to thrive' (UN 2015), an ethos in fact already enshrined in its *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, adopted by the General Assembly in 1989, which quickly became the 'most widely adopted international human rights treaty in history' (UNICEF 2022). Regional Unions follow a similar argument. The African Youth Charter of the African Union, for example, notes its conviction 'that Africa's greatest resource is its youthful population and that through their active and full participation, Africans can surmount the difficulties that lie ahead' (2009: 1), recognising young people as 'partners, assets and a prerequisite for sustainable development' (2009: 2). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN 2024) notes that as 'the future leaders, change makers, innovators and influencers of the region, ASEAN's youth is both the region's asset and hope of tomorrow that needs to be provided with meaningful opportunities to influence policies that have a direct impact on their lives'. Katherine Ellis, Director of Youth Affairs for the Commonwealth, similarly emphasises the role of young people 'as assets who should be empowered and resourced to realise their potential and contribute fully to national development' (Restless Development 2016: 4). Again, the language of large multilateral organisations such as the Commonwealth or the World Bank might be seen as somewhat problematic. Conceptualising young people as 'assets' to be developed seems to sometime frame them, at best, as *potential* future actors, without recognising their role as *current* agents of change that can set their own terms of engagement (Lopes et al. 2015). The position of young people as vital social actors is underlined in some of these documents. The African Youth Charter, for example, recognises the 'role that youth have played in the processes of decolonisation, the

struggle against apartheid and more recently in its efforts to encourage the development and promote the democratic processes of the African Continent' (2009: 2). Moreover, the significance of young people as current social actors has been demonstrated through the wide range of high-profile public protest movements in recent years where their role has been emphasised, from the 'Rhodes Must Fall' student movement in South Africa in 2015 to the youth-led political protests against entrenched cronyism in Lebanon in 2019, to the 2024 University encampments across the world calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, to Extinction Rebellion, and other responses by young people to the climate emergency. 'To all the young people out there – I want you to stay angry. I want you to stay frustrated,' declared former US President Barack Obama as he spoke to activists at the COP26 Climate summit in Glasgow in 2021, echoing many other commentators as he emphasised the importance of the energy that young people bring to this issue if there is to be meaningful change (BBC 2021).

It is the role that young people can, and do, play in solving the key social problems they face globally that is the focus of this book. Building on previous studies by members of the May Group (Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2020; Brody 2021; Harvey et al. 2021; Hodgkinson et al. 2021; Mkwananzi and Cin 2022) we examine the role of youth voice in international development and the ways in which it can challenge epistemic injustice, especially when supported through participatory arts approaches. Crucially, in our discussion, we do not take the definition of any of these key terms as a given. We ask how can young people themselves shape, and hold accountable, the programmes designed to improve their place in society (Fricker 2007; Anderson 2012), effecting the kind of epistemic change that redefines not only whose voices count in society, but also what actually counts as 'voice'? At the same time, we seek to tread the fine line between recognising young people as key actors and allies in change processes while also acknowledging that all the 'heavy lifting' of change cannot be left to young people alone. *Epistemic* change requires governments, INGOs and civil society more broadly to work *with* young people to rethink the role of young people in driving socio-economic and political development agendas. This shift away from prior (generally exclusionary) practices of treating young people as passive participants in development programmes recognises young people not only as users of knowledge but also as those who can define what we mean by, and can be articulated as, knowledge. This recognition and centring of diverse ways of knowing, as well as the very expression of knowledge, is at the heart of what Elizabeth Anderson terms 'epistemic democracy' (2012: 172).

Although our book is delimited to epistemic justice as it manifests its potential through our exploration of what counts as youth voice, it is clear that democratic epistemic change is important for understanding universal participation in development programmes on terms of equal recognition for all participants, including young people. And of course, as we shall discuss further below, young people cannot themselves be homogenised into the single group

the collective term seems to suggest. Instead, they must be understood as a complex, diverse demographic, subject to a wide range of competing socio-political factors. In our research, we therefore aim to adopt an intersectional approach, recognising the intersecting characteristics of young people that may either enable or constrain their participation and their perceived role in society.

The subject matter we explore in this book is the wide variety of arts-based, participatory-development programmes that are increasingly visible in this area, taking as our starting point work funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of the GCRF. GCRF was a £1.5 billion fund set up in 2015 to support research that would help to deliver Agenda 2030 and the UN's SDGs. The authors of this book were all involved in the AHRC GCRF programme *Changing the Story: Building civil society with and for young people in post-conflict settings*. Running between 2017 and 2022, and working with INGOs, grassroots civil society organisations, cultural practitioners and young people across the world's low- and middle-income countries, often referred to synonymously as the Global South, *Changing the Story* sought to evaluate present, and inform future practice of civil society organisations working with young people in conflict-affected settings, in order to help build strong communities to deliver sustained social and epistemic justice. Changing the Story comprised 34 individual participatory research projects that ran across 12 countries. The research was delivered through a number of iterative stages, first commissioning 5 proof of concept projects, then 11 Early Career Researcher Grants, 6 Large Grants and a rolling Mobility Fund for in-country partners. Each of these was run by an international team of university researchers and in-country civil society organisations. In our third year, we also started to bring these teams together to critically reflect on the project's overall findings and outcomes by commissioning a 'Consolidating Learning' project in each of our five regions (Southern Africa, East Africa, South-eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America) and setting up a Youth Research Board. In our fourth and final year, our legacy programme saw the launch of seven follow-on-fund research projects awarded to members of the Changing the Story community who had developed sustainable partnerships and generated outstanding momentum through their work in the communities with which they were engaging. Overall, Changing the Story worked with 175 partner organisations to implement these youth-centred participatory arts research projects. The projects used various methods and methodologies, dependent on the conflict affected contexts they were working in and the specific needs and challenges of young people in these contexts. These ranged from street art, animation, participatory video and theatre, sometimes combined with more traditional data collection tools such as interviews, surveys and focus groups. The COVID-19 pandemic hit during the third year of the programme, resulting in project teams having to find new ways to continue participatory research projects online (including reallocating funding to facilitate digital connectivity) and projects that addressed issues stemming from the pandemic. A full list of the

Changing the Story research projects can be found in the Appendix to this volume, and the methods of specific projects will be unpacked throughout.

In addition to the individual participatory research projects, the central Changing the Story team, based at the University of Leeds in the UK, applied participatory methods to the governance and management of the project, including co-creating funding calls with those who would apply for funding and through the aforementioned Youth Research Board. The programme produced more than 350 written and audiovisual resources on youth and participation and 495 engagement activities, including workshops, seminars and conferences, resulting in a plethora of open-access knowledge that exists beyond this book (and indeed, on which this book builds). The final stage of the programme – as we will unpack further in Chapter 4 – included the participatory archiving of the resources created through the programme to contribute to an 'ecology of knowledge' as its final act. Our book draws together key findings from all of this work, applying a transrational lens to examine the wide variety of ways in which creative development practices engage the voices of young people (however defined) to make a practical difference to their lives on the ground. But before we turn in more detail to our discussion of youth voice and epistemic justice, let us first explore the broader context of youth in global development and how we are to understand the very concepts of youth and development, and their relationship to the so-called cultural turn (Singh 2020; Labadi 2021) that has led to the growth in visibility of arts-based practices in youth-focused international development programming.

Young People and 'Positive Youth Development'

The terms 'youth' and 'young people', or even 'child', often evade neat, shared definitions. The dominant understanding of 'youth' is as a transition period, a 'life stage associated with adolescence and early adulthood […] where "youth" is broadened to include the social constructions and conceptualisations of young people and their role in society' (Billett 2019). This association is reinforced in development-related definitions and statements. For example, Agenda 2030 defines youth as 'persons aged 15 to 24 years' (UNDESA 2018: 2). Elsewhere in the official description of the SDGs 'youth' refers to people aged 18–29 (UNDESA 2018: 2). However broad or narrow the categories, the risk remains of excluding or misrepresenting certain groups of young people. Young people aged 11–14 might technically fall into the category of 'child' (in whatever way this is to be defined), but they might also be better described as adolescents or pre-teens, often with very different needs and vulnerabilities from younger children below the age of 11. For Dona Martin, the concept and experience of youth are subjective, relational and shifting. She suggests that 'the notion of youth is not considered a standalone concept; rather, I see that it denotes a complex system of meanings and inferences about a person and their place in society'. She calls, instead, for 'an alternate narrative, where youth is a relationally constructed and constantly negotiated fluid and

heterogeneous concept' (Martin 2019: 98–99). Notions, expectation and markers of youth and young adulthood also vary hugely in relation to different cultures and contexts. In sub-Saharan Africa, youth can refer to young men between 15 and 35 (Kayizzi-Mugerwa 2019). For young women, it generally refers to a much shorter period between puberty and marriage and/or motherhood (Yaya et al. 2019). This experiential definition of what is meant by 'youth' is also endorsed by UNESCO, which contends that the notion of youth goes beyond a fixed age-group: '"youth" is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she may leave compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment' (UNESCO 2019). Here we might also recall Diane Singerman's concept of 'waithood'. Writing about the place of young people in the Middle East, Singerman defines 'waithood' as a growing problem for young people subjected to a period of 'prolonged adolescence', due not least to the issue of youth unemployment and the concomitant impact this can have on a young person's ability to marry. These are concerns which tend to prevent young people from leaving their family home and thus being seen by society – as well as themselves – as fully adult (Singerman 2007).

While understanding youth as a subjective experience can allow us to adopt a nuanced, situated approach to engaging with young people, their world view and needs, it can also lead, in practice, to their instrumentalisation. Building on Singerman's notion of 'waithood', and definitions of youth as a problem that needs to be addressed, rather than helping to empower young people, such definitions can lead to their further marginalisation in a variety of ways. As Mayssoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock suggest, if the category of 'youth' is extended backwards into 'childhood', the 'adultlike characteristics of children are emphasised', which might underplay the need for state support and protection, 'seeing them as individually responsible for their own choices and actions'. Extending the concept too far into adulthood, conversely, can present people as immature, and thus 'less entitled to make claims on such things as a family, wage, job, career stability or the means to live independently' (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015: 24–25).

Of course, adopting a subjective, experience-based approach to the definition of youth can also support the more positive definition of the role of young people discussed above. Understanding what is meant by youth from the point of view of young people themselves emphasises the role that they can (or at least can see themselves) play in addressing the problems that they face, the most pressing of which clearly impact all humanity. This perspective is at the heart of the shift towards what is termed 'Positive Youth Development' (PYD) in development theory and programming. This is an approach that was developed in the Global North in the 1990s and has more recently been adopted by development agencies across the Global South (Olenik 2019; Lauxman et al. 2021; Lindsay et al. 2021). As will emerge in our more detailed discussion of epistemic (in)justice later in this chapter, the notion of 'transferring' an epistemological approach in this manner is, potentially at least, deeply

problematic. This is, moreover, an issue to which we shall return in our exposition on 'critical pedagogy' and 'whose knowledge counts'. For the moment, however, given the prevalence of PYD in the work we are exploring in this book, we wish to outline its founding principles, before looking at the questions this prevalence also gives rise to.

While previous approaches to youth programming tended to work according to the so-called deficit model, seeing young people as a problem that needs to be 'fixed', focusing, for example, on mitigating the impact of risk-taking behaviour amongst adolescents (Boynton-Jarrett et al. 2013), PYD offers an 'assets-based approach to youth development programming' (Lindsay et al. 2021: 56), considering adolescence, instead 'as an opportunity to harness the great energy and emotional growth that takes place during this developmental stage' (Olenik 2019: 5). PYD seeks to adopt a holistic and systemic approach to youth development, engaging young people 'along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential', as USAID, a key organisation in the international take up of PYD, puts it in its YouthPower programme (YouthPower 2022). It does this by seeking to 'incorporate youth voices and ideas and connect them to supportive adults and resources' (Lindsay et al. 2021: 56).

As is implied by the language used by YouthPower, 'youth voice' is generally considered to be both a given and an important asset in PYD (Iwasaki 2016). Here, once again, the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child is often taken as a foundational text, and its declaration that children and young people have the 'right to be listened to and taken seriously', and thus be considered 'competent social actors' (Cuevas-Parra 2021: 176). However, as is equally hinted at in the commentary on YouthPower by Lindsay et al. above, and their use of the word 'incorporate' in their discussion of youth voice, the role of youth voice in PYD is often also highlighted as a limitation in many programmes ostensibly built on its principles. Sukarieh and Tannock, in their critique of PYD, see the lack of genuine active engagement with the concept of youth voice as a key problem in many such programmes. While there is the frequent declaration of the importance of listening to young people, which, so the argument goes, will lead to their empowerment and thus to their social development, as well as that of society as a whole, the exercising of youth voice is, in practice, often reduced to a form of tokenism that simply incorporates young people into programmes where they do not have any real control or agenda-setting authority:

> What needs to be recognised more clearly, then, is that the act of promoting youth, proclaiming their power, strength or virtue, or celebrating their innate creativity or revolutionary potential is not inherently any more progressive, critical or radical – or just or accurate – than is criticising youth, complaining about youth, disregarding youth or focussing on their shortcomings, problems and deficits. The promotion of positive views of youth, and the call to engage and empower youth, can be driven

> by and embedded in a wide range of conflicting political ideologies and agendas that demand close and careful critical attention and analysis.
>
> (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015: 30)

This – what Sherry Arnstein terms 'Manipulation', the lowest rung on her groundbreaking 'ladder of citizen participation' (Arnstein 1969: 217) – Sukarieh and Tannock see as a particular feature of the way young people are positioned in neoliberal development discourses, such as those propagated by the World Bank. They point, for example, to this organisation's emphasis on the promotion of youth leadership skills and entrepreneurialism in its programming which, they argue, is ultimately designed to normalise the precarity of life for young people in a global neoliberal economy (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015: 24).

That said, while Sukarieh and Tannock might critique this position, for others this is precisely the point. The United Nations, in its 2020 Youth Report, for example, would seem to celebrate this very position, calling for the development of what it defines as helpful 'entrepreneurship ecosystems' that 'are responsive to the needs, characteristics, constraints and ambitions of young people', in turn providing what the report views as 'financially efficient models […] that help to address key sustainable development challenges' (UNDESA 2020: 1). The focus on youth entrepreneurialism is potentially empowering to young people, it is argued, while also helping to address the global challenge of youth un- and underemployment in a cost-effective way (UNDESA 2020: 2). For its critics, however, the concern is the balance between empowerment (another key term that needs careful clarification and to which we shall return) and cost-effectiveness, and how far an emphasis on entrepreneurialism can really help to empower some of the world's most marginalised young people. At the same time, as Sukarieh and Tannock also point out, however cynical some programmes might seem to be in their aims to co-opt the energy of young people for neoliberal ends, 'the irony is that the possibility always remains for young participants to draw on the training they receive in these programs and use it to radically different oppositional ends'. For every neoliberal business leader such programmes might produce, how many radical activists 'participating in occupations and demonstrations, from Tahrir Square in Cairo to Zuccotti Park in New York' do they also produce (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015: 32)? The practical ramifications of PYD, as they play out in individual projects, and their implications for our understanding of the potential of youth voice in these same projects are key concerns of our work.

Creative Youth Development, Arts-Based Practices and Critical Pedagogy

Similar tensions between the potential of PYD as either a tool of empowerment or instrumentalisation can also be found in discussions around the use of so-called Creative Youth Development (CYD). This is a programming trend

which has developed alongside PYD as well as the broader 'cultural turn' in development practice that began in the 1980s and which will be discussed further in Chapter 4. CYD programmes, like PYD, invariably see their strength in supporting a holistic approach to youth development, in this case using the arts (broadly defined) to help young people 'acquire social, emotional, academic, and vocational skills while also meeting their needs for physical and psychological safety, caring relationships, and community connection' (Montgomery 2016). The creative processes at the heart of this approach are generally seen as leading to 'profound personal growth for young participants', allowing them to 'express their own identities, understand and change the world around them, and to connect to the greater human experience' (*Collective Action for Youth: An Agenda for Progress Through Creative Youth Development*, quoted in Montgomery 2016). Like PYD, CYD also adopts a systemic approach, calling for equal respect of all those engaged in a given programme, from youth workers to arts facilitators to young people, in order to ensure that activities are embedded in a wider 'network of support' to ensure its longer term sustainability (Montgomery et al. 2013).

What one means by the term 'artist', or even 'creativity', differs widely across the world. Similarly, concepts such as 'culture' and 'development' have been critiqued by the likes of Arturo Escobar and Boaventura de Sousa Santos as neocolonial constructs, based as Simon Dancey and Emily Morrison argue – with regard to the definition of 'development' but which would be equally as valid for a discussion of 'culture' – on:

> a potent social imaginary, constantly reinvigorated and legitimised by fields of experts not solely in so-called 'donor' countries but also within national and international networks of power. A central problem for actors trying to rebalance these scales from a local or marginalised position is that the overarching imaginary of development has become globalised, focused on relentless, relative ideas of 'progress' mainly set on Western terms.
>
> (Dancey and Morrison 2020: 57)

Yet, while Escobar might call for the wholesale rejection of the development paradigm (Escobar 2011: 215), Dancey and Morrison ultimately see a role for cultural and creative practices in the process of rebalancing, helping to generate new 'imaginaries' that can see the world in new ways, new epistemologies that simultaneously understand art to be a contingent social construct, as defined by Stupples and Teaiwa (Dancey and Morrison 2020: 65), and challenging what de Sousa Santos sees as the 'epistemicide' which he considers to be at the heart of the Western ethos of development (de Sousa Santos 2010: 24).

We can ask similar questions around epistemically just 'empowerment' and neocolonialism when considering the education that young people receive. In order to think this through, let us turn to critical pedagogy and the work of Paulo Freire, which was foundational to this field. Freire argues that society

broadly, and education specifically, whilst ostensibly designed to empower young people, can be oppressive and limit what knowledges, experiences and practices are understood as legitimate. The field of critical pedagogy therefore calls for a remodelling of education around the notion of *freedom*, as a way of liberating society from oppression and towards an ethical ideal of 'becoming more fully human' (Freire 1970: 44). For Freire, education as emancipation develops through conscientisation; a continual process (education is not just limited to schools or school-age persons) of 'learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality' (Freire 1970: 17). A pedagogy of the oppressed, he suggests, 'must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity'. Such a pedagogy is centred on examining and reflecting on oppression and its causes, which – Freire argues – will lead the oppressed to engage 'in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle, this pedagogy will be made and remade' (Freire 1970: 48, original emphasis). To enact this examination and reflection, critical pedagogy relies on processes of dialogue and the genuine involvement of the oppressed in unpacking reality and continually re-creating knowledge towards emancipation, in praxis with action, to change the real circumstances that they face.

bell hooks developed the work of Freire via feminist radical pedagogy to further understand the role of education as freedom. hooks translates conscientisation as 'critical awareness and engagement' (1994: 14) and highlights the concept as instrumental to processes of decolonisation; enabling individuals to 'think critically about the self and identity in relation to one's political circumstances' (hooks 1994: 47). Processes of decentring – and so deprivileging – the West/Global North requires educators to focus on issues of voice; 'Who speaks? Who listens? Why?' (1994: 40). Education can therefore only be liberatory when everyone can claim knowledge as a field of labour. This requires hearing everyone's voice, recognising everyone's presence and contribution and understanding these contributions as resources for reinvention and reconceptualising. The work of hooks and Freire has been fundamental in the development of our conception of youth voice, and we will return to these ideas in Chapter 3.

Epistemic Justice, Participation and Youth Voice: From an Ecology of Knowledges to Ecologies of Action

For de Sousa Santos, Freire and hooks, existing approaches to education, as well as to development as a whole, have largely been about limiting how the majority of the global population is able to conceptualise its place in the world. The Global North, de Sousa Santos suggests, has created a 'monoculture of modern science'. He calls instead for a new 'ecology of knowledges', based on 'the plurality of heterogeneous knowledges (one of them being modern science) and on the sustained and dynamic interconnections between them without compromising their autonomy' (de Sousa Santos 2007: 66).

Echoing hooks and Freire, de Sousa Santos declares that knowledge must be produced through a dynamic and open form of dialogue that might well include, but cannot be limited to, development discourses such as CYD and PYD.

It is at this point in our discussion that we return to the question of epistemic justice which draws on a similar imperative, namely to open up our understanding of what (and whose) knowledge 'counts'. Building on the work of Miranda Fricker, Faith Mkwananzi and F. Melis Cin, we 'understand epistemic justice to be allowing a person to express and exercise their capability as a knower and contributor to knowledge creation and dissemination' (Mkwananzi and Cin 2022: 4). Achieving this is, of course, easier said than done. To create the kind of balance de Sousa Santos implies in his conceptualisation of different forms of knowledge co-existing in an ecology, we must also acknowledge and negotiate the competing, multiple factors that impact upon what is acknowledged *as knowledge*. Morten Fibieger Byskov points to a series of competing 'conditions' that can come together to exclude an individual, group or community from receiving epistemic justice. This might result from a wide range of complementary socio-economic and/or political disadvantages, creating a view that a given person has no relevant knowledge that can contribute to making a decision that might affect them directly (Byskov 2021). In Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2018) argument, in pursuing epistemic justice, epistemic freedom becomes fundamental in facilitating critical decolonial consciousness in education as part of the broader decolonisation process. Epistemic freedom is about democratising the concept of 'knowledge', shifting from its singular form to the plural 'knowledges', and in the process challenging the overrepresentation of Eurocentric thought in social theory, and education (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). As Geoffrey Hinchliffe (2018) points out, epistemic freedom allows individuals and groups to formulate beliefs and ideas, discuss them with others and modify them as necessary. It is a process de Sousa Santos (2010) calls 'cognitive justice' – a process based on recognising the diverse means by which human beings make sense of the world around them. Epistemic freedom, Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues, is the prerequisite for all forms of freedom (political, cultural, economic and so on) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). Thus, enacting epistemic justice is about effecting systemic change. It is about redefining whose knowledge counts while also understanding the complex interrelationship of competing knowledges and societal/systemic factors in a given ecology, and how these interrelationships both generate and reflect questions of power.

In an attempt to foster the kind of thinking that can support a culture of epistemic justice, and returning now to de Sousa Santos' 'ecology of knowledges', this is an idea that can be used heuristically to develop the kind of inclusive approach to understanding knowledge creation demanded by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Fricker and others. However, crucially, as a *dynamic* analytical device, de Sousa Santos' 'ecology of knowledges' can never be finally pinned down. The thinking we present in this book suggests a similarly inclusive approach which seeks to trouble the foundations of Northern/Western

thought: an approach with the capacity to embrace a range of knowledges not by negating or rejecting the knowledge systems which have created us and in which we have been complicit, but by refusing to centre any single episteme, instead holding space for constant, complex, productive, hesitant, partial, sometimes painful, often perturbing (following Wu et al. 2018) tensions. That said, within the context of the work explored in this volume, there is a further dimension, namely the imperative to *act*. de Sousa Santos' 'ecology of knowledges' must always ultimately be marshalled into an 'ecology of action'. Here we return to the holistic, systemic approach to development called for (for better or worse) in discussions of PYD and CYD. Within the kinds of projects explored in this volume, this involves understanding and acknowledging the motivations and skills of all the people and institutions involved in a given project, from large-scale INGO to local community-based organisations, to arts practitioners to young people and any other beneficiaries a project is specifically designed to support. At the same time, we are concerned with how the microecology of an individual project is embedded within wider societal support structures in order to ensure that the learning from an individual project is built into a sustainable ecology of action that can outlive the initial funding period and can spread good practice to other organisations where it might also be useful.

In particular, we are concerned with the role of young people within this ecology. As noted above, for all the warm words on youth empowerment in some development programmes, this can at times in actual fact be better described as, at worst, their instrumentalisation (Arnstein's 'Manipulation'), or at best a tokenistic form or empowerment within strictly prescribed parameters (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015: 32), what Arnstein terms 'Consultation' or even 'Placation' (Arnstein 1969: 217). If we return again briefly to the World Bank model of PYD, the language used by the organisation points to potential limitations in the way it understands empowerment. Here, this tends to be seen as a process of knowledge transfer that requires young people to be 'provid[ed] with opportunities for civic engagement' through which they can be 'equipped with a number of positive attributes and skills or competencies', to help them become fully engaged citizens (Naudeau et al. 2008: 76–77). Clearly, if we are to see projects as ecologies of action, then the subject position of all those involved needs to be negotiated and not just the position of the young people. It is also clear that the motivation and goals of young people involved in a programme cannot necessarily be predetermined, if we are genuinely to talk about youth empowerment. Empowerment must allow for the potential for young people to decide to become 'disengaged citizens', or to define engagement on their own terms.

As Patricio Cuevas-Parra notes, to talk of 'youth-led' programming, as it increasingly is in the literature, does not mean that adult facilitators do not still have an important role in supporting the work. It does, however, mean that young people need to be recognised (again as already noted) 'as competent social actors' who can potentially 'hold the primary decision-making roles over

adults' (Cuevas-Parra 2021: 176–177). This can have broad ramifications not only for an individual project, but also for the wider development industry. As Mark Waddington, CEO of the INGO Hope and Homes for Children argues, youth development funding exists within a 'dysfunctional market, where the people paying for the services are not the people using the services' (Waddington 2019). How can a project itself effect the kind of structural rebalancing of power required to ensure that it is ultimately accountable to an agenda set by young people themselves as the beneficiaries and not the agenda of the funders (Restless Development 2016: 10)? How can we ensure that a given project generates, to return one final time to Arnstein's foundational 'Ladder of Participation', genuine 'Partnership' and ultimately 'Citizen [in this case youth] Control' (Arnstein 1969: 217)?

It is with this in mind that we wish, finally, to turn again to the question: what do we mean by youth 'voice'? This is probably the most important of the terms we need to define in our discussion, as it is manifest in a wide range of arts-based development projects. In order to better understand and address both the issues facing young people, and the potential of youth engagement in development programming, we seek here to reconceptualise what voice means; how young people's voices not only *express*, but are fundamentally *bound up with* their many ways of knowing and how voice might be better *heard*. We investigate how voice operates both through and beyond language, in ways which decentre the responsibility of the individual speaker and which account for young people's relationality with, and in, their world, in order to better understand how voice can enact and effect sustainable change within programmes and societies. How can a re-evaluation of what we mean by youth voice help to promote epistemic justice in international development in ways that provide innovative, contextually relevant solutions to the systemic issues outlined above? In addressing this question, we wish to highlight the extent to which an expanded and nuanced understanding of youth voice can ensure that young people's experiences are integral to international development practice and ensure that international development is, in turn, accountable to young people.

As is clear from the visibility of young people in the many movements for social change already mentioned in this chapter, young people clearly understand their role as agents of social change, actively seeking the same in their day-to-day lives. The issue is that their actions often go unrecognised or are not fully understood by (international) organisations and researchers: even for listeners with the most inclusive intentions, young people's voices cannot always be heard. The aim of this volume is to explore the contribution young people can, and do, make to development focused ecologies of action in order for (arts-based) international development programmes to support meaningful social transformation. Consequently, at the heart of this exploration is a conceptualisation of voice that both reconsiders and expands what voice is and considers the work incumbent on listeners for voice to be audible, thereby ensuring that the narratives of marginalised groups are heard, considered, accounted for and included in the project of epistemic justice.

Youth Voice and Participatory Arts in Global Development: Overview of the Volume

Chapter 2 focuses on the ways in which global youth development is positioned in policy frameworks, taking as its starting point the World Bank's key policy report of 2006/7, *Development and the Next Generation* (World Bank 2007). Here we explore in more detail the economic framing of young people discussed in Chapter 1 and how this shapes overarching approaches to supporting young people in terms of education, employment and the gendered, as well as other intersectional challenges they face. The chapter highlights how very little seems to have changed in the years since the report's publication. We then explore the potential for the kinds of projects discussed in the rest of this volume to address some of the challenges faced by young people, looking at how such projects can both acknowledge and question the World Bank's perspective, as well as the perspective of other key institutions that shape how young people tend to be perceived structurally.

Chapter 2 is focused on the macro-level, and the ways in which youth-programming is shaped by, and can in turn shape, how young people are both seen and heard at the policy level. Chapter 3, however, is more centrally concerned with the impact of youth programming on the individual, and in particular how such programmes conceptualise what we in fact mean by 'seeing' and 'hearing'. Here, we explore in detail the theoretical underpinning of how we understand 'voice' in our work. Tracing the history of voice in Western philosophical thought, we highlight the ways in which Global Northern discourses have delimited the concept of voice to what is considered to be 'rational', defined as what can be spoken to, and heard by, hegemonic (colonial) forces. By way of challenge to this, we develop a 'transrational' understanding of voice that troubles what we mean by concepts such 'speaking' and 'understanding'. Revisiting our discussion of critical pedagogy in this chapter, we examine how voice can create new forms of social solidarity, and the ways in which art has the potential to surface new spaces of engagement that can help to maximise, and indeed instrumentalise, the value of what is ostensibly 'unsayable' within our developing understanding of 'ecologies of action'.

In Chapter 4 we begin to explore some of the practical implications of voice in Changing the Story and related projects. Our focus here is on the art produced by a range of participatory arts-based projects. In many arts-based projects there is surprisingly little attention paid to this aspect of the work, with the art itself seldom being considered within the context of a project's research findings. Instead, researchers tend to use the process of artistic production as a means of generating other forms of 'data' more widely used in social-scientific research. If the art is 'used' in such projects, it tends to be as part of a wider youth-engagement or skills-development strategy, or as part of an advocacy or activist campaign. Given the fact that the rationale for much of this kind of work tends to be 'youth empowerment', or the amplification of 'youth voice' (however this is to be understood), it is surprising that the art,

which for participants is often the primary articulation of their 'voice' and a product of their empowerment, can be ignored by researchers. In this chapter, we explore a range of artworks produced by the programme, as curated by the Changing the Story Youth Research Board, a group tasked with producing an arts-based evaluation of the project. Drawing on methods of 'close reading' favoured by the arts and humanities, the chapter further explores what the transrational voice can look, sound and feel like in practice, and how this can provide new insights into both the research findings and practical implications of the projects explored in this volume.

Chapter 5 focuses squarely on the practical implications of some of the youth-led projects developed by Changing the Story, in particular returning to the vexed question of 'entrepreneurialism'. On the one hand, the chapter explores how arts-based projects can support participants to develop new, creative approaches to the concrete problems they face as young people living in conflict-affected contexts, from Venezuela to Zimbabwe, through the promotion of collective voice. Specifically, the chapter addresses the issue of youth un- and underemployment, which we look at through the lens of social enterprise. The chapter presents three case studies, all taken from Changing the Story, which have sought to use creative practices as a means to develop practical business ideas rooted in the concrete needs of their local communities. In so doing, the chapter presents working examples of the kinds of ecologies of action we seek to define in this volume, where projects are embedded within a wider set of community-based networks that can help to make the learning and innovation from an individual project sustainable in the longer term. On the other hand, the projects also reiterate the limitations of entrepreneurialism, outlined in this chapter, again emphasising the need for any form of social enterprise to be embedded in a wider ecology not only to ensure that it is sustainable in business terms, but also that it is providing the necessary systemic support that young people require if they are to thrive. Supporting the development of entrepreneurial skills should not be seen as a way for society to wipe its hands of its duty of care to young people, and the need to provide meaningful support for young people to develop sustainable careers. At the same time, the chapter also acknowledges the wider potential benefits of social enterprise, particularly in terms of epistemic justice, once again returning to the volume's broader focus on voice and the need for young people's perspectives to be treated with the same respect that other parts of society are given.

Chapter 6 continues our discussion of epistemic justice and the transrational as it pertains to both formal and non-formal education systems. While this chapter, like all the others, is primarily focused on the role of education in the Global South, it also highlights some of the ways in which its implications are relevant to educational debates in the UK at the tail end of the Sunak government. Chapter 6 explores how arts-based participatory projects can, and have been, incorporated into formal education systems to create spaces for reflection in which the 'unsayable' can emerge to generate 'affective encounters' (Burnett and Merchant 2018; Zembylas 2018) through which young

people are able to redefine their position within the educational system. Once again, we see how participatory arts can provide spaces for Freire's 'conscientisation', that can, in turn, help to create ecologies of action. We argue that this is particularly important in the context of conflict-affected societies, where young people can feel excluded not only because of the socio-economic constraints they face but also because of their temporal relationship to past conflicts. While events such as the Cambodian genocide orchestrated by Khmer Rouge in the 1970s might have taken place long before a young person living in Phnom Penh today was born, it might well continue to shape their everyday experience of life in a variety of ways that they do not fully understand. Without a full understanding of the legacy of past traumas young people do not always have the ability to negotiate the present, and so to exercise their right to epistemic justice.

Chapter 7, rather than providing a conclusion to our discussion, seeks to revisit the key arguments of the previous six chapters in an attempt to point to what work remains to be done, what questions still need to be asked and answered. We call, for example, for more longitudinal evaluation of the kinds of arts-based development projects supported by Changing the Story in order to understand better the extent to which they can really support sustainable change. We also discuss how, or if, a project like Changing the Story can 'move the conversation on' about the role of the arts in international development and the extent to which our exploration of transrational voice can help in this endeavour. Finally, the volume concludes with a summary of all the main projects supported by Changing the Story. This is included to help contextualise the more detailed discussion of individual case studies in the previous chapters and to give a sense of the breadth of engagement supported by the programme. This summary only offers a snapshot of where individual projects had got to by the time of publication. Many have merged into other programmes; some continue in their own right with other funding; some have stopped completely. However, in some cases at least, due to the programme's emphasis of supporting projects that sat within a wider ecology of action, the learning they generated has gone on to be used elsewhere, at times being taken up in subsequent projects developed by members of the network or being used within further practical or policy-focused initiatives generated by development professionals or community-based organisations. This is due in no small part to the particular approach adopted by the Global Challenges Research Programme, which was very much a *research*-focused development initiative, the aim of which was to create new knowledge that could do more than either the research or the development community could do on its own. In the end, the GCRF was short lived. However, due to the approach of the programmes it supported, such as Changing the Story, which sought to develop research projects with practical and sustainable outcomes, we hope its legacy will continue to be felt for years to come. Whether this is the case is another question that of course, at present, remains to be answered.

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2 Young People in the Context of Global Challenges and Development Policy

As a starting point for our discussion of the complex 'ecologies of action' within which the projects explored in this volume sit, we now look in more detail at some of the challenges young people face globally that we introduced in the previous chapter. We examine the ways in which these challenges are conceptualised and presented by some of the key multilateral organisations, INGOs and policy actors that tend to shape the way young people are positioned in relation to these problems. In the process, we highlight a continued lack of engagement with some of the nuances around youth-focused development programming we have already touched on, offering a further way of framing the broader discussion of this volume from the perspective of development policy.

In 1996, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled the 'World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond'; a resolution aimed at providing a 'policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people'. The resolution identified ten priority areas for action – aligning with key challenges faced by young people: (1) Education – highlighting the need for both universal education and an education that is relevant to the 'current and future needs of young people and their societies', (2) Employment and the 'crisis of youth unemployment' (1996: 12), (3) Hunger and poverty, (4) Health, (5) Environment, noting that 'the deterioration of the natural environment is one of the principal concerns of young people world wide…' (1996: 18), (6) Drug abuse, (7) Juvenile delinquency, (8) Leisure-time activities, (9) Girls and young women, including gender-based discrimination and (10) The participation of youth in society and decision-making processes.

In 2003, the UN launched the World Youth Report, which reviewed these ten priority areas, finding that, while there had been some successes in addressing the challenges faced by young people, on the whole, young people continued to face the same challenges of limited education, employment insecurity, poverty and gender-based violence and discrimination. The report also highlighted additional priority areas, adopted by the UN Commission for Social Development in 2003 – namely globalisation, information and

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communication technologies, HIV/AIDs, conflict prevention and intergenerational relations – while also questioning the 'relevance of articulating youth issues on a global level. How well do these priorities apply to the youth of the world, who comprise many different subgroups rather than a single demographic entity?' (2003: 3–4).

In 2007, the World Bank launched its World Development Report, *Development and the Next Generation* (WDR 2007 – first published 2006). This has been understood (for better or worse) as a pivotal moment in the organisation's approach to youth policy and, indeed, the way transnational organisations approach this issue in terms of policy (Archer 2006; Bourguignon 2006). In the report, the World Bank outlines the systemic issues it sees as most impacting the lives of young people, as well as ways in which these issues might be addressed, an approach that frequently resonates with the 'assets-based approach to youth development' at the heart of Positive Youth Development (PYD) discussed in Chapter 1 (Lindsay et al. 2021: 56). The report emphasises global trends towards inadequate access to decent work; education systems that are far from fit for purpose and that are failing to prepare youth for employment; young people's growing disillusionment with formal forms of government and the gender-based discrimination negatively impacting young women's opportunities, in particular.

The report calls for a 'youth lens' in policy, with a focus on investment and youth inclusion across three key areas:

1 creating *opportunities* for young people to acquire and use skills for their lives and livelihoods;
2 building the *capabilities* of young people to make good decisions and grasp opportunities;
3 promoting 'second chances' for young people whose choices in life have been negatively affected by poverty and other contributing factors.

A central argument of the report is that:

> Efforts to give young people voice need to go beyond the tokenism that often characterizes such attempts. Not only does there need to be a process for listening to young people – there also needs to be a process for careful consideration of the suggestions and feedback that emerge.
>
> (2006: 211, original emphasis)

Leaving aside for the moment the potentially problematic notion, in terms of their individual agency, of young people needing to be 'given' a voice, before they can be listened to, WDR 2007 nonetheless both mirrored and contributed to the inspiration for a growing global trend towards youth-focused initiatives at governmental and non-governmental level, accompanied by a parallel growth in academic youth studies (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015). Almost 15 years on from the WDR report, and almost 30 years on from the 1996

resolution, it is, therefore, startling to see that little seems to have changed on aggregate in key areas. Drawing on the most recently available statistics and qualitative evidence from key sources that include the UN World Youth and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) reports, International Labour Organisation (ILO) survey data, which has been collecting data on global working conditions since the organisation's inception in 1919, as well as the British Council's Next Generation research programme, which has produced detailed reports on the experience of young people in countries across Europe, South America, Africa and Asia, it is clear that many of the problems identified through these documents persist or, indeed, have intensified.

This chapter starts by comparing the picture for youth presented in WDR 2007 with the current state of affairs by looking at more recent youth-centred data, focusing on the key areas of concern raised in the 2007 report. It goes on to consider reasons for the gap between the apparent *intention* to actively address these complex challenges while seeking to 'empower' young people and the *reality* in which young people's needs and concerns often continue to be side-lined in policy and practice. Our discussion here acts as the starting point for our more theoretical engagement with the concept of youth voice and development in Chapter 3. This in turn helps to further frame the practical focus of subsequent chapters, where we look at how GCRF programmes such as Changing the Story have attempted to go beyond tokenistic approaches to youth engagement.

The Implications of Global Challenges for Young People

The launch of *Development and the Next Generation* (World Bank 2006) marked a defining moment, reflecting a growing emphasis on *youth* as a focus for development policy and practice. The report articulates some of the unique challenges facing the next generation globally but particularly investigates the challenges faced by young people in many low-income countries.

A Crisis in Education

The report highlights the tensions between growing numbers of primary school enrolments and the failures of education systems to equip all students with the skills they need for life and work. It notes: 'Despite great progress in primary schooling in developing countries, the preparation of youth for work and life is very low, just as demand for skills and knowledge is rising' (2006: 68), highlighting the fact that primary school enrolment figures only tell part of the story and disguise a poor quality of education in many places:

> The dramatic recent progress in the numbers of children completing primary school, a Millennium Development Goal (MDG), does not fully address country needs because the children are not learning as much as they should. Many, even those who reach lower secondary levels, can

> hardly read or write and are unprepared to cope with the practicalities of daily life.
>
> (World Bank 2006: 6)

As one respondent puts it, 'There are practical things in life that secondary school doesn't even touch upon, for example, how to confront and resolve problems' (World Bank 2006: 12). While the quantitative data might suggest that the education MDG box was on its way to being ticked, the feeling on the ground was that there was still a long way to go.

More than 15 years later, the situation does not appear to have improved significantly. The total number of teachers has been increasing, rising from 62 million globally in 2000 to 94 million in 2019. However, another 69 million are needed to achieve SDG 4 (Quality Education)'s aim of universal primary and secondary education by 2030. Teachers in many countries face overcrowded classrooms and work overload due to high pupil-to-teacher ratios. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, figures from 2019 indicate that there was 1 teacher per 58 pupils. In South Asia, the number was 1 per 40 pupils, rising to 1 teacher per 60 pupils in Bangladesh (UNESCO 2020). Over and above the issue of teacher-pupil ratios, it is also imperative that teachers are equipped with core skills in pedagogy, classroom management and instructional management as well as subject knowledge. The SDG report for 2020 states that 85% of primary school teachers and 86% of secondary school teachers worldwide had received a minimum standard of required training, but these figures are not consistent across regions. Sub-Saharan Africa had the lowest percentage of trained teachers: 64% at the primary level and 50% at the secondary level (UN 2020). Many of the young people surveyed for the British Council's Next Generation research programme said that their education had not prepared them for employment. The *Education and Skills: What We Know Brief*, for example, highlights a general trend in the data of young people feeling frustrated by 'outdated teaching methods' that are not equipping them with '21st-century skills' (Cresswell et al. 2022: 11). Too much emphasis, it is argued, is put on formal examinations and not enough on 'soft' life skills, such as confidence building, resilience, communication, teamwork and problem-solving, the kind of skills young people need to be properly prepared for the world of work (Mayer and Marshall 2020).

In many cases, responses to COVID-19 would seem to have further undermined educational opportunities for young people, particularly the poorest. According to the ILO, 73% of young people who were either studying or combining study and work before the onset of the pandemic experienced school closures, and not all were able to transition to online or distance learning. One in eight young people globally (13%) were left without any access to teaching or training (ILO 2020a). These numbers hide further disparities. Precisely 70% of students who could not be reached lived in rural areas and more than three-quarters were from the poorest 40% of households (World Bank 2021). In the US, Black and Hispanic/Latinx households had

less reliable Internet and devices available, correlating with less wealth and reducing the hours children and young people could spend on remote learning. As Francis and Weller note:

> the digital divide may have emerged as a key reinforcing mechanism of education through wealth and of future wealth through education during the pandemic. The intergenerational transmission of racial wealth inequality likely played out at rapid speed during the pandemic.
>
> (Francis and Weller 2021)

Indeed, disparities in access will almost certainly have long-term consequences, which are themselves also being compounded by subsequent education budget cuts around the world, but particularly in the Global South. The World Bank (2021) found that two thirds of low and lower middle-income countries have cut their public education budgets since the onset of the pandemic, and one-third of upper and high-income countries. This has been further compounded by the fact that as of 2020, there are more violent conflicts globally than there have been at any other stage over the last three decades, with 2023 seeing the highest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War. These conflicts themselves not only result in students not attending school but also divert money away from education at the familial and state level; where families are forced into survival mode, and states divert money away from their education or international aid budgets to military and defence spending (UNESCO 2011).

