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The sounds of development: Musical representations as (an)other source of development knowledge

David Lewis, Dennis Rodgers and Michael Woolcock

LSE Department of Social Policy

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Abstract

The experience of development, as well as understandings of and responses to it, are uniquely rendered via popular culture generally, and popular music in particular. It has been a medium of choice through which marginalized populations all over the world convey their (frequently critical) views, while in the Global North music has also long played a prominent (if notorious) role in portraying the plight of the South's 'starving millions' as an emotional pretext for soliciting funds for international aid. We discuss the overlap between music and development in five specific domains: the tradition of Western 'protest' music; musical resistance in the Global South; music-based development interventions; commodification and appropriation; and, finally, music as a globalised development vernacular. We present our analyses not as definitive or comprehensive but as invitations to broaden the range of potential contributions to development debates, and the communicative modalities in and through which these debates are conducted. Doing so may lead to key stakeholders of development such as the poor finding said debates, and possible responses to them, decidedly more open, authentic and compelling.

Keywords: Music, protest, representation, development, knowledge

Authors

David Lewis is professor of social policy and development at LSE. He is co-editor of the forthcoming book 'New Mediums, Better Messages: How Innovations in Translation, Engagement, and Advocacy are Changing International Development', with Dennis Rodgers and Michael Woolcock. Since the 1990s he has released five albums of music, some of which can be found at https://davidlewis3.bandcamp.com.

Dennis Rodgers is research professor of anthropology and sociology at the Graduate Institute, Geneva (Switzerland), and the PI of the ERC Advanced Grant-funded project "Gangs, Gangsters, and Ganglands: Towards a Global Comparative Ethnography" (GANGS). He is co-editor with David Lewis and Michael Woolcock of the volume Popular Representations of Development (Routledge, 2014). He makes up for a complete lack of musical talent with frequent enthusiastic late-night dancing sessions, particularly during current Covid-19 lockdown conditions.

Michael Woolcock is lead social scientist in the World Bank's Development Research Group, and an adjunct lecturer in public policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. In the mid-late 1980s he was a proud member of a decidedly amateur covers band whose creed was to only play songs minimizing the effort/success ratio - of which, it turned out, there were many. This paper is the third movement of a sonata co-authored over many years with his current trio, exploring the rendering of development issues in popular culture.

Introduction

To our knowledge there has been little research to date on the relationship between international development and popular music – for example, on the ways in which familiar development themes are rendered in popular music, or how music might constitute part of development interventions.[1] As with our earlier explorations of popular representations of development in the contexts of novels and films,[2] in this article we aim to make the case that music is a useful but largely unexplored repository of knowledge about development that also critically helps to shape ideas, perceptions and practices. We are particularly interested in how music may offer distinctive insights into the way development issues – broadly defined as both aid and projects, as well as wider ideas about international poverty, inequality and societal change[3] – take on public significance in social, cultural and political terms, as well as the ways they are sustained in everyday life. Certainly, the centrality of music to social life should not be underestimated. As ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1973: 89) has put it: 'because music is humanly organised sound, it expresses aspects of the experiences of individuals in society'. It is a characteristic of virtually all societies and their constituent groups, and as such has long been a medium through which ideas are contested, collective memory is stored, and shared experience is conveyed.

Indeed, music is arguably one of the most immediate forms of art in the cultural repertoire, something that gives it a distinctive power. Smith and Jacobs (2011: 906), for example, suggest that:

> *music is arguably more pervasive than literature in the sense that one needs to choose to read a particular book in order to be influenced by its contents whereas one can encounter popular music in the supermarket, at sporting events or in one's motor vehicle regardless of whether one actually likes a particular song or chooses to listen to it.*

In its pervasiveness, music can be understood both as experience and as message. This makes music a potentially rich source of information about how ideas about development are manifested and represented, as well as a potentially powerful tool for shaping public perceptions, either unconsciously (as in the reinforcement of lazy stereotypes) or consciously (as in the case of efforts to use music to empower, inform or persuade). Or both, as with the now notorious charity singles issued in the UK and the US in 1984 as part of the response from Western countries to the Ethiopian famine. Drawing on the work of Lilie Chouliaraki, Anke Schwittay (2015: 32) identifies events such as 1985's Live Aid as examples of 'the spectacle mode of affective engagement' where such events serve as entertainment that 'incite(s) Northern publics to care and share in

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[1] Some exceptions, usefully summarised by Korum (2017), include Clammer (2014), Howell (2017), and Stupples and Teaiwa (2016). More broadly, as John Clammer (2014) has pointed out, there has arguably been a relative lack of attention paid within development research and practice to the cultural and artistic dimensions of societal change. See also Long (2013).

[2] Lewis, Rodgers and Woolcock (2008, 2013, 2014).