As *Development and the Next Generation* points out, one of the factors preventing these issues from being addressed is the myths that governments tell themselves about education. The notable global increase in primary school enrolment is still often viewed as a key marker of development and used as an important indicator of progress (Küfeoğlu 2022). Yet primary school enrolment figures do not capture retention of students or drops in attendance for secondary or tertiary education, nor what is actually being learnt in schools (UNESCO and International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training 2016). The MDGs education target therefore focused on the *completion* of primary education, (2A: 'Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling') and the SDGs expanded this to the completion of primary and secondary education (4.1: 'By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes'). However, within the SDGs, an understanding of what constitutes 'quality' and 'equitable' education is missing, and questions remain as to *what* education students are receiving, and *how* they are receiving it. Indeed, the indicators for SDG4.1 are the 'Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex' and 'Completion rate (primary education, lower

secondary education, upper secondary education)'. As Keith Lewin points out, with regard to the MDGs, but which is still a concern with the SDGs for all their attempt to move away from purely statistical measures, evaluating development via the types of indicators used by the UN cannot capture sociocultural nuances and other complex variables (2011). Significantly, because the concept of *quality* education, as it is enshrined in SDG 4 ('Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'), as well as the narrative used to describe the factors contributing to its achievement, are underdefined, the emphasis still remains to a significant degree on the *provision* of education as an indicator rather than on the ways in which education is *delivered*.

A Crisis in Youth Employment

Another major concern in WDR 2007, which is already hinted at in our discussion of education, are the barriers to young people's absorption into meaningful, well-paid employment. It cites data from 60 countries across the Global South which suggest that youth accounted for 25% of the population but 47% of the unemployed – up to three times higher than the employment rate for those over the age of 25 (World Bank 2006). Over 15 years on, the number of young people aged between 15 and 24 years globally has risen from 1 billion in 1999 to 1.3 billion in 2024, accounting for 15.5% of the world population (UNDESA 2020). Returning to our discussion of the previous chapter and the so-called 'youth bulge', some commentators see this demographic trend as presenting opportunities for economic development, if this 'bulge' can be marshalled into a young, educated labour force. Yet across both the Global North and South, the low labour force participation of young people aged 15–24 is a persistent problem. In 2020, the global average youth unemployment rate was 13.6%, rising to 30% in North Africa, and young people were still three times more likely to be unemployed than people over the age of 25 (ILO 2020b). One key reason for this is the pace of global technological progress, which – while creating skilled jobs – has rendered obsolete many of the types of entry-level jobs taken up by young people due to increased automation in manufacturing and other industries, a situation the economist Lawrence Summers has called 'persistent jobless growth' (Summers 2014). The global economic downturn triggered by COVID-19 and other global events has only served to compound the lack of decent jobs for young people (ILO 2020b). According to Summers, 'Even China, which has enjoyed unprecedented growth in competitiveness and exports, has seen manufacturing employment decline over the last 20 years, thanks to its rapid industrialisation and use of technology and automation' (Summers 2014: 12). In light of these challenges, many young people are experiencing intense feelings of insecurity about the future. This new generation has also been described, and often describes itself, as 'The Precariat' (MacDonald 2017: 156) because of their reliance on precarious, low-paid forms of often short-term work.

There is, furthermore, a clear gender-inequality dimension to youth employment. WDR 2007 reported that unemployment was highest among young women (World Bank 2006: 101). The global figures by 2015 indicated that women were twice as likely to fall into the NEET (not in education, employment or training) category (Carcilloi et al. 2015). And, according to the World Youth Report, in 2018, nearly 13.8% of the world's young women were unemployed, compared with 12.4% of young men (UNDESA 2019). While these figures are skewed by particularly large gender gaps in North Africa and the Middle East, where gendered sociocultural norms significantly undermine women's employment opportunities, they remain globally concerning (ILO 2020b). The burden of unpaid care work that often falls to women and the continued lack of state and employer-led strategies designed to mitigate this issue, such as subsidised childcare and flexible working hours, continues to create barriers to young women's access to decent work (UN 2020). And this is not to mention the less easy to prove, or track, implicit biases in hiring practices fuelled by discrimination based on gender, disability, race and other indices of difference, as these data are not formally collected at national or global levels (Bertogg et al. 2020). Once in work, many young women are subjected to sexual harassment and discrimination. For example, according to Next Generation in Kenya, women frequently reported being asked for sexual favours as a condition of employment, while others reported being sexually harassed by customers and colleagues (British Council 2018: 40).

A Crisis in Youth Political Voice and Participation

WDR 2007 also highlights the growing alienation of youth from formal governance institutions. It refers to a declining confidence, indeed interest, in mainstream political institutions among young people in middle- and high-income countries, noting that this was less prevalent in some low-income countries (2006: 161). Fast forward nearly two decades and there is a palpable sense of disillusionment with formal politics among young people globally, and of not being given space to speak or be heard, of young voices being side-lined or silenced on issues many care deeply about, from climate change and environmental unsustainability to inequality and global poverty (UNDESA 2016). As Magdelena Kitanova has noted, this generation 'seems to have lower levels of political engagement when it comes to participating in traditional forms of politics such as voting and being a member of a political party, compared to older generations' (2020: 819; also see Sloam 2017). Precisely 47% of young people aged 18–24 voted in the 2019 UK general election, the lowest turnout amongst any age group. This was a decline from the 2017 general election, when 58% of young people voted (Mayer and Marshall 2020). In many of the low-income countries participating in the British Council Next Generation research, the political participation of young people was similarly low. For example, in Zimbabwe more than 60% of those interviewed declared themselves unwilling to engage in politics and did not think that their vote could change

things for the better (British Council 2020). Many young people reported not feeling represented or listened to by governments. They were also concerned about corruption and nepotism among those with power. In Ethiopia, for example, 36% of young people experienced political corruption in the previous five years (British Council 2019a).

Yet, in parallel with this rejection of formal electoral politics, and as we saw in our previous chapter, young people are forging other forms of civic space. James Sloam suggests 'young people are not politically apathetic. [They] have their own political views and express themselves through issue-based engagement in political causes that have meaning for their everyday lives' (Sloam 2017: 287). Transnational issue-based movements, such as Occupy or X-tinction Rebellion, that amplify youth voices are simultaneously manifestations of this feeling of powerlessness and proof of the collective power and commitment of young people. Young people have also adopted arts-based practices to 'speak' to political issues, in contexts where other forms of expression may be dangerous. Lee (2018) shares the example of young environmental activists in Cambodia who developed a participatory activity in which people biked around Phnom Penh taking photos of places that were beautiful, and places with environmental problems, in order to raise awareness about environmental and planning issues in the city. Those who took part were divided into small groups to avoid the overt appearance of protest and activism in a context where this can lead to prosecution.

Nonetheless, despite the growing influence of such movements, it is surely important not to lose sight of promoting youth engagement in the powerful national and international institutions that, ultimately, retain decision-making authority globally. At present, young people are extremely under-represented in formal political structures. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a global organisation that supports national parliaments to advocate for parliamentary democracy around the world, even though 49% of the world's population was under the age of 30 in 2020, only 2.6% of Members of Parliament were aged 30 and below, while only 17.5% were under 40 (IPU 2020). The relative absence of young people's voices within the internal workings of government is likely to contribute to policies and processes that do not reflect youth needs or perspectives. Lobbyists are increasingly calling for political parties and governments to design strategies that encourage the inclusion of young MPs, such as youth quotas and leadership training. These are strategies, it is also argued, that will not only benefit young people but will have a positive effect on the whole of parliamentary democracy. iKNOW Politics – a joint initiative of International IDEA, the IPU, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – for example, argues that 'as the increased political participation of women benefits society as a whole, the presence of young people in decision-making positions benefits all citizens and not just youth' (iKnow Politics 2017).

With this in mind, it is important also to note that young women are particularly absent in terms of youth representation. A clear message from the available global data is the need to dismantle the many sociocultural norms and values that prevent women from political participation and, in the process, to encourage more young women to critically engage in electoral politics as voters, agents of accountability and leaders, since the poor representation of women in politics (particularly at the highest levels) pervades in the majority of low-income, and many middle and higher income, countries. In 2022, only 26.4% of the world's MPs were women, and globally only 21% of ministers (UN Women 2023). There are some promising developments that may begin to redress this imbalance, driven in no small part by the Beijing Platform for Action, established during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, at the time the largest ever gathering of gender-equality advocates and designed to dismantle systemic barriers to women's engagement in public life (UN Women 2023). The Platform for Action having now been adopted by 189 governments around the world, a growing number of countries have introduced quota systems for enhancing women's representation. For example, in Sri Lanka, a quota of 25% of seats in government for women has been introduced (British Council 2019b: 33). However, with engrained patriarchal social systems, enabling truly gender-equitable governance requires a socially transformative approach that involves deconstructing sociocultural barriers to women's participation and leadership, building leadership skills and confidence among girls and young women and creating an enabling environment for women. This can include some of the practical steps already mentioned, such as providing free or subsidised childcare and introducing flexible working hours for female and male government representatives (Brody 2009).

A Crisis of Gender-Based Discrimination and Violence for Young Women and Girls

WDR 2007 takes into account the extent to which gender inequality and discriminatory social norms often shape girls' and young women's choices and potentialities, for example, by emphasising the (often disproportionate) burden of unpaid care work that falls to them and lower access to opportunities than young men. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the authorship of the report, the emphasis here is on the economic empowerment of young women as a lever of sociocultural change. For example, it highlights the virtuous empowerment impacts of young Bangladeshi women's greater involvement in the export-driven textile industry (2006: 65). In so doing, it fails to call for strategies to address some of the root causes of gender-based discrimination that continue to drive lower formal market engagement, in particular wages and the limited bargaining power in the workplace for many women. It also misses an understanding of gendered employment, and the experiences of women in the workplace that we have mentioned above. According to UNDESA, in 2020, only 47% of women of working age participated in the labour market,

compared to 74% of men – with little change since 1995 (UNDESA 2020b). And for those who did participate by 2023, women earned only 51 cents for every dollar earned by men (Azcona et al. 2023: 18). There is also no explicit mention of gender-based violence (GBV) and its impact on participation in WDR 2007, perhaps due to the 'glaring absence of nationally-available data on its prevalence in most countries' (UN Women 2022) and the fact that GBV was missing from MDG indicators.

By contrast, the British Council Next Generation series and other sources of recent evidence reflect the extent to which GBV is a growing problem for women and girls globally at home, in communities and in schools (UN 2020). UN Women estimates that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner (not including sexual harassment) at some point in their lives. Some national studies indicate that up to 70% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime (UN Women 2022). The British Council research echoes these concerns. For example, as noted above, young Kenyan women interviewed for the New Generation research programme said they often felt pressured by men into performing sexual acts, and that the threat of violence made them afraid to refuse. Moreover, they reported feeling at risk in their communities, homes, social spaces, schools and workplaces. Where this was discussed, young women indicated that shame and stigma meant they often felt unable to report instances of sexual abuse and, when they did, they were frequently not taken seriously. As one young woman put it: 'People worry that if they tell their parents something they will spread it to aunts and others, and then suddenly it's all spread around the family. So they just keep it in their heart instead' (British Council 2018: 41).

Young women and girls often experience gender inequitable social norms and power relations in specific, acute ways. Pressure on young girls to marry early, and leave school in order to do so, remains high in many low-income countries. According to the SDG report for 2020, in 2019, the risk of child marriage was highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, where more than one in three women (34.5%) between the ages of 20 and 24 were married before the age of 18 (UN 2020). In many societies, adolescent girls encounter pressures to engage in sexual activity, leaving them vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies as well as physical and mental trauma. Teenage pregnancy is a persistent issue for many low-income countries in regions that include Sub-Saharan Africa, placing girls at risk of maternal death or complications from childbirth or abortions as well as, of course, potentially increasing their vulnerability by curtailing their education and limiting their ability to work.

Too often the reproductive health needs of adolescents are ignored. Consequently, adolescent boys and girls often have little or no access to practical, accessible information about sex and sexuality or counselling services, resulting in the perpetuation of myths and misinformation and a lack of effective routes

for seeking advice or support (UNFPA 2023). Entrenched social norms, senses of shame and stigma and a lack of effective interventions often mean that little happens to change this situation. These are extremely sensitive, often hidden issues and any available data only reveals the tip of a far larger iceberg. At the same time, these are vital issues to raise and understand but they can only be effectively addressed, we suggest, through approaches that work in partnership with young people, that hear and respect their point of view.

A Crisis in Youth Mental Health

The limited available evidence from across the Global North and South points to a global mental-health crisis for young people that has been compounded by catastrophic events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict and global recession. The World Health Organisation, for example, suggests that 'Globally, one in seven 10–19-year-olds experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 13% of the global burden of disease in this age group' (WHO 2021). However, given the relative lack of robust age-disaggregated data (UNDESA 2019), it is likely that the figures we have only reflect only a small percentage of those effected (another 'tip' of yet another 'iceberg' impacting young people disproportionately). Evidence indicates that around three quarters of all mental health conditions start before the age of 18, and that children aged 10–18 are particularly susceptible: according to a 2018 *Lancet Commission* report 'most mental disorders have their origins in childhood and adolescence' (Patel et al. 2018). This is partly due to hormonal changes in adolescence but is compounded by other factors such as poverty, conflict, displacement, bereavement, trauma, bullying, sexual abuse and discrimination, all of which can affect brain development as well as emotional responses and resilience (Meeker et al. 2021). These mental health impacts create a vicious cycle that affects educational attainment and employment potential as well as social integration more generally. Both boys and girls are affected but often help-seeking behaviour is much lower among boys and there is a higher rate of suicide among boys and young men, due, in part, to entrenched notions of masculinity and the associated shame of seeking help (Patel et al. 2018).

More robust, systematic research is needed to track the linkages between specific phenomena such as youth unemployment, gender-based discrimination and negative mental health among young people in detail. However, data collected following the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions such as school closures provide a useful barometer. For example, a survey conducted in 2021 with 2,438 young people aged 13–25 by Young Minds – one of the UK's leading charities supporting better mental health for young people – indicated that 67% believed the pandemic would have a long-term negative effect on their mental health (Young Minds 2021). The ILO survey mentioned above (2020a) also reflected the mental-health toll for 18–29-year-olds globally early on in the pandemic. Over 50% of young respondents, whose education or work had been substantially disrupted since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic,

reported significantly impaired mental health (ILO 2020a). The literature also reports a pronounced gender disparity in adolescent mental health globally, with girls tending to have worse mental health than boys, particularly in terms of 'life satisfaction' and 'psychological distress', the mental-health gender gap being at its most pronounced, somewhat curiously perhaps, in those countries where the overall gender gap is smallest (Campbell et al. 2021).

Persistent Gaps and Barriers for Engaging and 'Empowering' Youth

The global challenges young people face, some of which are identified above, are complex, requiring sustained engagement over time for perceptible changes to occur. The PYD approach discussed in the previous chapter reflects the enormous potential of, and need for, young people to play a key role in this process of engagement, if the world has any hope of achieving the SDGs by 2030. The 2018 World Youth Report states:

> The active engagement of youth in sustainable development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies by the target date, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development, including the impacts of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and migration.
>
> (UNDESA 2019: 1)

On the surface, the exponential rise of national youth-focused policies, initiatives, funds and fora appears to respond to this call for more youth engagement and 'empowerment' (a complex term that we return to throughout this volume, but as we shall see here, tends to be used unproblematically in the policy literature), supporting the growth of PYD in international programming. For example, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs has convened its annual Economic and Social Council Youth Forum since 2012 in order to amplify youth voices, 'empowering' young people to actively participate in the identification of solutions to climate change, post-pandemic recovery and other 'existential challenges' across the world (ECOSOC Youth Forum 2023). Yet, there are still glaring blind spots in policy when it comes to youth. The ways in which youth and youth roles are *represented* in development policy and practice and the kind of language that is often used only serves to widen the distance between the aspiration and the reality of youth engagement. As discussed in Chapter 1, and as we can see throughout our discussion of WDR 2007, there can be a tendency to instrumentalise young people in policy rhetoric, viewing them as potential 'human capital' that can fuel economic growth, rather than as complex, creative beings with their own individual psycho-social needs and rights. There is little or no mention of this, nor of the connected issues of well-being and positive mental health in WDR 2007. Sukarieh and Tannock note

that 'Positive youth development rhetoric is absolutely saturated with the language of human capital: youth are constantly referred to as "assets" and "resources"' (2015: 19). Partly as a result, some policy solutions have the effect of further excluding young people from the mainstream economy and political circles. The growing emphasis on youth entrepreneurship, again as discussed in Chapter 1, is one example of this. On the one hand, entrepreneurship offers alternative solutions to economically empower young people. On the other, the actual experience for many young people is of them being relegated to a second or parallel tier of informal employment where they have no real agency, very little support, a lack of fall-back position and even fewer rights (see for example UNDESA 2020a).

Given their humanitarian focus on addressing the specific, immediate challenges young people face, as well as the explicit (and necessary) fundraising emphasis in much of their literature, certain large-scale child-supporting organisations can underline this sense of marginalisation, as well as a view of young people as a homogenous group that are objects, rather than agents, of change. Be the issue child trafficking or global poverty, the emphasis in the literature of such organisations tends to be on addressing the immediate symptoms, rather than the root causes, of the issue at hand. And young people themselves are often not presented as equal partners in the development of the programmes that are designed to address these issues (Save the Children 2023). Yet, even when young people *are* invited into policy spaces, their physical presence does not necessarily mean that their voices are listened to. The participation of young people in policy processes frequently remains tokenistic, perhaps forming part of a public consultation. Young people do not tend to be present at the table when the 'real' decision-making takes place. As Safia Sangster, a youth activist and the UK delegate to the Y7, the formal engagement group for young people at the G7, puts it:

> The binary, Eurocentric approach the G7 leaders have taken to addressing global issues highlights a fundamental and urgent need to radicalise political decision making. National and international policy agendas that aim to address issues such as climate change, health and security threats need to move beyond tokenistic engagement with marginalised communities to genuine lived experience-led policy making.
>
> (Sangster 2022)

Youth engagement is not simply a 'nice to have'. It is a necessary step if we are to address the global challenges that we face. And moreover, as Nadim Kara puts it:

> Involving youth in decision-making is not just about the instrumental gains to be had in terms of better 'outcomes' […] Involving youth in decision-making is also about improving the ability of youth to understand their roles as citizens in a democracy. This includes questioning

> authority, navigating diverse perspectives, challenging assumptions, admitting to mistakes, and constantly learning and adapting through critical reflection.
>
> (Kara 2007: 564–565)

In his discussion of barriers to meaningful youth engagement in decision-making, Kara refers to young people's contribution being 'subtly squelched' – meaning that they are permitted a certain amount of 'space' to articulate their needs but are often blocked or silenced when they are overly critical of, or challenge, the premise of existing policies and practices (Kara 2007).

Questions that go beyond the scope of this chapter need to be asked about the extent to which this is a deliberate strategy, offering a level of youth representation as lip service without allowing youth voices the power to potentially de-stabilise or threaten the status quo (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; Barber 2009; Kennelley 2011). Rather than being truly empowered, young people too often appear to be simultaneously co-opted into, and kept on the margins of, existing structures and processes. What can be said with certainty is that current processes frequently fail to create genuine accountability to young people, missing opportunities to involve young people in enabling the kinds of radical systemic (epistemic) changes and paradigmatic shifts that are needed to improve their lives and livelihoods.

Opportunities to target and track positive change among younger populations, as already alluded to above, are frequently stymied by poor data collection/methodological approaches. For example, even though 90 of the 232 indicators developed to measure progress against the SDGs have relevance for young people, there is a paucity of age-disaggregated data and a failure to bring youth into the mainstream as a concern across the SDGs (UNDESA 2019). Silvia Guglielmi and Nicola Jones note:

> Although the years between age 10 and 19 are increasingly recognised as a critical time in which to accelerate progress against poverty, inequity and discrimination and to foster positive development trajectories […] this is not matched by global data generated across the SDGs.
>
> (2017: 1)

This means that the specific needs and vulnerabilities of young people remain largely invisible in the context of policy making and programme design. Guglielmi and Jones, moreover, identify a particular gap in the data around early adolescents, warning that this group is 'especially vulnerable to being left behind' (2017: 3).

The final point that should to be made here is the need to focus on the effective implementation of youth policies, a point again raised by Sangster in her frustration at the role of youth engagement in the G7. For all the lively youth-generated debate she experienced during the meetings, when the final communiqué was issued:

> I was left feeling disappointed that ambitious, targeted actions underpinned by sustained financial resourcing were lacking. Specifically, young people were not even mentioned once. Overall, issues regarding other marginalised groups were limited in ambition and principally siloed to development issues.
>
> (Sangster 2022)

Demonstrating the vitality of 'ecologies of action', if policy declarations are not backed up with adequate financial and human resources, or concrete strategies, all underpinned by political will, these policies become little more than window dressing.

Challenges and Bridging the Gaps between Policy and Practice

As we discussed in Chapter 1, there are competing 'versions' of what we mean by 'young people' in development discourses which impact the way young people are positioned in policy debates. And, as we also noted, this is particularly visible in the turn towards PYD, where, for all the talk of young people being seen as potential agents of change, there remains a strong tendency to instrumentalise them in the practical implications of PYD for organisations such as the World Bank. By focusing on the need to 'positively' support the skills development of young people in order to help them make the most of their 'agency', there can also be a tendency to abdicate responsibility for their development to young people themselves. At the same time, there can also be a tendency in such discussions to objectify young people, to see them as 'assets' that can help to solve wider societal issues (be that climate change or economic instability). In so doing, this approach can lose sight of the fact that young people cannot be seen as a single, homogenous group and ultimately, can potentially exacerbate the problems such projects seek to address by undermining the agency of the young people who are ostensibly being 'empowered'. In some of the work discussed in this chapter, we see this same tendency. There is often a dearth of disaggregated data on the specific role of different groups of young people in research. As a result, young people's specific needs and perspectives frequently remain side-lined, or even invisible, in a development context. One possible practical reason for this is the tension between the desire to engage and work with young people and the complexities and debates relating to safeguarding and risk. Here, we find a continuation of the earlier ways in which young people tended to be positioned before the growth of PYD. For example, McGregor and Farrugia note that:

> Intellectual frameworks currently used to conceptualise youth in the juvenile justice system are aimed at fixing the concept of youth in place through the notion of risk. They either essentialise the "young risky subject", or they critique the way that youth is positioned as an object of governance through the technology of risk.

They highlight the notion of 'at-risk youth', noting that 'this approach demonstrates an individual subject of risk and responsibility who poses a threat to the moral order of the "mainstream" and that is defined through technologies of risk assessment' (2020: 33).

PYD, conversely, tends to see such perceptions of risk as being overcautious. Indeed, in terms of youth research more broadly, such approaches would seem to limit the very research that could shed more nuanced light on the lived experiences of young people and help provide a better understanding of risk as it plays out in their lives. The bureaucratic requirements associated with safeguarding are sometimes considered to be a limiting factor on research aspirations and can also alarm funders, leading to researchers choosing safer, less 'risky' cohorts for their studies. Kevin Hart describes some of the tensions associated with conducting youth-focused research:

> On one side of the argument are scholars advocating for the protection of young people from harm […] On the other are those seeking to promote a "risk-positive" discourse, one that argues that only by being exposed to risks can young people adapt to and learn from life's problems and therein maintain a sense of wellbeing and resilience.
>
> (Hart 2020: 46)

This debate also echoes our discussion around the definition of 'youth' in Chapter 1. While PYD might seek to open up ways of working with young people, it is also necessary to avoid what Hannah Francis terms 'Adultification', a phenomenon that she observers can particularly impact marginalised communities of young people 'in which notions of innocence and vulnerability are not afforded to certain children, namely young people that are racialised and/or from working-class and marginalised communities' (Francis 2023). We will return to the issue of risk and safeguarding in the kinds of arts-based development projects explored in this book in Chapter 4.

Alongside the issue of safeguarding, there would also appear to be other potential stumbling blocks, not least the question of methodology. On the surface, the kind of Participatory Action Research approach that we see throughout the projects discussed in this volume offers useful tools for engaging young people, and in particular facilitating the articulation of youth voices (to which we shall also return shortly). Yet, many of these methodologies rely on the capacity of participants to verbalise and organise ideas:

> [participants] prove their credibility as sources through their ability to articulate complex ideas through language, maps and diagrams, to think and articulate ideas in ways that organise the arbitrariness and emotion of everyday life and relationships into neat, logical/cerebral patterns.
>
> (Brody 2021: 12)

Not only could these imperatives (however inadvertently) exclude many young people who may feel less comfortable trying to verbalise complex ideas and emotions, they may actively discourage the expression of the complex, sensory experience of 'actual felt bodies', of the messy – often contradictory – emotions many young people are trying to navigate on a daily basis, and which are made all the more complex in contexts where trauma and shame are common, perhaps accepted, as part of young people's experience. As we discuss in the following chapter, and as we hope many of the projects discussed in this volume show, it is vital that conceptual and methodological engagements with young people's voices account for the 'extra discursive' (Chadwick 2017), or what Harvey and colleagues call the *'unsayable'* (Harvey et al. 2021, 2022; Harvey and Bradley 2023) –the embodied, sensory, affective, collective, non-cognitive and inarticulable dimensions of experience.

Conclusion: Towards Transformative Youth Empowerment

As we see throughout our discussion, the notion of 'youth empowerment' is a key driver for youth development policy and programming. Echoing the DFID report, as well as other policy documents previously discussed, FuturePolicy can be added to the list of organisations that also makes the familiar claim that:

> Youth Empowerment is key for sustainable development: With more than 1.8 billion people between the ages of 15 and 35 worldwide – a quarter of the global population – we have the largest generation of young persons the world has ever known. Already today, youth make up 37% of the global working-age population, but account for 60% of the total unemployed. Youth Empowerment and harnessing this demographic dividend (growing size of the working-age population) is the key for countries to thrive in a way that recognizes the needs of future generations.
>
> (FuturePolicy 2023)

However, as we have also emphasised, the term 'empowerment' is highly contested, as are models for achieving it, as well as the mechanisms for measuring its achievement. The World Bank envisages empowerment largely as a function of economic capacity and participation, fuelled by opportunities and skills development, echoing Amartya Sen's capability framework. At the heart of Sen's approach is the notion of agency – not only being enabled to act, but crucially having the freedom and capacity to *choose* – to be able to both recognise and grasp opportunities in ways that give life meaning and value (Sen 2000: 63; see also Jacobsen and Chang 2019). Meanwhile, as previously discussed, for Paulo Freire, empowerment is both the means and the end of a process of transformation that relies on dialogue and the fostering of reflexivity. Freire advocates for the creation of reflective spaces grounded on humility, where

knowledge is not considered fixed and hierarchical but fluid and relational (Freire 1970: 65). This allows for expression and creative thinking and critical awareness, enabling movement beyond the dominant truths and stereotypes that often limits the potential for change (Suzina and Tufte 2020). This is also clearly a requirement if we are going to achieve epistemic justice and the kinds of 'ecologies of action' set out in Chapter 1. Based on Freire's notion of fluid, relational knowledge, youth agency results in what Medina (2022) calls agential epistemic justice (Medina 2022). As a result, any youth-informed change would require an environment that views young people as epistemic agents capable of bringing about the desired transformation.

The GCRF projects that inform the case studies explored in this book build on these foundations, constantly coming back to the questions of what empowerment means for young people and, as we shall see, how this interacts with our understanding of voice, particularly for young people living in fragile situations. What might the contribution of arts-based participatory approaches be in such contexts and how might processes of empowerment play out in practice for young people as well as the organisations that support them, and the policy positions that ultimately (or ostensibly) seek to empower them? Significantly, the projects examined here are all grounded on assumptions that young people are complex social beings with often untapped potential and capacity. From the point of view of policy and development programming more generally, such work has tended to achieve success in terms of sustainability, adaptability and transformative outcomes at personal and community levels by demonstrating their strength in four overlapping spheres:

1 Promoting agency by strengthening young people's sense of their own power to make a difference through the expression of their ideas and perspectives; their autonomy and their capacity to make informed choices.
2 Promoting representative legitimacy by building respect and recognition for diverse forms of art, identity, language and culture; and by ensuring meaningful inclusion in processes, with an emphasis on listening to and respecting youth inputs
3 Promoting resilience through the fostering of positive mental health, skills for work, life and leadership- including 'soft' skills of confidence, expression and problem-solving.
4 Promoting the rights of young people (to be heard, to quality education, to decent work, to be free of discrimination)

At the heart of these four spheres are epistemic justice and the creation of reflective space for young people to be able to re-tell and develop greater ownership of their personal, communal and national stories. Such reflective space and epistemic justice is only possible, however, if young people's voices are acknowledged - and, crucially, *heard* – as an expression of the things they perhaps cannot say in traditional ways, of their vital and dynamic knowledges, and of their shifting and complex relationships in, and with, the world.

Multiple challenges face young people globally, particularly those living in low-income countries. These challenges include poor educational provision, the lack of decent employment, the exclusion of young people from agency, and leadership, persistent issues of gender-based discrimination and GBV and the compounding impacts of conflict. These are issues that were particularly brought to public attention in the early 2000s through, not least, the World Development Report. Yet they persist, in many cases exacerbated by the increase in crises across the world, including conflict, environmental emergencies and health emergencies (not least COVID-19). Young people today have grown up, and are living, through unprecedented 'poly-crises' and 'permacrises' (Turnbull 2022; Allouche et al. 2023). This chapter reflects on the gap between the intention to prioritise youth and the reality, asking how and why young people's needs and concerns often continue to be side-lined in development policy and practice. In subsequent chapters, we will explore how arts-based participatory approaches can help to address this gap, enabling:

> quietly "disruptive moments" where young people are encouraged to view themselves, their immediate communities and larger national [and international] realities through a new lens and – as a result – see the possibility to imagine and begin mapping alternative paths and futures.
>
> (Brody 2021: 11)

We discuss how numerous projects across and beyond Changing the Story have shown that building reflective capacity for young people through the arts helps to foster critical thinking, problem-solving and leadership, thereby empowering young people to challenge accepted ideas and express new perspectives. Indeed, we discuss how such projects frequently problematise the very terms upon which they (and indeed our volume) are built (not least 'empowerment' itself, but also 'voice', 'development', 'youth', 'resilience' and so on), and ultimately how such projects might be more effective.

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3 Theorising (Youth) Voice, 'Sayability' and the Transrational

It is a substantial challenge to theorise *voice*. Although voice and voices are invoked widely across academic disciplines, as a phenomenon it remains largely under-conceptualised. We take as a starting point Mikhail Bakhtin's assertion that 'to be is to communicate' (1984, 287), that voice inheres in existence, that everyone has a voice – whether verbal or otherwise –, and everyone can 'speak' for themselves. But how does one 'speak' when there are limits to what can be said? In Chapter 2, we identified two key barriers to the generation of youth voice. The first is that invitations to young people to articulate their voices may come with restrictive and potentially punitive parameters for what they are allowed to say, thereby limiting the potential for meaningful political and social critique (Kara 2007). The second is that many of the methodologies used to generate youth voice are reliant on the verbal/logical organisation of ideas through language and representation, in contexts in which young people, as well as living the embodied, sensory, emotional and spiritual dimensions of daily life, may also be traumatised by unspeakable abuse, shame and stigma. In this chapter, we therefore argue that discourses of youth voice have been predicated on what is *sayable*: that which it is *permissible* to consciously express and verbalise, and that which it is *possible* to consciously express and verbalise. We examine the philosophical foundations of *voice* in the Global North that have shaped discourses in global development, demonstrating how the notion of *sayability* has become conflated with the concept of *voice* through its associations with cognitive imperialism and human supremacy.

However, it is not enough to consider *voice* alone: as Mike Baynham points out, 'to have a voice and not be heard is to experience pain. So a necessary response for speaking to become action is audibility, being heard' (2020: 15). We posit that this is a question of what kind of knowledges, and whose knowledges, are valued. Our analysis will therefore demonstrate how voice, as a Global Northern concept conflated with *sayability*, is inextricably bound to epistemic (in)justice and to the continuing dominance of epistemologies in which some voices will always be more audible than others. Alongside our question *what is voice?*, we ask *how can voices be heard (by those in power)*, as well as *to what end?* How might we learn to listen, and how might voices become audible, in contexts of *unsayability*: when speaking is socially

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inadmissible, forbidden or taboo (Busch 2020); when language is not enough (Milani 2014); where language is not available (Sagan 2017; Gilbert 2017) or when we cannot attribute meaning to it (Yergeau 2018)?

To address these questions, we produce an expanded conceptualisation of voice which can account for *both* the sayable *and* the unsayable. This account of voice is grounded in a knowledge paradigm that we define as *transrational*, a term we take from peace pedagogy (Cremin et al. 2018; Dietrich 2019; Kester 2018; Kester and Cremin 2017; Kurian and Kester 2018). We present this as a paradigm which moves across, through and beyond the dominant Eurocentric, cognitivist and humanist associations with voice and knowledge production towards a broader notion of epistemic inclusion. We explore how a transrational paradigm can help to operationalise an engagement with voice which decentres it as a Global Northern category without altogether discarding its value and resonance. This is an engagement with voice in which we acknowledge that voice is individually expressed or 'uttered' (to use the terminology of Bakhtin, one of our key theorists in the chapter) but can only be fully heard collaboratively, or 'socially', within the types of ecologies of action discussed in Chapter 1.

With the transrational we therefore offer not a new epistemology *per se*, but an emergent, future-oriented paradigm in which multiple epistemologies can reside and contribute, convivially and hopefully, towards epistemically inclusive ecologies of action. Importantly, while we recognise that the term *paradigm* may carry somewhat 'grand narrative' connotations, our engagement with the transrational entails a commitment to the micro, the fleeting, the partial, the hesitant and the in-between. Crucially, we see the arts-based projects explored in this book providing as particularly valuable spaces for working transrationally and the expression of transrational voice. Unlike the kinds of macro-level changes the policy actors discussed in Chapter 2 are focussed on, here we explore the value of smaller scale, incremental changes that can be generated by these kinds of projects. The space these projects create for empowerment and action, however individualised or localised, can contribute to a wider picture of epistemic justice that is valuable in itself. These pockets of change, if nurtured within a sustainable ecology of action, have the potential to *spread* and inform development practice, and thus, over time, to effect larger-scale change built on the lived experience of young people, supporting them to be recognised, and indeed to recognise themselves, as social actors in their own right.

A Metaphysical Backdrop: The Devocalisation of Logos

The Western history of voice is inextricably bound to the history of language. For Plato and the ancient Greek philosophers who followed him, reason and cognitive ability, as expressed through language, were, along with the human soul, the defining human qualities (Browning 1991). The ancient Greek term for this distinguishing quality was *logos*, meaning both *word* and *reason*

(see Thomaidis 2015: 10) and was often used synonymously with *language*. In this way, it both 'comprehends and confuses' the realm of speech and the realm of thought (Cavarero 2005: 33). *Logos* is language as a system of signification, or, according to Aristotle, *phone semantike* – signifying voice (Aristotle 2013). For Aristotle, this signifying voice is what separates humans from animals: in animals, the voice may function as a *sign* (of pain, fear, pleasure), but only in humans does it *signify*. As Cavarero indicates, '[t]he voice as prior to speech or independent of speech is therefore simply an animal voice – an *a-logic* and *a-semantic* phonation' (2005: 34). The *phone*, the acoustic aspect of speech, is always already bound, and subordinate, to signification. This is because, in metaphysics originating in the Greek tradition, a hierarchy of the senses operated: sight and sound were considered to be closest to language and thought and were therefore assigned to the mind and epistemically privileged, with the other senses relegated to the lesser realm of the body and epistemically disregarded (Pennycook 2018: 58). At the same time, hearing remained subordinate to seeing: as can still be seen in European languages today, the realms of thought, truth and signification are most closely aligned with vision, a mode 'wherein acts of cognition such as thinking, comprehending and understanding are understood as mental pictures to be seen by the mind's eye' (Lipari 2012: 23). Within this metaphysics, sight suggests the active position of a subject looking upon a largely stable external world characterised by objects and spatiality, permitting 'a position of autonomy that is at once active and detached' (Cavarero 2005: 37). In contrast, sound is characterised by temporality and evanescence, existing in sequence and then existing no more, becoming rather than being, and revealing 'not an object but a dynamic event' (Jonas 2001: 137). In other words, hearing 'consigns us to the world and its contingency' (Cavarero 2005: 37; see also Rée 1999). Therefore, sound and hearing are privileged only insofar as they transmit and receive language and thought, engaging cognitive understanding (Cavarero 2005). Later in the chapter, we will expand this argument beyond the purely sonic; the point for now is that the non-visual is perceived as always being secondary in relation to the 'immediately appearing, ideal and present' (Enwald 2004: 50).

This construction of the visual as primary and the non-visual as secondary underpins a system of binary oppositions on which Western philosophy rests, in which one term is identified with truth and the promise of fulfilment – of being fully present – and the other with loss or lack. In this 'metaphysics of presence' (Derrida 1974, 1984, 1997; Ferri 2018), 'presence' refers to both being and to time, where 'being and the meaning of being are seen as essentially present in the present' (Enwald 2004: 47). Presence is also fundamental to knowledge: the knowing subject is the presence of self-consciousness, and knowledge is the presence of meaning in that consciousness. Because consciousness is isolated from the material world, the mind creates knowledge through representations, which reflect objects and properties of nature, or the actions of animating agents, such as human

beings, who inscribe meaning onto these objects/properties (Marshall and Alberti 2013: 20). This representational logic assumes a world external to humans, in and on which humans act to bring about action and change. In this logic, meaning is represented by language, *logos*, which conceals what waits to be accessed beneath it as part of what Deleuze (2004) calls an arborescent (tree-like), hierarchical ontology (see also Barad 2007). Language is our route to accessing meaning, and the 'languaging' subject is separate from the 'languaged' object (MacLure 2013). This creates an understanding of difference in which difference is taken to exist along a binary axis that defines the present subject as having mastery over the non-present object – seeing/seen, self/other, human/non-human, adult/child, rational/non-rational and meaning/matter. In contrast to the subject/object dualism of the seeing/the seen, sound and hearing play upon different, more permeable boundaries, moving across and through inner and outer, enacting relationality and interdependence in knowing and being. Within this metaphysics, as Lipari points out, 'listening is a radically different epistemic process from that of visual perception – vision distances and separates while listening connects and bridges' (2012: 233). This binary construction of difference has major implications for epistemic justice, the effects of which we will come to below; for the moment, we will demonstrate how this Western metaphysical division between sight as presence and representation, and sound as non-presence and dynamic contingency, is fundamental to how voice has come to be understood.

Returning now to Aristotle's concept of *phone semantike*, or the 'signifying voice': this signifying (human) voice depends on the signified, which – because the truth is constructed as what is *present* – inhabits the realm of the visual. The voice as *phone* alone does not signify, because the acoustic sphere is subordinated to the visual. The role of the voice as *phone semantike* is to make the signified audible, to provide 'an acoustic robe for the mental work of the concept' (Cavarero 2005: 35). The voice is still unavoidably acoustic, anchoring logos 'to a horizon in which there are mouths and ears, rather than eyes and gazes' (Cavarero 2005: 40), but – crucially – it is bound to what is *sayable*. Logos, as word and reason, means that signifying voice communicates what is *sayable*, what is *sayable* is what can be *understood* and what can be *understood* is what concerns Western philosophy. Cavarero continues:

> This is […] a precise strategy of devocalising logos that relegates the voice to the status of those things that philosophy deems unworthy of attention. That which *each* voice as voice signifies – namely, the uniqueness and the relationality that the vocal manifests – does not even get proposed as a matter for reflection. […] Given that it is nevertheless linked to the realm of the sayable – although this link becomes ever more bothersome – logos concerns itself with saying, but not with the human world of singular voices that, in speaking, communicate the speakers to one another. Rather, this Saying becomes an abstract, anonymous

> logos – a code, a system. Chained to speech, but indifferent to the vocal, reciprocal communication of the speakers themselves […] logos is forced to coincide as much as possible with the silence of thought.
>
> (2005: 42–43)

Cavarero, citing the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus, draws attention to the necessity of *sayability* for Western metaphysics, claiming 'the final end of philosophy is a silent contemplation that at last takes its leave of logos and refuses to offer even a single word' (2005: 40). Conversely, the acoustic dimension of speech is a hindrance to the attainment of truth: the slighter the phonic component of speech, the closer speech becomes to a 'pure chain of signifieds', and thus to the realm of truth (2005: 42). The devocalisation of logos speaks to the binary construction of difference, where *semantike* represents truth and full presence, and *phone* represents the non-present hindrance of embodied others and their contingent, situated knowledges. The duality of the conceptual *semantike*, represented by the embodied *phone*, consequently became part of the binary logic of the metaphysics of presence and its epistemic violence, the material effects of which played a fundamental role in the development of Western philosophy and its understandings of *voice*.

The Mute Cartesian Voice: I Speak, Therefore I Am

The binary logic of the metaphysics of presence, being premised on essential truth and the promise of fulfilment, on the one hand, and an always-already lack or absence, on the other, is necessarily invested in maintaining an absolute boundary between the self and what it takes to be 'other'. It is thereby a 'colonising logic' (Barad 2014: 169), holding a clear and 'impenetrable' dividing line excluding, erasing or dominating the other in order to establish and maintain its own hegemony (Barad 2014: 170; see also Harvey et al. 2021). Competing claims can therefore only be resolved by defeating the 'false' argument or opponent (Ferri 2018: 51; Derrida 1997), and so there is no space for the *immanent*, or that which 'consist[s] of the world within our possible lived experience of [this world]' (McDonald and O'Regan 2012: 1010). This leaves no space for temporality, contingency or change (Garrison 1999); no space for the situated biopolitics and geopolitics of knowledge (Anzaldúa 1987; Fanon 1952/2010); no space for the differences within binary relations, or indeed within the concept of difference itself (following Minh-ha 1988); no space for all that would be enacted within the acoustic, within *phone*. If truth belongs only to the self, the other can never be seen on their own terms; the self can only ever attempt to understand the other from the self's own, all-knowing perspective (following Levinas 1969). Thus, the exercise of rational understanding itself reduces the other to become 'part of the same' as the self, where the self either categorises, objectifies, dominates and ultimately serves to possess the other in a 'partial negation' that constitutes an 'act of violence' (McDonald and O'Regan 2012: 1011, following Levinas 1969); or, the self does not allow the

other to exist at all. This is clearly, horrifyingly, demonstrated in the events of the long sixteenth century (following Wallerstein 1974), the period between 1450 and 1650 which saw the rise of European colonialism and capitalism, and what Grosfoguel identifies as the four genocides and accompanying epistemicides which played a crucial role in creating the conditions in which a certain kind of knowledge came to be privileged (Grosfoguel 2015): the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Al Andalus, and the burning of libraries; the conquest of Indigenous people in the Americas and the burning of the pictorial/textual codices used to record and archive knowledge; the trade and enslavement of African people and the suppression of their languages, songs, spiritual practices and expression of worldviews; and the violence against women who practised and transmitted hereditary Indo-European knowledge in Europe and were systematically murdered on accusations of witchcraft, the burning of their bodies enacting the destruction of their knowledges. Grosfoguel (2013, 2015) demonstrates how these four genocides/epistemicides were interlinked, constituting the modern world's epistemic structures by conferring on the European colonialists a God-like epistemic privilege via the logic of genocide and conquest, the destruction of knowledge tied to the destruction of peoples (following de Sousa Santos 2010). This logic provided the 'socio-historical structural condition' (Grosfoguel 2015: 28) that made possible Rene Descartes pronouncement *cogito ergo sum* – I think, therefore I am – in 1637.