[3] For present purposes we take a broad and inclusive view of the concept of development. Lewis (2019) unpacks the dialectical relationship between development as unfolding change with winners and losers, and development as deliberate intervention, and argues that ideas about development are relevant not only to the Global South but to the Global North as well.

order to alleviate the suffering of distant others'. Music – along with celebrity – is central to the increasing dependence of humanitarianism on the power of representation and spectacle (Richey, 2016).

Our primary (though not exclusive) focus is on 'the Global North' as a site for the production and exchange of music as a cultural product that refers to representations of the 'Global South'. In line with our own areas of regional knowledge and experience, we also engage with examples of other music from developing contexts (though of course make no claims that we are somehow providing a comprehensive or representative 'survey' of the form and content of music about development, whether from the Global North or South). Nor do we wish to present an unnecessarily romantic view of the power of music, which Dillane *et al.* (2018, p.1) and Dave (2019) remind us can also be used for 'malign' purposes of exclusion, incitement and disinformation. Rather, we aim in this article to unpack a new issue for development research along five related lines of initial enquiry: the tradition of Western 'protest' music; musical resistance in the Global South; music-based development interventions; commodification and appropriation; and, finally, music as a global development vernacular. This is far from an exhaustive list, but – extending our previous attempts to connect development studies and other forms of popular culture – we present them in the spirit of encouraging further contributions to both research and practice.

Traditions of 'protest' music in the Global North

Protest music in the Western world has a long history. Its heyday is often seen as the 1960s, notably with the music of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Malvina Reynolds and Pete Seeger in North America, Ewan MacColl, John Lennon, Leon Rosselson in the UK, or Leo Ferré, Jean Ferrat, and Georges Brassens in France, for example.[4] Each of these had different origins. In the US, the African-American blues traditions which emerged at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, connecting the historical experience of slavery with enduring forms of inequality and injustice in post-Emancipation USA, informed records such as Edwin Starr's 'War'.[5] Other key influences were the 'hobo' songs and ballads such as 'The Dishwasher' or 'The Bum on the Rods and the Bum on the Plush' described by Nels Anderson (1923: 200-202) in his classic study of homelessness in the US, and the folk music of Woody Guthrie about the Great Depression.[6] In the UK, protests songs also emerged from the labour movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, while in France they were associated with the anarchist movement. Reflecting its multiple origins, the nature of protest music has ebbed and flowed in the decades since the 1960s, and what might today be looked back upon as the 'classical' protest tradition is in many ways but one moment within a series of evolving forms of musical resistance within wider cultural trends and histories of social change in the Global North.

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[4] See Rice (2014) for a broader anthropological survey of 'the study of music in times and places of trouble', a topic on which he argues that formal research by ethnomusicologists has only 'began relatively recently' (p. 193) – that is, since the mid-1990s. Works in this specific field that are relevant for development include Barz and Cohen (2011), Harrison (2013) and Berger (2014).

[5] Songs such as Billy Holiday's 'Strange Fruit', written in reaction to the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith in Indiana in 1930, or Huddie 'Leadbelly' Ledbetter's 'Take This Hammer', which denounced the harsh prison conditions he endured in Louisiana, are classic examples, and were subsequently taken up as anthems by the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. See Margolick and Als (2000), and Blackman (2008).

[6] See https://www.woodyguthrie.org/.

For example, Daniel Rachel's (2016: xxi) oral history of the 1970s Rock Against Racism movement in the UK documents how 'through music, and through a general sense of disenfranchisement, both first generation black British and disaffected white youth … began to recognise common grievances'. The politics of solidarity created connections between emerging traditions of punk rock from the Global North and reggae from the Global South, linking subcultures of resistance with forms of hybridity and fusion. Later during the 1980s, other political and cultural movements built further on these foundations. UK-based musician Jerry Dammers launched an initiative 'to make the British public aware of the plight of the banned ANC', which culminated in an Anti-Apartheid concert in London in 1988, that 'demonstrated how pop music could awaken the conscience of a generation' (Rachel, 2016: xxv). Emerging from the 2 Tone movement of racially integrated political pop music that developed first in the UK (drawing heavily on Jamaican influences), the Special AKA's Free Nelson Mandela record was supported by the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

As Dillane *et al*. (2018) have argued, 'songs of social protest' are relational, involving exchanges between audiences and musicians. Protest music has long served as a means through which the politics of solidarity can be expressed, but it has also served as a channel through which a range of different ideas about global inequality and injustice have been communicated to mass Western audiences. For example, long after his brief 1960s protest phase, Bob Dylan's 1983 song 'Union Sundown' was an observational critique of globalization centred around the fact that most consumer items bought in the United States were now being made elsewhere, mostly by relying on cheap labour and exploitative working conditions: 'You know capitalism is above the law, it say 'it don't count unless it sells', when it costs too much to build it at home, you just build it cheaper someplace else'. Later that decade, Tracy Chapman's 'Talkin' Bout a Revolution' pondered the likelihood (and hope) that sustained economic dislocation would eventually lead to fundamental social change.[7] More recently, the 2016 song 'Poem' by the British psych pop group 'She Drew the Gun', explicitly tackles inequality and exclusion in neo-liberal Britain. Moving from the economic to the more explicitly political, the Canadian activist and singer-songwriter Bruce Cockburn's song 'If I Had a Rocket Launcher' dealt with his outrage and anger at the injustice of US involvement in the wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The song's accompanying video brought some controversy to MTV but the track was also commended by solidarity campaigners as helping to make young audiences more aware of the political situation in Central America. Finally, Joni Mitchell's song 'Big Yellow Taxi' connected with the burgeoning Western environmental movement and has subsequently been recorded by almost 500 other artists.