Descartes' pronouncement was based on two premises. The first, ontological, premise is that the mind and the body are different substances, an ontological dualism through which Descartes claimed that the mind is separate from, and superior to, the body – so far, so metaphysics of presence. What was radical about Descartes' claim, though, was that the human mind was the source of authority and knowledge, rather than the authoritarian structures of the medieval world – God, the Church and the monarchy. Unencumbered by these structures, or by a fleshly body, the 'I' could produce a God's-eye view of knowledge, objective, neutral and universal, true beyond time and space. The second, epistemological, premise is that the only way the 'I' can assert certainty in knowledge production is by internal discussion with oneself. This is the method of solipsism, in which the subject asks and answers questions of themselves until they reach certitude (Grosfoguel 2015), as only this one mind can be said to definitely exist (Descartes 1637, 1641; see Pihlström 2020 for full discussion of solipsism). Without epistemic solipsism – if knowledge were actually produced in dialogue, and in social relations with others – the knowledge the self (the *ego*) produced could only be situated, never universal. The vehicle for the articulation and production of this knowledge is the voice of the mind, talking only to itself in the search for knowledge and truth. This *ego* is able to think himself at the centre of the world because he has already conquered the world and destroyed its people and knowledges (Dussel 1995; Grosfoguel 2015), in a logic that runs like this:

conquiro ergo sum – I conquer, therefore I am
extermino ergo sum – I exterminate, therefore I am

cogito ergo sum – I think, therefore I am
loquor ergo sum – I speak, therefore I am

This mute Cartesian voice and its epistemic solipsism, speaking only in the voice of consciousness in order to produce its own knowledge, evokes Cavarero's 'silence of thought' (2005: 43), a point-zero epistemology – a point of view which does not recognise itself as a point of view (Castro-Gomez 2003). What is sayable/understandable leads back to this final truth, according to this theory: the individual mind as the foundation of all knowledge. Descartes' *ego* may speak to itself, but in a metaphorical voice, without embodied *phone*. The consequence of this elimination of the physical voice is that its relationality is neutralised, and so others need not be accounted for – indeed, others and their knowledges have been destroyed. Hence, the mute Cartesian voice is not only the individual, conscious, representational, analytical, disembodied voice of the mind, but also white, adult and male. Hence, the voice of epistemic authority has typically been conceived of as an educated white man, speaking a European language (preferably English, French, German or Italian) in its most prestigious and regionally unmarked accent; hence, the historic, material inequality and disadvantage suffered by those whose voices communicate a young, gendered, racialised, disabled or otherwise minoritised identity, who speak in the 'wrong' language or accent (Piller 2016), or who do not speak at all (Yergeau 2018). The centuries following Descartes would solidify this epistemic injustice into the Eurocentric rational humanism which continues to inform understandings of voice in the Global North today.

Bakhtin and Beyond: Dialogic Voice

The European Enlightenment of the long eighteenth century (1688–1815, following Baines 2004), also known as the Age of Reason, saw the rise of a humanist philosophy which advocated, post-Descartes, that human experience is the source of knowledge; that human agency is unique; that humans are masters of their own minds; and that humans are cognitively and communicatively distinct from, and superior to, other forms of life (Schatzki 2002). This represented a radical emancipatory project, putting humans in control of their lives, desires and behaviour (see Grayling 2013). Central to this project was the ways in which Enlightenment thinkers conceptualised and connected language, speech and rationality with civilisation and progress (well documented by Finnegan 2015). The following quotation from the eighteenth-century English antiquary and paleographer Thomas Astle provides a neat summary:

> The noblest acquisition of mankind is SPEECH, and the most useful art is WRITING. The first, eminently, distinguishes MAN from the brute creation; the second, from uncivilised savages. […] Without speech we should scarcely have been rational beings.
>
> (1784, cited in Finnegan 2015: 16)

This deeply problematic, colonialist view illustrates that the Enlightenment humanist project had always already failed. As can be seen in Astle's quotation, the *phone semantike* – signifying voice – not only separates humans from animals, but also from other humans, thereby bringing into question the epistemic worth of any being who does not have speech, and/or cannot write. This separation continues to be borne out today in various domains, including the domain of childhood. Infants are unable to speak/write and so, within Plato's formulation, do not have *logos*, language and reason (see Cavarero 2005). The Enlightenment valorising of progress and development towards enhanced reason and rationality posits children and young people as developing these qualities as they progress towards adulthood and 'the maturity of their faculties' (Mill 1859; see also Wright 2020 on adultism). The maturation of those faculties is bound to language and reason, the fundamental precepts of a Western education, so that by the time children reach adulthood, the assumption is that they can articulate, agentically and intentionally, the contents of their minds. The epistemic worth of children, therefore, is based on the extent to which they can demonstrate the logocentric and cognitive understanding that underpin *sayability* – on their abilities as speakers who say what they mean and mean what they say (MacLure 2013). However, by the early twentieth century, the absolutism of what we 'mean' by 'meaning' was beginning to be challenged.

Mikhail Bakhtin and his circle, loosely associated with the Russian Formalists (Brandist et al. 2003), developed a socio-ideological view of language which took account of its value-laden, subjective and situated nature. They understood language as 'ideologically saturated' (Bakhtin 1986: 354), endlessly dynamic and generative, grounded in socio-historical contexts, socioculturally constitutive and constituting – a living tool through which speakers create and shape their worlds. In the words of Bakhtin's contemporary, Voloshinov: 'Language acquires life and historically evolves […] in concrete verbal communication, and not in the abstract linguistic system of language forms, nor in the individual psyche of speakers' (1986: 95). Bakhtin's circle rejected the 'abstract objectivism' of the linguistic theories of their contemporary Ferdinand de Saussure (1922), as well as the European Romantics' 'individualistic subjectivism' (Voloshinov 1986). In their view, neither Saussure nor the Romantics account for the ongoing dynamic flow of interaction in social contexts. Instead, they consider the heart of the communication process to be the *dialogical* interaction between a concrete addresser and a concrete addressee, both of whom are located in a particular time and space within broader social relationships. In other words, the *listener* is as fundamental to communication as the speaker.

For Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1993) and Voloshinov (1986), the unit of communicative analysis is the *utterance*, which may or may not be linguistic. The utterance, the specific response to a specific moment, is always made for the benefit of a listener, in response to what has been said before and in anticipation of what will be said in reply; this may be either a physical listener, or an 'inner other' (Solomadin 2000: 33, cited in Marchenkova

2004: 183). The speaker/listener relation manifests the self/other relation in the active negotiation of meaning, where the listener is active and responsive, a 'link in the chain of speech communion […] for whose sake in essence [the utterance] is actually created' (Bakhtin 1986: 68). The *other*, then, inheres in communication: the utterance is 'a bridge thrown between myself and another […] territory shared by addresser and addressee' (Voloshinov 1986: 86).

Crucial to this argument is the *embodiment* of participants in communication. The dialogical self is biologically and biographically unique, existing in its own specific socio-historical conditions. Each embodied self carries an individual voice, with a distinct *emotional-volitional tone* (Bakhtin 1993), through which individuals express themselves as socio-historically specific people located in a particular time and place, with their own particular ways of communicating, being and knowing. Through their voices in their own emotional-volitional tones, speakers author themselves in response to other voices in the world around them (in the terms of this volume, as participants in a wider ecology), putting their signature to their utterances, and their own accent on linguistic and communicative forms which have been used many times before (see Hicks 2000: 240). These voices are not only their embodied interlocutors, but also the voices of ideological, historical and social forces. Any utterance, whether in speech or sign or thought, always involves engaging with and responding to (or ignoring) the utterances of others, utterances with a history and a present, loaded with meaning, evaluation and judgment, belonging to no one, 'shot through with intentions and accents […] each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life' (Bakhtin 1981: 293). Any utterance, whether in speech or sign or thought, always involves using the utterances of others, and thus both inner speech and outer speech are social phenomena: consciousness itself always exists in relationship with other consciousnesses, dialogically constituted through the continuous dynamics of communication. No single utterance can be understood separately from the contexts of its use; it is an individual act but not a purely individual act, as it always springs from what has gone before it. In contrast to a representational orientation, the utterance 'does not passively reflect a situation that lies outside language', but is 'a deed, it is active, productive [… it] is a situation' (Holquist 2002: 63). Consequently, the sign that comprises the utterance is always 'half someone else's': the 'living language' lies on the 'borderline' between both the immediately communicating self and other, but also between the self and myriad social others (Bakhtin 1981: 272). The dialogical self is therefore a social self, thoroughly steeped in the voices of others. The development of voice, then, is an ongoing and dynamic process of engagement with individual embodied voices, and with ideological, historical and social forces: it is *both* shared and social, *and* uniquely individual and embodied. A dialogic understanding of voice might therefore be summarised as:

a voice as utterance – the ability to employ, and be understood in, recognised communicative modes, through which we perform
b narration – a material enactment of our own biological and biographical self, which becomes an act of
c authorship – a response to, and positioning of oneself among, other individuals and social forces.

(Harvey 2020: 186)

This perspective rejects representational language and singular agentic voices as the vehicles of dialogue. Instead, voice is understood as material and immanent in the lived moment of the utterance, which takes place between uniquely embodied and socio-historically situated speakers whose voices are always both individual and inescapably social, imbued with the history of the language and the voices of previous speakers, and which position the speakers among and in other voices.

The emotional-volitional tone understands the voice as having material dimensions unique to each individual and, in this case, might be understood as analogous with *phone*, operating in productive relational tension with *semantike* – a relationship we will return to and develop later in the chapter. However, in its embodiment and materiality, the emotional-volitional tone expands *phone* beyond mere sound. In this way, it is inclusive of signed languages (see MacIntyre 2018), written communicators and users of assistive technologies (see Sequenzia and Grace 2017), and of the wider senses and modes of embodiment involved in communication (Pennycook 2018): facial movement and expression, posture, gesture, bodily movement, rhythm and vibration (see Finnegan 2014; MacIntyre 2018; Walker 2021). We might (re)define *phone*, then, as the 'nondiscursive materiality of voicing' (Magnat 2018: 434), which calls for listening to expand beyond what is explicitly 'said' (what Eidsheim and Schlichter 2014 term 'the vococentric'). We will further consider *listening* below; for now, we maintain focus on *phone semantike*, signifying voice, and how this is acknowledged as a collective and political phenomenon, a productive act with the potential to transform individuals and their worlds.

Critical Pedagogy: Transformative Voice

The thinking of the Bakhtin Circle levelled a radical challenge to the Enlightenment view of voice as individual expression, representing the stable, unitary, authentic and unique self. However, because of the repressive Soviet regime in which they were writing, the extent to which they could be explicitly political was limited. However, while his influence at his time of writing was limited, it gained ground as part of postmodern and poststructural philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century, philosophy which also rejected the Enlightenment grand narratives of personhood and focused instead on the constitution of subjectivity and identity through discourse. Discourse is a well-used term that varies in its application but can be taken broadly to refer

to how meaning is socially constructed and constituted through practices, processes and 'phenomena *beyond the individual*' (Taylor 2013: 2, original italics). Moore and Muller (1999) cite the specific emergence of 'voice discourse' as part of the influence of poststructural thinking on research and knowledge production, which they describe as:

> a discursive concern with the explication of 'voice'. Its major distinction is between the dominant voice and the 'Others' silenced or marginalised by hegemony. […] The main move is to attach knowledge to categories of *knowers* and their experience and subjectivities. This privileges and specializes the subject in terms of its membership category as a subordinated voice. Knowledge forms and knowledge relations are translated as social standpoints and power relationships between groups.
>
> (1999: 190, original italics)

In Moore and Muller's 'voice discourse', then, voice is linked to self and subjectivity but/and in an explicitly political and emancipatory way: voice relates to experience and experiential, situated knowledge; voice is relational, constructing knowledge in dialogue with others and voice is a tool of resistance to oppression, as part of a broader engagement with power relations. This perspective, identified here by Moore and Muller, but which long predates their work, has informed, and continues to inform, education and youth studies in development today, perhaps most recognisably through the paradigm of critical pedagogy, discussed in Chapter 1.

Critical pedagogy is a social educational movement that posits that teaching and learning should be fundamental to the struggle for social justice and equality. Its goal is emancipation through exposing and challenging power structures and political oppression, and through the growth of critical consciousness in order to effect change and contribute to justice. In so doing, it seeks to help people develop personally and collectively towards an ethical ideal of 'becoming more fully human' (Freire 1970) – in other words, of living as 'social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons' (Freire 1970: 45). Critical pedagogy contextualises education within situated histories and power dynamics, emphasising process over outcome and challenging what Paolo Freire, in his foundational work, conceptualises as the 'banking' or 'jug and mug' approach to education, which posits education as a process of filling the individual up with pre-validated and colonial knowledge. Freire instead conceptualises learning as a life-based and life-long activity within and beyond the formal classroom, which collapses the relationships between teacher and student, theory and practice (Rule 2011; Jones 2023). Its focus on liberation from the oppression of Enlightenment humanism's narrow epistemic parameters, through active, agential participation in learning and justice, has made it a highly influential paradigm in development studies (see Keat 2020) and post-conflict education and engagement (e.g. Cooke et al. 2020; Flower and Kelly 2020).

In critical pedagogy, voice is a coming to subjectivity, the ability to make meaning of one's life through engagement with, and critique of, dominant knowledges. This entails awareness of one's own position and the partiality of one's knowledge (Giroux 1991: Collins 1990), as well as recognition of the political nature of the act of speaking (hooks 1989). Through dialogue, the main means of creating knowledge for emancipation in critical pedagogy, the oppressed undergoes a process of what Freire calls *conscientização*, or conscientisation – a process which raises one's critical, conscious awareness (Freire 1970; Cruz 2013: 171) and through which the oppressed is able to recognise, name and externalise the oppressor and their oppression, so as to begin to name their own world in their own words (Rule 2011: 931). Critical pedagogy, therefore, accounts for knowledge as relational, emergent and collectively produced; and for young people, voice becomes fundamental to their political participation (Couldry 2010; Jenkins et al. 2016; Rheingold 2008) and the production of counter-narratives (Goessling 2020; Hickey-Moody 2014; McLeay et al. 2023).

Critical pedagogy thus levels an important epistemological challenge to the Global North and has been particularly influential in developing an expanded, more global concept of voice. However, even this expanded concept of voice continues to be underpinned by the *sayable* (Freire 1973: 141).The implications of this are that participants are asked to represent linguistically that which defies representation (Busch 2020): the traumatic experiences of marginalisation, which may be known through feeling rather than through telling (Milani 2014), and which may inhabit the very margins of knowing, the 'epistemological abyss that lurks at the fringes of one's own site of enunciation' (Milani 2014: 14, citing Menezes de Souza 2007). Here, we can draw an explicit link between *sayability* and *knowability*: dialogue and conscientisation are based on an assumption that knowledge through understanding and integration of experience is possible, without fully accounting for whether, or how, 'the non-understandable can be borne' (Busch and McNamara 2020: 330). This has implications for audibility, potentially leading not only to the production of particular kinds of voice, but also to the legitimation of particular kinds of stories, in which voices are only allowed to speak and be heard as victims, in narratives of pain (Shuman 2010; Green 2020).

Therefore, within the context of the argument being developed in this chapter, voice in critical pedagogy can be seen, at times, to occupy an uncomfortable, interstitial space in which it both challenges the assumptions of liberal humanist personhood and enables human agency within a relational and flourishing poststructural subjectivity, while also necessarily accepting some of the assumptions of that same Enlightenment humanism by maintaining that (a) transformation arises from enhanced conscientisation and understanding and (b) only humanity is capable of subjectivity (Corman 2012). Critical pedagogy thus continues to engage the mind-centric epistemologies of the Global North (Harvey et al. 2021; Kester and Cremin 2017: 1418; Kurian and Kester 2018; Wu et al. 2018; see also Zembylas 2018). However, at the same time,

the very success of critical pedagogy as an emancipatory and transformational tool demonstrates the value of this thinking, when harnessed alongside acknowledgement of epistemic partiality, commitment to collective action and an orientation towards a more politically just and participatory future. We therefore do not want to discard the trappings of the sayable – language, the mind, representation – altogether, nor the epistemologies they produce. Rather, we are calling for a move across, through and beyond the binaries of sayable/unsayable, self/other to create a more contingent, more messy, more uncomfortable paradigm which enables us to interrupt, and acknowledge the limits of, our own knowledge production (Biesta 2012; Milani 2014; see also Connell 2007). In the rest of this chapter, we seek to elaborate on this call, positioning the emancipatory ethos at the heart of critical pedagogy as being central to the transrational paradigm we propose. By way of a next step in this elaboration, we need to unsettle another problematic term in our argument: *understanding*.

Voice Beyond and Besides *Self* and *Other*: Creative Understanding

A recent body of work in intercultural education has critiqued the concept of dialogue (Phipps 2014, 2019; Ferri 2014, 2018), arguing that dialogue cannot account for irreconcilable differences in contexts of extreme conflict and political tension. In so doing, so the argument goes and as suggested above, this reinforces a metaphysics of presence, at the heart of which is the promise of a transformed consciousness and mutual understanding (McDonald and O'Regan 2012; Holliday and McDonald 2020). In response, scholars in this field have developed frameworks which account for our mutual strangeness and which work across, through and beyond the self/other boundary without resolving it (Bradley et al. 2016; Fay et al. 2022; Frimberger 2016, 2017; Frimberger et al. 2018; Harvey et al. 2022; Huang 2022; McDonald and Watson 2022; Phipps 2019; Rifeser and Ros i Solé 2022). Within this body of work, Harvey (2016, 2017, 2020) has directly engaged with the concept of voice, drawing on and developing the work of Bakhtin. As we have seen, the dialogic, mutually dependent self/other relation is fundamental to Bakhtin's thought and is realised in the utterance: self and other come together in the utterance through the 'simultaneous unity of differences' the utterance expresses (Holquist 2002: 26). However, the self/other relation is not deferred until the attainment of a transformed, unified consciousness: it is immanent and material, located in the lived, interpersonal moment of the utterance. In the dialogic self, the *I* cannot exist without the *other*:

> I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another […] To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he [sic] is always and wholly on the

> boundary, looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another* […] I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance).
>
> (Bakhtin 1984: 287, original italics)

The notion of being *on* the boundary, rather than transcending it, is crucial to the conceptualisation of voice we are developing. We – people, cultures, territories – only come into existence on our boundaries, which make us distinct from each other, and any interlocutors must remain distinct from each other in order for meaningful dialogue to take place. As Freire would point out, this means engaging with the unique situatedness of our own knowledge. By putting this idea into dialogue with Bakhtin, we also see that each interlocutor must maintain their unique self and remain different and apart from each other. This entails an experience of what Bakhtin calls *outsideness*: we are reliant on the other's position outside us, as it is only through what the other reflects back to us that we can see ourselves (Bakhtin 1990: 15), as if through the other's eyes (Bakhtin 1984: 287). This experience of 'finding the other in oneself' may be unsettling, even upsetting (Harvey 2016, 2017; Harvey et al. 2019a, 2019b), but the alienation and strangeness, the sense of otherness to oneself, that this generates, can become part of a move towards *creative understanding* (Bakhtin 1986). Creative understanding involves inhabiting the self/other boundary by simultaneously entering and remaining outside of the other, the object of understanding, for 'one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole […] our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are *others*' (Bakhtin 1986: 7, original italics). In this way, perspectives are broadened because the interlocutors see themselves through each other's eyes while remaining outside each other, on the boundary; neither participant has the right to articulate final meaning, but rather 'each retains its own unity and *open* totality, but they are mutually enriched' (Bakhtin 1986: 7). This enrichment, if it takes place, is where learning occurs.

Creative understanding, then, is an ongoing relationship on the border between self and other, which is not a totalising boundary to be reinforced or effaced, but a lived, dynamic, unfinalised and unfinalisable place where difference is *both* within *and* without. Creative understanding *relies on* the recognition of difference and strangeness, and it is this recognition on which common action depends. Here, the dialogic voice can be a tool for engaging with incommensurability (see Gaztambide-Fernández 2012; Harvey et al. 2019a, 2019b) rather than aiming for resolution, in which responsibility for the other inheres; a responsibility that behoves care and concern for the other *qua* other, rather than simply tolerating the other or 'understanding' them by casting them in the self's own image. Thus, we further expand our conceptualisation of voice: as a materially conscious phenomenon, a productive act with transformative potential, and as a morally conscious phenomenon in the articulation of relationality, an ongoing engagement on the self/other boundary.

We will now consider how this ongoing engagement may call for the active embracing of *non*-understanding, and what this may afford for further developing our conceptualisation of voice as accounting for both the sayable and the unsayable and an expanded capacity for epistemic justice. We will consider this through the lens of our overarching philosophy: *to be is to communicate*. First, however, we will demonstrate how we might equally theorise its precedent – *to be is to not understand* – in order to show that non-understanding, far from something to be unequivocally rectified, is a fundamental condition of being and becoming in the world.

Expanding Voice: Two Non-Understandings

In order to exemplify the affordances of non-understanding, we briefly present two arts-based projects from our own work with youth in intercultural and post-conflict education (one predating, and one from, Changing the Story), which demonstrate how our engagements with non-understanding led to our expanded theorisations of voice. It is important to be clear that these two projects were carried out by Global Northern scholars and drew on theory emanating largely from the Global North. We acknowledge again that we cannot escape 'the gravitational pull of hegemonic centers' (Wu et al. 2018: 509). From our subsequent engagements, including the collective endeavour of writing this book, we recognise that the non-binary and non-finalising engagements with the human and non-human world are commensurate with many non-Northern, non-mind-centric and future-oriented onto-epistemologies, such as Taoism (Wu et al. 2018; Zhao 2020), Ubuntu (Abdi 2022; Makalela 2016), Buddhism (Huang 2020; Robinson-Morris 2019), queer theory (Muñoz 2009; Kagan 2020), crip and disability theory (Chapman 2020, 2023; McRuer 2006; Wolf-Meyer 2020) and neuroqueering (Walker 2021; Yergeau 2018; Harvey 2024). In what follows, therefore (as indeed throughout the chapter), we use Global Northern thinking to deconstruct the Global Northern conceptualisation of voice, at the same time recognising the situatedness, partialness and hegemony of this thinking. We will develop this point further below, in our elaboration of the *transrational* paradigm.

Project 1: Dramatic Enquiry for Intercultural Learning

The first project we wish to discuss, which took place prior to Changing the Story, adopted a drama-based approach in order to understand students' intercultural experience in UK higher education (Harvey et al. 2019a). The students, aged between 18 and 23, were asked to consider, using different performance modes and techniques, their responses to a piece of technology which would translate anything its user did not understand. This was conceptualised as a contact lens and earpiece which would translate everything into the user's own voice. In an activity to explore the negative aspects of the technology, the students were asked to write poems about everyone being able to understand each other all the time. They were asked to write

sentences predicting the impact of the technology on social life, economics, health and education, then to cross out all the function words, leaving only the nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs for their poetic 'toolbox'. This is one of the poems:

closing linguistic services
suffer
less person talking
the same
no differences
loss
identity
reduced, simplified
is it healthy
earpiece
lens
loss jobs
can't afford
loss
uniqueness
everyone same
misunderstanding
faulty tech
deaf people
blind people

Harvey et al. (2019: 463)

Harvey et al. (2019) did not know how to make sense of these poems, and tellingly, none of the participants talked about them in any of the post-activity reflections. The authors therefore had to listen to what the poems were saying by focusing on aspects other than meaning. To do so, they drew on new materialist thinkers (e.g. MacLure 2013; Mazzei 2013; Mazzei and Jackson 2017) who understand language as one of many materials that are mutually implicated, or entangled with each other, on the same ontological plane. This engages a *rhizomatic* ontology (Deleuze 2007): a flat surface, with no hierarchies or binary oppositions, in which 'language is deposed from its god-like centrality in the construction and regulation of worldly affairs, to become one element in a manifold of forces and intensities that are moving, connecting and diverging' (MacLure 2013: 660). In other words, language is part of *assemblages*: 'states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodges […] utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs' (Deleuze 2007: 177). Thinking language in terms of assemblages enables a move away from thinking representationally, that is in terms of what language *means*, and towards thinking performatively, in terms of what language *produces* when it is understood as one element

among many. When Harvey and her colleagues applied this perspective to the poems, they started to 'hear' interesting things.

The poems – written in response to a provocation to think about what would happen if everyone could always understand everyone and everything else – are bleak, truncated, dystopian and disturbing. They were hewn from longer sentences by crossing some words out and using only those which were left. Having written them, the participants did not mention them again, despite having opportunities to do so – it was as though they had never happened. The powerful feeling they communicate – the *absence* – is impossible to express in language, enacting the 'loss of mastery over language' (MacLure 2013: 662) that the participants expect to take place as a result of this technology. The poems are examples of 'words which were present in their absence' (Mazzei 2013: 733), or what MacLure (2013) would call a paralinguistic silence, which voice-centred qualitative methods do not offer tools to account for. The analysis enabled the authors to listen to what the poems produced – a 'material enactment of the loss of language' (Harvey et al. 2019b: 463) – rather than what they meant, thus drawing attention to the limits of language in terms of explaining, understanding and knowing; the language here only 'makes sense' when attended to alongside the silences, feelings, imaginings with which it is entangled. Language, as a material ontologically inseparable from other materials within the assemblage (Mazzei and Jackson 2017), is not at the top of a hierarchy and does not create or erase difference; rather, it is entangled among and within the inseparable entities that make up assemblages. This orientation disrupts binary logic and complexifies difference, not in terms of an erasure or effacement of difference – difference is 'not opposed to sameness, nor synonymous with separateness' (Trinh Minh-ha 1988: 75) – but as 'a relation of difference within' (Barad 2014: 175). Harvey et al.'s lack of understanding was *productive*, opening up new possibilities for the relationships between language, data, affect, other actors and materials within the participants' voices. This enabled the 'provincialisation', or de-centring, (Thurlow 2016; see also Finnegan 2014, 2015) of language and meaning as only two aspects of voice within complex assemblages.

Project 2: Supporting Vulnerable Children to Develop Voice Through Participatory Arts

The second project, which was part of the early development of Changing the Story, was an investigation of the relationship between participatory arts, voice and learning for vulnerable young people aged 8–18 in a township in South Africa (Harvey et al. 2021). The young people attended an Isibindi Safe Park in Vosloorus township in Ekurhuleni province, a feeding and homework support scheme where they receive a hot meal and academic and pastoral care. The project partner, a South African NGO, ran participatory arts activities with the young people to help them express the concerns in their lives and 'speak back' to their communities. Our role as researchers was to theorise the relationship between voice development and learning through these activities.

As soon as author Lou Harvey arrived at the Safe Park, she was starkly confronted with her linguistic incompetence (Phipps 2013): although the formal work the children had been carrying out was in English, and although the children's fluid multilingual reality (Makalela 2016) meant that English was part of their repertoire, it was generally not the language in which they were most comfortable communicating. With Lou, the children would mostly undertake arts-based and playful activities – drawing, collaging, singing and dancing, taking selfies and photographs with her iPad – activities that were child-led and engaging for everyone, but which left Lou at a loss for how to make sense of their development of voice. They did not satisfy her 'rage for explanation and meaning' – like the poems of the previous example, they refused to offer themselves up as signification (MacLure 2013: 662, 663).

In letting go of her 'rage for meaning' and need for understanding, Lou once more found the *assemblage* a productive concept, this time for showing *how* voice was being produced. In the children's activities, there were so many actors: the children, Lou and the other adults, paper, pens, magazines, glue, desk, scissors, the space of the shipping container that served as our 'classroom', the outside space, and so much more. All these materials had what Jane Bennett calls 'thing-power' (2010a: 2) which is a way of thinking about 'nonhuman materialities […] as themselves bonafide agents rather than as instrumentalities, techniques of power, recalcitrant objects, or social constructs' (Bennett 2010a: 2, 47). Lou began to see things as 'themselves actors alongside and within us […] vitalities, trajectories and powers irreducible to the meanings, intentions or symbolic values humans invest in them' (Bennett 2010b: 47). In other words, these things were actors that defied *understanding*, but nevertheless acted with a force; and voice emerged from the assemblage of all these things. The desire for collaging, for example, was 'eventful […] it moved outward' (MacLure 2013: 662) beyond the two girls who started it, to more children who started taking photographs of their collages, to a boy who wanted his photograph taken with a collage he did not make. These things *mattered* – they were part of the production of voice for these children, part of their engagements with Lou and with/in their world. This led Harvey et al. (2021) to conceptualise voice as distributed across human and non-human actors (Pennycook 2018): utterances are inseparable from the assemblages in which they are produced and have no representational resemblance to anything *except the whole* (Mazzei and Jackson 2017). Voice is thus fundamentally collective, produced in 'a complex network of human and nonhuman agents that exceeds the traditional notion of the individual' (Mazzei 2013: 738).

Wu et al. write:

> The very act of seeking understanding in order to 'explain' or 'teach' disrupts our ability to be ontologically engaged, at least initially. Escaping the desire to fully understand is not easily achieved in the Western mind, nor in the print-and-teach culture of the Western academy. Words are the foundation of our understanding; they need mindful unlearning.
> (Wu et al. 2018: 515)

In the projects described above, active non-understanding and attempts to let go of the need to understand enabled greater ontological engagement. It develops, albeit slowly and sometimes painfully, the ability to attend to voice differently. The fluid boundaries between/among a range of different agents engaged the aesthetic, affective, collective dimensions of voice – the *unsayable*. In the condition of not understanding, a 'quality of heightened attention' (Scarry 2010: 81) could be extended out to other people and things, affording analyses that decentred not only language but also selves, highlighting the fluidity and complexity of the boundaries between selves and others, both human and non-human, and the many radical differences being constantly made and re-made both within and without. This decentring of the self generated a relationship with others in which, rather than thinking of the other as a stranger to *oneself*, it became possible and productive to think of oneself and the other as *strangers to each other*, both becoming in their mutual encounter (Ahmed 2000). The experience of not understanding is one of *both* relationality, drawing attention to our similarities, *and* of incommensurability, highlighting our insurmountable differences, our always-otherness to each other in which we strive to make ourselves intelligible in the project of creating and sharing a common world (Arendt 1994; Biesta 2012).

In this chapter, we have shown that as long as voice is bound to *sayability*, it draws attention to particular types of difference that necessarily include some and exclude others, thereby reinforcing the potential for epistemic inequalities and abuse. If we can, if not escape, then at least decentre the desire to fully understand and engage a quality of heightened attention to the *unsayable*, greater epistemic justice becomes possible: it enables conditions in which selves and others may meet each other as strangers in an engagement which is not colonising or finalising – aiming to master the other –, but fluid and creative, in which all participants take part in an ongoing dialogue of mutual openness and respect (Bakhtin 1986). This brings us to the articulation of a new paradigm for engaging with both the sayable and the unsayable in voice, which (as we shall now discuss) we term the *transrational*.

Voice Across, Through, and Beyond Understanding: A Transrational Paradigm

This may, of course, appear to be a utopian view, and in a sense it is – we are committed to this book as a performative ontological project (Gibson-Graham 2008), bringing, through its creation, something new, and hopefully usefully innovative, into being. However, it is useful at this point to reiterate two key points: first, that this boundary work is always fluid and ongoing, never finalised into a utopia (nor, equally, a dystopia); and second, that the fluid boundary also applies to the *sayable* and the *unsayable*, so that our conceptualisation of voice accounts for these in a *both/and/more than* rather than an *either/or/only* relationship. To account for this relationship, we draw on the concept of *trans-* as it is used by performance scholar Amelia Jones and

colleagues (2016; see also Harvey 2020; Harvey et al. 2021), performing movement across, through and beyond in a process which highlights 'our relationship to knowledge creation as performative […] the trans- is itself fluid and multipurpose, a mode of performing complex relationships between one site, identification or mode of speaking/being/doing and another' (Jones 2016: 4, 2). This performance of complex relationships requires precisely the fluidity and porosity of boundaries that the creative understanding we have described above entails, in a process implicitly relational and ongoing. A trans-orientation allows for 'understanding of a field of knowledge in a momentary and processual way,' which 'enables rather than confirms or fixes knowledge about the world' (Jones 2016: 5, citing Gotman 2016). The trans- prefix has been operationalised widely across research in communication, education and identity politics (see Hawkins and Mori 2018), but most pertinently for our argument in what scholars in peace education have called the *transrational* (Dietrich 2012, 2019).

Transrational peace pedagogy (Cremin et al. 2018; Dietrich 2019; Kester 2018; Kester and Cremin 2017; Kurian and Kester 2018) emerged in response to calls for approaches more consistent with 'the transformative and inclusive purposes of peace education' (Cremin et al. 2018: 295), and particularly in response to, and in dialogue with, the prevalence of critical pedagogy in this field. The transrational neither discards nor overcomes the rational (Dietrich 2012), and neither denies nor embraces the non-rational; rather, it moves across, through and beyond both (Harvey et al. 2021). This enables space for the emotional, embodied, spiritual, sacred, discordant, collective, aesthetic and metaphysical aspects of learning (Cremin et al. 2018: 298; Cremin 2018), and for the entanglement of these with the rational, the psychological, the cognitive and the analytic. In a transrational approach:

> the mind is no longer the locus of multiple interpretations of one reality (as in peace approaches reliant on representationalism and voice), but only one of many spaces that occupy the synchronous truths about multiple intersecting possibilities, human and nonhuman.
>
> (Kester 2018, 6)

The transrational thus offers a paradigm for decentring, or as Thurlow (2016) puts it, 'provincialising' *understanding* and *sayability*, recognising their limits and acknowledging their constructedness, in the process opening up to a world of knowing beyond and besides the mind. This necessitates acknowledgement of the inseparable relationship between knowing and being – a relationship which accounts for the entanglements of knowing with both material and metaphysical experience, and an acknowledgement which is needed in order to unsettle the dominant forms and systems of knowledge produced in the Global North (Hall and Tandon 2017; Zembylas 2018).

Our transrational conceptualisation of voice accounts for voice as both individually uttered in *phone* and collectively produced in complex assemblages.

It speaks to our overarching philosophy that *to be is to communicate* by enabling an account of the communicative properties, including vocality, of both human and non-human agents – animals, plants, landscapes and objects – in all their uniqueness, their irreducible otherness and their relational complexity (see Bell and Russell 2000; Corman 2011; Finnegan 2014; Haraway 2008). The transrational voice is a posthuman voice that includes the specificity of being human (see Riszko 2017): the human is both decentred and uniquely realised in the utterance, where the utterance is not the rational expression of the humanist subject, but rather 'recognises the singularity of each human life before the human becomes an abstract category, an identity whose meaning relies on language' (Burgess and Murray 2006: 168): a voice which 'reveals nothing but itself', but which 'must be heard for this revelation to occur' (Linsley 2015: 198, following Cavarero 2005). The voice is simultaneously inner and outer, individual and interrelational (Tjersland 2019), dependent on a listener who must know to listen differently (Weaver and Snaza 2017), focusing not on only *what* is uttered – the object – but also on *how* it is uttered – the process (Di Matteo 2015), and attending/attuning to/within the assemblage (see Hecht 2023; Lee et al. 2022; Pool et al. 2023; Sheridan et al. 2020; Tate 2023; Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2019), in order to account for *oneself* as part of the assemblage in which voice is collectively produced. This does not necessarily mean discarding *semantike*, but rather acknowledging its inseparability from *phone* – and indeed, that sometimes it *matters* just as much (see Harvey et al. 2021: 16–19). In this way, language and the sayable are still accounted for, provincialised as part of many materials inhabiting the same ontological plane in complex assemblages; and the human being – whether child, young person or adult – is still accounted for as a *becoming* bound up with knowing, engaged in an ongoing, lifelong process of learning to be with human and non-human others in the world. In this way, transrational voice accounts for *both* the sayable and the unsayable, making both domains more complex, and moving across, through and beyond them.

In our transrational conceptualisation of voice as both individually uttered and collectively produced, we posit learning and knowing as a process of ideological becoming (Bakhtin 1986; Harvey 2016, 2017), of individuation from and within the collective. This is young people's developing awareness that all life and all learning are part of myriad, complex relationships with the human and non-human actors around them – in their immediate surroundings, in their local communities and in the discourses that shape the sociocultural and sociopolitical conditions of their lives. It is also an awareness that these relationships may shift and change according to time, place and context but/and are always functioning relationally, always 'dynamically interacting and creatively transforming at the contact boundary at work' (Tjersland 2019: 296; see also Harvey et al. 2021). In this way, a transrational approach to voice offers the potential to 'exercise theoretical and practical decoloniality' by provincialising hegemonic communicative and epistemological norms (Kester, Archer and Bryant 2019: 275): epistemic justice is our utopia, but this is

always contingent on working with the discomfort, messiness, and pain which overcoming the logic of coloniality necessitates. It is vital also to acknowledge our inextricability from these systems and ideologies that we are always already within, and that the knowledge we produce within them is both worthwhile and contingent, both liberating and violent (see Wu et al. 2018), and always unfinished. The great affordance of the transrational paradigm – for voice, for epistemological justice, for decolonisation – is its acceptance of contradiction, of processes of 'learning with and through difference', and knowing that 'the hope for an arrival at a common, collective place of understanding is to deny the necessity of constant difference' (Phipps 2019: 11). In a transrational paradigm, we work towards epistemic justice by welcoming differences, disjunctions, contradictions and complexities as a 'field of transformative potentials' (Tjersland and Ditzel Facci 2019: 247), and towards interrupting the dominant structures of knowledge creation by letting go of the 'tyranny of understanding' (Barker 2015: xix; Wu et al. 2018). As the following chapters will demonstrate, working and voicing transrationally is both an ongoing long-term project and a series of events, perhaps brief in time, but significant in weight and resonance.

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4 The Transrational Art of Youth Development

In July 2023, the Changing the Story programme held its final conference. This was designed to draw out some of the key learning that had emerged from the many projects the programme had run over the course of the previous five years. The final day of this event was given over to the Changing the Story 'Youth Research Board' (YRB), a group of young researchers who had been working for the previous 18 months on a participatory-arts-led evaluation of the programme. The research team, including these young people, decided to organise this day as an 'Unconference'. An Unconference is, as Budd et al. suggest, 'a participant-oriented meeting where the attendees decide on the agenda, discussion topics, workshops. […] The overarching goal for most unconferences is to prioritize conversation over presentation', with the ultimate aim not only to reflect in new ways on the topics explored in the rest of the event but also, more radically, to try and change 'how [participants] think about their day-to-day work' (Budd et al. 2015). With this in mind, the YRB organised a number of workshops that sought to reflect in different ways upon the core issues discussed by the Changing the Story programme, from the instrumentalisation of heritage and hidden histories in conflict-affected settings, to the role of young people and the potential of arts-based and participatory practices in global development. At the same time, the activities chosen by the YRB were very much designed to question the working practices of the mainly academic participants involved in the event.

One of these activities involved participants being challenged to explore their personal connection to a past event associated with their work on Changing the Story. On one level, the group was simply invited here to continue a number of discussions that were ongoing from the previous day. Topics touched upon ranged from the experience of making music and theatre in Rwanda with people affected by the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, to the memory of passing through the mountainous landscape in Nepal by an early career researcher who had never been to the region, to the impact of familial events that had taken place during the research process. However, the YRB decided that this exploration had to be undertaken *silently*. 'Academics talk too much', one of the young people suggested. Instead,

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the group had to use the paper, chalk, play doh, paint, scissors, card, tissue paper and a whole variety of other materials to present what they wanted to 'say', but that they could not, or did not necessarily want to, put into words. The group produced a series of images and sculptures in response to the session's prompt. These were joined together into a large collage, to which the group was subsequently invited to respond. Some of the group were keen to *explain* why they had chosen to produce the work they had, at times apologising for their lack of artistic skill, suggesting a sense of discomfort at the way they were being asked to engage. A paper plate covered in a thick coat of sludge-coloured paint, for example, was declared to represent the morass of Balkan politics some participants had been embroiled in during the project. Some were more interested in asking questions about the images *others* had produced 'What does the hay mean?'; 'Why did you decide to make a chicken out of play doh?' It was clear that the dominant drive amongst the group was to pin down meaning, to *interpret* the art produced in ways that aligned with the previous day's discussions.

Striking, however, were the ways in which the YRB facilitators refused to focus on this aspect of the developing discussion, instead prompting participants to reflect on how they felt physically and emotionally when producing their work, seeing the material objects as largely 'speaking' for themselves. They were very supportive and positive about all the work made by an, at times, very nervous group. As the session progressed more personal, affective, stories started to emerge. One participant, visibly emotional, talked about how they had lost a close family member during the project, an event that, while ostensibly having nothing to do with the project, had completely changed the way they understood their relationship with it and the sense of loss that pervaded so much of the work the project generated on historical conflict and hidden histories. The physical act of making, coupled with the YRB's insistence on silence during the production process, seemed to have created a new space for reflection. For some, it was an uncomfortable space, for others a clearly emotive space, with multiple participants shedding tears through the process – something that is perhaps relatively uncommon in academic conference spaces. The workshop produced a series of artefacts that reflected, to a degree, the intentions of their creators but could not – nor necessarily needed to – be fully explained by them and could be engaged with in multiple ways by others.

Returning to the discussion of the previous chapter, in this activity, the YRB created a working example of how arts-based participatory practices can function *transrationally*, challenging the Cartesian logic of much Western educational practice by adopting an embodied, holistic, approach to exploring the legacy of the various pasts with which Changing the Story engaged. The activity also suggests how the YRB saw this activity as an activist gesture, as a part of the 'ecology of action' they had developed over their time working on the project that sought to challenge established power dynamics, in this case, the way the academics involved practiced 'knowledge creation'.

In doing so, the activity also speaks to some of the key questions that surround the use of arts-based practices in development projects more widely. Firstly, it questions how such projects conceptualise the relationship of arts-based practices, generally undertaken by 'participants' in such projects, to the role of the 'researchers', who generally 'observe' and 'analyse' the processes and products generated by such participation. Changing the Story sought to create 'equitable partnerships' between all those involved in the project, where everyone had a place at the decision-making table. This activity forced the group to think about how far the programme had achieved this. For all the warm words about the emancipatory power of the arts, and their ability to amplify the voices of young people, how far is this realisable if we simply see the arts as providing a mechanism of engagement for young people which needs to be 'translated' through the work of 'researchers' into meaningful 'data'? Secondly, the exercise asks us to reflect upon the extent to which this kind of work can create a 'safe space' for reflection. What does 'safety' mean within the context of artistic production? How does this relate to wider, perhaps more pragmatic and concrete concerns connected to 'safeguarding', particularly when a project is working with young people? Finally, the activity asks us to reflect anew upon the relationship between the artistic *process* and the artefact *produced*. As we have discussed elsewhere, there is a good deal of exploration in the literature about the relative merits of *process* over *product* in the context of youth development, with relatively little discussion about the type of art produced and/or the aesthetic implications of this art (Cooke et al. 2020). In this chapter, we wish to explore in detail some of the art produced by the Changing the Story network. That said, we do not wish to replace a focus on *process* with a focus on *product*. Rather, and once more echoing the discussion of voice in the previous chapter, we hope to move beyond this dichotomy and explore how such art is always fundamentally 'relational', as Verena Thomas and Kate Britton put it. Talking about their work as participatory filmmakers, they suggest:

> The media product is the manifestation of a relationship between the maker(s) and their subject(s). Each visual image therefore has an external narrative that comes to hold as much significance as the internal, entangling the image within the conditions of its creation.
>
> (Thomas and Britton 2012: 216)

The art produced by such projects has a valuable position in the wider (transrational) ecology of action through which the projects discussed in this book operate. In this chapter, we wish to reflect upon this position, exploring what the art produced seeks to communicate, what it 'says', and indeed what it does not (or does not need to) 'say', how this relates to other forms of expression generated by the Changing the Story programme more often considered to be valuable 'data' (interviews, focus group discussions etc.) and how this addresses the programme's overall attempt to impact key concerns affecting young people globally.

In order to navigate our way through the huge amount of art produced by Changing the Story, we remain with the YRB and a digital exhibition that the group curated from this body of work. We will describe how the YRB developed and how its role related to the wider research goals of the programme. This will allow us to reflect further on the concept of the transrational in youth-led international development and how this idea relates to the other key concerns of this book: ecologies of action and epistemic justice. However, let us first turn to the broader issue of the role of art in community and international development, touched on in Chapter 1, and the so-called 'cultural turn' that has led to a growth in use of arts-based practices in this context.

Participation and the Cultural Turn

As Paul Cooke and Inés Soria-Donlan have discussed further elsewhere (2020), since the 1980s, there has been a turn towards the use of culture, broadly defined, as a way of driving international development. According to UNESCO, for example, the cultural and creative sector is now one of the most powerful engines of development worldwide. It accounts for more than 48 million jobs globally – almost half of which are held by women – representing 6.2% of all existing employment and 3.1% of global Gross domestic product (GDP). It is also the sector that employs, and provides opportunities, for the largest number of people under the age of 30 (UNESCO 2022a). This trend began to gain momentum with the UN Decade for Cultural Development (1988–1997) but grew in significance with the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. The SDGs were established as part of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015). Their aim was to 'build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals', with the objective of addressing key global challenges in order 'to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all' by 2030 (UN 2023). Leaving aside any evaluation of the SDGs *per se*, or their achievability, it is interesting to note the value placed on culture in their initial development. Cooke and Soria-Donlan cite, for example, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' SDG implementation plan:

> Culture will be key in the success of sustainable development policies, as driver and enabler of development and people-centered societies. A holistic and integrated approach to development needs to take creativity, heritage, knowledge and diversity into account. Poverty is not just a question of material conditions and income, but also of lack of capabilities and opportunities, including in cultural terms.
>
> (Quoted in Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2020: 4)

For many commentators, as they go on to discuss, cultural and creative practices can be utilised to support 'greater citizen participation in governance', and thus 'to strengthening and enriching local sustainability, resilience, and holistic development' (Duxbury et al. 2016: 15). This can be achieved in two ways.

On the one hand, the creative industries are seen by funders and development agencies as important to economic development in the Global South (see, for example, the UNESCO/UNDP Creative Economy Special Report 2013). On the other, the arts are considered an important space for critical reflection on development goals, 'offering a public site for the abstracted discussion of contentious issues' (Stupples and Teaiwa 2016: 11), for 'imagining alternative ways forward' particularly important, for example, in post-conflict settings (Crossick and Kaszynaska 2016: 118). The importance of culture in this context was further reinforced in 2022 in the historic signing of the 'Declaration for Culture' at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT) by all 150 national delegates (UNESCO 2022b).

Within this cultural turn, particular emphasis has been placed on participatory arts practices (PA), themselves part of a far broader engagement with (non-arts-based) participatory approaches to development. Critical anthropologies have long been exercised by the question 'whose version of development counts?', asking:

> where are *the people* in current planning and to what extent are their interests served by top-down, largely Northern-driven priorities underpinned by a focus on macro-economic progress that, on close examination, often perpetuate inequalities and are not translated into meaningful social and economic transformation that can serve emerging and future generations of citizens?
>
> (Brody 2021: 12; see also Escobar 2011; Chambers 1996)

In the 1990s, Robert Chambers made a powerful argument that development planning and interventions were repeating the same mistakes because of a fundamental failure to work with and learn from local people as 'actors' in, rather than seeing them as objects of, a given development programme. He made the case for the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approaches that directly engaged the rural and urban 'poor' in the identification of problems to be solved, demonstrating that they are often best placed to analyse their own complex and diverse realities. Notably, he articulated the potentially empowering nature of what he conceptualises as 'non-extractive' research processes that directly feed insights back to the communities from where they have emerged (Chambers 1996: 5). Moreover, through his work, he sought not only to empower communities but also to highlight the importance of self-critical awareness among development professionals, thereby seeking to effect a fundamental shift in the values, methods and behaviours at the heart of international development (Chambers 1996). The global take-up of PRA approaches is testimony to the enormous and significant influence of Chambers on the field. Since the early 2000s, PRA has evolved into a number of Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches that engage people in identifying, planning and reflecting on the effectiveness of locally relevant solutions

to development challenges. The shift towards participatory development is something that can, again, be evidenced in the establishment of the SDGs within the UN 2030 Agenda, which sought the active participation of a far wider constituency of stakeholders in their development than its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (Fox and Stoett 2016).

Returning now, specifically, to participatory arts. Although admittedly starting from a low base, PA are increasingly considered to play an important role in supporting civic engagement around the world, 'nurturing engaged citizenship' (Flinders and Cunningham 2014: 5). Within international development, from community theatre in Rwanda to mural projects in Colombia, PA are frequently viewed as 'an essential component of peacebuilding work' in conflict-affected societies (Zelizer 2003: 62; see also Harvey and Bradley 2023), with a wide range of organisations of all sizes, including large-scale international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), seeing value in the use of PA in their community development initiatives. Here, one might mention, for example, Save the Children's 'Healing and Education Through the Arts (HEART)' initiative (Save the Children 2024) or UNESCO's 'Culture for Sustainable Development' programme (UNESCO 2024). Such initiatives can have immediate, therapeutic impact for participants, proponents maintain, as well as supporting community resilience and even 'reparations' in the face of weak state structures (Cooke et al. 2022). PA-based projects have been instrumentalised as 'an essential driver of transformation and sustainable development in the world's most fragile societies' (O'Keefe 2016: 11). Such projects are often considered valuable ways of generating rich, holistic, 'embodied' engagement, rooted in individual, lived experience, that can support genuine community-level ownership of the development process.

PA, like participatory approaches in development contexts more generally, tend to begin as small-scale, local initiatives that might seek to use – in this case – cultural practices as an instrument to engage specific communities in finding 'bottom-up' solutions to local problems. Since the 1990s, however, as suggested in the use of arts-based practices by the likes of Save the Children, or participatory approaches more broadly by the UN, there has been major investment to upscale these kinds of participatory initiatives. The World Bank, for example, considers grassroots, participatory projects as a way of alleviating pressure on aid agencies by promoting 'independence' and 'community resilience' and thus 'cost-saving [and] project efficiency' (Mayo and Craig 1995: 2). At the same time, increasing the scale of such work has, for some commentators, also seen the initial critical intervention of participatory development 'co-opted' by international institutions. While traditional participatory approaches have no doubt contributed to very effective, targeted, development interventions, they also contain within them a conundrum. Chambers' argument for taking local knowledge seriously rests on the central premise that 'ordinary' people in rural or urban communities in developing countries are, or can be, as 'analytical' as Northern 'scientists'. In other words, they have to

prove their credibility as sources through their ability to articulate complex ideas in ways that the powers-that-be (often Northern donors) can understand. This includes through (Western) language, maps and diagrams, through thinking and organising ideas in ways that corral the chaos, the perhaps arbitrary, incidents and emotions of everyday life into neat, logical/cerebral patterns that fit Western structures of analysis. Chambers suggests that 'methods have provided a professionally acceptable point of entry for the spread of PRA. PRA methods which generate figures, matrices and tables can be immediately attractive', acknowledging a need for PRA – and the more recent iteration of PAR – to demonstrate a Cartesian sense of rationality (cited in Bendelow and Williams 1998) to be taken seriously alongside robust 'scientific' methods. PRA evidences, this logic suggests, that 'undeveloped' people can also be logical, rational beings, thereby challenging orientalist notions of people in the Global South being 'other' to the North. This approach also chimes with an increasing insistence by donors on the generation of 'logical frameworks' (Golini et al. 2017) that equate project success with the achievement of short-term measurable goals. However, these bureaucratic imperatives often entail a stymying of the deeper forms of transformation that happen over time and that are crucial for long-term sustainable change. These insights are too often shared anecdotally rather than being documented in a funding environment that primarily values and rewards (predetermined indicators of) success. But beyond this, the focus on logical frameworks, as well as the other discursive approaches that flow from Chambers' approach to PRA, also replicates dominant Northern-centric perceptions of what constitutes valid research in a development context. In so doing, it raises the question of what is lost in the process of ignoring or tidying up the messy, contradictory and often emotional experience of being human, explored in detail in the previous chapter, as well as the broader issue of undermining the kind of epistemological pluralism called for by de Sousa Santos (2010), discussed in Chapter 1. Thus, despite the aspiration to 'hand over the stick', which is at the centre of Chambers' call for PRA, allowing 'the insiders [to] determine the agenda, categories and details' (Chambers 1996: 12), the expectation of specific outputs and outcomes also raises questions of how authentic participatory processes and voices can be in practice.

In short, it would appear that there is a risk (or at least the appearance of a risk) for the grassroots collaboration of PRA to become a form of co-option by the agenda of large-scale, international organisations as such initiatives are scaled. With regard to the use of art specifically, this reached a point in the early 2000s when Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari speculated whether 'participation' itself had become a new 'tyranny', which was leading to decisions being taken that 'reinforce the interests of the already powerful'. 'Do participatory facilitators override existing legitimate decision-making processes [driving] out [other methods] which have advantages participation cannot provide?' (Cooke and Kothari 2001: 7). Similarly, Andrea Cornwall and Karen Brock

argue that 'whilst international development organisations may appear to have appropriated concepts once used by radical alternative movements, […] they have not necessarily swallowed them whole'. For all the propensity of organisations such as the World Bank to talk about 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'poverty reduction', other terms such as 'accountability, governance and partnership' are never far away in development policy, all of which potentially serves to create a neoliberal Western model which these same organisations ask the communities they support to conform to. 'Dissident meanings are stripped away to ensure coherence', in turn making it more difficult for local communities and those smaller, radical groups that first adopted participatory models to make their voices heard against the din of their larger-scale interventions (Cornwall and Brock 2005: 1057).

At times echoing Sukarieh and Tannock's critique of PYD discussed in Chapter 1, Claire Bishop also points to what she sees as the potential for PA to be co-opted by a neoliberal agenda. In PA programming, she identifies a utilitarian approach to art and culture, ultimately focused on manufacturing social consent, 'creat[ing] submissive citizens who respect authority and accept the "risk" and responsibility of looking after themselves in the face of diminished public services' (Bishop 2012: 14). 'Good' art (however, this might be conceptualised) is almost by definition unpredictable and risky. Grant Kester, for example, dismisses any state involvement in PA projects, suggesting that participatory projects whose goals and methods of which are predetermined, can only ever produce superficial art (Kester 2011). Or as David Bell puts it 'an uncritical participatory approach to participatory art supports – rather than challenges – the status quo' (Bell 2015: 8). Thus, summing up the debate, as the arts practitioner and theorist François Matarasso puts it:

> The normalisation of participatory art presents opportunities and threats. It is a remarkable achievement to which countless people have contributed over decades. As a result, many others have benefitted through participating in artistic work. Millions of lives have changed for the better, in small ways and large. At the same time, the growing acceptance of participatory art in centres of power risks making it another arm of institutional control, its purposes, goals and methods dictated from outside rather than negotiated between the people concerned.
>
> (Matarasso 2018: 21)

Within the context of PA in international (youth) development, and returning, once more, to the question of voice, the critique of Bishop, Kester, Bell and others is built upon a specifically Western avant-garde tradition within art history. As previously discussed, and (within the debate being outlined in this chapter) as Stupples and Teaiwa also note, other traditions exist. Indeed, they argue that this is 'reflected in the lack of terms for "art" in many languages where art and everyday culture, or social life, are deeply integrated' (Stupples and Teaiwa 2016: 4). The notions of the 'artist' and 'creativity' differs widely

across the world. Here, we return to the role of the transrational and, ultimately, our fundamental question about what constitutes youth voice. What happens if art is neither judged solely according to the hierarchies of a specific (Western) artistic tradition that fetishises the value of an artistic work in a particular way nor seeks to ignore the object produced as the by-product of community development? What happens if we consider *process* and *product* to be in dialogue with each other, as well as with the wider ecology in which they operate? How does this allow us to reflect further on the role of art in youth development, to explore further what the young people involved are looking to express and how such work seeks to ensure that their voices are both 'heard' and acknowledged?

The Development and Role of the Changing the Story YRB

The YRB was made of up 11 young people from Rwanda, South Africa, Venezuela, India and Nepal, aged between 18 and 24. The group was recruited through an application process open to anyone who had previously been involved in a Changing the Story project and was aimed at both generating a youth-focused evaluation of the programme and to support young people to build on the skills they had already developed through their participation in the programme. This kind of group is increasingly commonplace in youth-focused projects, particularly in public-health research, where there is a growing literature on the role of 'young people's advisory boards' as part of a broader shift towards 'patient and public involvement' in research (Gaillard et al. 2018; Pavarini et al. 2019; Chan et al. 2020; Brady et al. 2023), although it is considered less common in research focused on the Global South (Tsang et al. 2020).

In Changing the Story, a number of different models for active youth engagement emerged that sought to ensure young people's voices were at the heart of the development, evaluation and governance of the individual projects funded by the programme. 'Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba' ('the true voice of the land' in isiXhosa), for example, was one of the first projects funded by Changing the Story. Every aspect of this work, starting with even its name, was co-designed and carefully negotiated in a vigorously democratic fashion between all those involved in its delivery: the young people involved (described as a 'co-creator collective'), a local South African NGO (the Support Centre for Land Change), a community-based activist organisation (Youth-in-Power) and academics from the Universities of the Witwatersrand in South Africa and Leeds in the UK. The project itself focused on the use of film as an advocacy tool to support the land rights of the local population in the Karoo, a hotly contested region in the battle for sustainable energy in South Africa.

The project team was particularly attentive to the danger of instrumentalising youth voice in this kind of research project, where the so-called 'scholarly "listener"' can be the person that is ultimately 'heard' outside of the project's immediate sphere of activity. Thus, the project asked the question, 'Can

research voice/s be plural, create space for dissonance, and not privilege harmony?' (Walsh and Burnett 2021: 606). The concept of plurality is key here, chiming with our understanding of the transrational, and the need for an inclusive, holistic, view of voice that could be captured in the varied outputs produced by the project. This included a series of short films that adopted a variety of formats – from 'realist' documentaries to a sci-fi movie – and that presented the individual stories of numerous people who had lost their lands to the energy and other industries in the region. These films were then used as advocacy tools to raise awareness of a population that is often seen as having no agency of its own in the face of the more powerful actors who seek to control the region, and also as a training tool to build capacity for the young people involved in the project to create their own media-based youth activist organisation that would be able to continue to work in the region once the initial funding period of the project was over.

In this project, the young people involved, as the co-creators at the heart of the work, owned all the knowledge produced by the project and decided how it was to be instrumentalised, both in terms of the project's activist impulses and in other spheres. 'Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba' was an ambitious project that sought, from the off, to build capacity for action in a sustainable way through its engagement with the wider research and development 'ecology' in which it was embedded. This was helped by its relatively small scale, in terms of the number of participants (up to 20 at any point), which allowed it to prioritise its rigorous approach to democratic negotiation, providing a rich case study for the potential, and challenges of, genuinely youth-led development projects (Walsh and Burnett 2021).

Other projects, particularly those that were operating at a larger scale than 'Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba', opted to create formal youth-led engagement strategies to guide the overall direction of travel of a given project in ways that could be understood (read: 'heard') by some of the large-scale organisations they worked with. Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP), for example, now an independent arts-education programme running in Kyrgyzstan, Rwanda, Indonesia and Nepal, led by the University of Lincoln, began as a Changing the Story project. From the start, the project was particularly focused on ensuring that the young people involved were equal partners in all aspects of the project's work, which drew on key existing arts-based methodologies to co-develop a new programme designed to address the specific challenges of peacebuilding in (to begin with) Rwanda (using, for example, Forum and Playback Theatre).

The project adopted a 'train-the-trainer' approach to its work, creating a group of youth ambassadors who could raise awareness of the project's approach with a wide range of stakeholders, from local community elders to national policymakers, ensuring that the young people involved were at the heart of this communication process (Breed et al. 2022). Key to the success of this approach has been the way the project has been able to amplify local, grassroots voices through the wider structure of MAP and its policy-level partnerships in order to engender dialogue between groups of people who would

not normally come into contact. In so doing, however, a greater degree of formality was required in how young people engage with this wider structure than in 'Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba'. It is hard to change the way policymakers engage with other stakeholders. If 'dialogue' is to be achieved, projects need to support grassroots participants to 'understand' the rules of the game and how best to negotiate its well-established structures.

MAP has achieved a great deal, helping to bring new ideas into the national curriculum for arts education in the countries in which it has operated through, for example, the coproduction of a series of policy briefs that took as their starting point insights that have emerged from the various arts-practices used in the programme. Here, we might mention the way the project used 'story circles' to draw out narratives that illustrate key issues participants face in education. These stories were turned into short performances that then led to a drawing exercise in which the group drew 'solution trees'. This exercise was designed to generate equitable discussion between young people, the rest of the researchers involved in MAP and policymakers in order to create briefs that were informed by the lived experience of young people, the broader research evidence that had been generated by the project and the delivery requirements of the policymakers (Breed et al. 2022: 313).

While the way MAP engages with the 'ecology of action' in which it is embedded might be different to that of 'Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba', there is a fundamental point of correspondence, namely the extent to which the insights the project seeks to communicate to its various stakeholders are still rooted in a specific, local, context that makes sense to everyone involved. Creating a youth advisory board of some sort for the whole of the Changing the Story programme was initially seen as too difficult for a number of reasons, not least the lack of a clear understanding of how the project management team could embed what would be a transnational grouping within a context that not only made sense locally to the young people involved but also to anyone else the group sought to work with. As a programme that was engaging with many hundreds of young people in many different countries, questions, for example, of representation were asked. Who should be part of this group? How could it be anything other than a tokenistic gesture of youth engagement in the project's management structures? It was also difficult to envisage how a group could be physically brought together, within the limitations of the resources available, that could somehow 'speak' for the wider body of young people with whom Changing the Story was engaging.

It was not until the arrival of COVID-19, and the way the pandemic of 2020–2022 forced the programme to rethink how it was structured, that the team could see a way of actively engaging young people in the governance and, in particular, the evaluation of the project. The pandemic saw a major shift in the way in which programmes like Changing the Story worked, most obviously in the growing reliance of such work on online digital tools (Koh and Daniel 2022). In many respects, this allowed far more interaction across individual projects, increased interaction that also made clear to the project management group that our key stakeholders, namely the young people

involved, had to have a 'seat' at the project management table, however difficult this initially appeared.

At the same time, the shift online proved a major challenge for Changing the Story, which was generally working with marginalised groups living in communities that often had only limited digital infrastructure. Thus, funding had to be reconfigured away from travel and physical meetings to provide online support for participants in order to keep projects on track. This also allowed the team to reconceptualise its thinking about a young person advisory group as an online forum that could bring together a cross-section of participants from different regions. That said, the question of how this group might be representative of the whole programme was still considered too problematic. So instead, a group of youth researchers that had already engaged with some of the programme's projects was envisaged, which could bring their experience to bear on the findings that were beginning to emerge from the project. This was seen as a professional development opportunity for the young people involved, rather than purely as an advisory group. Participants applied and were appointed by a committee independent of the management team. They were also paid for their time.

YRB activities began with a series of meetings, facilitated by Lauren Wray (Changing the Story's Project Officer who supported this strand of the programme), in which the group discussed what they hoped to achieve during their time working on the project, in order to collectively agree expectations of this strand of work. This was followed by a number of workshops, run in collaboration with the management team and its network of stakeholders. These workshops were designed to provide the YRB with training in a number of arts-based practices (including PhotoVoice, film, poetry, cartoons), in order to build on the group's existing expertise and provide them with an increased set of tools that they could use to reflect critically on the work undertaken by Changing the Story. They were also asked to explore ways they could use the lessons they took from this work within their own communities, and in particular in their own approach to activism. In doing so, the aim of the YRB was to provide participants with an international perspective on youth engagement and activism. At the same time, it was also designed to provide them with a way to further support their local engagement with Changing the Story and to maximise their ability to leverage the local relationships built up by the individual projects they had previously taken part in. After this series of workshops, the YRB, working in small groups from different countries, used these methods to review the Changing the Story projects they found most interesting and, subsequently, to consider how any insights gleaned from this work could be utilised in campaigns that addressed issues that were locally of interest to them and their communities. Finally, the groups explored how they could use these ideas to find common cause internationally in order to develop collective campaigns that, nonetheless, still resonated with them individually.

An important challenge in the work of the YRB was the balance between art and activism and the requirements of the project's safeguarding responsibilities to all involved. As we have discussed previously, and as we see in the

example used to open this chapter, art can create new spaces for reflection. It is frequently seen as a means to generate new ways of understanding, viewed as a 'safe space' for experimentation. However, as we see in debates around the use of art and culture in participatory development, the value of experimentation is sometimes also viewed as being compromised by the very process of participation, which is also at times considered to be a form of co-option rather than engagement. 'Safe' art can be seen as compromised art, failing to maximise the disruptive potential of the kind of work required to genuinely find new, creative, solutions to at times intractable problems.

That said, as was clear from the work of the YRB, it is also important to understand that the creation of art does not exist in a separate realm to the everyday reality inhabited by participants. In one early workshop, the YRB was asked to produce a series of flags as part of a large-scale public artwork called 'Public Untruths'. This was designed as a way of helping the young people crystallise some of the key messages they wished to explore as part of their subsequent work with the YRB. This proved to be an important moment in the development of the YRB and the flags themselves are currently being exhibited in Pristina, Kosovo. However, the development of the project had to be very carefully negotiated given the very different political cultures within which individual members of the group operated day to day and the way these different cultures understood the political and cultural meaning (and ramifications) of the public act of flying a flag on a flagpole (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 'Public Untruths': an art installation created by the Changing the Story Youth Research Board, Pristina June 2021.

Similar tensions can arise in 'community mapping' exercises that are frequently employed in youth-focused development work and that were widely used in Changing the Story (Whelan and MacLeod 2016). Here, a young person might be encouraged to map out the key resources that are available to them locally, configuring the map in such a way as to prioritise resources creatively, emphasising those things that are most important to them, rather than producing an inclusive map of everything to be found locally. This can be a complex process if it involves mapping out local tensions between rival gangs, for example, or pointing to areas controlled by competing local leaders. The art produced by development projects is always relational; its meaning is always contingent. The value of supporting young people to use creative practices to push the barriers of the way they approach living in their community is not an abstract exercise that exists somehow separately from the rest of their life. It can have real consequences for participants. This always needs to be uppermost in people's minds when undertaking this kind of work.

Over time, the YRB broke into smaller groups to focus on topics that were of particular importance to them, as well as some of the Changing the Story projects that they wished to explore in more detail. This led to the development of three campaigns, which were launched online in December 2021. The 'You're Not Alone Campaign on Youth Unemployment' emerged out of the work of members of the YRB who were interested in the ways in which Changing the Story reflected upon the everyday lives of young people across and beyond the communities they lived in. The group interviewed researchers involved in two Changing the Story projects. The first was 'Tribal Education Methodology (India)', which had developed an arts-based, contextually relevant, educational curriculum for the indigenous tribes of Wayanad District, Kerala, India. This is a community that is largely ignored by the mainstream education system. This frequently leads to young people from this community being marginalised and their skills and achievements unrecognised, a consequence of which, for their adult lives, is widespread unemployment and systemic poverty. As such this can be seen as a case study in the production of epistemic injustice. This project has recently been adopted by the Government of Kerala and has been incorporated into the state education curriculum. The second project the group investigated was 'Youth-led Social Enterprises in Malaysia', a project that examined the everyday experience of young people running social enterprises. Central to this project was the fundamental tension at the heart of entrepreneurialism discussed in Chapter 1. On the one hand, the project investigated the value of entrepreneurialism as a way of addressing the widespread issue of youth un- and underemployment around the world, but particularly in the Global South. On the other, it explored the role of the state in providing the necessary support for young people to best be able to achieve their potential.

The group's research led to the development of a series of flyers that can be easily distributed with very simple messages that sought to emphasise the 'can do' potential of entrepreneurialism while also highlighting the responsibility

of the whole of society to actively support young people as they seek employment. In one flyer, a group of multiracial raised arms, fists variously clenched in defiance or open as if asking a question, point up to a caption that seems to encapsulate both sides of the entrepreneurial coin: 'Together Everyone Achieves More: Trust your Creativity. It's your Superpower'. Young people are not all the same. Different communities will have different needs. All young people should maximise their creativity to make the most of their lives. However, they should not be left alone to do this without the solidarity of the rest of their community (Figure 4.2).

A second group focused on the issue of historical memory and its relationship to the present, exploring three projects in detail: 'The Making of the Museum of Education' (Kosovo) sought to amplify the history of the so-called 'House Schools' that provided Albanian-language education in Kosovo after it was outlawed by the Serbian ruling minority in the 1990s. The project was particularly interested in the relationship between place-based heritage, memory and intergenerational dialogue, and how digital tools can help support this dialogue; 'Mapping Community Heritage with Young People in Rural South Africa' examined the heritage of the rural people forced off their land to establish the Kruger National Park in the early twentieth century and sought to uncover the relationship between place, memory and community identity; finally, 'Building Trust for Truth-Telling' used animation to facilitate intergenerational dialogue between former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) child soldiers in Colombia and vulnerable teenagers who are at risk of being radicalised by a new generation of paramilitaries in the country (discussed further below). The group's investigations of these projects led to the creation of a fanzine 'The Planet of No Memory' (Figure 4.3).

The centrepiece of this work is a beautifully illustrated zine that tells the story of the destruction of a planet that has no understanding of its history, a lack of knowledge which ultimately leads to the planet's self-destruction. From the way the group conceptualised the message of the zine, it is clear that the group was very focused on the concrete implications of their research. At an event organised by the young people to launch all three campaigns, the group highlighted their sense that so much discussion of the legacy of the past in all three contexts they had explored was seen as something of an abstract, academic exercise that young people might find dry and irrelevant to their own experience. In their campaign, the group wanted to emphasise their appetite to understand the past as a concrete necessity for their understanding of how they should live in the present. This becomes very clear in their zine, where their reflections are stripped of any specific national context and put onto a planetary stage. Not learning from history becomes a metaphor for the way the ruling generation is ostensibly currently dealing with both the climate emergency and global conflicts, the simple starkness of the zine images seemingly unable to contain, and thus emphasising the magnitude of, the problems we face as a species because we seem unable to learn from our past mistakes. That said, the group finally brings the story back to Earth specifically, providing

Figure 4.2 Flyer from the 'You are not alone' campaign: Together Everyone Achieves More.

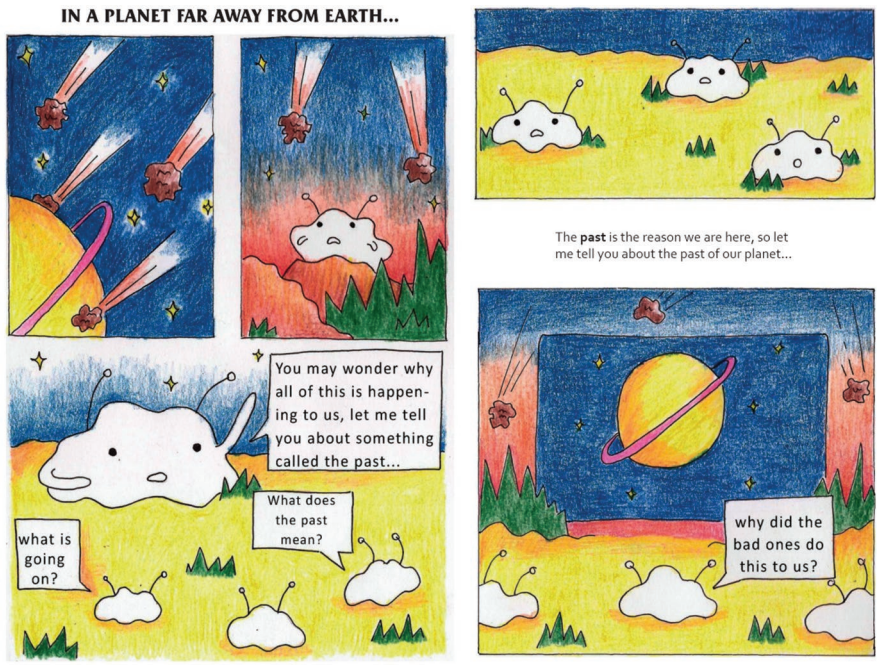

Figure 4.3 Two pages from 'The Planet of No Memory' zine.

a glimmer of hope in suggesting that on this (our) planet there remains at least the chance that the population might avoid destruction: 'There's a planet where hope still exists [...] They call it Planet Earth'.

The third group of YRB members focused on the potential of arts-based methods as a way of enhancing mainstream education systems, engaging with the widespread feeling amongst young people across the Global South, discussed in Chapter 2, that current education systems often do not provide them with the skills they need to face adult life. 'Does the Education System Equip us for our Future? Creative Education Corner Campaign' drew on research undertaken by 'Reanimating Contested Spaces (ReSpace): Designing Participatory Civic Education for and with Young People in Kosovo and Rwanda' and '¿Cuál es la Verdad? (What is the truth?) Colombia', two projects that explored the potential of a variety of arts practices (animation, music, dance) to reimagine contested spaces in order to redefine the way such practices can be utilised within mainstream curricula (something which, as we can see from the work of the Tribal Education Methodology project, was a concern across the Changing the Story portfolio). This work was used to produce an animation and a booklet ('pocket book') that provided a provocation for educationalists and young people to reconceptualise the very purpose of education, emphasising its potential as an emancipatory gesture that can be accessed via an open-minded engagement with the creative arts. Taking a

very deliberately activist stance, the campaign produced by this group seeks to challenge established structures of authority in order to provoke discussion on the wider implications of the arts in education in a way that is reminiscent of the earlier discussion in this chapter, asking if education is ultimately about developing critical thinking or replicating established systems of power and control. Locating their work in the tradition of Louis Althusser and Pam Christie, but also highly reminiscent of the approach of Paulo Freire discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, the group explores what it sees as a potential 'hidden curriculum' in current educational practices, a discussion which, in turn, provides a further provocative contribution to the wider debate already discussed around the role of the arts as a space for either provocation or co-option (Figure 4.4).

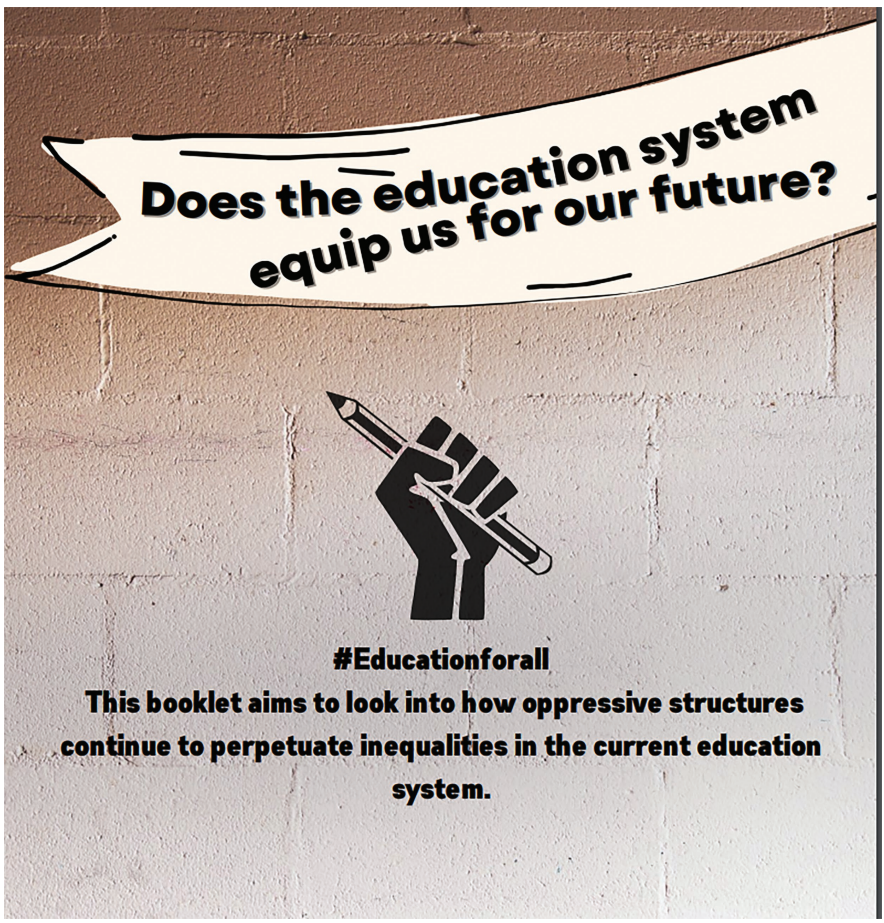

Figure 4.4 Cover from the 'Does the Education System Equip us for our Future?' pocket book.

While all three of these campaigns are clearly rooted in the specific, localised, experiences of the young people that developed them, it is fascinating to see the way they each identify transnational points of common interest that chime with the kinds of issues discussed in earlier chapters in this volume, from unemployment and education to the climate emergency. It is also notable how their conceptualisation of campaigns that they think will broadly resonate with communities beyond their own sphere of experience is also rooted in a very visceral, concrete and affective understanding of the issues at hand. All three campaigns hinge on the emotional value of art to engage its audience. Just as we saw with the Unconference described in the introduction to this chapter, and in our discussion of voice as transrational in Chapter 3, the YRB was keen to maximise the disruptive potential of art to create affective links with the issues they wished to explore, to speak to the transrational, the non-linguistic, that, moreover, adopt epistemological approaches that can challenge Global Northern value hierarchies.

Let us now return to the question, what can we 'do' with the art in these types of projects over and above its use in the kinds of advocacy activity described above? How can we approach art as 'data' in arts-based research? What can it tell us about how young people understand a given problem in a particular project? As noted above, much research on participatory arts-based projects tends to ignore the art produced, focusing their analysis on what are frequently considered to be 'more traditional' qualitative and quantitative research methods in the social sciences. However, as Claudia Mitchell notes, new insights can be drawn from adopting the kinds of 'close-reading strategies' that are commonplace in arts and humanities disciplines such as literary, film and cultural studies (Mitchell 2011: 11). These approaches might not be able to generate the kind of definitive evidence required to conclusively 'prove' a given hypothesis, or be understood as a form of replicable exercise that is at the heart of much (social) scientific research. Nonetheless, they can provide important new insights into the perspective of the young people involved in the project that can, at the very least, complicate and nuance data generated by other means. In the final section of this chapter, we continue our exploration of the art produced by Changing the Story to further enhance our understanding of the insights generated by the programme, specifically focusing on a digital exhibition curated by the YRB to mark the end of its work.

Curating the Art Produced: The Changing the Story Digital Exhibition

The final activity that the YRB led for Changing the Story was the curation of a digital exhibition of some of the art produced by the programme. Working in collaboration with Helene Rousseau, the programme's digital lead, as well as Bottom Up, one of the programme's partner organisations, the group sought to take what they had learnt from their experience of the project thus far to inform their presentation of the programme's body of art on the Changing the Story website using Microsoft Sway, an easily accessible platform that was free

to use and straightforwardly embeddable within the wider website. This was then complemented by a physical exhibition: the '(Re)memory box'. Taking its inspiration from the Smithsonian Institute's concept of the 'Museum in a Box' (Espiritu 2018), the group created a mobile physical exhibition that presented a series of postcard-size images with accompanying audio descriptions that could be played through the box when the images are placed upon it. This was complemented by worksheets that were sent out to all the programme's partner organisations who wished to host it. To a degree, the idea for the physical exhibition was another response by the team to COVID:

> Throughout Changing the Story it was clear that, whilst digital outputs and ways of connecting, particularly at the start of the COVID pandemic, were intrinsic to organising and connecting across groups, countries and disciplines, physical encounters and lo-tech solutions held equal importance and impact in forging new relationships and reflections across contexts. We wanted to extend this same mix of digital and physical with our final exhibition.
>
> (Changing the Story 2023)

Although curating the exhibition was the final act in the Changing the Story programme, this was designed to generate further interaction and engagement with the programme's key questions, as they were understood by the YRB. Thus, the group organised the exhibition into four subthemes that they felt spoke to these key questions: 'Peacebuilding', 'Creative Resistance', 'Participatory Arts' and 'Youth Leadership', each subtheme focusing squarely on the art produced by the various projects they were presenting, and how this work could open up new points of departure for future engagement (Figure 4.5).

Across the four strands, the exhibition showcases the art from around 20 different projects. This includes work produced by a photographic elicitation project that used pictures taken by young people as the starting point for a process of reflection on their place in the world. For example, a picture is included of a young man from Johannesburg crouching on top of a sign to a museum of 'African Design'. The picture seems to directly address the viewer as a provocation, suggesting the potential commodification of participants like him in projects like this. Elsewhere the exhibition reproduces a series of colouring images from the project 'Color Up Peace' (a project that began in Bulgaria a couple of years before Changing the Story but with which the YRB engaged), designed to provoke reflection on the potential for peaceful transformation in conflict-affected settings through the physical act of colouring, an act that transforms an outline drawing into a multicoloured image. Below, we discuss the work produced by a youth-led animation project also included in this strand. These three artistic forms are complemented in the exhibition by examples of many other types of arts practice. In doing this, the exhibition highlights the different mechanisms at work in each form; how a given practice operates to support peacebuilding and active citizenship in a variety of ways that emerge from the specificity of the media involved (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.5 Changing the Story (re)memory box.

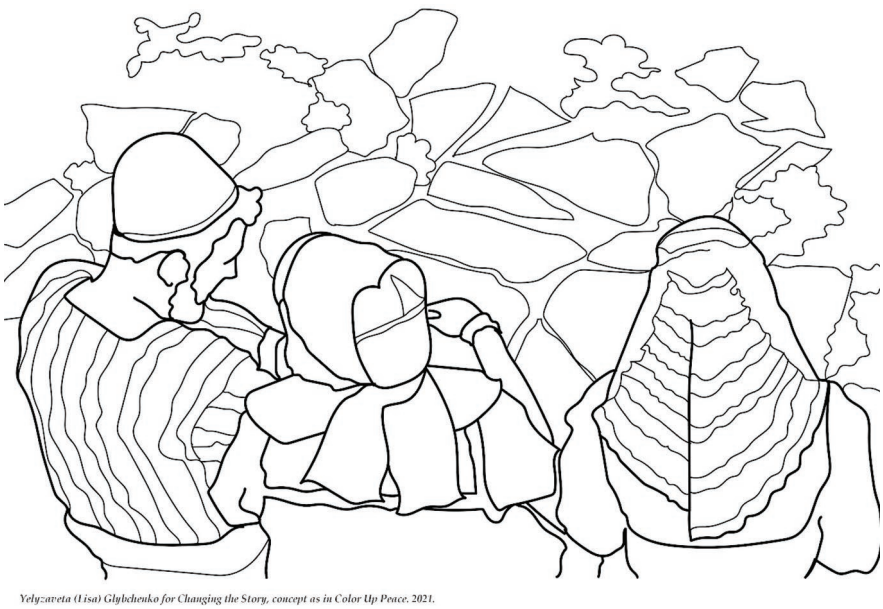

Figure 4.6 Picture taken from 'Color Up Peace'.

It is important to note, in this regard, that the exhibition, like so much of the work of the YRB, presents a deliberately activist approach to active citizenship. The 'Creative Resistance' strand, for example, foregrounds the disruptive potential of art to create new ways of thinking and mobilising collective action. 'Imagining Otherwise', for example, one of the projects showcased in this strand, worked with local artists and young people living in the Cape Flats (a location known internationally for its gang violence) to create a public exhibition focused on the participants' hopes for the future. The project used a variety of tools, from drawing to green screen video, to present a series of imagined futures. 'Imagining Otherwise' sees art as a tool for grassroots activism, the art being shown locally to provoke collective action for change. By including the work of this project in the exhibition, the YRB sought to spread the learning from this practice. Here, we return to the question of scale we discussed earlier in this chapter. Increasing the scale of such projects, often through the adoption of activist/participatory practices by larger NGOs, for example, has frequently led to claims of co-option and to the ostensible limiting of their capacity for radical change. By including Imagining Otherwise, for example in the exhibition, the YRB sought to raise awareness of this work in order to *spread*, rather than necessarily *scale,* such work.

Another featured project in this strand was the Kosovo-based 'Arts, Critical Thinking and Active Citizenship' (ACT) project. Here, participants used animation to find new ways of engaging with the country's recent past to inform the national Civics curriculum, calling for a refocusing of history away from the conflicts of the 1990s to the 1980s, a time in which the arts, and particularly music, flourished, providing ways of conceptualising society beyond the one bound by ethnicity that dominated later. ACT, rather like the MAP project already discussed, sought to use arts-based practices to support critical thinking that could, in fact, be scaled (as it is traditionally understood) via inclusion in the national curriculum. In so doing, however, the project remains deliberately provocative, pointing to what it sees as gaps in the current educational provision of the country, deliberately eschewing the kind of approaches to the use of art by mainstream institutions that might be seen as a form of co-option (Figure 4.7).