The role of protest music within social processes is of course contested – between those who see it as a force for change, and those who understand it as primarily reflective of change. For Thom York, singer of the rock band Radiohead, this structure/agency tension is essentially contingent. There have been times and places where music has shaped events, but others – such as the present-day West – where it seems to have lost much of its power to do so:

> *In the 60s, you could write songs that were like calls to arms, and it would work. If I was*

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[7] This song was subsequently covered by musicians in the Middle East during the Arab Spring in the early 2010s, and in 2016 was used by Bernie Sanders as the unofficial theme song of his candidacy to be the Democratic nominee for President of the United States.

going to write a protest song about climate change in 2015, it would be shit… It's not like one song or one piece of art or one book is going to change someone's mind (The Guardian, 25 November 2015).[8]

Protest music is normally associated with a political message, which distinguishes it from music aimed primarily at fund-raising. For example, one of the best-known and earliest musical events linked to development issues in the Western public imagination was the 1971 'Concert for Bangladesh' organised by former Beatle George Harrison and Indian musician Ravi Shankar to raise the profile and resources for the new country – one that faced natural disaster and the aftermath of a war that led to Bangladesh's secession from Pakistan following a popular liberation struggle and India's military intervention. Yet this event was primarily framed in charitable terms as a humanitarian response to famine and hunger rather than one that engaged with the underlying structural or political conditions that lay behind the crisis. This set the template for the similarly framed 'Live Aid' in the 1980s or today's Comic Relief in the UK, although more recent initiatives, such as the Lilith Fair music festival, founded by the Canadian singer Sarah McLachlan in the late 1990s, which showcases solely female solo artists and female-led bands to counter the pervasive gender imbalance in the music industry, suggest that new approaches are also emerging.

The protest tradition has not simply communicated ideas but has also shaped global representations in particular ways. For example, the 2012 video release of a song by 'Radi-Aid', created by the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH) illustrates the use of musical parody as an instrument for protest. Taking its cue from the persistence of passive images of African societies first promoted by Live Aid, this faux campaign produced a 'We Are The World'-style video in which singers and rappers called upon people in African countries to donate radiators to Norway to help them deal with their extreme weather conditions. SAIH was an organisation first established to support anti-apartheid movements and had continued to engage with global issues. The aim was to make people in the West think about global relationships, challenge representations, and influence public debate. The video surprised those who made it by garnering huge attention, receiving (as of this writing) almost three and a half million viewings on YouTube.[9] According to its producers:

SAIH has strived to promote a more nuanced image on countries in the global south than is usually portrayed in the media and by some charitable organisations and fundraising initiatives. While there are negative issues that need to be reported and a lot of organisations are doing very important work, we are frustrated at the constant repetition of the same negative images. Since the narrative tends to be the same as it was when development assistance first started some 50 years ago, it might give the impression that none of these efforts have produced any results and thus lead to apathy.[10]

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[8] See https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/nov/25/thom-yorke-tony-blair-advisers-tried-to-force-me-to-meet-pm.
[9] For the video, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJLqyuxm96k.
[10] See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/26/radiaid-norway-charity-single

The protest song has continued to evolve in ways that ensure its relevance. For example, in the current turbulent political climate in both the US and UK, there are signs that the protest song is once again in the ascendant in the Global North. Time Magazine reported on 24 January 2017: 'They say music flourishes in times of protest—and already, a slew of anti-Trump songs have sprung up in the lead-up to his election and inauguration'.[11] Similarly, a concert attended by one of us in Geneva, Switzerland, featured British hip-hop jazz artist Soweto Kinch premiering an anti-Brexit rap song. More generally, the Russian Pussy Riot feminist punk collective invaded the pitch during the 2018 World Cup final in protest against the Putin regime's human rights abuses. Questioning the idea that the 1960s was the golden age of protest, Jeneve Brooks (2009) found far more US protest music being written and circulated during the Iran and Afghanistan conflicts than during the Vietnam war, but also noted that changing modes of music production and consumption, including media fragmentation and radio consolidation, now limited its exposure and collective impact.