Alongside the exploration of method, and how this can relate to active citizenship and activism, the exhibition also seeks to generate further reflection on the relationship of the past to the present-day experience of young people, a topic that was a major interest for the YRB. This includes the presentation of a number of projects highlighting marginalised histories that young people involved in the programme sought to amplify, from the history of the 'House Schools' in Kosovo, showcased in the Re-Space project discussed above, to the Anlong Veng peace tours, which made a series of films designed to provoke discussion about the inclusion of the experience of former low-level Khmer Rouge members in the Cambodian national historical narrative.

Adopting a transrational approach that seeks to challenge binaries and to adopt an inclusive, epistemically just, approach to knowledge creation

Figure 4.7 The process of making a handmade animation frame by frame. Image taken from Changing the Story Kosovo project film.

throughout, the YRB asks its audience to focus on how art can support engagement with both the political and the emotional, and ultimately how the audience can learn from the works presented to help peacebuilding in their own communities. In a set of questions posed by the group at the end of each exhibition strand as a 'worksheet', the audience is asked, in a variety of ways, how what they have learnt from the art can be used to effect change in their own community? Having looked at all the work in the peacebuilding section, for example, the audience is asked 'Are there signs that give you hope for peace in your community?' and 'How can they "use art" to help build on these signs?' The exhibition is deliberately set up to promote discussion in order to continue the work started by the original programme, the art itself standing as an ongoing provocation for this future discussion. At the same time, it also supports reflection on the transrational, and translational, potential of art as a method to provoke discussion in this context. By way of example, let us look in more detail at the work produced by 'Building Trust for Truth-Telling', a project that worked with the Colombian Truth Commission, grassroots civil society organisations and artists from the UK and Colombia to include the testimony of former child soldiers in the official history of the country's civil war (1964–2017). A particularly disturbing feature of this conflict was the inclusion of under-age combatants. In addition to capturing the testimony of those who had experienced combat as children, the project sought to generate intergenerational dialogue with young people in Colombia today who remain vulnerable to being exploited by armed groups still operating in the country, be they political or narcotics related. This led to the development of a series of policy recommendations to support the country's broader deradicalisation

and violence prevention strategy. In order to achieve these aims, the project worked with young people who interviewed the former child soldiers. These interviews were then developed into verbatim dramatic monologues, voiced by actors, which were set to animations made by the young people with the support of a professional animator. The result was a series of short, emotionally charged films that tell a variety of stories about the lives of the soldiers before, during and in the aftermath of their time with the paramilitaries. The primary reason for using this approach to presenting the testimony was to protect the identities of everyone involved. This remains a fraught period of Colombian history. Investigations into crimes that took place are ongoing and the safety of both the former soldiers and the young people involved in the project had to be maintained throughout. Using actors to voice the stories and animation to visualise them allowed for this. However, the use of animation also brought other, affective, dimensions to bear on the story that might not have been there if the films had simply presented filmed testimony.

The individual animations adopted a range of styles. At times, abstract patterns were used, forcing the spectator to envisage the details of the testimony for themselves. At times, children's drawings and cut-out figures told the story, or stop-motion animations were created, using puppets or other children's toys. Central to the visual imagery throughout is the immediacy of a child's perspective, rooted in a visceral connection to their environment and to the events narrated in the voiceover. The disturbing narratives are frequently at odds with the naivety of their visual presentation, at times creating a form of abstract dissonance that seems intent upon maximising the affective potential of the medium. 'New Toys', for example, tells the story of a 15-year-old girl who is kidnapped by the FARC and suffers years of sexual exploitation by members of the group. The title of the story highlights her relationship with the other combatants. She is a toy for their exploitation. In this stop-motion animation, she is literally presented as such, as a rag doll toy, pulled from under her doll's house bed and dragged off to join the guerillas, only taken out of her 'toy box' when the other (male) soldiers wanted to 'play'. The presence of the soldiers is depicted as a giant hand that can easily envelop the doll (Figure 4.8).

An earthy colour palette of brown and green dominates many of the animations, reflecting, on the one hand, the darkness of the narratives being told, on the other, reflecting the connection of the communities represented here to their environment. All the young people and former soldiers involved in the project are products of their immediate surroundings. They have nowhere else to go. They are of this land and must find a way to survive it. This is highlighted particularly clearly in 'Dressed in Green', another film that documents the violent sexual exploitation of a young girl by FARC guerillas. The story is told through a series of semi-abstract green collage images that are gradually overwhelmed by hundreds of decaying autumnal leaves. On the one hand, the abstract imagery provides space for affect, resolving itself in emotional reflection on the story as it is presented to us. On the other, the animation's closing image can be read metaphorically, highlighting the danger of this and similar

Figure 4.8 The young 'doll' being kidnapped by the hand of the FARC in the animation 'New Toys'.

stories being buried and forgotten as society moves on, simply to repeat, perhaps, the mistakes of the past. Yet, while society might be able to move on from the past, it is very clear that the people who have contributed their stories to this project often cannot. The protagonist of 'New Toys' suggests 'They told me that I had to forget'. The frame slowly fills with an animated cloth, representing the ocean, which fades from brown to black. The cloth doll slowly begins to appear in the frame, as if swimming through the ocean, a speck against the waves, the voiceover declaring, 'This is impossible'. Nonetheless, she continues to swim. Her life has been destroyed, she declares, but the animation focuses on continuity, on her continuing struggle to continue struggling, the ultimate message, perhaps, of all these films.

The final message of the YRB exhibition, as well as, it might be noted, the subsequent development of the animation project after its initial phase of funding, would seem to offer more hope, emphasising the potential of young people to become agents of change. The trust-building project has more recently grown into a youth-focused 'citizen journalism' project, where cohorts of young people are introduced to the videos as a starting point for them to think about their experience in Colombia today, the key stories that they feel need to be amplified in the press and how they can actively report these stories. This is a project that is currently attracting a good deal of attention nationally, having been offered further support from various agencies including UNESCO (mihistoria 2023). The Changing the Story digital exhibition ultimately leaves its audience with a similar challenge: how do the various art products presented speak to their audience? How do the histories presented here relate to their local, perhaps very different experience, and how can the audience use this art to provoke action for change?

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have attempted to outline the particular added value of the art produced in arts-based participatory development projects. As we have suggested, in research that explores the contribution of such projects, the art itself is often ignored in favour of other forms of 'data' that can be subjected to more traditional methods of social-scientific analysis. By drawing on arts and humanities approaches of close reading, the art itself can make a significant contribution to the findings of such projects. Or, at the very least, the art can open up new avenues of enquiry that can investigate the affective, embodied, transrational experience of the participants that have produced this work. While there might well be a degree of subjectivity in the way an individual 'reads' a piece of art, their position on this art will invariably generate a new point of communication with the art, and in the process, with the person who made it, potentially offering a new perspective on what that person was seeking to convey.

It is the value of the art as a form of communication that has also been a key focus in this chapter. Exploring the art generated by Changing the Story and related projects allows us to reflect further on the idea of transrational voice, discussed in Chapter 3. The art discussed here can be explored as 'utterances' by the young people in and of themselves. However, as is clear from the work of the YRB, such work does not exist in a vacuum. All the work discussed here was produced within a wider 'ecology of action' that must be collectively understood. It is invariably an activist gesture designed to provoke change, directly addressing the broader aspects of epistemic injustice that are discussed throughout this volume, and to which we return more directly in subsequent chapters. Interestingly, in the work of the YRB and in particular in the digital exhibition the group curated, we also see their belief that the art generated also has the potential to communicate beyond the immediate context of its production and to provoke broader discussions with, and about, projects engaging with similar topics in other parts of the world. Rather than being a side product of the process of engagement, art is a vehicle that can spread – if not scale – the impact of these kinds of grassroots projects.

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5 Socio-Economic Justice through Participatory Processes

Building on our previous discussions about creative skills and what one might call 'entrepreneurial thinking' that can be acquired by young people through collaborations and creative participation, this chapter explores the role of participatory art in advancing economic and epistemic justice for youth. This chapter takes as its starting point some of the Changing the Story projects that addressed the challenges of youth exclusion in knowledge creation and economic participation. Expanding upon insights from Chapters 3 to 4, we showcase various methods of expressing voice to advocate for economic inclusion as a matter of epistemic justice across diverse and intricate contexts. By leveraging locally relevant engagement processes and cultural heritage, the case studies presented here illustrate the transrational nature of voice that acknowledges its material, embodied and collective dimensions. Youth 'voice', particularly if it is understood via our transrational paradigm, cannot be delimited to a specific mode of programmatic operationalisation within the context of youth development. Thus, in this chapter, we explore various ways in which it can act as a catalyst for inclusive youth development practices focused on promoting social justice.

Building on the concept of epistemic justice outlined in Chapter 1, this chapter illustrates how participatory approaches provide opportunities for youth voices to be amplified to create spaces for what we see as a three-step process of (1) deliberation, (2) participation and (3) contribution to economic initiatives. The main emphasis is on young people's role in identifying interventions to address the critical social problems they encounter daily. Here, we echo Coady's (2017) point, also made in Chapter 1, that excluding young people from the development agendas that affect them overlooks the potentially pivotal contribution they themselves can make to addressing these issues and reframing their futures. In Chapter 2, we noted the concerns raised in the UN's 2018 Global Youth Report about the barriers to participation in economic, political and social life that young people continue to experience globally. Often, as Kielburger (2013) argues, these barriers are also associated with young people's disconnection from, and distrust of, the environments in which they live. Meaningful youth engagement that addresses this sense of disconnection is an essential factor in driving epistemic change.

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Acknowledging the importance of recognising young people as pivotal contributors to youth development and epistemic change underscores their inherent right to epistemic recognition and freedom, in turn highlighting their capacity to shape and influence society. In this process, participatory art-based programmes can create an environment in which young people themselves can harness their potential, often unexpressed because of the barriers already mentioned. Such programmes can also push the boundaries of the status quo in knowledge creation. However, as we have also argued, expressing this potential requires an epistemic change that is *driven and supported by* governments, INGOs and civil society *in collaboration with* young people. The potential of entrepreneurial thinking cannot be encouraged in place of providing concrete support for young people and their families. It must be seen as complementary to such support. If this balance is achieved, and as we shall explore in this chapter, such collaborations can be instrumental in rethinking the role of young people in driving (sustainable) socio-economic agendas.

To highlight the role that young people can play in supporting socio-economic development, we draw on three Changing the Story projects as case studies. In these projects, young people positioned themselves as proactive problem solvers who could affect (epistemic) change in their communities. In Chapter 3, when discussing the concept of voice, we introduced Mazzei's (2013) argument that voice is collectively produced, emerging within an intricate network involving human and non-human entities. This perspective goes beyond the traditional notion of voice as an expression of individuality. The projects we showcase in this chapter aim to demonstrate how voice can transcend individualised expression in order to generate collective impact.

Case Study One: Youth-Led Social Enterprises in Malaysia

Our first example is a project created with young people in Malaysia on youth-led social enterprise. Its conception was based on the recognition that, despite the acknowledged significance of youth social entrepreneurship for Malaysia's future in terms of social justice and a sustainable economy, the rates of social entrepreneurship in the country remain surprisingly low (Au et al. 2023). As we have seen elsewhere in this volume, simultaneously deploying civil society and social entrepreneurship discourses in development initiatives has the potential to shift institutional responsibilities onto individuals and communities, reinforcing existing power dynamics and impeding overall well-being. In this context, the project aimed to investigate the lived experiences of young people and how this supported or impeded their ability to become meaningfully involved in social entrepreneurship. It also sought to explore the activities undertaken by youth-led social enterprises and how these activities might contribute to wider civil society.

Methodologically, the project utilised a co-design approach with young social entrepreneurs and incorporated case studies to bring together arts and humanities and social sciences in order to amplify the voices of young people

themselves. The project elucidated how civil society can be moulded with, and for, young people, emphasising their active participation. The aim of this was to establish a supportive ecosystem in which young social entrepreneurs and their social enterprises could successfully address social and economic challenges in sustainable ways for individuals in collaboration with their wider communities.

Case Study Two: *¿Cuál es la Verdad?* (What is the Truth?)

Our second project focused on Quibdó, the capital of Chocó in the Colombian Pacific: a remote area disproportionately affected by armed conflict and home to mainly Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations who face a complex legacy of intersectional inequalities. Here young people identified, and responded to, issues facing their community by exploring the potential of youth-led social entrepreneurship in partnership with communities and civil society organisations. The project, like a number of projects supported by Changing the Story, sought to imagine 'alternative futures', in this case basing its work on extensive data collection with young people in Quibdó. From this study, young co-researchers developed the idea for a social enterprise business following a multi-stakeholder cooperative model for their community. Young people were supported in developing this idea into a pilot project. This led to the creation of a 'cultural restaurant', *Casa Gastro-Cultural OSHUN*, a social enterprise restaurant that was able to provide childcare and cultural activities in the community (e.g. music and dance events) through a cooperative involving key cultural CSOs in Quibdó, thereby localising best practices in social innovation and sustainable economics. Well-aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the restaurant drew on traditional Chocóan cuisine/heritage (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities) and aimed to improve socio-economic conditions (SDG 1: No Poverty; 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), gender equality (SDG 5: Gender Equality) and early childhood education (SDG 4: Quality Education).

Utilising the transrational lens developed in Chapter 3, which engages with the collective dimension of the creation and communication of voice, in this project we see a similar approach being adopted in its core business model. All the economic activities undertaken by the young people must be understood as part of a collective ecosystem of individuals, services and organisations working together to help deliver the project's aims which, in turn, sought to make a useful contribution to the larger aim of delivering the SDGs. The project was instrumental in creating economic opportunities and addressing other intersecting factors considered necessary in this context to support these opportunities (childcare, education, an understanding of local cultural heritage). At the same time, the project showed that young people have a significant social role to play as critical thinkers, change makers and innovators. Helping young people to lead in identifying locally

relevant approaches to challenges empowered them to drive transformative change within their socio-economic ecosystem.

Case Study Three: Street Art to Promote Representation and Epistemic Justice among Marginalised Rural Zimbabwean Youth – Developing the Moringa Industry

In 2019, young people in Binga, Zimbabwe, participated in a street art project to advocate for representation of, and epistemic justice for, marginalised rural Zimbabwean youth, all of whom are part of the Tonga community. The Tonga were displaced from their traditional homeland in Zimbabwe on the banks of the Zambezi River by the government in the 1950s in order to allow for the construction of the Kariba Dam, and they continue to be marginalised within mainstream society today. The project encouraged young Tongans to reflect on, and share, their everyday experiences with, and beyond, their communities. The project initially involved a five-day participatory art workshop with 12 young people, an official from the Basilwizi NGO Trust, and two representatives from the BaTonga Community Museum, both organisations that are dedicated to supporting the human rights, and making more visible the history, of the Tonga people.

Through the workshops, the young people involved sought to visualise their experiences on the edges of Zimbabwean society, creating graffiti paintings mounted on moveable boards. During these workshops, several themes were identified, including poverty and high youth unemployment, which were later incorporated into the graffiti created by the young people. The art produced was then collected together into a travelling exhibition that was shown in three cities across Zimbabwe. At each site where the exhibition was shown youth engaged with key stakeholders, including university lecturers, members of the public and civil servants, to discuss the issues raised by their art. Through this process, the young people acknowledged the importance of their Tongan heritage to their sense of identity and expressed a desire to preserve it. For example, approaches to fishing, food culture and construction were seen as common ways in which Tonga heritage survives in the community experience of the young people involved in the project. Conversations with the youth showed that these activities are often, but could also be further developed as, core income streams for the Tonga community today. Thus, while capturing what the young people valued culturally, the graffiti produced also emphasised the potential skills the young people in this area could draw on and further develop into practical ways of earning a sustainable living. The young people then worked with a group of mentors in order to generate ways in which they could learn more about, and exploit, their cultural heritage in order, on the one hand, to help protect this cultural heritage for future generations and, on the other, to create sustainable social enterprises through which they could support themselves. In so doing, the group actively sought to right the wrongs they felt were being perpetuated against them as a community due

to the fact that their cultural practices and identity continue to be side-lined by mainstream society.

As Changing the Story developed, colleagues working on the street art project came together with other teams working in Southern Africa to share findings. This involved bringing together research from six projects, five in South Africa and one in Zimbabwe. The projects used various creative arts methods, including drama, graffiti, drawing, painting and filmmaking to explore the broader potential for engagement with cultural heritage. All the projects involved significant youth leadership at every stage, from design to dissemination. The projects all shared certain themes and significant issues (e.g. unemployment, poverty and diminishing cultural heritage) crucial to youth development in Southern Africa. However, one of the most significant shared concerns was the need to find ways to identify and integrate ecological heritage into community life.

This led to the creation of a further grassroots pilot project exploring the commercial potential of one particular aspect of the region's common ecological heritage. 'The Transnational and Intergenerational Exploration of Ecological Heritage with Youth in Southern Africa: Gathering Data for Moringa Commercialisation' project uncovered the shared use of the Moringa plant across the region. Historically, Moringa has been widely used for medicinal, nutritional, artistic and economic purposes by rural southern African communities, and it is considered a valuable part of the region's ecological heritage. Although Moringa has many uses and is widely cultivated, intergenerational knowledge of Moringa's use has been negatively affected by apartheid-related forced removals in South Africa and mass resettlements in Zimbabwe, as well as changes in climate and livelihoods caused by climate change in both countries. This project sought to promote the sharing of intergenerational community knowledge about the potential of Moringa in order to stimulate new community-level social enterprises to exploit this very easily cultivated plant. At the same time, the project also facilitated interactions between the young people involved and local decision makers to see how the wider social ecosystem could support this endeavour. Thus, in this project, we see how participatory and creative approaches can start by providing a space for youth to embrace their cultural heritage, in turn using this space to provide a way for young people to reflect upon their present-day needs and to see how this same cultural heritage might ultimately also provide them with opportunities to address these needs.

Moving Beyond Individual Knowledge

All these case studies illustrate the 'ecology of knowledges' de Sousa Santos describes; an ecology that highlights 'the plurality of heterogeneous knowledges and […] the sustained and dynamic interconnections between them without compromising their autonomy' (de Sousa Santos 2007: 66), which in our work we see (when successful) marshalled into the 'ecologies of action'

discussed in Chapter 1. Walker and Boni (2020) argue that a diverse range of voices is needed for such an ecology to succeed, allowing for different perspectives and disagreements to emerge, based on various interpretative resources and practices. By allowing discussion of as many positional objectivities as possible, it is envisaged that the best ideas can organically emerge. All three case studies illustrate how diverse community resources and practices can be integrated in ways that significantly benefit youth. In the South African strand of the Commercialising Moringa project, one young person noted:

> Based on research done in 14 communities around Kruger National Park in South Africa, there was limited youth involvement in the industry. The few available growers were older people, indicating a lack of intergenerational knowledge and skills transfer. After engaging with an expert in rural agricultural training and development, a local business, a local representative from the National Youth Development Agency, the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Affairs, and a botanist with years of experience in the farming and utilisation of Moringa, the youth visited four farmers and processors of Moringa in the region. One of the farms is a multiple portfolio farm with extensive Moringa growing and processing operations, which uses Moringa in homeopathic practice and livestock feeding. Another farm grew and processed Moringa into various medicinal products.
>
> (Changing the Story Southern Africa Youth Documentary 2021)

Through this project, youth were recognised as, and supported to become more active, agents of change that have a significant role to play in the socio-economic development of their respective contexts. Part of this role is about identifying possible interventions for the growing youth unemployment rate, a result of the youth bulge highlighted in Chapter 1. Sustainable interventions might necessitate adopting unconventional strategies in order to draw out learning from non-formal spaces, which should be considered more readily than they currently are as possible and legitimate skills development and knowledge-acquisition routes. One of the young people noted that recognising such opportunities more readily would:

> equip us as young people to be responsible for our societies in different ways, for example, getting income [generating] ideas that could help our society. […] As citizens, it is important for us to improve the quality of our lives and lay a foundation for future generations. We are agents of social change, economic growth and technological innovation.
>
> (Changing the Story Southern Africa Youth Documentary 2021)

To a degree such projects are an 'easy sell' to development agencies in as far as they offer new ways to mitigate what Summers defines as the 'chronic jobless growth' (2014) impacting young people globally. Here, we recall our

discussion in Chapter 1, in which we explored how such projects not only allow the development of basic life skills but also the higher level enterprise skills required to develop new business opportunities that can, moreover, also help to mitigate the risk of young people being forever trapped in entry-level jobs (Summers 2014). That said, and as we also discussed in Chapter 1, to see such projects primarily as part of a skills development agenda could be viewed as a way for society to wipe its hands of the issue of youth un- or underemployment. In this chapter, rather, we wish to explore how a holistic approach to youth development fostered by the arts-based approaches utilised in Changing the Story – which prioritise, not skills development *per se*, but rather the expression of voice – can *also* generate embedded, sustainable opportunities for what might be termed the expression of 'economic voice', which can, in turn, foster collective epistemic justice (Sukarieh and Tannock 2011). Simply establishing opportunities for basic participation, we suggest, is insufficient. Instead, and as we will discuss further here, there is an urgent need to focus on the essential elements of meaningful youth engagement, actively supported by the wider socio-economic infrastructure in which young people live.

With the right support, the case studies outlined here show how young people can use their knowledge, social networks and exposure from participating in these programs to combat economic injustice. In thinking about how best to carry forward the Moringa ideas developed during the early stages of this project, for example, one young person claimed:

> We plan to start championing Moringa production, processing, and utilisation in communities around Kruger Park. We will immediately plant 200 Moringa trees, develop a business plan for submission to relevant stakeholders we have engaged, and create awareness campaigns in our communities about the benefits and uses of Moringa. It is our sincere hope that this initiative will have a significant impact on the resolution of the problem of youth unemployment and intergenerational knowledge transfer.
>
> (Changing the Story Southern Africa Youth Documentary 2021)

The projects described here show the importance young people themselves put on solving urgent socio-economic problems that influence the local and global community, seeing themselves, through their engagement with the Changing the Story programme, as agents of change. If the environment enables young social entrepreneurs and their enterprises to effectively address social and economic issues sustainably, it has the potential to benefit both individuals and communities. However, although youth-led businesses can be valuable as they can give young people opportunities for income generation and platforms to influence society, they do not come without challenges, as noted by a participating local businessman in South Africa:

> Often, young people are passionate about producing a product and need to understand the uptake of that product clearly. Ongoing dialogue with,

> and support from, multiple stakeholders are therefore important, highlighting the importance of continued engagement across and between institutions and groups of stakeholders in youth development.
>
> (Changing the Story Southern Africa Youth Documentary 2021)

Young people cannot be allowed to operate in a vacuum. It is important for them to learn about the value chain of business, even as they start to develop proposals for entrepreneurial ideas. To ensure the long-term success of a project, it is crucial to integrate local ideas and efforts into broader societal support systems. This allows the knowledge acquired from an individual project to be incorporated into a sustainable network of actions that can continue even after the initial financing period of a project is completed. Meaningful involvement and collaboration can result in learning that goes beyond its singular focus, so facilitating the dissemination of best practices to other organisations where it can also be beneficial and help to promote epistemic fairness.

If we are to see these projects as examples of ecologies of action driven by what we have defined as transrational youth voice, it is essential to ensure the active participation of *all* stakeholders, including youth and community members. And if this involvement is to be meaningful, it necessarily should result from a careful process of negotiation with all these same stakeholders, rather than solely relying on the perspective of young people. From a transrational standpoint, it is evident that tackling the economic disparities faced by young people cannot be accomplished in isolation but rather necessitates an approach that encompasses the inequities they encounter in a range of interconnected spheres, political, cultural and social. External influences can range from broad issues, such as poverty, race and ethnicity, to very local experiences, such as teenage pregnancy, domestic violence and early marriage. This means that efforts to address one dimension ought to consider other elements, as their interaction can impact levels of engagement and the specific actions young people are in a position to take. Moreover, while addressing youth empowerment involves taking a holistic approach that draws on many perspectives, it is also important not to forget that the motivation and aims of young people participating in such projects, too, cannot be predetermined.

Linking Youth Engagement, Participatory Arts and Development

A holistic view of development is necessary, as our operationalisation of transrational voice emphasises: all learning happens through dynamic interaction and engagement with one's surroundings. Hence, Positive Youth Development (PYD), as discussed in Chapter 1 as an approach to youth development, remains useful, as it pays attention to all dimensions of a young person's development (opportunities), including the economic. In all our case studies, socio-economic inclusion emerged as one of the critical areas young people felt needed to be recognised. The expression of young people's voice through

collectively conceptualised and socially relevant programmes demonstrates how the participatory nature of projects can also (but not solely) re-engage young people in socio-economic development. Engagement with young people across the Changing the Story programme points to their potential to be significant players in local development, despite their continued frequent exclusion from development agendas. Building on our earlier discussions of epistemic justice, young people's contribution to socio-economic development expands their epistemic reach by drawing on locally shared and collectively envisioned socio-economic practices. These practices highlight how youth voice, if understood transrationally, can be a force in challenging what we conceptualise as socio-economic epistemic injustice. Here, we understand 'injustice' to mean both being shut out of socio-economic activities and neglecting the specific intersectional challenges young people might face in a given community.

In Chapter 4, we explored ways in which participatory arts approaches can help address the intersectional nature of these challenges, helping young people grow personally by allowing them to express who they are, helping them to understand and influence their environment and relate to a more extensive human experience than they may have time and space to inhabit in their everyday lives. The participatory process emphasises how important it is to treat everyone involved in the project with respect and as the carriers of knowledge and expertise, from youth workers and art facilitators to the CSOs involved and, of course, the young people themselves. An inclusive strategy can help foster long-term sustainability by ensuring initiatives are embedded within a larger support network. Thus, a holistic and systemic approach to youth development is required. This involves engaging with not just young people but also their families, communities and organisations (be they governmental or from civil society) that make up the wider ecosystem within which they all operate. Projects like those in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Cambodia and Malaysia outlined above strive for holistic youth development designed to foster epistemological, and so epistemic, inclusion.

Participatory Arts for Socio-Economic Justice

Having established in Chapter 3 that theorisations of voice need to move away from what is sayable to what can be fully 'heard' collaboratively, or 'socially', within the types of ecologies of action the work explored in this study seeks to promote, the questions we ask in the rest of this chapter are: what might this look like economically, and what are the implications of this for epistemic justice? The kind of epistemic shift we are looking to promote seeks to redefine which voices matter in society. Such an approach, which accounts for a collective of voices in which young people are equal partners, has the potential to shape the programmes designed to improve young people's position in society. Thus, the benefits of participatory methods, particularly by way of creating spaces for deliberation, participation and making contributions based on young peoples' lived experiences, allow us to return to, and re-think, Fricker's

question, first raised in Chapter 1: what counts as knowledge and, in addition, *whose knowledge counts?* (2015) (see also Chambers 1996). The question of who gets to contribute *epistemically* to the development of shared knowledge and, in turn, how this relates to the creation of shared social understandings of justice, remains crucial in this context.

Although, in the project with Tonga youth in Binga, young people mostly expressed personal experiences of being a young person in the area, through the collective and participatory nature of the project as a whole, including the multi-city exhibition, knowledge was created and shared through the construction of a collective narrative that captured the transrational processes of voice production. Each of the 12 young people involved worked on an individual theme. However, these themes were informed by dialogue and creative reflection across the group and captured holistically in the graffiti, a process that was heavily informed by the group's collective social, cultural and political environment. The result of this collective endeavour was a shared sense amongst these young people of themselves as ambassadors, or representatives, of their communities, who not only had a growing sense of their own individual capabilities, but also of the issues, practices and values they shared, and how they could work together to effect change collectively. In the project with Tonga youth, as well as in the other Changing the Story projects we draw on here for our case studies, this was frequently linked to the question of addressing unjust past experiences, which became critical in challenging past and, in turn, present exclusionary practices. In so doing, projects sought to generate better, inclusive practices that could ultimately generate epistemic justice.

The arts in these projects created spaces that could be used to model more inclusive, epistemically just, forms of participation for groups that are systemically excluded from mainstream culture. In particular, in the case of the Tonga project, the utilisation of participatory arts as a process of transformation reflected young people's aspiration to reclaim knowledge amidst oppressive neocolonial and patriarchal structures (Barry and Keane 2019; Bishop 2012). In addition, it helped to amplify youth voices and foster the creation of inclusive transrational knowledge that both allowed for the expression of, and fostering a culture of, listening to the voices of people. As Mkwananzi and Cin (2022) argue, participatory arts can assist in addressing a variety of challenges, including the suppression of youth voices due to political and cultural exclusion. Ultimately, the participatory and creative engagement processes explored here can help to advance social, political and economic justice and, consequently, can help to foster epistemic justice.

Remaining for the moment with the economic implications of epistemic justice, in Cerovac's (2018) thesis, which argues that what he calls 'epistemic liberalism' is necessary to support a market economy based on individual (or group) autonomy, economic freedom becomes a proxy for political freedom. In epistemic liberalism, emphasis is placed on the necessary conditions for knowledge to be used efficiently in complex environments that can support

the inclusion of marginalised communities (2018: 83). Knowledge must not only be acknowledged but also utilised to support (inclusive) action. In the projects discussed in this chapter, we see how ecologies of action are also designed to support economic freedom through the amplification of youth voice and the ways in which this can create opportunities for young people to generate self-reliance and to see themselves as agents of change. Moreover, such projects can also help young people understand what constitutes epistemic justice. That is, they are designed to help young people to understand how they are being excluded and how they can understand the role that the different institutions and procedures that pertain within their communities either promote or delimit this exclusion, in turn helping them to see and the ways in which justice itself is conceptualised. However, such projects still only provide tools for young people to seek economic freedom. They do not remove the fundamental, systemic barriers young people face if they are to achieve such freedom. That said, such projects do, at least, show that young people can legitimately possess economic information and ideas and have the capacity to make the most of this information.

Economic-epistemic injustice is a product of disregarding young people as holders of knowledge due to the structural constraints they face, which, in so doing, delimits their freedom to act on what they genuinely value. Several structural factors, such as age, ethnicity and familial background, may interact with broader structural conditions, such as economic policies, to perpetuate young people's continued marginalisation. We have argued in earlier chapters that participatory arts can support individuals and groups to reflect, explore and express themselves, thereby addressing inclusion issues. The projects discussed in this chapter illustrate how both the process of knowledge creation and the products of such projects can be instrumental in at least identifying solutions to social issues/problems when responding to young people's demands to commercialise, in particular, aspects of their heritage.

The Role of Youth in Contributing to Socio-Economic Justice

As interest in creative research projects across the globe is increasing (Florida et al. 2015; Grand & Weckerle 2018; Fazlagić & Skikiewicz 2019), the development of 'soft skills', such as verbal communication, presentation skills or projecting self-confidence, is increasingly being viewed as equally essential and complementary to the development of technical skills, particularly for young people coming from low-income backgrounds who might be lacking these skills (Pauw et al. 2008). Through creative and participatory projects, young people can develop these skills and, in the process, create income-generating opportunities for themselves (Rankin et al. 2012). The three case study projects presented in this chapter demonstrate the value of smaller scale, incremental changes that can be generated towards addressing these skills needs. The space these projects create for empowerment and action, however individualised or localised, can contribute to a broader culture of epistemic justice. The pockets

of change generated by such work, if nurtured within a sustainable ecology of action, have the potential to spread into other contexts, and thus, over time, to effect larger scale change built on the lived experience of young people, supporting young people to be recognised, and indeed recognise themselves, as social actors in their own right. Having young people engage and act locally, and at a micro-scale, recognises their legitimacy as holders of knowledge and can create the conditions for more youth-focussed forms of engagement. Such conditions help young people to begin imagining (economic) futures that they themselves can own and drive, in turn also generating potential markets for this same knowledge, as these same young people may well be the key economic 'consumers' in the future for the kinds of products they wish to produce and that map on to their expectations and values. If we want decisions (both individual and collective) and policies (both local and national) to be inclusive of the whole population, and thus more epistemically just, we should encourage participation in decision-making processes by people from different backgrounds with diverse knowledge that can be collectively brought to bear on a given problem.

We noted in Chapter 3 that acknowledging contextual diversity among young people across regions, and the diversity of the (types of) knowledge held by young people, becomes easier if we adopt a transrational approach to understanding what knowledge is and what makes it 'count'. If we take an inclusive approach that accepts the ostensible contradictions and tensions in what we see as knowledge, adopting a process of 'learning with and through difference', we not only create opportunities for young people to speak, but also for their voice to be heard, understood and acted upon. Walker and Boni (2020: 13) state that we do not develop alone 'but in relationships of diversity with others'. Therefore, what we might call one's epistemic well-being – that is, the extent to which a person experiences an inclusive, epistemically just environment where their knowledge is valued – should be understood as interwoven with the abilities of others. If epistemic justice is to be achieved, the realisation and acknowledgement of the different knowledges possessed by young people need to generate a space to address the hermeneutical and testimonial injustices experienced in and by communities.

Through participatory approaches, young people can become knowledge carriers, directly challenging their epistemic exclusion. As suggested in our introduction, well-managed participatory spaces embrace, and function according to, a three-phased process of (1) deliberating on, (2) participating in, and (3) contributing to knowledge creation. With regard to our case studies in this chapter, this is related particularly, but not solely, to economic knowledge creation. In turn, these projects, and the art they produce, also provide ways of reframing how people 'see' the young people involved, allowing them to be considered producers/artists and not 'simply' as young people who come from, or are solely defined by being part of, a particular age group, race, gender or class. They can come to be seen, rather, as people worthy of investment, of skills training and as people who can themselves contribute to the economic

development of their community, rather than being an 'issue' that needs to be addressed, or a net drain on that same community. Our case studies demonstrate that, despite being on the margins, individuals and communities usually have access to resources that have the potential to support the development of these communities. However, they need to be recognised *as* resources. The examples of the three projects now lead us to explore in more detail our three-part epistemic typology of deliberation, participation and contribution, informed by how we understand participatory arts and how they can create spaces where young people can participate meaningfully in challenging unjust socio-economic structures.

Epistemic Deliberation

The challenges societies face with regard to creating inclusive, epistemically just knowledge economies involve addressing the broader question of how large and complex societies can acquire, organise and disperse knowledge to be helpful to the whole community without one part of this society excluding, or withholding knowledge from, another (Cerovac 2018). According to Benson (2021), the value of deliberation lies in its epistemic and problem-solving functions, combined with the benefits that arise from the pooling of information from different backgrounds and individual experiences. Landemore (2013) describes deliberation as a collective problem-solving process in which participants seek to reach the best possible solutions in unstable political environments. The three examples we are using in this chapter show how young people's actions to address the challenges they face in their communities followed a process of deliberation where they carefully considered the issues that needed attention. For example, in the Malaysia project, after carefully considering the factors influencing young people's involvement in social entrepreneurship, the project adopted a collective approach to share how civil society can be shaped with and for young people, emphasising the value of their active participation.

For Fricker (2021), an epistemic approach to deliberation draws upon a variety of knowledges, experiences and understandings of the world and the everyday circumstances of people's lives. This is precisely what our projects demonstrate. Collective knowledge and experiences shared by multiple stakeholders in these kinds of projects focussed on making socio-economic interventions become the bedrock for how such projects understand sustainability. According to Benson (2021), a precise explanation of how diversity produces epistemic (and sustainable) benefits that extend beyond vague appeals to the benefits of deliberation on 'different views' or 'ways of thinking' reveals that these benefits are realised when applied to challenges that are cognisant of the real-life complexities and contradictions experienced by the individuals who make up a given community (2021: 8258). The Changing the Story projects demonstrate, through their multi-stakeholder collaborative nature, ways in which participation (dialogue, action and learning, as discussed here)

has a range of meanings that can be more or less inclusive but that can ultimately still support inclusivity (Walker and Boni 2020: 15). For example, in the Moringa project, interaction with policymakers was limited to a basic level (one-day engagement). Yet, incorporating their perspectives and input was crucial for mapping the entrepreneurial direction taken by the young people involved. Over time, the focus of these projects on the active promotion of inclusivity created space for deliberative decision-making, which is an essential aspect of epistemic justice in the contexts in which the young people involved in these projects live.

Epistemic Participation

One of the fundamental ways in which unequal relationships and statuses of all kinds are expressed is through unequal epistemic participation. To address the injustice of unequal partnerships, spaces need to be created that enhance people's freedoms, including opportunities for participation. Broadly, Changing the Story aimed to support and understand processes that can contribute towards the building of inclusive societies with and for young people, combining this with an understanding that sustained justice is most effectively built through collaborative participation. According to Frediani (2015), such participation disrupts the 'passivity' of communities, or their perceived 'silence', encouraging those involved to become active participants in creating knowledge. Building on Hayek's work, Cerovac (2018) suggests that we examine two important ideas regarding the nature of society and the ways in which we understand economic (and indeed political) knowledge in order to achieve this level of participation. Firstly, the relevant knowledge needed for economic or political decision-making is not necessarily integrated in an epistemically just manner in society. It might instead be held by a small group of people dispersed among the population in small, often inconsistent ways. Consequently, we must find appropriate terms for the decision-making process that can allow for the harnessing of this knowledge, integrating it into the wider knowledge economy in order to foster a culture of good, equitable decision-making that can consistently achieve epistemically just political and economic results (Cerovac 2018). In this regard, it is important to emphasise that there is not necessarily one fixed way to approach the decision-making process. The process will always be contingent on the nature of the group of people involved in making the decision. As argued in Chapter 3, if participation is to be meaningful, its creative, embodied and dialogical dimensions must be emphasised (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008). During a dialogical process, knowledge can be generated collaboratively with the young people and other stakeholders, allowing them to collectively set the agenda. If a process is working well, it can help to build the confidence of all participants (particularly young people who may have not previously been involved in such a process) so that they can make (and they can see that they can make) a significant contribution to solving complex social and socio-economic challenges. The *¿Cuál es la Verdad?*

project, for example, established a platform that extends beyond imagining alternative futures for young people, transforming ideas into an actionable project. The establishment of the cultural restaurant by the local youth showed the epistemic potential of deliberation and participation, highlighting their ability to creatively address socio-economic challenges within their community. In this case, the collective aspect of the transrational lens went beyond deliberation and participation to identifying a concrete intervention that acknowledges and utilises the interconnectedness of the cultural, economic and spiritual dimensions of the local community.

Epistemic Contribution

The capacity for epistemic contribution involves articulating one's epistemic perspective and conveying personal beliefs and interpretations through communication. When this capability is accessible to everyone, it forms the foundation for fostering an epistemic relationship grounded in equality. Fricker (2015) argues that frustration with epistemic contributions indicates wider structural inequalities that are restricting participation. Thus, when considering an epistemic contribution, it is necessary to consider the diverse abilities and opportunities people possess as individuals and as a collective. Since young people are frequently not considered to be legitimate contributors to the creation of knowledge, their capacities are frequently overlooked. Young people in the case study projects described here shared economic ideas and the knowledge they possess, be that generated via formal education or experiential learning. This is knowledge which, more often than not, is not considered (epistemically) to *be* knowledge, and certainly not knowledge that can contribute to social development and/or economic liberation. Each team member in each project brought fundamental abilities that, once collected together through the processes of deliberation and participation, created an opportunity to drive social, and ultimately economic change. This can be seen, for example, in the potential of Moringa commercialisation project in South African and Zimbabwe and the *Casa Gastro-Cultural Oshun* social enterprise restaurant in Colombia. While the level of active participation in the projects depended on each project member's role and responsibilities, the conceptualisation of the socio-economic interventions was based on bringing together a *collective* of skills and knowledge from multiple partners. Such a process can, directly or indirectly, make a significant epistemic contribution, especially in contexts where such opportunities have been less evident. All the case studies described here involved a range of stakeholders: young people, other members of their communities, industry experts, local businesses and civil society organisations (Figure 5.1).

Each stakeholder's skills and knowledge were crucial in effectively addressing the specific social issues highlighted in their respective contexts. For instance, in the Moringa project, the participation of commercial farmers and local community entrepreneurs provided valuable insights to the young people involved on Moringa cultivation, the stages of production and industry

Figure 5.1 Visitors to the Street Art Exhibition at the Midlands State University in Gweru.

policies (Changing the Story 2022). Meanwhile, the Social Innovation Movement, a civil society organisation, amplified the voices of young social entrepreneurs in Youth-led Social Enterprises in Malaysia. Similarly, the *¿Cuál es la Verdad?* project in Quibdó involved young individuals, communities and civil society organisations in identifying strategies to meet community needs.

Across these examples, a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach engaged different levels of participation throughout the various project stages. For instance, and as already noted, policy representatives joined a one-day event in the Moringa project aimed at exploring Moringa's potential value chain as a catalyst for youth development. Despite being a one-time event, the involvement of this constituency in discussing issues relevant to the young people and their communities not only fostered new knowledge generation that might otherwise not have been considered. It also created an environment for the collective expression of this community's voice that was both aware of, and could 'speak to', its wider context. From a transrational perspective, the informal educational approach of this project opened up diverse pathways for translational learning, new knowledge generation and ultimately the advancement of epistemic justice.

Socio-Economic Participation and Epistemic Justice in Complex Societies

Cerovac (2018) states that the following factors should be considered when thinking about economic inclusion and justice: economic knowledge is subjective, making it impossible for any one individual to have all the relevant expertise required for decision-making; actions (and beliefs about what is appropriate in the future) depend on the actions of others that are potentially unseen and unknown; economic knowledge is also held in the conditions of isolation. In other words, knowledge relevant to any significant socio-economic decision is going to be widely dispersed among the population, with everyone holding only a portion of it. The idea that no individual or small group can possess all the economic knowledge necessary for any community takes us back to our conceptualisation of transrational voice, which accepts, and indeed embraces, emerging tensions and contradictions when one seeks to learn with and through difference.

Confronting social inequalities directly, by allowing participants to work with other community members without worrying about what different groups may think (Bacharach 2018) constitutes the core of participatory projects. Our three case studies all suggest that young people are aware of their and others' roles in local development and reflect the need to embrace the diversity at work in each group. The Malaysian social enterprise project sought to draw together a diverse ecosystem of projects working with local (cultural) assets that could provide participants with a wide range of models and resources they could use in order to support the sustainability of their work. The goal of the *Casa Gastro-Cultural OSHUN* social innovation project in Colombia was to set up a social enterprise restaurant that supports various cultural activities in the community through a cooperative model involving key cultural CSOs in Quibdó. In so doing, it seeks to attract and support people with a range of interests and competing social needs (be that training or childcare). At the same time, the project

aims to localise best practices in social innovation and sustainable economy. The Commercialisation of Moringa project in Zimbabwe draws on local cultural heritage. It illustrates how young people are connected to their past and present and identifies the meaning of this connection for their futures, without disregarding the heritage of others. As a result, and as Graham and Vergunst (2019: 2) also note, the young people involved in these three projects negotiate the preservation of their heritage *with* that of others.

In essence, the projects show that connecting local meaning, values and resources with participatory approaches to development can help re-envision new strategies for identifying sustainable and context-specific solutions to the socio-economic challenges young people face. Indigenous Moringa trees, for example, are a plentiful and accessible local resource to which young people attach meaning and value, both culturally and, through its use in their cultural production, economically. The young people involved in the project explored a range of activities exploiting different parts of the tree, from basket weaving to using it in agriculture or medicine. This approach aligns with McGrath and Powell's (2016) suggestion of having poverty alleviation interventions emphasising life-enhancing, environmentally sensitive and intergenerationally focused skills. Through participatory processes, it is possible to identify locally appropriate economic skills and strategies, even in contexts where young people are facing extensive social pressure. The use of participatory arts in the developmental process undertaken by young people in the Moringa project reflects particularly clearly the Tonga youths' aspiration, and ability, to reclaim knowledge in the face of oppressive structures (Barry and Keane 2019; Bishop 2012).

Let us now consider the extent to which the (socio-economic) success of individual plans or aspirations is dependent on the plans of many other individuals, as suggested by Cerovac (2018), once again reflecting our collaborative, transrational, approach to the expression of youth voice. Although young people may have individual aspirations, and face individual challenges, solutions identified through participatory projects can often have broader, collective, impact. In Zimbabwe, one youth leader emphasised:

> Previous workshops conducted in 2019 and 2021 highlighted the issue of unemployment among youth, particularly in Binga. With the Moringa project, we need an agricultural-based approach to promote youth participation in Moringa cultivation processes which will be in tandem with the 2030 development agenda for sustainable development. This stresses the urgent need to take collaborative action and pursue policies directed at transformational change.
>
> (Changing the Story Southern Africa Youth Documentary 2021)

The collaborative action in relation to the youth participation mentioned here requires multi-level mobilisation across and between stakeholders to challenge socio-economic barriers in these communities, since unemployment impacts

both the individual and the nation. On one level, young people can mobilise themselves as a group to bring core issues to the attention *of* stakeholders other than themselves. On another level, young people can mobilise *with* other stakeholders interested, and invested, in supporting a particular cause, be that community members, local organisations or national and international NGOs.

Thinking about whose – and what – voice matters in the complex 'ecologies of action' such projects generate, and need, to achieve their goals, requires us to look for alternative models that promote economic opportunities and youth-inclusive decision-making processes. An important element of the alternative models generated by our case study projects is the creative, participatory spaces they produce that allow groups to deliberate, participate and contribute to development issues that are relevant to them. Participatory approaches enable individuals to express themselves in ways that draw on society's broader influences. All three of our case study projects highlight this, in particularly showing how all the art produced reflects the interplay of the cultures and heritages at play in the society in which young people live. Crucially, this art does not only reflect, but also challenges, longstanding prejudices at work in these same societies. Returning to our three examples, it is evident that creative and locally rooted projects can transcend ecologies of (social) knowledge and move into ecologies of (economic) action. Given these findings, it would appear clear that cultural and creative practices can enhance and strengthen local sustainability, resilience and holistic development (see also Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2020: 8). It is within these spaces that young people can find their place, allowing them to contribute to forward-thinking initiatives and programmes that have the potential to generate epistemic justice.

We have suggested that voice is both individually uttered and collectively produced and that it can also account for the complexity of learning and knowing as a process inseparable from being in the world (Harvey et al. 2021). It is within this context that the elements of deliberation, participation and contribution become important for understanding how voice, beyond utterance, can result in collective agency to address local challenges. The typology explored in this chapter helps us to understand youth voice through an epistemic lens. The three case studies, as well as the work of the Youth Research Board discussed in Chapter 4, illustrate how voice, operating within and through these three elements, has the potential to support ecologies of action that are at least potentially sustainable, being rooted in the lived experience and cultural heritage of the young people involved. In these instances, the power of youth voice can be determined by how the young people themselves, government and relevant policies negotiate the fluid boundaries between and among the complex community of agents engaged in the aesthetic, affective and collective dimensions of voice in all its transrational *(un)sayability*.

Linking the epistemic justice typology with transrational voice, all the projects discussed here generated creative and engaging spaces that allowed for collective deliberation on how best to challenge the status quo. That said, considering the broader inequalities at play in the conflict-affected contexts in which Changing the Story worked, one must, nonetheless, manage one's expectations. Epistemic injustice cannot be universally addressed overnight (Walker and Boni 2020: 17). Instead, in complex contexts that often exhibit intractable social issues, it might help to make comparative assessments of where a project has got to in terms of addressing such injustice by asking questions such as: how far did the projects advance universal participation? What concrete opportunities did they provide for young people? How did the project seek to generate an enabling culture for young people to reflect on and celebrate their achievements, and how far did this allow them to reflect upon their place in their society and their ability to contribute their knowledge and so to increase the potential for inclusive epistemic justice? The participatory processes informing the projects presented here at least allowed the young people involved to decide, in collaboration with the other stakeholders, which issues and questions they wanted to respond to. Crocker and Benson calls this 'deliberative democracy', where individuals and groups decide upon the questions they wish to address based on their values (Crocker 2008: 295; Benson 2021). In the deliberative spaces created in our case studies, it is young people who decide upon the fundamental epistemic questions. It is they who decide what is to be decided upon. As Frediani notes, while young people themselves might feel that a given process does not necessarily lead to the best choice ultimately being made every time, the opportunity to discuss is crucial, allowing them to at least reflect upon, and build the skills necessary to separate what 'better' or 'worse' choices look like (2015: 8). In our case study projects, opportunities were created for young people to learn from each other, share knowledge and make an epistemic contribution, which ought to be seen as a foundational opportunity for all young people (see Walker 2006; Mathebula 2019).

The collective problem-solving process in which youth deliberate, participate and contribute to identifying the best possible solutions takes us to a key point in our work: that the expression of voice includes not only the explicitly 'sayable' but is also enacted through the art produced by the young people involved. While epistemic deliberation, participation and contribution are critical in amplifying and foregrounding youth voices, in some contexts, especially environments where freedom of participation is not encouraged, individuals or groups may not equally contribute to deliberation and participation. Consequently, we do not suggest that projects must necessarily follow a linear process of deliberation, participation and contribution, nor that one of these elements automatically leads to the other. Instead, although all aspects are essential, sometimes projects might only enable deliberation and participation but not contribution. This does not mean that such projects have failed, or that they have not contributed to epistemic justice. Instead, it reinforces the

potential significance of continuous engagement, often through collaborative spaces, to create an environment that encourages ongoing reflections on ways to address issues facing communities, so that the goal of achieving epistemic justice might at least remain as a guiding light for the participatory process.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how some young people from across the projects supported by Changing the Story have been addressing the socio-economic challenges they face by examining approaches to social enterprise. In so doing, they demonstrate how these approaches have the potential to promote youth empowerment and inclusion. Although young people frequently have the necessary personal capabilities in terms of ideas, vision and motivation to contribute to development in their respective contexts, they often do not have the opportunity to make the most of this potential. We have demonstrated in our case studies that young people often wish to be critical contributors to socio-economic development, and that participatory creative practices can provide ways for young people to make such a contribution. In particular, our case studies suggest that embedding cultural heritage into this approach can help to develop locally appropriate skills which can support meaningful, culturally specific, community engagement which can, in time, make a significant contribution to economic-epistemic justice.

As we conclude, it is useful to broaden our focus, picking up on our discussion in Chapter 2, where we explored the barriers faced by young people at the macro level, as reflected in the ambitions of the UN SDGs. Rather than focussing here on the problems young people face in their marginalisation, and specifically their exclusion from epistemic justice, this chapter has looked at the potential for young people to play a key role in the development process. Focusing on the contribution that they can make to economic-epistemic knowledge allows us to reconceptualise young people not as a 'problem' that must be addressed but, in line with our earlier discussion of PYD, as the carriers of crucial knowledge and skills that are required if the SDGs have any hope of being achieved.

Through the examples provided here, this chapter has challenged the long-standing perception of youth as passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, through our transrational understanding of voice as a collectively produced driver of change, it emphasises the role of young people as agentic co-creators, as well as critical users, of knowledge. That said, and as we have also argued throughout this volume, they cannot do this on their own. Valuing young people as key players in development is crucial. However, they must be brought together as equal partners within a wider ecology of action that draws on, and respects, multiple knowledge creators and values diversity in interpersonal interactions. Finally, we should also note that there remains a key challenge with regard to the question of sustainability in such projects. As we have seen, local participatory initiatives often take the form of small

grassroots initiatives which intentionally seek to engage specific communities in the pursuit of bottom-up solutions to local problems. We have argued that it is important for such initiatives always to be embedded into broader societal support structures, ensuring that such projects are built into a sustainable ecological model of action that will last longer than the initial funding period. The challenge remains, however, that if/as a project becomes embedded within a larger structure, the voices of some stakeholders (such as young people) might once again start to be drowned out. In this chapter, we have pointed to some interesting case studies that have attempted to address this issue. But how sustainable will these projects be in the long term, and how can epistemic justice be hardwired into the very DNA of the ecologies of action within which they are embedded? This remains to be seen.

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6 The Transrational, Education and Social Change

We have already found that young people across the globe are dissatisfied with their education systems. In our penultimate chapter, we contextualise this to examine how formal education systems have limited the 'sayable' in some of the Changing the Story project contexts. Young people themselves highlight the dangers of these restrictions, and we will explore how participatory arts projects – themselves often understandable as non-formal forms of education – can enable transrational voice to speak to, and within, these restrictions. Participatory arts in education can enable affective encounters and prompt young participants to reflect on their own positionality in society, working as pockets of action that can change how young people engage in the world. Young people have also used the voice created through these affective encounters to call for action, amidst the social and political constraints they face on a daily basis.

The '(Un)sayable' in Formal Education

> This booklet aims to look into how oppressive structures continue to perpetuate inequalities in the current education system
>
> (Does the Education System Equip us for our Future? pocket book)

We begin this chapter by returning to the work of the Youth Research Board (YRB). As discussed in Chapter 4, part way through their engagement in Changing the Story, the YRB divided into subgroups, to work on campaigns relating to what they had identified as the key themes to be emerging from the wider project. One of these groups named themselves the 'Creative Education Corner', focusing on current issues and challenges in formal education systems, and the potential of creativity to address these. The above quotation can be found on the front cover of an interactive booklet that this group developed, entitled *Does the education system equip us for our future*. Resting below this title and above the quotation is a raised fist – the globally recognisable protest salute symbolising resistance and solidarity. Clasped within this raised fist is a pencil, and underneath, the hashtag #Educationforall. In global development

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circles, education for all, as a slogan, tends to reflect campaigns for universal *access* to education. Here, the YRB extends, or subverts, this meaning, to question whether those who are in school receive a suitable, socially and politically relevant education.

Challenges to epistemic justice within education often centre around questions of whose narratives, experiences and knowledges are represented and embedded in the curricula and pedagogies of formal education systems. Formal education systems are historically renowned for embedding, reinforcing and reproducing the status quo (following Bordieu and Passeron 1990) – meaning that formal education systems tend to reflect the practices and experiences of the dominant, or majority, group in society. Many education systems across the world also continue to be shaped by the legacies of colonialism and authoritarianism, in which education systems 'fulfilled the imperial goal of educating the people of the colonies without emic perspectives' (Parashar and Shulz 2021: 876). Education systems therefore often continue to promote cultural imperialism, and teach with both pedagogical practices and content that lack relevance to the communities they are working within.

In their booklet, the Creative Education Corner examined how capitalism is reproduced and legitimised through classroom practices. They write:

> It is not coincidental that working class people usually have less education and have often received poorer quality education. In many ways, education prepares people for the jobs they will do. They learn skills, attitudes and values, which are relevant to their work situations. They learn their place in the general social arrangement.
>
> (Does the Education System Equip us for our Future? pocket book)

While these Marxist and Socialist readings of education and class are applied throughout this booklet, it is interesting to note that the booklet also frequently refers, specifically, to the education system in South Africa, where the legacies of apartheid continue to have deep impacts on society. Under apartheid – as the group itself highlights – the education system prepared learners differently for the positions they were supposed to occupy in society based on their race. The black population were forced into an inferior and discriminatory education system, which excluded them from participating in the modern economy and from participating in politics (Barrios-Tao et al. 2017; Soudien 2007). The booklet goes on to examine the hidden curriculum in education – that which is not formally taught in education systems but is implied through teaching and classroom practices, including the norms, values and ideologies that are shared in education spaces. The YRB reflect on this in terms of how students are taught to treat authority figures, about what happens if young people break rules, that work should be individual, and that 'we learn that people aren't equal in society'.

That education can perpetuate inequalities and epistemic injustices is well theorised and was a recurring issue throughout many of the Changing the Story projects. Education practices can stifle youth voice by limiting critical

engagement, or being generally unsuited to learner needs. The banking approach to learning – coined by Paulo Freire to depict approaches in which teachers 'deposit' knowledge into students – remains common across the world, driven, in part, by the legacy of colonial education systems. Such an approach is also often prescriptive of wider socio-economic issues in schools, where teachers are provided with minimal, if any, training, teach to very large cohorts of students, and are significantly underpaid. Such pedagogical approaches, and school conditions, make it very difficult to teach in nuanced ways which can empower learners and embed critical thinking practices. However, there may also be societal or political drivers for why the place of critical skills development in a given education system is limited. One Changing the Story researcher stated in reference to Rwanda that while critical thinking skills are ostensibly encouraged, young people 'can only ask certain types of questions […] you should question someone who is, say, spreading what would be called genocide ideology, so the double genocide narrative for example, but you shouldn't maybe ask questions about why is it that adults make so many decisions for young people'. This results in 'double messages […] that must make it extremely hard for young people to navigate' (Interview Z1031 Rwanda).

Furthermore, the learning that takes place in formal education can result in direct tensions arising with cultural practices. The 'Tribal Education Methodology' project, for example, worked with young people from Adivasis communities (indigenous tribes) in the Wayanad District of India. A researcher on the project highlighted the 'disconnect between society, family and the young learner' (Interview Z1014 India). This disconnect can cause difficulties for young people both in schools – where they cannot associate with the histories and narratives being taught – and in their homes – where they cannot connect their cultural practices and histories with what they have learnt in school. The researcher explained that 'currently in the school environment, as well as in the pedagogical environment there is no space for cultural expression' (Interview Z1014 India). This has fed into the disproportionate number of out-of-school Adivasis youth, as parents do not see the relevance of formal education for their children, and the related issues of high levels of youth unemployment, early pregnancy and early marriage (Menon 2019: 2).

What is and is not taught in school has important consequences in relation to the conflict-affected contexts in which Changing the Story was working. In their key text, Kenneth Bush and Diana Saltarelli (2000) demonstrate that education can have two faces in relation to conflict: on the one hand, education can reinforce and exacerbate inequalities within a society that lead to direct violence. This is often done through processes that are themselves epistemically unjust and restrict the sayable, promoting further and wider epistemic injustice, including through excluding the experiences, histories and languages of certain societal groups from the education system, or actively manipulating curricula in order to promote discrimination and hatred of these groups. On the other hand, education can work to address these inequalities, promoting inclusivity, respect and tolerance, thereby mitigating the causes and effects of violent conflict and promoting, instead, peacebuilding.

In Changing the Story, those involved frequently highlighted that in formal education past national or local conflicts are either not addressed, are not addressed in ways that are meaningful to young people and/or exclude narratives from certain – often marginalised – groups. In Kosovo, for example, as well as believing that their education did not equip them with the skills they needed to succeed in life, as discussed in Chapter 2 (and echoing a 2019 Youth Survey carried out in the country that found only 23% of young people were satisfied with the quality of formal education they had received (Rrumbullaku 2019), young people expressed dissatisfaction with the way they were taught about the history of conflict in the country. They described this education as 'blurry', 'superficial' and 'washed', leaving them with little understanding of the processes and politics that led to the outbreak of violent conflict in the country and the lived experiences of people at the time (Hodgkinson 2022).

In Nepal, one of the researchers involved in Changing the Story noted a similar engagement with the past in formal education processes: 'Many stories or issues [relating to] conflict are not addressed in the formal education – it's still not incorporated. No stories, nothing is there – because [the] curriculum is kind of silent about the armed conflict' (Interview Z1042 Nepal). Similarly, in Cambodia, participants on the Changing the Story programme were uncertain about the ramifications of the genocide, beyond surface-level dates and figures, resulting in uncertainties about the lead-up to the takeover of the Khmer Rouge and the role of different past and current actors within the genocide (Cooke et al. 2022).

There are a number of practical constraints that limit how conflict is taught in the classroom that were found throughout Changing the Story. Severely overcrowded classrooms, and undertrained and underpaid teachers, limit the possibilities of providing in-depth and nuanced lessons. Curriculum revisions may only be undertaken periodically, and therefore, it can be years, if not decades, before a curriculum is updated to provide lessons on recent events. And teachers themselves may have personally experienced the conflict on which they are expected to teach; in Kosovo, some participants highlighted that they had teachers completely skip over discussing the conflict, due to the personal trauma they had experienced at the time (Hodgkinson 2022).

There can also be significant political constraints on what and how histories are taught in many of the places where Changing the Story worked. This can include contention over which version of history – whose story – should be told through formal education, which can mean discussion of the past is simply avoided altogether. As one researcher in Nepal explained:

> There's a lot of debate inside the country – which narratives or which stories we should include […] So there's no agreement. That's why they just prefer not to have it [in the curriculum]. Rather than having the conflicting stories.
>
> (Interview Z1042 Nepal)

In Cambodia, too, teachers face severe restrictions when discussing 'sensitive' issues (read: historical narratives that do not conform to the version endorsed by

the government) in classrooms, in a country where opposition or criticism of the state can be met with violence and arrest. Teachers are therefore either actively prohibited from talking about anything contentious in the classroom – which include the lead up to the genocide in the country and the role of certain actors in that genocide – or simply censor themselves. The phenomenon of (self-) censorship, of course, is not limited to the Global South or 'conflict-affected' settings such as those in which Changing the Story worked. Within the UK, schoolteachers now face restrictions on how much they can engage in discussions of colonialisation, systemic racism and capitalism, as teaching about white privilege has been deemed unlawful and anti-capitalism as extremist (Murray 2020). In these various cases, the effect of these practical and political constraints limits what is 'sayable' in the classroom, and thus the extent to which teachers can engage in nuanced debate about the past and its continued legacy.

Limits on the sayable can also be enforced through the dominance of wider and entrenched social narratives. In Kosovo, the experiences of women during the conflict have been silenced by national and family narratives that tend to focus on dominant masculine identities and heroism (see, for example, Guisa et al. 2020), as well as due to the shame that sexual violence is seen to transfer to fathers and husbands who were unable to fulfil their role as protectors (Luci 2005). The (sexual) violence experienced by women during the conflict in the country has therefore been silenced, and only very recently has it been recognised in transitional justice or rebuilding efforts.

In 'The Planet of No Memory' zine, discussed in Chapter 4, members of the YRB expressed what they perceived to be the dangerous consequences of failing to engage with histories, and in particular of failing to teach about, or engage with, the causes of past violence and conflict. The zine is the story of an alien-like creature explaining to what look to be younger creatures why their planet is being attacked. One of the younger creatures asks 'why did the bad ones do this to us?'. The other creature explains that at one point in history the:

> bad ones weren't called that way […] they used to be our friends and lived peacefully on our planet. Until one day everything changed, a virus expanded and they were accused of causing it. The real causes were never known.

The zines images turn bleak and dystopian, with signs of the creatures labelled as infected and dangerous (Figure 6.1). The creatures are then rounded up, eliciting imagery of genocide: 'As they were extinguished, erased from the surface of the planet, so did the wonders of this world. Leading to its current DESTRUCTION'. The zine moves to a drawing of a young alien creature, who is being told the story, looking shocked and confused, asking 's.so.o… they weren't the bad ones?' Through this narrative, the zine emphasises the conflicting histories that different groups within society are told about victims and perpetrators of conflict, and the 'othering' that takes place through these narratives. By using a fictional world, the YRB are able to speak to issues that, within real-world conflict or post-conflict contexts, are shrouded by political

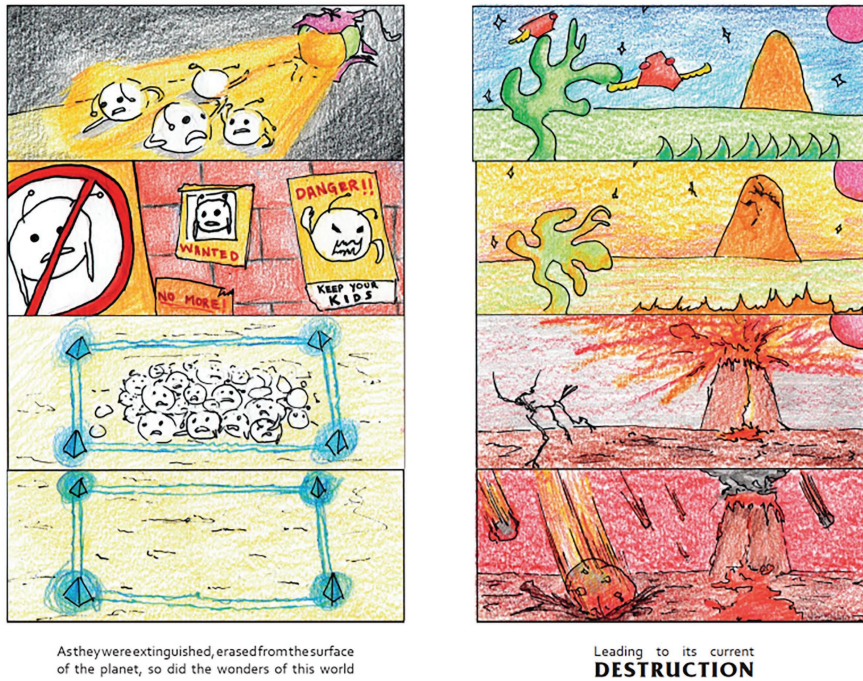

Figure 6.1 Two further pages from 'The Planet of No Memory' zine.

and personal sensitivities that can render unspeakable the nuances of conflict and the experiences of the 'other' in conflict.

The cartoon has a positive ending; that the planet still has hope and still has a chance, if the next generation of creatures remembers the violence that was perpetrated. The zine finishes, on its final pages, with a piece of reflective writing and a poem by other members of the YRB. The writing strongly condemns adults for failing to talk with young people about history, and young people for failing to engage with it themselves:

> Given the general myth believed by adults that young people are too young to know history and the myth believed by young people that history is boring, we want this zine to invite you to rethink these perceptions as our experiences as Youth Research Board members spoke otherwise.

In this last sentence, the YRB invoke the power of young people speaking as one, demonstrating the importance of our understanding of voice as a collective, political and productive act. In the cartoon and this reflective writing, the YRB express what they see as the transformative nature of collective voice and collective memory in post-conflict society. Their expressions align closely with Mariam Hirsch's concept of post-memory. Hirsch describes how 'traumatic historical events' – in her case, the Holocaust – result in a 'break in [memory]

transmission' (Hirsch 2012: 32). The post-memory generations (the generations after those who directly experienced conflict and genocide) are embedded in political and cultural memory structures that shape narratives of the past, while often being disconnected from the lived experience of the past. Instead, the narratives that young people hear tend to be generalised, state-endorsed narratives of conflict. Within these narratives, 'the counter-memories of non-dominant groups may be forgotten, ignored, or pushed aside when they are not easily assimilated into the overarching group-understanding' (McGrattan and Hopkins 2016: 489). Yet, while these different experiences of conflict may not be explicitly spoken about, either within families, or within education systems, they continue to permeate everyday life both implicitly and explicitly. Paulson et al. highlight that memory has 'active, "performative" and spatial dimensions' and is 'maintained within "everyday" milieus […] as well as seemingly embodied at sites designated as historically significant' (2020: 433). These 'everyday milieus' include the physical space young people find themselves in, which are marked by conflict and/or post-conflict reconstruction (see, for example, Atabay et al. 2022) and contain sites for memory (re) production, including museums, monuments, memorials and schools (Paulson et al. 2020). Such sites also include the attitudes, behaviours and sometimes silences, of family members, friends, teachers and politicians.

Hirsch calls for what she defines as 'post-memorial work' to 'reactivate and re-embody more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of meditation and aesthetic expression' (Hirsch 2012: 33). As Paulson et al. elaborate, 'Memory is work and requires work; ongoing interpretation, dialogues and reflection on meanings are important components of the ways we negotiate and make sense of the past in the present' (2020: 433). Through their artistic engagement with the very notion of memory, the YRB has both engaged in memory as work, while also creating an artistic output that challenges its viewers to do the same, to critically engage in how their understandings of the past may be shaped by their own positionality or masked by societal narratives that have 'othered', silenced or manipulated the experiences of certain groups in society. Again, we see how the YRB's artwork 'speaks' both the sayable and unsayable, transcending this boundary, and how this transrational voice is both a personal and collective political act.

We can see, then, that formal education processes can promote epistemic injustice particularly by silencing utterances of voice; determining what is (allowed to be) 'sayable', whose histories and experiences are 'sayable', who is allowed to use their voice and in what way. This, in turn, restricts what and whose knowledges, experiences and cultural practices are embedded into education systems, and how people learn about the world. We have already seen how the YRB used their artistic outputs to 'speak' out against limitations placed on their right to voice, drawing, at times, on non-verbal/written utterances. In the remaining sections of this chapter, we will further examine how the use of the arts as a pedagogical tool can move away from a restricted understanding of what we mean by the 'sayable', and in doing so promote action and reflection that can lead to change.

Participatory Arts as Pedagogy

Given the limits to epistemic justice and the utterance of voice across many formal education systems, participatory arts can play an important role in creating spaces for new forms of knowing and learning that transcend hierarchical narratives and a focus on the rational. Scholars find that participatory arts can instead extend engagement to the transrational, corporal and affective, which can work to overcome 'normative social and cultural barriers' (McPherson et al. 2018: 4) and better enable people to navigate their daily lives (Naidu-Silverman 2015). By providing non-linguistic avenues for expression that engage creativity and emotions, the use of participatory arts can also 'move across perceived intercultural boundaries' (Harvey et al. 2019: 451) and enable participants to communicate beyond language and express 'unsayable' experiences, events and feelings.

Throughout the Changing the Story programme, these elements of participatory arts were used as pedagogical practices, designed to engage and co-create knowledge with young people, often around the histories and legacies of conflict, violence, marginalisation and/or discrimination in the projects' respective contexts. This was undertaken, as we have seen throughout the previous chapters, via a range of artistic practices, including dance, drama, filmmaking, street art, animation, song and sound. Embedding local and indigenous participatory arts into pedagogical practices can promote epistemic justice precisely because such practices and forms of knowledge are an integral part of day-to-day life for many communities and cultures. The fact that such arts are frequently excluded from formal education systems demonstrates an epistemic injustice in itself – where cultural practices continue to be excluded from formal systems that may either be based around the experiences and practices of a dominant group within society, or continue to be impacted by legacies of colonial education systems. In Colombia, for example, dance is deeply engrained in community practice and therefore is a form of expression that many young people are familiar with, and feel safety in. The use of dance in Changing the Story's Colombian work sought to maximise this potential, using movement as a way of embodying society in order to challenge social barriers and discrimination, and enabled transrational expression of voice in a manner that is deeply engrained in the lived experience of young people in this society.

Returning to the Tribal Education Methodologies project in India, the project found that 'formal education doesn't have a link with the tribal past, tribal history' resulting in, as discussed above, 'school dropouts […] that lead to unemployment, lack of education, poverty' (Interview Z1014 India). By co-developing a programme with young people that incorporated tribal arts and culture, young people were given the opportunity to shape their own educational curriculum in a way that recognises, and is meaningful to, their cultural background and personal experiences:

> Arts-based [work] is very positive, working very well in the sense that each and every moment in [a young person's] life, when you look at the tribal life, everywhere there's a song, or some sort of a dance - you

> know, they have songs and dance for birth, puberty […] agriculture, everything […] the culture is art. Art is not simply an entertainment for them. It's part of their life. So, I think that that is what is really missing in the current education now.
>
> (Interview Z1014 India)

Drawing on dance and song in educational practice can therefore mean drawing on the knowledge systems and cultural practices of community groups. By co-developing a curriculum with young people that incorporates tribal arts and culture, young people were given the opportunity to shape their own educational experience in a way that recognises, and is meaningful to, their cultural background and everyday life. The process of incorporating youth voice into the curriculum can make education more inclusive to the students from tribal communities, and to their families who can begin to recognise the value of education for their children. This has resulted in decreasing numbers of school dropouts in the community, with predicted positive knock-on effects on the socio-economic circumstances of these families (Onru Nillava 2021).

Integrating participatory arts into pedagogic practices can also enable the incorporation of young people's competing epistemic systems into their educational experience, using techniques that young people increasingly use as expressions of voice to create and share knowledge. Participatory filmmaking, online zines, animations and numerous other modes of creative expression have been employed by Changing the Story projects, reflecting the content that young people are interested in developing and their main methods of sharing information. Often, the hope is that by integrating these approaches, new forms of youth-based and youth-led expression may open new, and potentially more critical, narratives. As also discussed in Chapter 4, COVID, despite its challenges, also helped to accelerate this process, providing opportunities to incorporate young people's systems of communication into approaches to knowledge exchange. Numerous Changing the Story projects, for example, started to use WhatsApp and other social media platforms for creative exchanges while participants were in lockdown, from ¿Cuál es la Verdad? (What is the Truth?), in Venezuela, to Mobile Arts for Peace in Rwanda. Although this could never replace the act of physically meeting, and forced a change in creative direction, the use of a social media that all participants were already very familiar with allowed engagement to continue and also created new artistic outputs and expressions, and novel ways of curating these outputs that might not have emerged otherwise. Here one might mention the Changing the Story online Film Festival which brought together films from 16 countries around the world that were produced not only by Changing the Story project but also by numerous other projects from across the GCRF portfolio (CTS 2019: 28).

Participatory Arts and Affective Encounters

Expressing transrational voice resulted in young people both critically reflecting on themselves, their experiences, and on their relationship to the 'other',

that is voices and positions which are excluded from their epistemic reality, and worked to create youth-led pockets of action to further spread the knowledge that young people had co-created. Across the programme, the use of participatory arts also played a crucial role in developing spaces for nuance; spaces for engaging with the complexity, and sometimes with the unknowability, of their experience with the 'other' in order to challenge the very processes of othering that frequently defines the experience of young people growing up in post-conflict contexts. This moved away from the standard, often hierarchical and monological, ways of learning received in formal education, in order to challenge the ways in which young people engage with society. As one young participant from Nepal reflected in a blogpost for Changing the Story:

> The teachers should be trained in such a way that the learning can be fun rather than memorizing the textbook. This will be a major educational change if we can adapt the teaching methods to the present context of post-conflict settings […] it might help young people to learn about respect, harmony, peace, equality, non-discrimination from the schooling age in more practical ways that they learned through their own engagement.
>
> (Bisunke 2019)

In a number of projects this approach to learning 'through their own engagement' resulted in young participants engaging through a series of 'affective encounters' with the issues they were examining. Michalinos Zembylas understands an affective encounter in education as one that 'operates on both the psychic and social level by challenging one's agency to imagine oneself as an ethical and political actor' (Zembylas 2006: 314).

Hodgkinson (2024) analysed the role of the affective encounter in three Changing the Story projects in Kosovo and Cambodia. In the 'Arts, Critical Thinking and Active Citizenship' project (ACT), historical concerts that took place in the capital of Kosovo in the 1980s were investigated as forms of resistance against state control, as well as expressions of unity between different ethnicities before a period of violent ethnic conflict in the region. In 'Making a Museum of Education', participants were engaged in filmmaking and archiving around the 1990s parallel education system in the country, which developed as a result of exclusionary education policies. In the 1990s Kosovo Albanians developed a parallel education system to ensure their children continued to receive an education. It was considered a pivotal moment in resistance to the oppressive Serbian regime, and paved the way for Kosovo developing its own state structures. Young people involved in the projects explained that these periods of history are missing from their formal and informal education, not having been 'transmitted', to return to Hirsch's terminology, to this generation's collective memory. In Cambodia, Hodgkinson analysed the Anlong Veng Peace Tours, a participatory filmmaking project in which young people who were training to be teachers across Cambodia were introduced to filmmaking and interview techniques, and set about interviewing the residents of Anlong

Veng – the area that was the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge, and where the residents are predominately ex-lower level Khmer Rouge cadre. Lower level Khmer Rouge cadre are understood as complex victims in Cambodia – many were forced into the regime, some as children, and in Anlong Veng a number did not join the Khmer Rouge until after the genocide. Reintegration of this cadre is a central part of the transitional, restorative (and ultimately epistemic) justice process in the country. However, there continues to be high levels of stigmatisation suffered by this group.

When reflecting on their experience of Changing the Story, in all three projects the young participants mentioned processes and encounters that might be considered affective. Discussing the visceral, emotional responses they developed through engaging in the programme via the arts, they spoke about the events they were examining feeling 'real'; like they were 'reliving' the periods of time. In her work examining affect, Sarah Ahmed develops the concept of an affective encounter into 'affective economies', demonstrating that affective responses *do* something. Affect moves and circulates; this circulation creates possibilities through affect and means that affective value accumulates over time (Ahmed 2004: 120). Hodgkinson found that in these projects, the economies of affect worked to promote socio-cultural recognition, mediating the relationship between the young participants in the programme and their societies and cultures (Hodgkinson 2022). As Zembylas argues, affect in these settings has the potential to move beyond acts of recognition that, while important, might continue to 'other' groups in a society. Instead, affect can enable students to become a transformative agent of awareness and reception of others' trauma (315); highlighting the role of the collective in transrational approaches to voice. In Changing the Story, affective encounters resulted in participants' relationships with 'others' in their society shifting; they became better able to reflect on the lived realities experienced by those who had lived through conflict. In Cambodia, this process helped to break down victim-perpetrator binaries (Cooke et al. 2022) – participants who previously expressed being afraid of meeting lower level Khmer Rouge cadre began to recognise this group as complex victims. As one participant noted:

> For me, from the beginning, and before meeting with the Khmer Rouge soldier, I think that he, perhaps, is the extreme cruel person who had killed the people without compassion. But, after asking and talking with him, then I understood that in reality he is the same as the common people who survived in Khmer Rouge regime, living under the conveyance of the leader, having no freedom, do anything other than […] by order of Angkar [the name of the Khmer Rouge state] only.
>
> (June 2018 Peace Tours Post-Tour Survey)

The Anlong Veng Peace Tours project, on which Changing the Story collaborated with a well-established programme led by the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam), used the participants' experience of making films with the population of Anlong Veng to begin the work of transitional justice and

peacebuilding with these young trainee teachers, seeing the teachers as 'multipliers' who, in their work with future generations of young people, will help to accelerate the process of dismantling notions of 'other' in society, thereby promoting inclusivity and epistemic justice.

By creating space for the affective (and, as we shall discuss further below, transrational) in this way, the programmes also worked to promote intergenerational dialogue and understanding, in line with the calls of Hirsch's post-memory work highlighted above. Wider research demonstrates the potential for participatory arts to improve intergenerational and communal relationships. McPherson et al. (2018), for example, found that music education in Colombia promoted collective experience, communication and solidarity, and in doing so expanded social networks and strengthened family and community relations. These intergenerational and community relationships were similarly fostered in the Changing the Story projects. In Cambodia, this was central to the design of the Anlong Veng Peace Tours project. In Kosovo, young participants highlighted that they had started to have conversations with their relatives about Kosovo's past, finding that they 'had a lot more questions because before the project I didn't know what to ask; I didn't know what was going on and I couldn't create questions out of nowhere' (Interview 1619, Museum, Female). Young people suggested that these conversations were 'fun and exciting' (Interview 1311, ACT, Male) for themselves, as well as meaningful for their parents and grandparents, who frequently expressed relief and joy that the events were not being forgotten by younger generations (Hodgkinson 2022). Areas of history that had previously been silenced between generations were, through the work produced by the project, brought into the realm of the 'sayable', or at least expressible.

Reflecting on Positionality

That participatory arts can open up spaces for affective encounters, for complexity and nuance, demonstrates the value that participatory arts can have in promoting inclusivity. Scholars argue that participatory arts can 'be inclusive of diverse voices' (Cin et al. 2022: 117) and therefore can create spaces in which marginalised groups can build their capacity to articulate their experiences and needs and so demand, for example, 'inclusion in the national narrative', as we have seen in both the Anlong Veng Peace Tours project and the Tonga Graffiti project discussed in Chapter 5 (Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2020: 9; Baú 2017; Kollontai 2010; Cin et al. 2022). This process is again aided by the project's transrational approach to the articulation of voice, enabling dialogue to develop beyond the written or the spoken. In wider literature, Pruitt (2011), for example, finds that the use of music in Northern Ireland enables expression in a language which does not exclude communities of LGBTQ+ and disabled youth. Because participatory arts can be more inclusive of these diverse voices, they can also promote further inclusion as they 'deconstruct stereotypes, reshape dehumanising narratives about excluded and discriminated-against

groups and create shared cultural experiences around shared values' (Hodgkinson 2022: 78; see also Cin et al. 2022; Naidu-Silverman 2015). That said, and as we have discussed in detail in Chapter 4, it is important to note that the arts, participatory or otherwise, are not a 'magic bullet'. If used well they can significantly enhance the work of the other processes described in this chapter, be that around developing more inclusive approaches to national memorialisation and/or social justice. However, while important, they are always only one part of the puzzle, and work towards epistemic justice needs to be carried out continuously, carefully, collaboratively and appropriately.

At times in the Changing the Story projects this would appear to have been achieved. Frequently, participatory arts seemed to create useful spaces for young people to reflect on their own oppression in society, akin, it might be noted and again returning to our discussion in earlier chapters, to the approaches of critical pedagogy, and Freire's concept of conscientisation. The research team of the Tribal Methodologies project in India highlighted that through learning about, and through, their own arts and cultural traditions, young people on the project learnt:

> how they have been marginalised from the mainstream. So, this will give them a tool to design their own things, to raise their voice to rebuild their consciousness and […] give them a freedom to speak about their experience.
>
> (Interview Z1014 India)

By engaging in activities that enabled new forms of expression through transrational voice, young people were empowered to speak out about the epistemic injustices that they and their communities face. Processes of inclusive education through the participatory arts can, therefore, promote epistemic justice not only through the inherent epistemic justice of recognising different, and often marginalised, forms of knowledge, but also through the deeper knowledge of potentially conflicting and contradictory personal experiences and oppression – young people themselves cannot, of course, be considered a singular, homogeneous, group – for which this can create space.

The YRB Creative Education Corner in the booklet the group produced, and which we discuss at the start of this chapter, reflect on the question of non-homogeneity and difference particularly in relation to class. The booklet highlights the 'ways in which education performs the function of reproduction and helps the capitalist class to maintain its position of dominance', ending with a task for the reader to reflect on 'how do you think each of these agents of socialisation brainwash you into the ruling class ideology: 1. Family 2. Religion 3. Friends 4. Media 5. Work 6. Education' ('Does the Education System Equip us for our Future?' pocket book). Through this exercise, the YRB both present their own understanding of oppression through the education system, and encourage the reader of their work to do the same. As we will see in the final section of this chapter, this was a recurring theme

throughout many Changing the Story projects: the arts were used to encourage participants to critically engage in, and deconstruct or nuance, commonly held societal narratives. In their artistic outputs, participants both present these deconstructed narratives and call on the consumers of their outputs to fight against injustice and oppression in society. Engaging in the arts therefore enables participants to explore new aspects of political and self-expression. As one participant in Bosnia and Herzegovina noted in their film 'Provocation', their experience enabled them to 'discover some parts of me that I didn't know I had' (Provocation 2022).

Reflections on positionality and marginalisation also frequently came to the fore through examinations of gender. We saw in Chapter 2 how gender inequality continues to permeate societies. And, as noted at the start of this chapter, formal education generally mirrors and replicates the experiences and perspectives of those with the power to determine what children learn and how they do so. This contributes to the perpetuation of epistemic blindspots – the inability and even refusal of those in power to see beyond the frames of reference that inform their worldview. Gender is one such pervasive blindspot – institutions, curricula and the very foundations of formal education have been dominated by men for centuries, to the extent that men's narratives appear to be a given, and are often difficult to reimagine through an alternative gender lens. From a feminist perspective, the key question this chapter poses about whose narratives, experiences and knowledges are represented – whether in history, art, policy and myriad other arenas – lies at the heart of the global call for women's and girls' voices to be not only present but recognised, empowered to speak and heard and valued. Those conducting research in the context of gender and development have drawn attention to a tendency to 'gender blindness' in development-related policy, planning and implementation – highlighting the extent to which these activities are based on an assumed 'gender neutrality' but are too often informed by a predominantly (white) male understanding of development problems, needs and solutions, and of household roles and relations (Kabeer and Subrahmanian 1996).

Formal educational institutions and practices are key arenas with regard to gender as they play a central role in producing and reinforcing the gender stereotypes that help shape children's gender-normative behaviours and attitudes. Gender stereotypes reinforce ideas about what is considered to be acceptable or expected male and female attributes or characteristics, and about desirable or possible roles for women and men, often making other epistemic interpretations literally unthinkable. To paraphrase Michel Foucault, gender stereotypes are forms of power that are 'ubiquitous, and [appear] in every moment of social relations – hence, the operations of [gender stereotypes] are not departures from the norm, but rather [are] constantly present' (Foucault in Gaventa 2003: 4). These are forms of power that prescribe socially acceptable, expected expressions of masculinity and femininity, while proscribing others. They contribute to personal and social tensions around the myths about women and men: women as weak, passive, sensitive, men as powerful, self-controlled,

breadwinners. These socially engrained gender biases are further compounded when they intersect with other axes of discrimination that include race, ethnicity, class and disability (for example see Gutiérrez y Muhs 2012).

Within the gender and development arena, debates have revolved around the extent to which simply acknowledging and responding to gender differences has the effect of ticking bureaucratic boxes but failing to change the systemic forms of gender discrimination introduced in Chapter 2. Critics have argued that anything less than transformative gender justice risks simply reproducing or even intensifying existing inequities. Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead refer to the 'gender myths' that feed the stories policymakers, educationalists and other influential professionals tell themselves and others about women's and girls' 'natural' capabilities, strengths and weaknesses (Cornwall et al. 2007). Elsewhere Andrea Cornwall and Althea-Maria Rivas note:

> Going beyond the sex/gender distinction calls for a view of 'gender' as literally inscribed in bodies shaped and transformed by its daily performance. This calls for recognition that gender, as power, is embodied. It urges closer attention to the political implications of the unreflective transposition of notions of male dominance or female vulnerability onto far more complex and diverse social relations.
>
> (2015: 402)

They provide an eloquent reflection on what gender transformation could look like and on the conditions needed for a shift towards women's and girls' empowerment:

> Empowerment is fundamentally about changing power relations. It is not just about improving women's capacities to cope with situations in which they experience oppression or injustice. It is about enabling women to question what they might previously have considered 'normal', and to begin to act to change that reality via the acquisition of a collective self-confidence that results in a feeling of 'we can'.
>
> (2015: 405)

In post-conflict societies, the experiences of women in conflict can be further overlooked or silenced in the national narratives, which, as already noted, tend to focus on dominant masculine identities and heroism (see, for example, Guisa et al. 2020). As Asavei writes, in reference to Kosovo, for example, 'women's voices and the memory of their ordeals are subsumed under the grand narrative of the "whole nation"', with a focus on how the nation suffered under conflict (Asavei 2019: 619). This means that, in Kosovo, commemorations and the legacies of the past have established a 'we' 'based on patriarchy, hierarchy and the image of powerful men as "the liberators", leaving very little spaces for others to fit into this image' (Guisa et al. 2020: 109).