Musical resistance in the Global South

Protest music obviously also has a long history in the Global South, to the extent that it can be associated with most of the major political struggles of the past half century. The Nicaraguan revolution of 1979-1990, for example, was inextricably linked with the protest and then revolution-supporting songs of the Mejía Godoy brothers, Luis and Carlos, as well as the Katia and Salvador Cardenal sister and brother *Guardabarranco* duo. Similarly, in South Africa, the singer-songwriter and activist Johnny Clegg, with Sipho Mchunu, combined Zulu styles with Celtic folk to challenge apartheid in South Africa during the 1980s with their band Juluka, while the Miriam Makeba – a.k.a. 'Mama Africa' – song 'Soweto Blues', about the 1976 Soweto uprising and its brutal repression, became one of the anti-apartheid movement's most iconic anthems. At the same time, however, the idea of protest music in the Global South can also be approached differently: not so much as intentional attempts to raise awareness or shift opinion, but as situated within the wider frame of music as reflective of social values and as a site of cultural resistance. In this sense, music becomes a site for both construction and contestation of post-colonial identities, something that is perhaps especially obvious in the music of Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa or Senegalese artists such as Youssou N'Dour or Ismail Lo.[12]

Certainly, Dave Randall (2017) argues that music and politics have long been interwoven in West African societies, with musicians playing a role alongside workers in the liberation struggle. For example, Ghana's 'high life' dance music shifted during the 1940s to reflect support for Kwame Nkrumah's movement for national self-determination. In post-colonial settings, music is a site of ongoing contestation over the direction of national development processes. As Senegal's Geji Hip Hop collective illustrates, it is also a site of resistance to gender violence and cultural stereotyping.[13] In Mali, Tuareg musicians, some of whom had fought against the Malian military regime in 1990-91, have fused African and Western rock (via links with Western audiences built

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[11] See https://time.com/4643778/trump-protest-songs/.

[12] At the same time, Dave (2019) undermines the assumption that music necessarily forms part of freedom struggles, resistance or contestation, showing instead how music served to support authoritarianism and was used to sidestep dissent in Guinea.

[13] 'Rap does not shut up': hip-hop women of Senegal', The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/31/rap-does-not-shut-up-hip-hop-women-of-senegal.

through the 'world music' networks),[14] and serve as rallying points for opposition to Islamist takeovers in parts of the country. In Pakistan, guitar-based heavy rock bands have long worked within and adapted Western traditions, where the music serves as a signifier for a certain kind of liberal middle-class identity that pushes back against both secular and Islamist political interest groups. For example, Sufi-rock band Junoon were censored by the government and banned from state TV for songs such as Ehtesaab, which attacked political corruption.[15]

Contests between musical traditions and nation state identities reflect wider structural and cultural issues in contemporary Bangladesh. For example, what role does religion play in a society that in 1971 fought a war to secede from Pakistan, a state that was supposed to have been defined by a shared Muslim identity? The area that became Bangladesh is long home to people practising a variety of religions (including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity) and to different traditions within each one. After 1971 the state attempted to promote the idea of a new 'Bengali' nation that was defined not primarily by religion but by the *Bangla* language. Yet given their polyvalent nature, various elements of these complex religious identities have been asserted at different moments. For example, a syncretic 'Bengali' Islamic tradition, shaped by a wide range of influences including Hinduism and Sufism, exists in contrast to more orthodox Islam, creating occasional tensions between multiculturalism and religious conservatism. The latter harks back to the earlier history of the country as part of Pakistan, but also reflects more recent migration trends that have increased some people's exposure to religious movements in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

In Bangladesh these identity questions play out at the national level through formal politics and are enacted in the cultural sphere. For example, a popular Sufi gypsy folk music known as *Baul* is an example of such syncretism, reflecting a distinctive local fusion of Hindu practices and Islamic beliefs. A key figure in this tradition is the poet Lalon Shah (c.1774-1890), whose work embodies inclusive spiritual values and a rejection of organized religion (Ohlmacher and Pervez, 2014). Lalon's music is kept alive by those who favour 'secular' nationalist traditions, and has regularly been adapted (and commodified) by generations of both younger and older listeners, and also contested by those favouring alternative views. For example, in 2008 the government commissioned a piece of public art in Dhaka that commemorated *Baul* musicians. During construction the sculpture was attacked and damaged by religious extremists. The situation quickly escalated, prompting counter-protests organised on social media, and later a street rally with a human chain, reflecting these wider state/society tensions:

> *When an Islamist group pulled down Mrinal Haq's in-progress sculpture of Baul musicians near the airport, there was an intense mobilization of cultural activists to defend Baul cultural icons. Just as 'Islam in danger' is a frequent rallying cry for Islamists, 'Bangla culture under attack' mobilized and temporarily brought together many disparate cultural organizations. (Mohaiemen, 2014: 127)*

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[14] Although Western rock music of course itself drew on African traditions imported to the US through the slave trade that later evolved into jazz, blues and rock.

[15] See 'In Pakistan, protest music is a tradition', The Times of India, 1 November 2011 https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/In-Pakistan-protest-music-is-a-tradition/articleshow/10562389.cms.