Violence continues against women in this lack of acknowledgement of the violence women experienced during the war, pushing women into spaces of silence (Pollozhani 2019). Gender shapes the experiences of both fragility and conflict, as well as the actions young people take in response to these experiences (Oosterom et al. 2018).

Participants on Changing the Story actively used the spaces created through participatory arts to reflect on, and question existing practices and discourses around gender. In the above-mentioned project in Cambodia, for example, participants were able to create interviews and films on topics of their choice. Through the films, some of the participants decided to examine the gendered experiences of life under the Khmer Rouge. The film *Forbidden Love* discusses forced marriages under the Khmer Regime. An interviewee laughs as she says 'You just have to stand and swear that you would take her to be your wife for life and that is it. You are married'. She explains that 20 or 40 couples would get married at once: 'it was hard to tell whose partner was whose because everyone was wearing black'. Her voice then quietens; her face turns more serious, as she explains:

> If a man told Angkar that he was "interested" in a woman but the woman was not "interested" back, the woman still has to get married to the man or she will be executed. The woman has no say in the matter.

The film ends with a young participant's reflection that they will share what they have learnt with the younger generation in Cambodia, 'so they can understand about the personal and social issues during the regime'. A researcher on this project noted that while exploring very difficult and complex histories, the films also served as 'proxies for the priorities and concerns of young Cambodians today' (Interview Project Team 2110), particularly through their representation of gender in a country where traditional gender norms prevail. While it is important to acknowledge that the entire experience of life in Cambodia today cannot be described solely in its relationship to past events, many of which happened long before the filmmakers involved in this project were born, it is remarkable (perhaps even more so given the amount of time that has elapsed), that it continues to limit the opportunities available to women in both public and private spheres.

In Kosovo, in the context of the silencing of gendered experiences already discussed, the role of women was an important consideration in the ACT project, 'particularly as it remains an area of transitional justice processes that is often underestimated or misunderstood, particularly when it comes to who is remembered and how much space women have in the narratives of the past' (Original CTS application document). The project therefore worked to move from a focus of women as passive and vulnerable, by representing women as agentic political and societal actors, The project examined the BOOM rock concerts of the 1980s in Kosovo, including exploring the life and music of

Violeta Rexhepagiqi, who went by the stage name Vivien, a female rockstar. In her analysis of the project, when interviewing young people Hodgkinson (2022) found that participants frequently discussed this focus on Vivien, in a large part because it provided opportunities to reflect on continued gender inequality, and the continued silencing of gendered experiences of the conflict, in the country today. Participants centred Vivien in the animations they created in the project, highlighting the project as 'an outlet to make it [gender] a part of [their] activism' (Interview 2026; ACT, Hodgkinson 2022).

Outside of Changing the Story, another project from the wider GCRF portfolio is particularly worthy of mention in this discussion. 'Promoting sexual and reproductive health education among adolescents through creative and youth-led practice in India, Malawi and Uganda' centres around the gender transformational potential of participatory arts, with a focus on enabling learning, trust and self-expression about sexual health issues among adolescents through creative, participatory approaches. It used theatre, games and role play to create a safe and informal space in school environments for adolescent boys and girls to have frank discussions about issues relating to sex, bodies and relationships. These are very sensitive issues and are frequently ignored in formal school curricula. However, given the high levels of teen pregnancies and subsequent school drop-out among girls in these contexts it is crucial that they are addressed. This project provided opportunities to learn more about what is important to young people, what their experiences and challenges are, correct areas of misinformation and identify practical interventions. Project Lead Jane Plastow notes:

> It was very much about finding out where [the young people] were coming from and in that they were very much co-researchers. We found out there were, as is often the case, lots of myths and assumptions – this is particularly the case in situations where it is taboo to talk about sex. We were telling the kids that what they knew was important, even if a lot of the stuff they knew was wrong […] We were able to understand boys' anxieties about themselves as young men and why they behaved the way they did.
>
> (Plastow quoted in Brody 2022: 112)

The project also enabled the gentle reframing of notions of self and relationships for the adolescents. Plastow goes on:

> A key term used throughout the process was kindness rather than love, because love is overused and has become a sexualised term. Kindness had a sense of agency because a lot of the kids had very little kindness in their lives and were unkind to each other. The idea was that they needed to build empathy.
>
> (Plastow quoted in Brody 2022: 112)

The success of the project is reflected in significant shifts in gender norms and behaviours that have occurred in the aftermath of these sessions. An evaluation showed that six months after the project had ended in Uganda, in all six schools only one girl had become pregnant compared to between six and eight per school prior to the intervention. In a context where being 'manly' signifies sexual pursuit, participating boys also reported 'giving up sex' because they realised it wasn't what they should be doing at this time and the pursuit of sex could be abusive to girls.

Transrational Voice: Calling for Action

Young people's engagement in participatory arts can be understood as actions towards social change. We have seen through the chapter so far that engaging in the projects described here can change the way young people understand themselves, their place in society and their relationship with others in society. In addition to this, young people often used their engagement in the projects to contribute to transrational ecologies through calls to action within their artistic outputs, in particular, calling on and out the vital role that young people have to play in addressing the societal challenges their communities, and communities across the globe, face. To explore this process, let us return to 'The Planet of No Memory' zine created by the YRB, and in particular the poem on the final page of the zine, entitled 'Peer the Future!' (Figure 6.2).

Following the cartoon panels and reflective writing examining the perils of forgetting – or not engaging in – nuanced narratives of the past, the YRB present this poem. It reads as a call for action to all in society; adults need to recognise the importance of engaging young people to create positive change in families, countries and the world. They need to teach and guide young people; this is not something young people should be expected to do on their own. Despite the international rhetoric of youth as the future (as we saw in Chapter 1), young people need support and guidance to facilitate societal change. Most strongly, however, this is a call to action for young people to work together as peers, to remember the past in order to change the future – to support and guide one another as they create the world that they want to live in. The zine grips its audience with its emotive narrative that addresses the reader in a variety of ways, depending on their own positionality and understanding of the past. And once the reader is emotionally invested, the YRB call on them to act, to remember the past and collaborate with others to create a brighter future.

In other projects, participants suggested a call to action more implicitly in the outputs they created, precisely through the transnational and the affective. In her study of Changing the Story projects presented above, Hodgkinson (2022) found that participants in Kosovo and Cambodia purposefully developed their outputs to evoke the same affective response in their audience members that they themselves had experienced as participants on the project.

Figure 6.2 'Peer the Future' from the 'The Planet of No Memory' by the Youth Research Board.

A participant on the Making of the Museum of Education project in Kosovo, for example, explained that:

> It got me so emotional and maybe I thought if I get emotional, maybe a lot of other people would feel bad, would feel sympathy […] I really think that pictures are very important parts of this period on this project,

> and there are a lot of them, and thank God, there are a lot of them. And we have the chance to keep them safe. To be sure that the spirit won't be all vanished.
>
> (Interview 1619, Museum, Female)

Similarly, in Cambodia, a participant on the Anlong Veng Peace tours explained, when describing the process of creating the short documentaries:

> we wanted them [the residents of Anlong Veng] to express their feelings, their hurt, we really wanted the exact evidence, the exact feeling. And it's really important to take a video and let the young generation see that, because it's really touching… they can feel how people who survived from the Khmer Rouge felt.
>
> (Interview 3019 PT)

These participants are working transrationally to evoke emotions and empathy with the intention that this will create a shared responsibility for social change, not least through promoting further empathy and further recognition of diverse and nuanced lived experiences. Here we can see again how transrational voice blurs the boundaries between the individual and collective; boundaries than can result in continued (epistemic) exclusion and marginalisation. By focusing on feelings rather than assuming one 'collective place for understanding' (Phipps 2019: 11), it creates spaces for recognising difference, complexity and contradiction that often belies the rational, audibly spoken, 'voice'.

Ecologies of Action

However, despite their desire to implement social change, young people continue to be thwarted in these efforts due to the systems and structures that they find themselves in, and arts-based programmes supporting them face similar structural constraints. Projects are frequently impacted by the inequalities that exist in societies, and there is a risk that rather than working to transform societies, programmes may end up mirroring inequalities in society. In South Africa, societal hierarchies between black and 'coloured' participants were reported to be mirrored in one of the Changing the Story projects and were particularly difficult to navigate. Similarly projects mirrored gender divides, with young female participants in South Africa reporting feeling discriminated against and marginalised by their male counterparts. The gender divide was also reflected in the context of Colombia when it came to recruiting participants; young indigenous women in particular were often not part of the groups that gatekeeper organisations engaged with, making them particularly hard to reach. In India, amongst matrilineal tribal groups, this gender divide was reversed, and young men were more cautious about coming forward than young women (Interview Z1014 India).

These differences, based on exclusion as a result of gender, race and ethnicity, often intersect with socio-economic factors. In Colombia, groups from lower socio-economic settings were more likely to drop out of projects, potentially because there are fewer structures in place in society that support these young people to have the ambitions to pursue careers in development or the NGO sector, as there are for other young people in the country (Interview Z1085 Colombia). In Nepal, where the programme used iPads and other forms of technology, it was noted that young people in urban areas were more comfortable engaging in project activities than those in rural areas, because young people in urban areas were more familiar with the technologies used, making it much easier for them to participate (Interview Z1042 Nepal). In Rwanda young people from poorer backgrounds found the spaces that the workshops were taking place in to be alien settings, some young people not being familiar, for example, with using an inside toilet. This meant it was more difficult for them to feel safe and at home in the space, making participation more challenging (Interview Z1031 Rwanda). Importantly, socio-economic factors can limit young people's ability to engage in programmes. This may be because young people find it difficult to focus during activities because of what they are experiencing at home, or because young people may be expected to work for an income to financially support their families, meaning that young people from poorer backgrounds either cannot engage in arts-based programmes outside of school, or that doing so may create tensions at home.

These issues highlight questions around the sustainability of programmes, and the place of research-in-action programmes as part of the wider development system. It highlights the importance of ecologies of action; in order for either individual projects or whole programmes to have a lasting impact, they need to work towards restructuring the systems that have resulted in the problems, in this case in education, that they are working to solve. Programmes need to engage with, deconstruct and (re)imagine the very structures that can limit the effectiveness of their work (Hodgkinson 2022). Without doing this, surface-level adjustments will need to be made again and again (following Nancy Fraser 1995) rather than there being lasting, sustainable change. Of course, it is unreasonable to expect small-scale research programmes to create this kind of change independently, but this exemplifies a fundamental challenge within international development, where numerous small-scale projects are often working in the same context in silos, sometimes missing (owing to structural constraints) collaboration towards incremental and transformative change within a given community and country. While it is often difficult for small-scale arts-based projects to *scale* their level of activity, we return here to our notion of *spreading*. If such projects are embedded meaningfully into an ecology of action, do they have potential to spread their insights to the wider ecosystem within which they sit, thereby maximising their impact, and their potential to generate sustainable change?

This is clearly easier said than done. It is, however, crucial if participatory arts-based projects are to be anything other than tokenistic. For the young participants involved in this work, they may find themselves a part of projects that create spaces for voice and self-expression, but face challenges in engaging in politics and activism *beyond* the projects, and making the changes in their communities that they understand as vital. Young people expressed their frustration with the limitations that are put on them in the artistic outputs they produced through Changing the Story. One example of this is in a poem, written by a member of the YRB as part of the final reflections the group made at the end of the project. Throughout the poem, the reader is prompted 'Did you know the world is a beautiful place?', while being reminded of the genocides and conflicts of the world and the crippling nature of capitalism. The last refrains of the poem reflect on the role the YRB wishes to play in helping make the world the beautiful place it is often described as. The YRB presents itself as:

> 11 different pieces
> One perfect puzzle
> Shining bright shedding light
> Poverty, low literacy, unemployment, crime
> Different locations
> Not so different backgrounds

who, by the end of the project, have developed an artistic repertoire of skills ranging from 'Haiku poets' to 'Gender experts' to 'Photo Voice producers'. The final refrain of the poem reads:

> Physical meeting was scheduled and paid for,
> Visas were declined.
> I could not attend.
> The UK immigration deemed me unworthy of a visit
> to their country because,
> I'm a poor boy from Africa
> The Africa they impoverished
> The Africa they continue to exploit
> The Africa they supposedly civilised
> Is enslavement civil?
> Did you know the world is a beautiful place?
> Well it could be, if this 11 young minds
> Could be multiplied by billions.
> Did you know the world is a beautiful place?

This YRB member was unable to join for the final event held in Leeds, as discussed in Chapter 4, because their visa was declined. In this poem, the writer juxtaposes the potential and hope that young people have in addressing the key challenges facing the world today, with the harsh systemic realities they

face, including racism, socio-economic injustice and (the legacies of) colonialism that constrain their ability to make those changes.

A similar juxtaposition is present in the song and video 'La Verdad' (The Truth) produced as part of the ¿Cuál es la Verdad? (What is the truth?) project. The project worked in Quibdó, the capital of Chocó in the Colombian Pacific, a remote area disproportionately affected by armed conflict and home to mainly Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations who face a complex legacy of intersectional inequalities. The project sought to address tensions within and between neighbourhoods, including feelings of fear and distrust, through a co-produced music-and arts-based approach. The music to the song 'La Verdad' is very upbeat, the video brightly coloured with bold graphics and shots of the young participants on the project singing the song. The song itself discusses the difficult and elusive nature of the 'truth', which sometimes can be very 'tough' and 'difficult to find'. It presents the need for things in society to change, but the young people sing that 'for them to change, I'll have to change first […] Change requires strength and a lot of dedication'. While these lyrics are being sung, cartoon images of mortar boards and certificates fly onto the screen, as does an artist painting at an easel, seemingly depicting the role that education and the arts can play in the personal growth needed for an individual to change their society. The young people sing 'no no me voy a render' 'no, I'm not going to give up'; they will build their dreams, despite the challenges they face. When the song finishes the screen turns black, and a single voice is heard. We do not know who this voice belongs to. It says:

> How great life is when everything is in harmony.
> How valuable it is to be young when I can live life.
> I feel anger and a lot of sadness to see the cosmos that does not straighten;
> for wanting to change the world, a world that increasingly moves me away.
> I am a warrior, a fighter, and I know my worth.
> But so fragile and precarious in the face of a heartless reality.
> What is the truth?
> I do not know yet.
> But I know the reality that I have to go through […]
> I had war on one hand, and my childhood on the other.
> I had the chance to stop being a hostage.
> Untie the chains that condemn my land.
> Show the whole world the flag of peace.
> But I was silenced by those who prefer evil.
> And my eyes got watery when I saw my brother pass to those who silence the ones who want to succeed.
>
> (¿Cuál es la Verdad? 2022)

Again, we see here the juxtaposition of the strength, power and potential of young people to contribute to societal change, with the realities of the world around them that places them in positions of fragility and precarity and silences their actions. Young people across the world are working against these

significant constraints on their political voice and participation. But while, in these examples, young people are demonstrating the constraints they face, the juxtaposition of this with the hope and potential they also know they have means these can also be read as a call to action for both young people and adults to continue to struggle against the oppression that they experience, and to transform the unsayable and undoable into voice and action.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined how formal education plays a role in determining what is sayable, and how, in ways that can limit the experiences and expressions of different groups in society. The use of participatory arts through Changing the Story were often valued by young participants precisely because they created a space to challenge these restrictions and engage in the production of nuanced, affective narratives of the past and present. Participants used these spaces to challenge their assumptions about the 'other' in society, reflect on their own positionality and call – either explicitly or implicitly – for social change, and the centrality of young people in curating this change.

Reflecting on our conceptualisation of transrational voice, this chapter has again demonstrated how young people have used the arts as 'voice' to enable discussions of complex histories and emotions that, in the conflict-affected settings Changing the Story worked in, are often rendered unsayable for personal, societal and political reasons. Similarly, they have used the arts to express their own positionality in a consistently thwarting international system. Young people have done this in a way that transcends the, often epistemically unjust, binary of the individual and the collective voice: They have created collective spaces for voice and reflection through their artwork – a political act that we understand as 'pockets of action'. These pockets, linking to our notion of 'ecologies of action' (and also reflecting back on the work of Sara Ahmed), *do* things in themselves, opening up new spaces for epistemic encounters and epistemic justice amongst the participants of programmes and the spectators of the artworks that they create. The hope, and indeed aim, of many of the projects discussed here is that this space will *spread*, through the networks that young people engage with, with young people themselves acting as cultural multipliers. Crucially this collective, transrational voice is not about creating 'sameness'. It is not even (always) about creating 'understanding'. As the participants from Cambodia and Kosovo note in the quotation included above, the purpose of voice here is to create 'feeling' and 'spirit', opening spaces for complexity and contradiction and, in this process, pockets of epistemic justice.

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7 Moving the Conversation On

At the start of this volume, we demonstrated that the position of young people in relation to key development challenges presents a paradox; a Schrödinger's Cat scenario, in which young people are constructed as occupying two contrary positions at once. Young people are reported to be pessimistic about their futures – understandably, given the permacrises and polycrises that they are living through – while also being conceived of as 'social assets', well placed, in their large numbers, to address the challenges the world is facing. Throughout the chapters of this book, we have demonstrated that conceptualisations of young people in global development, and young people's experiences of the challenges they face in the world, indeed sit on a sometimes uncomfortable boundary. The young participants of Changing the Story projects expressed, often simultaneously, the beauty they found in the world, the belief, strength and hope they had in themselves as young people; *and* the cruelness of the world, the limitations social structures and norms place on them, their feelings of helplessness. These findings return us to our key notion of boundary work, and a transrational paradigm that accepts and works with these contradictions.

In this final chapter, we present not a neat conclusion to this complex study, but a reflection on what we have examined, and what there is still to examine. Commensurate with our transrational approach, we do not seek to bring this book to an end point, but to reflect on the messy and complex relationality with which we are engaging and which has no end point, precisely because it is focused on enabling knowledge and dialogue, rather than confirming or fixing knowledge about the world (following Jones 2016, citing Gotman 2016). To do this, we reflect on our concept of transrational voice and its contributions to the kinds of ecologies of action we see as necessary in order to spread epistemic justice. In the process, we return to our discussions on the position of young people in global development and look forward to what we consider to be currently less- or unknown.

Reflections on Transrational Voice within and through Participatory Arts

We have advocated throughout this volume for a transrational understanding of voice. Transrational voice does not discard the rational, nor does it deny or

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revere the non-rational, but moves across, through and beyond both (Harvey et al. 2021). In so doing, it recognises the notions of 'understanding' and 'sayability', which have been central to Global Northern conceptualisations of voice, as socially constructed and decentres, or 'provincialises', them. The transrational therefore accounts for expressions of both the sayable *and* the unsayable, providing a paradigm for engaging in boundary work that avoids considering these concepts as a dichotomy, in an either/or/only relationship. Rather, it understands them as both/and/more than. We have explored the various and intersecting ways in which society renders things 'unsayable', for example through political constraints that threaten, sometimes with real bodily harm, those who speak to certain topics; through trauma that renders certain issues 'unspeakable', particularly pertinent in the conflict-affected contexts within which Changing the Story predominately worked and through the (again intersecting) positionality of those who may wish to 'speak' but who are denied listeners. This includes young people, girls and women, and others who are marginalised as a result of their (perceived) gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, language and disability (and for a whole host of other reasons).

Conceptualising voice transrationally also conceptualises voice as not having a finalising end point of 'understanding'. Rather, it sees voice as emerging through dialogue (in whatever form), through mutual openness and respect. This approach is perhaps especially important given the injustices, epistemicides and atrocities experienced across the world, the conflicting narratives different groups are subjected to and intersectional experiences of life. While we may call for people to try and view the world from the perspectives of others, we must also recognise the 'impossibility of being in another's shoes' (Harvey and Bradley 2023: 362). Transrational voice accounts, therefore, for the relational complexities inherent in society, and which necessarily change over time. Part of how it does this, and indeed where the arts may play a particularly important role, is through engaging with *feeling* as well as *telling*; decentring cognitive knowability, and creating space for productive messiness and discomfort.

Throughout this volume, we have sought to demonstrate what conceptualising transrational voice means in practice; how a transrational lens has enabled us to 'hear' young people's expressions of voice through the production of artistic outputs, and indeed what it means to 'listen' to this voice. Crucially, we have also identified how young people themselves have expressed, in their own terms, the importance of engaging with the unsayable, thus calling for it to be taken seriously. The Youth Research Board (YRB) demonstrated this through the outputs they created, as well as through the workshops they ran. We have explored, for example, 'The Planet of No Memory' zine, in which the YRB used the arts to speak to an issue – in this case around competing narratives of conflict – that within conflict or conflict-affected societies can be so politically and personally sensitive as to be unspeakable. In Chapter 4, we discussed how, during the final conference for Changing the Story, the

YRB ran a workshop in which they declared that 'academics talk too much' and therefore created an activity that was to be done in silence, with researchers expressing themselves through creating something tangible with the play doh, paper, colouring pens and paint provided by the YRB. When the academics were given space to discuss their creations, the YRB encouraged them to focus less on the *meaning* of their artwork, and more on what they *felt,* physically and emotionally, when producing the work. We see here a prime example of young people encouraging a transrational approach, using the arts to work on the border between the rational and the non-rational and creating room for feeling in spaces where the focus is usually on telling. In Chapter 6, we similarly saw how young participants on Changing the Story projects in both Kosovo and Cambodia had affective responses to the projects they were engaged with, which – albeit in very different ways – examined narratives that were previously 'unspoken' in collective understandings of the past in these two countries. Through engaging with these narratives through the arts, young people engaged affectively with this past, discussing feeling as if what they were hearing was 'real' and that they were 'reliving' events (Hodgkinson 2024). Moreover, participants sought to elicit these same affective responses in the spectators of their artistic outputs. Rather than (only) using their artwork to explain the histories they examined, they believed that a focus on feeling would build relationality and promote a shared responsibility for social change, understanding themselves as both individuals and part of a collective.

In Chapter 5, we examined the power of collective voice to generate collective impact. In Zimbabwe, Tonga youth taking part in the Changing the Story programme used the arts to engage in collective knowledge creation and sharing, affecting the relationality of the group by creating a shared sense of the young people as representatives of their community, agents of change and a group with shared practices and values. As a group systemically excluded from mainstream culture, this collective voice reflected young people's aspiration to reclaim knowledge amidst oppressive structures, creating embodied, dialogical and inclusive knowledge, and a culture of expressing and listening to this knowledge.

Epistemic Justice and Ecologies of Action

Given the potential of transrational voice to reclaim knowledge, work on the boundary of the individual/collective, rational/non-rational, cognitive/affective, and to welcome complexity and difference, we have argued throughout this volume that transrational voice has the potential to contribute to epistemic justice, both as an ongoing long-term project and a series of events, or pockets of action. We have seen, for example, how transrational voice, given precedence through participatory arts methodologies, has been used to directly address issues of epistemic injustice, where societies' answer to whose knowledge counts, what knowledge counts and how knowledge can be expressed legitimately is limited. The Tribal Education Methodologies project,

which worked with young people from Adivasis communities (indigenous tribes) in the Wayanad District of Kerala, India, for example, sought to highlight and overcome limitations these young people experienced on ways of knowing and expressing knowledge in the mainstream education system. This project sought to address this epistemic injustice by co-developing a programme that incorporated tribal arts and culture into the school curriculum, drawing on the knowledge systems and cultural practices that are meaningful and relevant to these populations. Here, we might also mention some of the projects discussed in Chapter 5, such as *¿Cuál es la Verdad?* (What is the truth? 2022) and Youth-led social enterprises in Malaysia, which used the arts to model more inclusive, epistemically just, forms of participation for groups that are systematically excluded from society and culture. In so doing, these projects sought to promote epistemic well-being and promote economic-epistemic justice in which young people are understood to be holders of crucial knowledge, rather than as an (unemployment) problem to be solved. It also includes the projects discussed in Chapter 6, where participants used their artistic outputs – including films, animation and song – to voice the unspeakable and unspoken experiences of women in conflict, in contexts where women's experience of epistemic injustice frequently leads to them experience violence.

These projects, and the transrational youth voice expressed through their artistic outputs, constitute pockets of action for epistemic justice in themselves. Young people have created spaces for collective voice and collective action through the processes of boundary work that transcend the above-mentioned dichotomies. These pockets of action have contributed to change, opening up new epistemic and affective encounters, and, at times, affecting the way young people view themselves and their position in society. Transrational voice therefore has the potential to support what we refer to as 'ecologies of action', spreading the work done at the micro-level of a project. We consider this notion of 'spreading', rather than 'scaling', to be important, given the potential dangers of co-option that small-scale projects can face if they are adopted and 'grown' by large-scale organisations. We have argued that nurturing wider 'ecologies of action' is essential if we are to enable the innovation and impact of small-scale projects to 'spread', and so to promote further and wider transformative epistemic justice. We have also examined the systemic constraints placed on young people that can limit their ability to engage in the ways they want to in society. Young people cannot be expected to do this work by themselves, enabling ecosystems of individuals, services, organisations, policy and social structures need to be nurtured for this work of transrational epistemic justice to take root, spread and become sustainable.

Youth Voice, Participatory Arts and Global Development

Let us now reflect on what this all means for the position of young people in global development. We have seen throughout this book that participatory arts, and particularly the spaces they create for alternative forms of expression,

have worked to empower young participants in Changing the Story projects to both recognise and 'speak' to the challenges they and their communities experience, as well as supporting them to take steps to address these challenges. In many cases, this has happened in ways similar to Paulo Freire's concept of 'conscientisation', and to the view of learning as a form of *ideological becoming*, which we articulate as part of our transrational lens. In the projects discussed here, arts-based methodologies enabled expression of the 'unsayable' and of feeling, which can be masked in entrenched systems of (rational) knowledge, including in formal education systems (as discussed in Chapter 6).

This enabled young people to engage in relational work, understanding their own positionality, their often complex, changing relations with others and with the sociopolitical-cultural norms and structures that impact their lives. In some cases, this resulted in young people becoming more attuned to their own oppression within these structures, as we saw in the Tribal Education Methodology project in India, where young people from indigenous backgrounds became more aware of the structural drivers of their marginalisation when their traditional forms of knowing and learning were brought into the curriculum. Likewise in Zimbabwe, Tonga youth used their collective voice to address the historic and ongoing marginalisation of their community, expressing themselves through moveable graffiti paintings that were exhibited across the country. In other cases, participants became more attuned to the oppression and marginalisation of others in society. For example, in Cambodia, participants expressed their affective responses to hearing the often untold stories of everyday life under the Khmer Rouge regime, including the experiences of both male and female former lower level Khmer Rouge cadre, a group often described either as 'complex victims' or 'complex perpetrators', and who continue to be ostracised in society (Cooke et al. 2022: 1223). We also saw this across projects, including in Cambodia and Kosovo, where young people – through engaging in intersectional discussions – became more attuned to the role that women played during social movements, resistance movements and conflict, and to how these gendered and intersectional experiences have been marginalised in collective social narratives about the past.

In this volume, we have highlighted how, through their participation in the programme and the learning it has generated, young people have been empowered to take action towards what they see as a more socially and epistemically just future, both within and beyond the particular projects in which they have been directly involved: through the campaigns produced by the YRB, through furthering intergenerational dialogue to develop new collective narratives of the past, and through participants' desire to share their work with younger generations to promote continued change. We have discussed above how these pockets of action towards epistemic justice might spread through, and be supported by, wider ecologies of action. Crucially, and as per our discussion in Chapter 4, we have argued that transrational voice should not be conceived of as another methodology, where only the process of engaging young people through arts-based approaches matters and warrants attention.

Instead, expressions of voice that take place beyond the rational and audible need to be taken seriously, including through the artistic outputs that young people produce in arts-based programmes. The artistic outputs generated by Changing the Story – songs, soundscapes, animations, films, street art, poems, zines – are all expressions of 'voice' through which young people simultaneously 'speak' to and act on individual, societal and global challenges. Yet, throughout this book – including in the artistic outputs created by young people – we have seen that the structures and systems in society which marginalise and ostracise young people continue to constrain their ability to effect change, and indeed sometimes even to 'speak' to the issues that are impacting their lives.

Here, we return to our examination of current movements surrounding youth participation in global development, particularly Participatory Youth Development (PYD). As we discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, PYD centres on an 'assets-based' approach to engaging young people in global development; understanding young people as assets who can be empowered to contribute to the development of societies and to address key global challenges. The approach centres on incorporating youth voices into development programming and treating all actors engaged in programming, including young people, with equal respect. However, as Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) argue, a lack of engagement with the concept of youth voice limits both PYD programming and the principles on which it is based. Our conceptualisation of transrational voice, and our analysis of programmes through this concept, demonstrates that simply including young people in development programmes is not enough. Understanding voice transrationally highlights the necessity of deconstructing existing power relations and binaries that delineate the roles and positions of different actors in global development and what constitutes legitimate forms of knowing and being. Young people, for example, are not assets for the future but are current sociopolitical actors, engaged in the production of knowledge and meaning every day (and not only when they are engaged in development programmes). And youth, as a category, is not homogenous; recognising transrational voice entails acceptance that we need not necessarily *understand* the varied and complex experiences of different, intersecting, groups of young people, but rather create spaces in which these experiences can be collectively articulated and listened to (itself a step towards epistemic justice), and acted upon.

A danger within PYD, and indeed within any approach to unpacking the role of young people in global development, is that the responsibility for change – particularly for issues affecting young people – is placed on young people themselves. There are two flaws in this approach; firstly, young people are not only affected by 'youth issues' but are impacted by *all* policies, practices and norms within a society. Young people's engagement in development cannot, therefore, be side-lined to dealing with 'youth issues'. Secondly, young people cannot be expected to address these issues alone, not least given their interconnection and embeddedness with social systems that continue to

marginalise them and the social groups of which they are necessarily a part. Here, again, we return to the need to nurture ecologies of action, in which grassroots or youth-led processes towards change and epistemic justice need to be embedded within, supported by, governments, international organisations, civil society and community. Without fostering these ecologies of action, which, we have argued, transrational voice can play a key role in enabling, we continue to run the risks identified in Chapter 2 in our exploration of the way young people are often viewed at the macro-level as a problem to be solved, the shift away from this view generated by the growth of PYD notwithstanding.

Moving the Conversation On

Before ending this chapter, it is worth raising questions that we do not yet have the answers to. Perhaps, one of the most central to us as a group is: what are the long-term impacts of projects like Changing the Story, which have aimed to create space for the articulation and recognition of transrational voice? Throughout this book, we have identified the ways in which participants in Changing the Story projects have engaged in various forms of activism that address local and global development challenges. Many young participants also expressed their desire to continue this activism beyond the project, and indeed for the art that they had created through the project to continue to 'speak' to its audience and achieve change this way. However, participants are still embedded within the constraining environments to which we keep having to return. Young people can therefore simultaneously find themselves in a mixture of enabling and restrictive environments, some of which support their activism, and some of which work against it, be that their education systems, employment systems, family or wider community (Hodgkinson 2022). Questions remain, therefore, as to how much impact programmes like Changing the Story can have beyond their duration; both for the young participants engaged in the programme, and on the ecologies of action the programme sought to foster. A lack of opportunity for longitudinal evaluative studies remains a persistent problem in global development, limiting our answers to this question, and the possibility of learning and developing from those answers.

In a similar vein, questions remain as to the extent to which this conceptualisation of voice can work to address the key global challenges the world faces today. While we contend that pockets of action *do* things in themselves – even small-scale political acts or activism can spread and contribute to incremental change – we are not naïve to the urgency of development issues. Further work needs to be carried out to understand how youth activism in these areas might be enabled through transrational voice, and there is an urgency to ensuring that the 'voice' of those most affected by these challenges is also transrationally 'listened' to, to develop the collective knowledge – and the potential for the kind of ecologies of action – needed to address global challenges effectively and sustainably.

And finally, although far from exhaustively, in this book, we have used the transrational specifically to explore youth voice, participatory arts and global development. But we also caution against separating 'youth' approaches from 'other' approaches to development. Transrational voice is not a 'youth' phenomenon, and so examining its expression in other groups of society is essential, as is having a better understandings of how voice is – or can be – generated across the boundaries we see in society, including the blurred boundaries we identify in Chapter 1 between child/youth/adult, in order to create epistemically just and participatory approaches to addressing key development challenges.

From the start of Changing the Story, we wanted to make sure we finished the project with, if not answers, then at least new questions in relation to our central focus on participatory arts methodologies for engaging young people in civil society building. Key global challenges, including those we laid out in Chapter 2, have continued to go under-addressed for decades, as have the challenges in engaging in action research (with young people) in response to these challenges. This has sometimes resulted in the same questions (not unjustifiably) being raised again and again. Our aim in Changing the Story was to push this conversation forward, at least within the small corner of global development work on which we focused. This book is therefore our contribution to progressing this conversation, or at least to examining existing questions through a new lens. We have asked, and will continue to ask: what happens if voice is understood, by individuals and institutions, as not only individually uttered, but also as collectively produced in complex assemblages; as not only telling, but also as expressions of feeling; as not solely centred around understanding, but as a means of welcoming differences, disjunctions, contradictions and complexities. What power lies in such a conceptualisation of transrational voice? And how can we build ecologies of action that enable transrational voice to contribute to epistemic justice and transformative change?

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Appendix

Summary of the Main Commissioned Changing the Story Projects

For further information about these projects, and links to the archive of resources they have generated, go to www.changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk.

Phase One Projects

The Anlong Veng Peace Tours (*Cambodia*): From 2017 to 2019, Dr. Peter Manning (University of Bath) and Dr. Ly-Sok Kheang (Documentation Centre of Cambodia) worked together and with colleagues to explore intergenerational memory within the context of peace and reconciliation in Cambodia. Their work focused in particular on the Documentation Centre for Cambodia's (DC-Cam) existing Anlong Veng Peace and Human Rights Tours, a programme 'designed to promote inter-personal and inter-community dialogue as part of [DC-Cam's] larger objectives of promoting memory, peace and reconciliation. Students of various majors and backgrounds, regardless of victims or perpetrators' sides, are selected and trained to partake in this community-based reconciliation project of the Anlong Veng Peace Center' (DC-Cam). Considered the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge Movement, Anlong Veng has become an important site for DC-Cam to develop their work in creating spaces for memory, justice and healing in Cambodia. As with all of Changing the Story's (CTS) Phase One projects, the Cambodia strand of CTS conducted a critical review and a proof-of-concept project. The critical review asked how 'intergenerational memory' supports societies that have experienced conflict and what past and present approaches in Cambodia could tell us. The proof of concept built on this learning and the existing work happening as part of the Anlong Veng Peace Tours to explore and incorporate new ways of enhancing the participatory aspects of the tours, with a specific emphasis on participatory video.

Tales of the Future: Senses, Creativity and the Arts of Survival (Colombia): 'Relatos del futuro: sentidos, creatividad y las artes de la supervivencia en Colombia' was a collaborative, experimental and itinerant project, led by Professor Alejandro Castillejo-Cuéllar (Universidad de los Andes) and Dr. Simon Dancey (University for the Creative Arts), that sought to stimulate creative embryos (or artistic ensembles) among young people inhabiting the borders

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of precariousness in Colombia. In the middle of the current and complex transitional context, which the project defined not only as a series of unresolved tensions between fractures and continuities of diverse forms of violence but also as a moment in which a retrospective gesture seems to co-exist with the prospective illusion of a new imagined society, *Tales of the Future* was concerned with creative forms of narrating or articulating the future as a possibility through different languages of collective pain and particular modes of integrating lived experience, whether corporeal, visual, sonic or textual among other possibilities. Likewise, the project was interested in the textures and creative modulations of daily survival of these youth and their complex contexts, as well as in the economies of solidarity that the project sought to grow out of these embryos. This project was driven by a vision of 'peace on a small scale' in which the restitution of the other's neighbourliness and the transformation of the imaginaries ossified over the years of war was the focus. The project began with a critical review, which synthesised existing practice by arts initiatives addressing peace, conflict and reconciliation. This was based on two types of data; interviews with relevant organisations and official information from the National Centre for Historical Memory, the Ministry of Culture and the Office of the Major of Bogota. Overall, more than 80 initiatives were reviewed for the critical review, including those working specifically with young people. In all places that were reviewed, precariousness, joblessness and violence were the main features defining the life of young people, as well as a deep scepticism towards 'development projects'. Such work was generally perceived as mining, 'extractivist', short-term interventions. Discussions with young people concerning their experience of violence, both personal and communal, were then conducted in seven poverty and conflict-affected areas of the country which acted as sites of data gathering and scoping. These included Quibdó (Chocó), Buenaventura (Valle del Cauca), Cali-Ginebra (Valle del Cauca) and Medellín (Antioquía). A micro-regional pilot was completed in Ginebra-Paramo de las Hermosas in November 2018, which was used as the starting point for the development of a longer, itinerant project collecting sonic biographies capturing the relationship between young people, the experience of violence, the natural diversity of the environment and an alternative imaginary of the future in three other locations in Colombia. In addition to work focused at a local level in the Pacific coastline region of Colombia, the project also began to develop transnational cooperative initiatives concerned with youth and recovery from violence between Colombia, Brazil and the UK.

ACT – Arts, Critical Thinking and Active Citizenship (Kosovo): the ACT project, headed up by Professor Nita Luci (University of Prishtina) and Professor Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (University of Bournemouth), combined research and applied components, producing alternative practices to be proposed to formal and informal educational institutions, as well as academic research and publishing in Kosovo. The project operated in partnership with four local partners that work with art and youth in several Kosovo municipalities: Anibar (Peja), 7 Arte (Mitrovica), NGO Aktiv (Mitrovica North) and

Varg e vi (Gjilan). Additionally, participants from local and international organisations contributed, including Kosovo 2.0, Youth Initiative for Human Rights and Opera Circus (from the UK) as well as other independent researchers. ACT began with a comparative analysis of the content, forms and practices of municipal versus independent arts-based forms of civic education and explored their respective potential, with a specific focus on the issues facing CSOs targeting youth in marginalised areas outside the capital, Prishtina. Core questions included: How do state versus international funding streams and, at times, conflicting political demands influence the methods and outcomes of civic education? How do state and independent educational sites conceptualise and negotiate civic education, e.g. in relation to post-war, national 'master narratives'? Who uses the services provided? Who does not? How, and why, are CSOs and youth centres succeeding or failing in promoting social justice, civic integration and education for local youth? These, and other questions, required reflection upon the ways historical contingencies have shaped the underpinning practices, concepts, and politics of such work. Following this analysis, the project looked at four different municipalities in Kosovo, because the team considered it important to look at the peripheral spaces beyond the elites and trends in the centre. Each of ACT's partner organisations has a track record of creative and innovative ways of engaging local youth, artists and activists, ranging from the organisation of animation festivals, art exhibitions, theatre plays to city tours. A kick-off workshop took place in September 2018, where artists, academics and activists from Kosovo and the UK were brought together. The kick-off workshop was organised with the aim of discussing the opportunities of civic education for Kosovo youth through the arts. This workshop also led to a formal call for Kosovo research-practice teams to propose projects which would form the 'proof of concept' phase of the project. The successfully awarded project was 'BOOM Zine' – a qualitative research project that looked at the development of music, particularly at the rock and roll scene in Kosovo in the 1980s. The team was composed of the writer Rina Krasniqi, sociologist Lura Limani and designer, Bardhi Haliti. Two are artists and all three have a background in civil society activism in Kosovo.

MAP Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) (Rwanda): the starting point for MAP was to work with young people, educators, cultural artists and civil society organisations (CSOs) to inform the National Curriculum Framework in Music, Dance and Drama in Rwanda. It began as part of CTS and has now developed into its own AHRC/GCRF-funded Network Plus. Championed by Dr. Eric Ndushabandi from the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) and Professor Ananda Breed from the University of Lincoln, MAP works alongside partners to design and deliver all its project activities. In 2018, MAP was launched in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. Initial activities included a curriculum workshop with cultural artists to inform its overarching methodology, a training of trainers with educators to adapt this methodology to local and regional contexts and a youth camp to train young people as facilitators working alongside the adult educators to develop drama clubs and to integrate

the methodology into schools. In Rwamagana, MAP worked with five schools, ten cultural organisations, twenty-five educators and ten young people to design and deliver the MAP methodology. Following the training events, youth and adult trainers extended the training to an additional 62 educators and 526 young people by the December 2018. Thanks to Laure Iyaga, MAP is also a peacebuilding initiative in Rwanda that integrates mental health awareness and support for its participants. In addition to offering workshops and counselling during MAP activities, the team offers ongoing support to MAP youth and adult trainers. On 24 January 2019, the IRDP launched their role as co-investigator of MAP at a stakeholder meeting in Kigali, Rwanda attended by the Rwanda Education Board (REB), Ministry of Education, Ministry of Sports and Culture, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of ICT and Innovation and numerous other distinguished guests. Dr. Sylvestre Nzahabwanayo from the College of Education, University of Rwanda gathered research findings based on interviews and focus groups with MAP youth and adult trainers, cultural artists and stakeholders. Thanks to AHRC follow on impact funding, in 2019 MAP youth and adult trainers from Rwamagana district trained adult educators and young people in Gicumbi, Rubavu, Nyamasheke, Huye and Kicukiro using the same structure as the pilot phase, as well as inviting MAP adult and youth trainers to apply for small grants to continue expanding the programme. The MAP team also developed a filmmaking strand for adult and youth trainers with Eric Kabera from Kwetu Film Institute. MAP is playing an increasingly important role in the shaping of the National Curriculum in Rwanda, thanks to their partnership with the REB.