Music traditions can also become elements of contestation in other ways, however. *Narcocorrido*, a type of Mexican folk ballad that extols drug traffickers and glorifies drug trafficking is a good instance of a counterexample. A hugely popular musical genre, it has significant crossover appeal to broader youth and Mexican musical culture more generally, as well as internationally. At the same time, as Mark Edberg (2004: 25) has highlighted, *narcocorridos* are associable with 'the creation of a particular cultural archetype or persona' that ties the violence, power, money, and drugs narcotraffickers are known for to broader 'political, social, and regional themes'. In particular, *narcocorrido* ballads tend to represent the figure of the drug dealer as a community hero or a 'Robin Hood' figure who defies the threats posed by a corrupt Mexican state and who exploits the USA's demand for drugs to benefit Mexico's poor. Yet while undoubtedly 'at the margins of society, drug traffickers are far from being an exploited, suppressed, powerless subaltern group for whom musical expression functions as symbolic empowerment in its struggle for social betterment' (Simonett, 2001: 316)[16], and *narcocorridos* are perhaps better seen as a symptom of a broader struggle for what Christina Baker (2017: 179) has called 'the sounds of the modern [Mexican] nation'.

Seen from the perspective of both the *Baul* and the *narcocorridos* traditions, if we are to understand processes of development and change within post-colonial societies then there clearly is value in broadening the frame of reference: it enables music and its associated tropes and identities to be included alongside the more familiar elements of economy, politics and civil society. We might, for example, pay more attention to the way that community level music making and music sharing can be understood as part of people's efforts to process their traumatic history and as a contribution to nation building and reconstruction, as in the case of Timor Leste, for example (Howell, 2018). But we must perhaps do so in ways that go beyond simply taking music as a point of reference, instead including it into our analyses and modes of presentation and representation. Indeed, this is something that some academics have begun to experiment with very successfully, including for example the French political sociologist Jean-François Bayart, who in May 2018 combined with the Senegalese dancer Alioune Diagne to give a powerful multi-modal presentation on 'Violence and religion in Africa' that involved academic lecture, dance, music, and poetry-reading.[17]

Music-based development interventions

Moving from the ways in which music shapes and reflects wider society and its development values and directions, we turn now to consider how policymakers and aid professionals have experimented with using music as a practical development tool. To what extent has music been part of formal development interventions? As a starting point, it is interesting to note that while numerous musicians have established foundations to encourage and fund development initiatives – such as the Colombian singer Shakira's 'Barefoot/Pies Descalzos' foundation, or the British singer Elton John's AIDS foundation, for example – few, if any, are actually based on the

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[16] See Malcomson's (2019) analysis of agency in the writing of narco-rap for a stark reminder of the way that drug dealers can ruthlessly deal with singer-song-writers who disappoint them.
[17] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuxuqEwmfxA. See also the rendering of the 20th century Asian American experience (migration, internment camps, the Vietnam War) by cultural historian Julian Saporiti, innovatively integrating 'art and scholarship' for broad audiences; available at https://www.nonoboyproject.com/.

promotion of musical activities. An exception is Venezuela's El Sistema youth orchestra, acclaimed as an inclusive social programme that empowers vulnerable children, but also criticised for its authoritarian culture and middle-class origins (Baker, 2014). Another is the Aga Khan Music Initiative, which supports musicians and music educators around the world working to preserve, transmit, and further develop their musical heritage in contemporary forms.[18]

A relatively small but growing project literature is documenting efforts to use music as a component within NGO work in fields as diverse as health, community development and peace building. One of the fields that has received particular attention here is that of post-conflict settings. Gillian Howell (2017) has developed a useful four-level typology of the different intentions that lie behind such interventions: (i) music education (building new knowledge, skills, and learning as part of wider education), (ii) cultural regeneration (in the context of efforts to restore or rebuild cultural resources), (iii) social development (effecting social change, rebuilding trust, and challenging disadvantage), and (iv) healing and health promotion (individual and group-based therapeutic use of music and promotion of public health and wellbeing). While optimistic, Howell resists the temptation to be naive about such work, noting that intentions may not lead neatly to clear outcomes and are often subject tto overreach. Yet these risky 'beginnings', informed by 'optimistic and sometimes idealistic aims and goals', can create opportunities on which other plans and activities might build (Howell, 2017: 63).

In community health, Michael Frishkopf (2017: 50) describes a pilot project which experimented with the idea of using music to support changes in sanitation behaviour in post-conflict Liberia. Based on participatory action research (PAR), it aimed to build a form of 'collaborative ethnomusicology' that in turn sought to create 'music infused relationships' to challenge cultural and linguistic differences. Such work centres on the idea of 'giving voice' as a form of collaboration with real-world effects. This consisted of video production and media dissemination in which local musicians and producers were encouraged 'to take the lead' in developing and promoting health messages. Although it is not unusual for international NGOs to contract local musicians to disseminate such messages, the PAR approach seeks to move beyond what Frishkopf (2017: 50) characterises as 'simply an exchange of money for art' without meaningful participation:

> *By contrast, musical creativity was integrated into the project through serious commitment by local artists, musicians, and producers whose roles extended far beyond the musical domain, drawing on their general knowledge of Liberian society, culture, and health practices as well.*

Approaches like this draw on the power of music to shape beliefs, values and norms. In another documented case, Lucy Bolger (2012) examines the use of music therapy as a psychosocial support tool within a women and children's refuge in rural Bangladesh, as part of a collaborative international project. A weekly women's music group was established at village level, creating a forum where stories were shared and people sang and danced. As well as helping to facilitate

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[18] See: https://www.akdn.org/akmi.

forms of peer support and solidarity, the project aimed to develop the leadership and coping skills that women would need to rebuild their lives.

Music can also play a less positive, more instrumental role beyond the community level. For example, anthropologist Mark Schuller (2012) describes musical performances encouraged by NGOs in Haiti in their efforts to build their relationships with local beneficiaries – involving singing development and solidarity songs together in camps – that primarily served for donor consumption rather than the actual building of local community relationships.[19] In his account, the main aim was to produce a lively set of representations of the NGOs' organisational engagement with local communities – in the form of photographs and video – that met the NGOs' need to make its work visible to a select international audience.

There also exists a (more limited) number of development initiatives promoted at a more macro scale by international organisations and national government agencies, including two instructive cases promoted respectively by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The first relates to the World Bank's work with multiple donors in Aceh, Indonesia, following the horrendous devastation wrought by the tsunami in December 2004.[20] If there was a 'silver lining' to this tragedy, it was the impetus it gave to the forging of a peace agreement between secessionist factions and the government that, heretofore, had been engaged in a violent civil war lasting many years. The peace agreement was of pragmatic necessity negotiated and signed in Finland, leaving Indonesian and Acehnese officials with the daunting task of not merely conveying the news of the peace deal, but relaying to a sceptical population still deeply traumatized by the tsunami the details of the agreement while credibly conveying its legitimacy in the eyes of all key stakeholders. A two-part communications strategy was implemented. In addition to printing enough copies of the agreement for every household in Aceh – so that it could literally be pinned to the walls of every residence – a popular Acehnese musician was hired by the World Bank to produce a rap song consolidating and celebrating the end of the civil war. Crucially, the song's words were not drawn from the peace agreement itself, but from Acehnese school children, who were asked to submit a single sentence summarizing what the peace agreement meant to them; the musician arranged the best of these sentences into a catchy song which was then recorded and played across local radio stations, becoming a huge hit. The medium and the message aligned: in desperate, fraught circumstances, domestic and international development actors used locally credible people (musician and children), content (words penned by the children) and communication tools (an original, memorable Acehnese song) to disseminate and legitimize a peace agreement that endures to this day.[21]

A more recent – and contested – case is the Girl Hub (later Girl Effect) project established in 2010 with a reported £15.6 million of DFID funds in partnership with the Nike Foundation and a number

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[19] In this sense, they can be seen as 'performances', as social acts intended for symbolic consumption by a particular audience (like the performance of charity – see Lewis, 2019).

[20] The material that follows is drawn from personal communications with Patrick Barron of the World Bank in 2007. Barron played a major role in conceiving and implementing the World Bank's response to the 2004 tsunami and ensuing opportunity for forging a peace agreement to end the decades-long civil war in Aceh. For a broad overview of this process, see Barron and Burke (2008).

[21] See also Kartomi (2010) for a historical-anthropological account of the role of music in shaping Aceh's experience of civil conflict and the 2004 tsunami. No-one, of course, claims that these interventions singularly 'caused' the peace process to be forged or to endure.

of other philanthropic and business organizations. The main aim of this venture was to contribute to the wellbeing and development of adolescent girls in Ethiopia, Nigeria and Rwanda by challenging and changing how girls are socially valued and perceived. Its approach was less conventional than many development projects and included working through a variety of media including radio drama, music, talk shows, and clubs. The project became controversial because of both its achievements and its limitations. In 2012 the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) reviewed the project and identified some potentially positive impacts, along with some doubts about how these could be measured, and some concerns about objectives, learning and delivery. This made it similar to many such projects, but it was popular media coverage that was to play a more significant role in the project's subsequent trajectory.