The Change Makers (South Africa): the Phase One South Africa strand team consisted of Professor Stuart Taberner (Co-Investigator, University of Leeds), Professor Chaya Herman (Co-Investigator, University of Pretoria) and Tali Nates (Lead Delivery Partner, South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation, SAHGF), along with a number of other colleagues and organisations in South Africa and beyond. As part of CTS, The Change Makers team conducted a critical review based on work completed for a previous Global Challenges Research Fund project 'Mobilising Multidirectional Memory to Build More Resilient Communities in South Africa'. In that project, Dr.Charity Kombe and Herman (University of Pretoria), working in collaboration with Taberner and Dr.Matt Boswell (University of Leeds), conducted an initial evaluation of one of the education projects of the SAHGF, and specifically its involvement in the Change Makers programme (CMP) developed by the SAHGF and other partners in Rwanda (Aegis Trust, Salzburg Global Seminar). The CMP is one of a series of global initiatives to create education programmes, drawing on historical traumas, to encourage the new generations to become active upstanders and leaders of change and to resist extremism. Change Makers was piloted in October 2017 among learners from Thabo Secondary School in Soweto South Africa and in November 2017 among learners from Agahozo Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda. The evaluation report examined the theory of change that guided the development of the pilot programme; how

the programme was developed and implemented; and what the facilitating and hindering factors were in the implementation of the programme. It further identified success factors and made a series of recommendations for any future scaling-up of the programme. The proof-of-concept project built on the outcomes of both the CMP and the broader SAHGF suite of programmes to inform how the CMP could be rolled out across South Africa and – mirroring a pilot project led by the SAHGF in Senegal and The Gambia with the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation – in a pilot project in Nigeria. Specifically, this led to the development, delivery and evaluation of a 'train the trainers' Change Makers project with colleagues from the American University of Nigeria.

Phase Two Projects

Izazov (Bosnia and Herzegovina, BiH): *Izazov* aimed to connect with youth civil-society networks and to engage Bosnian youth in inclusive civil-society activities. Through filmmaking workshops and mentoring support, six young activists, from different parts of BiH, created short film stories that they identified as relevant and important. They disseminated these films to audiences that they identified as relevant. Alongside youth-led dissemination, this included showing the films to relevant policy audiences to increase the visibility of young people's priorities and concerns. Using an action research framework, Izazov developed methodologies that combined participatory filmmaking with youth activism, assessing their effectiveness in enabling young people to increase their visibility. Research outputs included the films made by young people, a practitioner workshop resource, an academic case study and a peer-reviewed journal paper. In the Bosnian context, where there were few opportunities for engaged young activists to amplify their voices, Izazov aimed to build the skills of young people to extend their networks, communicate their concerns and in the long term, to build solidarity with other young regional change makers. Izazov was a collaboration between Kings College, London (Tiffany Fairey and Henry Redwood), the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (Dr. Jasmin Hasić) and Tina Ellen Lee from Opera Circus as well as a number of other BiH CSO organisations. In addition to CTS, the project also drew on findings from the AHRC/GCRF-funded project Art and Reconciliation, as well as Opera Circus' wider project work in BiH.

YouthLEAD: Fostering Youth Peacebuilding Capacity in Colombia: this project, set up by Laura K. Taylor (Queens University, Belfast) and Edwin Cubillos (National Centre for Historical Memory), was developed in the wake of the 2016 peace accord in Colombia. Although excluded from the negotiations and not eligible to vote to affirm or reject the agreement, children and youth were vocal in social movements for peace. Given this context, the project tackled two broad research questions. First, how are young people in Colombia tackling the legacy of violence? Using participatory practices, the project documented how young people are taking ownership of history and the production of creative content. Moreover, it not only studied the impact of the civil war

(e.g., forced displacement), but also everyday life in a setting saturated by conflict. Second, how can the arts amplify the voices of young people? Here, the project explored how young people can use arts-based practices to promote Sustainable Development Goals 4 (inclusive education) and 16 (participatory institutions). More broadly, the project explored how arts-based practices can foster engagement, dialogue, and deeper listening between generations and social groups. Throughout the project, the team sought to integrate and compare the experiences of two CSOs: (a) Gestores de Paz (Promoters of Peace), a movement of children and youth working to mobilise the population for peace, through the recognition of their agency, and, (b) the Centre for National Historical Memory that promotes integral reparation and the right to the truth for the victims of the armed conflict, with the goals of building long-term peace, democratisation and reconciliation. The project aimed to support its partners to translate their ongoing work into practical and sustainable projects and public policy. The collaborations supported by the project allowed for a novel and innovative dialogue among those working at the grassroots and national levels in Colombia designed to generate new theory while making a difference on the ground and influencing policy.

Participatory Arts for Health Improvement (India): using participatory methods and audio-visual tools, this project, set up by Dr. Amrit Virk (University of Leeds) and Dr. Michael Heneise (Kohima Institute), supported young people in Nagaland state in India to utilise filmmaking techniques for capacity building and advocacy. Led and co-produced by young Naga researchers at The Kohima Institute (TKI) and supported by young filmmakers and CSO volunteers, the project produced a documentary film consolidating a number of case studies of CSOs' arts-based interventions with youth in Nagaland. Combining an arts and humanities perspective with a global health approach, the project showcased how locally relevant models can be generated and applied to address sustainable development and health goals (SDG), particularly SDG 3: 'ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all'. By linking TKI researchers with young filmmakers and CSO volunteers, the project ensured peer-support for researchers whilst maintaining a balance between gender and skills sets. Key stakeholders – community leaders and young men and women from CSOs – were active collaborators in the project, through their participation in the initial design and later feedback meetings. The documentary film was used as an advocacy tool for youth mobilisation and showcasing the CSOs' arts-based community development interventions amongst young people in Nagaland. In partnership with relevant policymakers, faith-based bodies and youth organisations, informal screenings of the film were arranged in colleges, churches and other spaces where youths gather, and viewers' feedback was collated via text messages and social media. Through this programme of screenings, the film sought to promote amongst audiences reflection on key issues facing Naga youth and help carry community voices to the policy level.

The Making of the Museum of Education (Kosovo): the Making of the Museum of Education, set up by Dr. Linda Gusia (University of Prishtina) in

collaboration with Dr. Jane Healy (Bournemouth University), explored the ways in which museums emerge through interactions between places, narratives and social actors in the process of excavation and construction of pasts. The research was process-oriented and focussed on the rooted and full-cycle understanding of memory production and mobilisation in post-conflict societies. Researchers and participants of the workshops organised by the project were asked to reflect on this process through blogs, podcasts and video documentation. The process hinged on self-reflective and dialogic critiques of its own practices and was itself a rich source of methodological, theoretical and practical learning. Through the process of training, data gathering, discussions, public screenings and creation of an interactive digital platform, the project sought to initiate plural and critical public discussion, generating space for analysis of the conflicting, converging and connective acts of remembrance across temporal and generational experiences. A documentary film documented the process. The project produced a digital media platform exploring the ways spaces and platforms contribute to the production of multilayered, intersecting and occasionally competing narratives. Furthermore, by paying attention to a range of media, from film to literary texts to archives, the project interrogated the mobilising potential of public remembrance, as well as its catalysing and re-mediating force in activist projects. The emphasis of the research was placed on inter-generational and plural remembrance of events. The use of digital media as a complement to, rather than a replacement of, the analogue became particularly important for the project, highlighting the value of adopting hybrid understanding of remembrance as practiced both offline and online, and therefore to consider the way that media can transform memory and how this can shape our present day understanding of past violence.

Examining Interpretations of Civil National Values made by Young People in Post-Conflict Settings (Kenya and Nepal): this project, led by Dr. Marlon Moncrieffe (University of Brighton) in collaboration with Dr. John Mwangi Githigaro (St. Paul's University, Limuru), Rajib Timalsina (Tribhuvan University), Dr. Willis Okumu (Anglican Development Services), Antony Ndung'u (Zenn Theatre Company), Rajan Khatiwada (Mandala Theatre) and Nub Raj Bhandari (Janaki Women Awareness Society), aimed to empower children in post-conflict settings to articulate their interpretations and shared communications of civic national values. This it sought to do through the creation of a performance arts-based 'scheme of work', envisaged as a process of transformative learning that would support local and global CSOs in reducing poverty and advancing education for all as part of the peacebuilding process. The project had four central aims: first, to explore how children in post-conflict settings interpret civic national values, this exploration being supported through the application of varied performance arts-based tools and techniques. Second, to empower children in post-conflict settings to develop and advance their thinking about the past, the present and future possibilities of peacebuilding through theories of 'reflection'. Third, to examine the perspectives of teachers on 'civic national values', including the varied ways

they pass these narratives to their learners; and forth, to facilitate our research partners to continuously analyse, reflect and conceptualise their understandings and shared communications of civic national values. In so doing, the project sought to advance future policymaking through a performance arts-based 'scheme of work' that could be applied locally, nationally and internationally in comparative contexts. It was hoped that, through this project, children in post-conflict settings, their teachers and CSOs could be empowered by their reflections, conceptions and arts-based performances, benefitting current and future processes of education and advancing their shared communications of 'civic national values', with the aim of supporting national and transnational forms of peacebuilding.

Youth-led Social Enterprises in Malaysia (Malaysia): despite the support for and suggested importance of youth social entrepreneurship for Malaysia's future, social entrepreneurship rates are surprisingly low in Malaysia. At the same time, deploying discourses of civil society and social entrepreneurship in development initiatives shifts institutional responsibilities onto individuals and communities, thereby reinforcing existing power dynamics and hindering well-being. In this context, this project, led by Dr. Andreana Drencheva (University of Sheffield) and Dr. Wee Chan Au (Monash University Malaysia), aimed to examine the lived experiences of young people in relation to the factors that influence their engagement in social entrepreneurship and the activities that youth-led social enterprises employ to contribute to civil society. This was achieved by combining co-design with young social entrepreneurs and case studies, drawing on arts and humanities with social sciences in order to amplify the voices of young people in social entrepreneurship research. By investigating the lived experiences of young social entrepreneurs and how social enterprises contribute (positively and/or negatively) to civil society, the project created a conceptual link between civil society and social entrepreneurship research. The project highlighted the diversity of organising forms in civil society by shedding light on a new type of organisational actor (i.e. social enterprises). The project also offered a contextualised approach to examining the activities through which social enterprises seek to catalyse social change. By focusing on youth-led social enterprises in Malaysia, the project aligned with the overarching aims of CTS Phase One projects, while also contributing insights based on a new context, new method and a new conceptual lens. Ultimately, the project sought to explicate not only how civil society can be shaped with and for young people, but also by young people. The aimed for impact of the project was to help create a supportive ecosystem in which young social entrepreneurs and their social enterprises could address social and economic challenges in sustainable ways for individuals and communities.

Connective Memories: Intergenerational Expressions in Contemporary Rwanda: drawing on arts-based methodologies, the Connective Memories (CM) project, led by Dr. Kirrily Pells (University College, London), Professor Ananda Breed (University of Lincoln), Dr. Chaste Uwihoreye (Uyisenga Ni Imanzi) and Eric Ndushabandi (IRDP Rwanda), sought to break new ground

by exploring the ways that memories are made, mediated and negotiated by Rwandan young people to create new social imaginaries, in contexts where narratives of trauma and violence dominate. While there has been increasing attention to intergenerational transmission of trauma, this is largely framed by theory and practice from the Global North and there has been far less consideration of how children themselves approach the concept and practice of memory and how this may act as a resource to create cultures of their own making. CM was an interdisciplinary project which was co-designed, undertaken and evaluated with young people in Rwanda to address three questions. First, what are the characteristics and dynamics of memory among children and youth? Second, how are memories constituted and mediated intergenerationally? Third, how might arts-based methodologies open up possibilities for (a) understanding and exploring memories and how these are mediated in transgenerational spaces and (b) for creating more locally-grounded and culturally sensitive approaches to envisaging alternative futures in addressing past legacies of violence? This collaborative project sought to learn from, and build on, the knowledge and capacities of local actors to extend, elaborate and reimagine responses to the legacies of violence by adapting the MAP methodology. The overarching intended impact was to foster space for marginalised young people to allow hidden stories to emerge and create new future imaginaries. Via written and creative outputs, the project generated: new theoretical insights; a preliminary evaluation of the MAP methodology designed to inform the development of the National Arts Curriculum in Rwanda and to generate discussion about the higher-level policy implications of the project's findings for development agencies.

Mapping Community Heritage (South Africa): this project was a collaboration between the University of Sheffield (Dr. Seth Mehl), South African grassroots CSOs Pala Forerunners (PF, Paul de Bruyn) and the University of Pretoria (Dr. Glen Ncube), working in rural communities bordering South Africa's Kruger National Park (KNP). These rural communities were established in the twentieth century by people who were forced off their land in what is now KNP. The project trained and supported local young people to act as interviewers in order to record the lived experience of older generations (interviewees) who remembered the forced displacement, and thus to build narratives and an archive for community-development purposes. The young interviewers and the research team mapped perceptions among older interviewees of development concepts such as home, land, heritage, conflict, displacement, old age, youth and other terms that were identified iteratively by community participants. The project's first objective was to define local perceptions of development concepts that would otherwise be defined by the Global North. A second objective was to establish a sustainable archive, supported by local young people, with help from two major international research universities. Throughout the project, the team assessed the linguistic, cultural and historic landscapes surrounding the work, with a view to co-creating new ways to negotiate the legacy of historical conflict, and building local consensus on how best to secure future livelihoods and well-being.

Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba (South Africa): Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba was developed to amplify the voices of young South Africans telling the stories of the Karoo. A group of young adults from Graaff-Reinet were recruited into a 'co-creator collective' (CCC), supported by Dr. Scott Burnett (Wits Centre for Diversity Studies) and Professor Aylwyn M. Walsh (University of Leeds). The CCC used video equipment and training provided by the project to source, film, edit and analyse community stories about the land and its stewards in order to produce digital media, theatrical performance and research outputs that could form part of a new youth-led environmental justice activist programme under the aegis of the local #BanFracking campaign being led by the Support Centre for Land Change (SCLC) in partnership with an existing youth group 'Youth-in-Power' in Graaff-Reinet. The vast, dry plains of central South Africa are not only home to wind and solar farms, but also conceal millions of cubic feet of natural gas, making the region a crucial battlefield in the politics of 'sustainable' energy. Control of the land is already contested: decades after the end of apartheid, white people still own most of it and benefit directly from decisions over whether ecotourism, mining, farming or other industries are planned. Landless Black people are often constructed as lacking agency in development debates and easily led into supporting whichever unscrupulous lobbyist promises the greatest immediate gains. Instead of the rational public sphere envisioned under liberalism, public participation stacks the odds heavily towards existing racialised land distributions that reproduce hegemonic whiteness. The story of the land is thus often dominated by colonial narratives. Latent conflicts over land shape contemporary realities. The project started with no pre-judgments about people's ethical and cultural relations to the land, engaging instead in finding narratives, co-creating artistic and scientific analysis and amplifying the signal of historically dispossessed people in debates about development, natural resources and the environment. In the process, the capacity of a local youth organisation (Youth-in-Power) was built to enable them to work on future media and arts campaigns with an established land rights organisation, SCLC, which has a proud track record of securing land rights for its constituents and a successful office in Graaff-Reinet.

Thought and Freedom (Venezuela): under the Bolivarian Revolution, since 1999, Venezuela has become increasingly polarised. In political rhetoric, the news, and social media, we find multiple antagonistic narratives: Chavistas versus the opposition, rich versus poor, as well as a narrative that Venezuelans have become 'a submissive people'. Tensions have grown exponentially, erupting in violent protests between 2014 and 2018, featuring young people predominantly, which left over 200 people dead and around 20,000 people injured. A generation of Venezuelans have grown up in a context where violent confrontation is the predominant expression of political polarisation, and where it is difficult for them to conceive of themselves beyond the frame of conflict. Thought and Freedom, a partnership between the *Escuela de Teatro Musical de Petare* and researchers from the Central University of Venezuela (Mirla Pérez and Dr. Jesús Flores) and the University of Exeter (Dr. Katie

Brown), aimed to develop creativity and critical thinking among young people through arts education and skills training, leading to improved understanding of the relationship between power and language and how to use language to move beyond violent conflict. In the first phase of the project, the group studied the divisive language of Venezuelan politics and held focus groups with a cross-section of young people (aged 15–25) from Caracas to determine how language has shaped their understandings of themselves and of their capacity to overcome conflict. It then developed and implemented a series of weekly arts-education workshops, following the hypothesis that arts-educational practices can develop young people's critical thinking skills and promote active citizenship. As well as developing skills in writing, filming and performance, the 100 young participants involved developed the ability to think of themselves beyond the current conflict and to take an active role in leading change in the country. A group of these participants worked with professional web designers to create a website to share both the materials used in the workshops, to be used by other youth groups around the country, and to create a forum for discussion, bringing together a community for change, or in the terms of the present study, an ecology for action.

Street Art to Promote Representation and Epistemic Justice among Marginalized Rural Zimbabwean Youth: this project, set up by Dr. Melis Cin (Lancaster University), Dr. Tendayi Marovah (Midlands State University) and Dr. Faith Mkwananzi (University of Free State), focused on rural Binga, a significantly underdeveloped rural district located in the Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe. The area is largely inhabited by the minority Tonga people who have long been subject to marginalisation, social violence and exclusion. The project sought to document the treatment of the Tonga and their history through participatory street art, with the aim of encouraging social cohesion, making their experiences and knowledge visible, thereby contributing to epistemic justice. The project sought to generate a democratic space by giving Tonga youth an opportunity to tell stories about the lives that they value, with the aim of undertaking research *with* Tonga youth rather than *on* them, in turn promoting social awareness of, and beyond, this community. Thus, the project sought to provide a platform for Tonga youth to voice their aspirations and to address the social powerlessness they hold; identify how youth and CSOs can work together to address social cohesion and epistemic injustices; bring the issues of marginalised youth to the attention of policy-makers and other local stakeholders; and discuss the role of participatory arts as an intercultural learning tool for deconstructing the bias against such groups. The project brought together NGOs, government agencies, museums and art galleries, and urban university youth to dismantle longstanding stereotypes against the Tonga community. The partners of this project were Batonga Community Museum in Binga and the Basilwizi Yrust youth NGO. The Batonga Community Museum helped with the design of the art-based methodology, art training, exhibition and dissemination of artefacts. The NGO worked with young people on the design, production and delivery of artefacts, as well as ensuring active

communication between stakeholders. In so doing, the project sought to create a sustainable platform for the Tonga community to effect social change.

Phase Three Projects

Contemporary Arts Making and Creative Expression Among Young Cambodians: this project, a collaboration between Dr. Amanda Rogers (University of Swansea) Reaksmey Yean (Centre for Khmer Studies, Phnom Penh) and Cambodian Living Arts (CLA) analysed the contemporary expressions of young Cambodian artists and their relationship to post-conflict identity. It examined how arts NGOs support and shape these activities and reflected on the challenges they face. These interlinked foci were achieved by examining the work of CLA, one of Cambodia's leading arts NGOs, through their 2020 Cultural Season. The Season supported young artists from across Cambodia in developing and showcasing new work and encouraged young audiences to attend artistic events. Specifically, the research examined key concerns of young Cambodian artists, tracing how this affected their creative process, and analysed how the resulting works were received among their peers. In so doing, it examined the varied relationships young people have to past conflicts and the extent to which these shape creative production. By orienting its focus organisationally, the research examined the role of CLA in developing a post-conflict creative sphere, considering which visions and voices were heard, and discussed how CLA can support contemporary artistic expression. Methodologically, the project examined the process of selecting, developing, performing and interpreting new works by observing the selection and development process in meetings and rehearsals and by interviewing artists and CLA employees about their experiences. The content and form of the final works were examined using performance analysis, and their interpretation was investigated by undertaking qualitative and quantitative studies of audience reception through student taster performances, post-show talk backs and surveys.

¿Cuál es la Verdad? (What is the Truth?) De-constructing collective memories and imagining alternative futures with young people in Chocó through music and arts (Colombia): this project, led by Dr. Marlies Kustatscher, Professor Kay Tisdall (University of Edinburgh), Dr. Edwar Calderon (Queen's University Belfast), Laura Toro, Tony Evanko (Fundación Casa Tres Patios) and Juan Manuel Gomez Serna (Mr Klaje Collective), focused on Quibdó, the capital of Chocó in the Colombian Pacific, a remote area disproportionately affected by armed conflict and home to mainly Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations who face a complex legacy of intersectional inequalities. It emerged from a longstanding partnership between the University of Edinburgh and Universidad Claretiana and built specifically on partnership and research workshops carried out in May 2019 in Quibdó, funded by a GCRF Partnership Grant that brought together young people, researchers from Colombia and the UK, artists, CSOs, local government agencies and education providers to collaboratively develop the project focus and methodology. The project responded

to priorities identified during this process and focused on tensions within and between neighbourhoods (barrios), violence and armed gangs, feelings of fear and distrust. Using a co-produced music-and arts-based approach, the project team worked with CSO partners Fundación Casa Tres Patios and Mr Klaje Collective to train young co-researchers from three Quibdó barrios to facilitate workshops with other young people in order to critically deconstruct collective memories of past violence. The project's aims were, first, to enable young people to become critical co-constructors of their communities' histories and to visualise alternative futures through a co-produced music- and arts-based methodology; second, to generate dialogue between youth groups to break down neighbourhood barriers and deconstruct post-conflict tensions; third, to make visible the experiences of marginalised young people and to support the creation of sustainable alliances with CSOs, policy and educational stakeholders and researchers for delivering social justice for young people; and forth, to investigate the potential of participatory music and arts as a tool for reconciliation and capacity building by engaging comparatively with other projects in the CTS portfolio and beyond.

Reanimating Contested Spaces (ReSpace): Designing Participatory Civic Education for and with Young People in Kosovo and Rwanda: ReSpace, which brought together Dr. Paula Callus (University of Bournemouth), Dr. Linda Gusia (University of Prishtina), Dr. Alex Ndibwami (University of Rwanda), The African Digital Media Academy and Anibar investigated how concepts of space, through arts-based participatory methods, can engage the 'post-memory' generation (Hirsch 2012) in Rwanda and Kosovo to reimagine specific sites of memory. The project sought to impact upon educational content and methods in these countries by introducing creative methods to explore concrete spaces in young people's social surroundings. These spaces bear witness to often-silenced, everyday histories of, for example, civic resistance and societal cohesion, before or after war and violence. The project brought together the work of combined innovative technologies with causal, factual (evidential, not selective) and affective approaches to history in order to avoid essentialising stories of war horrors and victimisation. The methods, focus and spaces explored thereby served as interactive and exploratory civic educational means for youth to identify the contextual reasons for societal disintegration and violence, as well as the civic potentials of counteracting these processes. Through a collaboration with architects, designers and artists as organised or non-formalised members of the CSO sector from across these countries, ReSpace organised a series of workshops that employed creative experimentation with digital animation and VR technologies. These provided innovative and critical, yet safe, explorations of selected spaces, as an alternative means of engaging and co-creating multiple historical knowledges. Amongst other things, the project asked: how can art and design methods encourage young people to explore the cultural heritage of space (affective, enspaced histories) as well as re-'invent' these spaces in differently situated post-conflict and educational contexts? And how can we reflexively develop methods that can support

a move from hierarchical didactic spaces that operate to maintain the status quo, to spaces of participation? Over the course of a year, the project critically engaged youth from organisations in Rwanda and Kosovo, through a series of workshops, to research and reimagine selected historical sites (e.g. urban cultural locations). By the end of the project, the youth had gained deep contextual knowledge and designed their own VR experience. Additionally, the project commissioned contemporary artists to create interactive work engaged with space, allowing all involved to simultaneously interrogate the notions of 'invited' and 'invented' spaces by civil society in the past and present.

Imagining Otherwise – Transforming Spaces through Arts Education in South Africa: Imagining Otherwise (IO) was a cross-disciplinary collaboration grounded in performance, activism and youth-led social change. A group of young people located in Cape Town's Cape Flats, supported by Professor Aylwyn M. Walsh, Professor Paul Routledge (University of Leeds), Alexandra Sutherland (Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education), Ashley Visagie (Bottomup) and Professor Mark Fleishman (University of Cape Town), sought to establish a sense of place beyond systemic identification of place with gangs, drugs and violence. Their aim was to challenge youth disempowerment related to lack of resources as a consequence of systematic erasure and forgetting. The project partners, Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education and Bottom Up both deliver arts-based activism and education, with an explicit focus on young people's participation in the community, supported by a mentorship programme. The partners sought to build capacity amongst participants through a series of intensive workshops with local artists to create performances, storyboards and a graphic novel. The cross-arts collaborative storying of experiences and dissemination was designed to enable a wide audience to engage with what young people identify in their communities as resources for developing resilience. Drawing on the team's collective experience in working with marginalised young people and the arts as method for critical engagement in public life, the team approached this particular context of violence and exclusion through participatory arts. It asked: How do young people make sense of race and spatial inequalities in Cape Town? What role does the generative potential of the arts have in 'hope'? When we create and make the world, can that assist in redressing the psycho-social effects of poverty, unemployment and rampant violence in educational and activist alternatives? How do dialogic creative arts generate a theory and practice of social change by, with and for marginalised young people? In order to address these questions, the team worked with several aims: to map and analyse spatial inequalities of community engagement and resources in the Cape Flats; to establish a programme of youth engagement through creative arts education; and through such engagement, to generate alternative youth imaginaries and practices.

Tribal Education Methodology (TEM) – Sustainable Education through Heritage and Performance (India): this project, led by Dr. Sreenath Nair and URAVU: Indigenous Science and Technology Centre, aimed to develop a

sustainable curriculum for young people (10–16 years of age) from the indigenous tribes (Adivasis) of Wayanad District, Kerala, India. The project developed the TEM Toolkit by using tribal heritage, oral and performance traditions through participatory approaches and digital means. The tribal youth do not generally attend formal school, and a proper integration of tribal language and culture into the State syllabus of Kerala has a long way to go. This results in Adivasi education being considered a complex problem in the State, frequently leading in practice to a lack of education, unemployment and poverty among the tribal youth. This is in addition to the ongoing political issue of tribal land ownership. The ratification of the Indian constitution in the 1950s made the State the custodian of tribal homelands, making the tribal people themselves homeless and landless. To address the issues the tribal communities in Wayanad face in terms of education, the project undertook youth-led participatory action research to design a tribal art-based curriculum for empowering transformative learning with the aim of advancing education and reducing poverty. The key activities of the project included digital documentation of the tribal oral traditions to create a tribal museum and digital archive in Wayanad; developing a TEM Toolkit for an inclusive curriculum, that could help the tribal youth to complete their secondary education; setting-up a youth-led, sustainable drama club (Bamboo theatre) to inform the participatory 'scheme of work' of the project. Learning in tribal communities through the toolkit was designed to be active and embodied. Physical and sensory components such as touch, smell, seeing and hearing inform the pedagogic practice of forest-centred tribal life and hence, learning is understood not only in terms of reading and writing. As a result, education in the tribal context involves 'gustatory' terms of bodily learning. A massive body of rituals and oral traditions, as well as participatory-art practices such as dance, music and performance, dominate not only the tribal way of life but also shape this community's worldview, historical and cultural memories and formation of their collective self. The project sought to carefully integrate art and education to create a sustainable model of tribal education. The impact of TEM includes the development of a partnership with the State Education Board, the goal of which is to integrate a sustainable model of education for the tribal youth in Kerala into the State curriculum. A TEM Museum and Bamboo Theatre were also set up in order to equip young people in the tribal communities to develop new strategies for conflict resolution through cultural means.

Building inclusive and sustainable civil society: A social entrepreneurship toolkit created by and for young people (Cambodia and Malaysia): young people and CSOs are increasingly pushed into social entrepreneurship. While social entrepreneurship can catalyse positive social change in economically sustainable ways, it can also be exclusive and potentially unsustainable for individuals, with impact on their well-being. At the same time, the dominant approach to social entrepreneurship support neglects the personal costs of the process. This is why this project aimed to co-develop, co-pilot and evaluate a Sustainable Social Entrepreneurship Toolkit (SSET) from a person-centred and

critical perspective that enables young people's engagement in social entrepreneurship in ways that are economically and personally viable in environments of project-based funding, institutional voids and shifting institutional responsibilities. This the project sought to achieve by combining a process of co-creation, case study development and evaluation, bringing arts and humanities into dialogue with social sciences in order to enhance and amplify the voices of young people. This project aimed to provide a foundation for making social entrepreneurship more inclusive and accessible. In doing so, it sought to contribute to social entrepreneurship research by challenging the current portrayals of social entrepreneurs as heroes; to development studies by challenging discourses around entrepreneurialism and sustainability; and to civil society research by addressing calls for research on the lived experiences of individuals involved in CSOs and how these experiences are shaped by organising forms. By focusing on sustainable social entrepreneurship in Malaysia and Cambodia, this project aligned with the overarching aims of CTS, while questioning important terms in development studies, such as entrepreneurialism and sustainability. The project sought to generate synergies between other CTS projects working in Malaysia and Cambodia in order to enable scalability and sustainability of methodologies, learning and impact across the network. By co-developing, co-piloting, and evaluating an SSET, the potential impact of the project was aimed at supporting young people and CSOs to engage in social entrepreneurship in ways that are economically and personally sustainable in order to shape inclusive civil societies. The Wellbeing for Impact toolkit, produced by the project, was a collaborative effort between Social Innovation Movement (Jian Li Yew), the University of Sheffield (Andreana Drencheva), Monash University (Wee Chan Au) and the Impact Hub Phnom Penh (Laura Smitheman). The toolkit aims to support the development of change makers' attitudes, skills and practices towards well-being, which can ultimately lead young people to create and sustain social ventures that can catalyse positive social change.

Follow-On Projects

Promoting youth-led social entrepreneurship in partnership with communities and civil society organisations (Colombia): this follow-on project built on ¿Cuál es la verdad?, which responded to issues identified by young people in Quibdó, Colombia, about violence within and between neighbourhoods, and supported them to visualise alternative futures. The team worked with Afro-Colombian and indigenous young community leaders and activists as 'young co-researchers', who co-produced a set of methodological tools and who were supported by the team to involve wider groups of young people in participatory research. As an unanticipated outcome of the project, the young co-researchers developed an innovative idea for a social enterprise business, following a multi-stakeholder cooperative model, for their community. This follow-on project supported them to develop the social enterprise idea into

a pilot project. The social enterprise *Casa Gastro-Cultural OSHUN* set up a restaurant which supports childcare and cultural activities in the community (e.g., music and dance) via a cooperative involving key cultural CSOs in Quibdó, thus localising best practice in social innovation and sustainable economy. Strongly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, it draws on traditional Chocóan cuisine/ heritage (SDG 11) and aims to improve socio-economic conditions (SDG1, 8, 9), gender equality (SDG 5) and early childhood education (SDG4).

Power of the Word (South Africa): South Africa's complex language politics informs how its people participate in democracy, producing civic norms that retrace the historical but lasting hegemony of English and Afrikaans. Everyday tactics of youth resistance to these norms have reverberated across history in creative and effective social movements. And it is young people expressing their own linguistic citizenship that POW (Power of Word) took as its source of energy. In POW, the team took up the politics of 'voice' using peer exchange as its driving ethos between two CTS projects: IO in Cape Town, which was an arts activism programme working with school-going young people, spearheaded by the Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education and implemented in partnership with BottomUp; and Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba (ILL) in Graaff-Reinet in the Karoo, an independent youth land activist and environmental justice filmmaking project incubated by the SCLC. What the team discovered in both of these projects confirmed that language and different forms of linguistic and/or semiotic citizenship were important vectors of power in social change movements in South Africa. In this context, full democratic participation is affected by the hegemony of English and a rural/ urban divide. POW thus brought together young creators from across these divides to critically examine language, spatial politics and activism. POW was inspired by the recent work of linguists at the University of the Western Cape that underscored the role of Kaaps – a historically devalued language in colonial and racist orders – as a living language for cultural and political expression. The aim of the follow-on projects was to use creative arts engagement and peer exchange to address the question: what would a youth-led linguistic citizenship strategy look like? The project brought rural and urban co-creators together with the intention of legacy-building for a living archive to be based at the IO Library for Social Change. Film, oral histories and cross arts creative workshops all formed part of a sharing of practices that came together in the project's Word Fest in March 2022.

Ontu-Nilluva (One Community) – Tribal Education Methodology Forum for Youth Leadership and Engagement (India): the aim of the project was to work with the Government of Kerala to formalise and continue the activities of Ontu-Nilluva, a TEM youth forum, created at the end of the originally-funded project led by Dr. Sreenath Nair (University of Lincoln). Literally meaning 'one community' in the local tribal language, Ontu-Nilluva as an engagement framework helped the Government of Kerala to implement the TEM model to enhance tribal youth-led community engagement, empowerment and policy

interventions. On this project, Dr. Nair worked with policymakers in the Government of Kerala, including the Chief Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister of Kerala, the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Social Justice, the Principal Secretary, the Director of Additional Skill Acquisition Programme, the Director of Tribal Development, the Director of Public Instruction, the Director of Knowledge Mission and the Director of Women and Child Development to embed the TEM findings into the wider social and education system in Kerala.

Developing Mobile Apps for Young Audience Participation in Cambodia: the aim of this project was to design an interactive mobile app that can be used to engage young audiences in Cambodian performing arts. It is commonly assumed that arts audiences in Cambodia are mostly foreigners, but the previous research collaboration on the CTS, from which this project followed, 'Creative Expression and Contemporary Arts Making Among Young Cambodians' challenged these assumptions, highlighting that there is a young Cambodian audience which is interested in the arts but does not necessarily have a complete awareness of the cultural forms they are watching. The project attempted to gain a more complete picture of Cambodian arts audiences, and to consider how best they might be served in order to ensure the sustainability of Cambodian arts for the next generation. As such, the aim of the app was to: work as a sustainable means of gathering audience data to track the extent of youth participation in the arts; be capable of sharing information with young audiences about performances that they see, ranging from information about the artists, to the art forms and the piece itself. The team's earlier research showed young people want and need this information in order to participate meaningfully in Cambodian arts and culture. The app allows audiences to engage with art works in real time. This may include sharing reactions, responding to questions raised in the work or asking questions themselves. The team road tested the app with young artists and audiences during the Cambodia Living Arts (CLA) 2022 Cultural Season 'Action Today: Consequences Tomorrow', held in Phnom Penh and then toured across Cambodia in January–March 2022. The findings from the research project subsequently fed into CLA's longer term research project on 'Civic Participation through the Arts in Cambodia'. This project was itself part of a larger program of activities presented to SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) by CLA, which went by the same name. This involved young people taking ownership of the design, curation, programming and production of a festival, exploring the tensions between CLA programming of artistic content, and young people's interests and concerns.

Digital Art-based Mental Health with and for Young People in Rwanda: in Rwanda, psychosocial services provide an important contribution to building individual and community resilience, social cohesion and trust. The lack or absence of trust has been shown to not only affect victims of the genocide but to have transgenerational effects with young people encountering issues with developing meaningful relationships. Psychological sequalae from the genocide

are found to be long-lasting in both offspring of the survivors and perpetrators of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi (Rieder and Elbert 2013). Although most of the population are aware of where they can seek support for mental health (61.7%), only 5.3% reported to have utilised existing mental health services. This project sought to increase uptake of mental health services and to extend the impact and sustainability of CTS projects, including MAP and CM to embed the provision of mental health support through digital platforms with, and for, young people by: designing and implementing youth-led monitoring, evaluation and learning tools (MEL); scaling up the original projects in connection to key services and institutions; developing a CPD programme to embed MAP into the School of Medicine at the University of Rwanda; delivering MEL outputs and a policy-level webinar to share project outcomes. Members of the team received requests from existing partners REB and Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) to embed the MAP methodology into mental health services. Members of the team (alongside six psychosocial workers from Uyisenga Ni Imanzi, nine youth MAP master trainers and six adult MAP master trainers) delivered trainings to 118 mental health professionals (clinical psychologists and nurses) who work in five rehabilitation services (serving street-connected young people and former drug users), 82 health institutions (health centres and district hospitals), three prisons and four rehabilitation centres working alongside three key policy influencers (from REB and RBC) to inform mental health in Rwanda. With this project, MAP was able to ensure the sustainability of its approach by integrating the training into a CPD programme with the University of Rwanda, School of Medicine and School of Nursing. This project also enabled partners to embed the MAP methodology into existing systems for sustainability, to provide youth-led MEL and to secure future funding by establishing a system and structure in order to apply for a Wellcome Trust Discovery Grant with CTS partners Ananda Breed (University of Lincoln) and Kirrily Pells (University College London). The project used indigenous Rwandan approaches to understand mental health alongside the awareness that mental health and wellness is considered as a communal endeavour to heal the wounds of genocide and structural violence. Likewise, it focused on the use of digital platforms (Zoom, WhatsApp) to link mental health service users with mental health service providers through youth-led and art-based approaches as a response to COVID-19 to ensure the ongoing provision of mental health support and to address stigma.

Transnational and Intergenerational Exploration of Ecological Heritage in Southern Africa: this project built on the findings of CTS's work across Southern Africa (2021). The previous critical review of practice and participatory engagement with young people in South Africa and Zimbabwe emphasised unemployment and diminishing cultural heritage as major present-day issues experienced by youth in the region. Young people highlighted their wish to take a proactive role in development projects. However, they pointed to a lack of relevant support, skills deficits and a need for better mentorship as barriers to them taking up this role. Building on this previous research, the project

sought to create a pathway for realising the potential impact of invigorating ecological heritage in the region and embedding it into community life. Specifically, the project sought to galvanise rural youth interest in the ecological heritage of the *Moringa oleifera* plant through intensive intergenerational workshop engagement with both elderly community experts and research and farming experts. The *Moringa* plant is used by rural southern African communities for medicinal, nutritional and economic purposes and is considered an important part of the ecological heritage of southern Africa. However, intergenerational knowledge about the uses of Moringa and the practice of its farming has been adversely affected by historical apartheid, forced removals and mass resettlements in South Africa and the contemporary fast-track land reform taking place in Zimbabwe, as well as climate and livelihood changes in both countries. This pilot project sought to revitalise community intergenerational knowledge about Moringa in the face of these challenges. The project team took the established regional relationships between NGOs, policymakers and youth in both countries that had been developed by CTS, and converted the knowledge gathered into business portfolios/manuals, short documentaries and short policy briefs in order to advocate for more engagement with the potential of Moringa at community and at policy level.

Other Projects Developed in Partnership with CTS

Building Trust for Truth-Telling Among Former Child Soldiers – Animation for Inclusion and Peacebuilding in Colombia: this was an arts-based project, which facilitated the inclusion of former child soldiers in Colombia, seeking to guarantee the representation of their voices in the country's official narrative of the civil war. It was a collaboration between the University of Leeds, El Rosario University in Bogotá, The Colombian Truth Commission, grassroots CSOs and artists from the UK and Colombia and was led by Dr. Mathew Charles (El Rosario University) and Professor Paul Cooke (Univeristy of Leeds). The Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition in Colombia was created as part of the 2016 historic peace deal between the Colombian government and leftist FARC rebels. Its mission is to clarify major human rights violations that occurred during the armed conflict, as well to provide a general explanation of the conflict as a whole. Former child soldiers are susceptible to PTSD, depression and can often find it difficult to establish social bonds and speak about their experiences. Ex-combatants can also display high levels of distrust in the State and its institutions. This project was therefore intended to build trust and foster the inclusion of these marginalised voices through creative methods, in particular animation. The aim of the project was to guarantee the inclusion of former child soldiers in the Commission's final report on the civil war, as well as to provide peace-building tools based on these experiences to incentivise a wider audience to engage and empathise with these experiences, and to promote the consolidation of reconciliation in the country. The animations were also used as the basis for

workshops around Colombia in which marginalised communities were invited to formulate concrete recommendations for the non-repetition of conflict in Colombia, also to be submitted to the Commission. Since this phase of funding, the project has received further support to create a foundation, led by Charles, which has used learning from the project to create a citizen journalism programme designed to help develop self-efficacy skills among vulnerable young people in Colombia at risk of radicalisation.

Developing Youth Leadership through arts-based practices in South Africa: the Bishop Simeon Trust (BST), a UK-based NGO working in partnership with local communities to transform the lives of vulnerable children in South Africa, was a key organisation in the initial development of CTS as a programme and remained a core collaborator over its entire life span. Before CTS, and as part of an earlier AHRC project 'Voicing Hidden Histories', Professor Paul Cooke and Daniela Wegrostek (University of Leeds) partnered with the BST and members of the South African CSO Themba Interactive to work with young people that are supported by various community-based organisations in South Africa called 'Safe Parks'. Safe Parks provide access for vulnerable young people to education and emotional support, health services, counselling and food. Through this initial partnership, the team sought to help young people create stories and films that could raise awareness of specific issues in their communities that they felt were being ignored by the mainstream media. In so doing, the project sought to empower the youth people involved to promote change in their own communities. Building on this early work, CTS was devised with the intention of being the first large-scale comparative study of CSO practice across a range of post-conflict societies. Following the emergence of CTS, Cooke and Wegrostek continued to work closely with the BST to explore innovative means of using the creative arts to support children and young people to develop their leadership skills and claim greater voice in their communities. In 2019, the 'Supporting Vulnerable Children to become Youth Leaders in South Africa' project, a CTS, BST and the National Association of Child Care Workers collaboration, developed an arts-based leadership programme to train approximately 240 children and young people across eight Safe Parks supported by BST to become 'youth leaders'. This group then worked with a further 150 children and young people in their particular Safe Park (a total of approximately 1,200 children and young people) to use film and other arts-based methods to develop advocacy campaigns that could raise awareness of a series of issue that directly affect their lives (from gender-based violence to the issue of undocumented children). The project supported a policy event that created a dialogue with local, regional and national stakeholders to raise awareness of the Safe Park model and to ensure that the project's work was embedded in, and aligned with, the aims of these stakeholders as well as the wider national support infrastructure. In 2020, following the COVID-19 pandemic, CTS and the BST collaborated again on a rapid redesign and pilot of a remote youth leadership programme that moved between online and face-to-face delivery, with a view to extending the model to a broader group

of young people and communities. The project aimed to explore the value of participatory media to empower young people to shape the terms of debate in their community's responses to the pandemic; capture the experience of life during COVID-19 for some of the world's most vulnerable young people; support community resilience by exploring how participatory methods can be used to co-produce new, sustainable, online networks that could both help young people to cope with the experience of lock-down, to support community recovery and to prepare for further lockdowns; and to inform regional and national childcare policy and practice. In addition to developing and implementing an online version of the leadership programme and further enhancing the digital filmmaking skills of the young people involved, the project curated an exhibition drawing on the digital materials produced by the project. This generated a unique community archive recording the local impact of COVID-19. Then, in 2021, CTS and the BST were awarded further funding for a new research project. 'Developing a Youth-Leadership Programme for Deaf Children in, and beyond, South Africa'. The project, a partnership between CTS, BST, Hope and Homes for Children (HHC), DeafKidz International (DKI) and Thrive, aimed to foster the integration of deaf children and develop their self-advocacy skills through the creation of an arts-based leadership programme and to support relevant agencies to develop more inclusive practices. Working in partnership with DKI and Thrive, the project supported BST and HHC to build organisational capacity. The project provided them with new skills, and new approaches to programme design, helping them to integrate and support deaf children more effectively across their programmes as well as to support youth-led South-South knowledge exchange to inform child-welfare and protection policy nationally and internationally (Bastable et al. 2023).

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Note: *Italic* page numbers refer to figures.