In 2017, elements of the anti-foreign aid British media picked up the Girl Hub project as a prime example of its argument as to why foreign aid itself was a waste of money. The *Daily Mail* in particular built a series of stories around one part of the project taking place in Ethiopia. It focused on Yegna, a five-piece Ethiopian women's popular music band, described as a 'multi-platform culture brand, rooted in Ethiopian culture, which inspires positive culture change for girls'. Through Yegna's music and videos, the project was aiming to improve access to schools and health facilities across the country, and to address issues such as forced marriage, gender violence and genital cutting – in part through the messaging effects of Yegnas's music and videos. For Farah Ramzan Golant, speaking at the time as CEO of Girl Effect, Yegna is justified as a pioneering example of 'innovative, unconventional and efficient solutions to combating poverty at scale'. A key part of the *Daily Mail's* strategy, however, was to trivialise these efforts: Yegna was pejoratively characterised as 'the Ethiopian Spice Girls' – the hugely successful but manufactured UK 1990s pop group - and therefore undeserving of British tax-payer support. Development was understood narrowly as economic support or technology transfer, but not as the promotion of rights through intervention in the cultural sphere. This led to the withdrawal of government funding before the planned end of the project due in 2018.[22]

According to the BBC, Girl Effect was reported as stating that its aims had been 'wilfully misrepresented' by the media,[23] but the case highlights both the ways in which experiments with using music to promote social change have recently become more mainstream. While music may be seen as an arena in which more exploratory and innovative development interventions are being conceived, there are reasons to be cautious about how this might be playing out within the current climate of development agencies and intervention. There are deep challenges associated with verifying the positive 'impact' of development ventures involving music/popular culture in an age of austerity that not only shrinks aid budgets but increasingly generates wrenching resource trade-offs – music or medicines? – and intensifies demands for taking a narrow 'evidence-based' approach to aid and project-level results. As the Ethiopia case above suggests, innovative forms of development interventions grounded in popular culture are inherently going to struggle for legitimacy in such an environment. At the same time, considering the neo-liberal environment within which development increasingly operates, combined with so-called 'donor fatigue', turning to music-related development initiatives might also be a means through which to generate income

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[22] See https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-38538631.
[23] *Ibid.*

and self-fund development.[24]

Music, commodification and the Global South

Paradoxes clearly arise from the contradictions contained within the collision of popular music, politics and commerce, as Way (2017) has highlighted in his analysis of the role that music played in the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Turkey. Focusing on music by the Turkish indie rock duo Dev, and more specifically their song 'Dans Et', he shows how it helped communicate about the protests, which began as a demonstration by a few protesters seeking to protect a green public space, but quickly spread and eventually led to thousands of arrests and six deaths after a violent police crack-down. At the same time, however, Way (2017: 114) shows how the song, 'through a number of strategies identified in lyrics, images and musical sounds', also legitimized Dev as an authentically anti-establishment band, something they – somewhat ironically – benefitted from enormously in commercial terms after the protests, leading to criticisms of their countercultural credentials.

The issue of 'authenticity' is something that has long been at the heart of the consumption of music from the Global South in the Global North. Gilroy (1993: 99) famously noted how 'authenticity enhances the appeal of selected cultural commodities and has become an important element in the mechanism of the mode of racialisation necessary to making non-European and non-American music's acceptable items in an expanding pop market'. In a similar vein, Hutnyk (2000: 20-22) argues that the famous World of Music, Arts and Dance (Womad) festival, founded in 1980 by English musician Peter Gabriel, relies on a combination of the exoticisation of 'traditionalism' and an 'evacuation of politics' in order to 'offer… the commercialisation of everything'. At the same time, he also recognises that 'Womad brings acts to Britain that [which] would otherwise not be widely seen, and in this sense it serves a progressive and explorative, innovative role unlike any other organisation in the UK' (Hutnyk, 2000: 23), something that can be said to correspond to the initial, more modest objective that drove the origins of Womad's founding by Gabriel, namely 'bringing the world to the world'.[25]

The example of Womad begs the question of how – and how far – music from the Global South becomes commodified within the production and marketing systems of the Global North. Cultural industries are concerned with the reproduction of aesthetic categories through the linking of technologies, content producers and consumers. Music has always travelled along trade networks, and colonialism led to the imposition of Western cultural forms as well as the incorporation of other traditions of music through the festivals and exhibitions that were held in the cities of the colonising countries (Connell and Gibson, 2004). At the same time, cultural fusions and artistic hybridity can be regarded as positive strategies of both resistance and accommodation across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[26]

Processes of commodification have also been facilitated by wider historical shifts in the technologies available for mediating communication between human beings. The advent of

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[24] See Kabanda (2018) on the broader, sizeable, rising but often ignored contribution of 'the arts' (including music) to the economies of low-income countries.
[25] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztPXTOpYzb0.
[26] See, respectively, Bayly (2004: 366-392) and Bayly (2018: 215-230).

recorded music created a form of 'technological mediation allowing for remote exposure to other forms of music' (Connell and Gibson, 2004: 391) that in turn made possible its circulation as a commodity within a commercial economy at the global level. This also led to the distinct *separation* of sounds from the societies and communities that produced them, which led both to forms of disjuncture as well as to new conjunctions or mixtures arising from within these wider forms of circulation (Arom and Martin, 2011). In this regard, the invention of 'world music' as a selective category designed to sell records illustrates key issues within the commodified representation of development. The idea can be pinpointed to a meeting in a London pub on 29 June 1987. Recognising its dynamism and originality – and increasing popularity due to festivals such as Womad – veteran broadcaster Charlie Gillett aimed to bring together non-Western music for sale to consumers in the UK. In response, eleven small record labels raised a total of £3,500 to introduce a new section in record shops where African, Asian and Latin American music could be highlighted as distinct from rock, classical, reggae and folk (Llewellyn Smith, 2011).

World music has been identified by geographers as a prime example of the way that places are constructed, commodified and contested within the shifting context of market power, cultural products and migratory flows of people. As Connell and Gibson (2004: 344) put it:

> *World music acts as both a metaphor for, and agent of, global cultural-economic change. 'World music' defines both a subject category and branding exercise, intended to increase the appeal of certain commodities: consequently, through world music, discourses of the 'global' and 'local' are produced and disseminated. World music relies on its being perceived as both global and 'distant', with connections to specific places.*

The marketing and consumption of world music extends what these authors term an 'aesthetic of exoticism' that had been long been part of the Western gaze, since it presents the music as a cultural product distanced from commercial business, and imbued with an authenticity and purity of expression no longer found in Western forms.[27]

The construction of the world music category was a successful marketing ploy by Western record companies. Did it contribute to forms of international solidarity and multiculturalism, as its progenitors might have hoped, or simply reduce complex cultural traditions to single essentialised signifiers? In many cases the 'world music' that met with commercial success was that in which the artist had been forced into 'artistic compromise' (Connell and Gibson 2004: 353). By the 1990s artists such as British Indian musician Nitin Sawhney were reported as resisting the implicit marginalization embodied in the category and describing it as 'a form of apartheid' (Connell and Gibson 2004: 357). In an article published in *The Guardian* on 24 July 2019, Ammar Kalia pronounced the term world music not just as 'flawed and problematic' but 'dead'.[28] In 2017, Oslo's

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[27] In this sense, it extended the earlier examples of Western artists attempting to renew their work through what might be seen as either opening up to, or the appropriation of, outside influences – the Beatles with Ravi Shankar, Paul Simon with Ladysmith Black Mambazo.
[28] See https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/jul/24/guardian-world-music-outdated-global.

long running World Music Festival changed its name simply to Oslo World partly in recognition of the outmoded nature of the term.[29]

Music as a Global Development Vernacular

Certain forms of music seem to travel well. Reggae, for example, driven by the twin forces of migration and by the powerful marketing of Bob Marley's music, has spread throughout the world (Dagnini, 2010). Similarly, a striking feature of gang dynamics around the world is the way that – in some shape or form – for many gangs in extremely varied contexts US gangsta rap becomes a major element of their cultural baggage. According to Hagedorn (2008: 94), gangsta rap has its origins in US hip-hop, which in turn emerged from the street music and dance of African-American and Latino youth in the South Bronx in the early 1970s, 'an expression of the dispossessed's misery and defiance of racism and poverty'. The fact that such situations of socio-economic exclusion and political discrimination often led to the emergence of gangs is associable with the development of a particular form of hip-hop, namely gangsta rap, which 'expresses the rage of the gang member in the ghetto and his defiance of the white man's system, particularly the police'. In other words, gangsta rap is 'a creative expression of street-level reality', reflecting the 'harrowing experience of a life lived close to death' (Hagedorn, 2008: 97, 99-100).

Gangsta rap became extremely commercialised – and even corporatized – since its origins, to the extent that much of it has become highly stereotyped, with lyrics becoming 'more mythical than factual' (Kubrin, 2005: 375). Indeed, as Hagedorn (2008: 100) puts it,

> *gangsta rap's booming popularity, constant play, and erotic, money-worshiping music videos reinforce racist stereotypes among whites. On the other hand, these stereotypes also have had an influence on gang members themselves…: life imitating art imitating life in a manner that would make Jean Baudrillard proud.*

The latter is especially germane to the issue of making a case for including music sources within the corpus of development knowledge insofar as the global appeal of major figures of gangsta rap such as Tupac Shakur, the Notorious B.I.G., or N.W.A., among others, are arguably indicative of cross-cultural connection and commonalities. For example, Utas (2014: 173) describes how the post-conflict West Side Boys (WSB) group of ex-combatants that he studied in Sierra Leone 'adopted the global rebel and gang icon Tupac Shakur as a primary reference point for their social being', with their name taken from the introduction to Tupac's 1996 track 'Hit 'em up', for example. Utas (2014: 177-179) goes on to note that:

> *[t]he influence of Tupac Shakur is by no means surprising; he has been an inspiration for other youth militias around the world. Around the time the Sierra Leone WSB emerged, there was a Tupac Outlaws/West Side Outlaws militia group in Guadalcanal…, while in both eastern DRC and Côte d'Ivoire, rebel groups were, a few years later, reportedly using*

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[29] See http://www.osloworld.no/en/news-2017/oslo-world-music-festival-endrer-navn/.

> *Tupac T-shirts as their uniforms… Even within Sierra Leone, the Tupac imagery was not restricted to the WSB but was also a major reference for youthful members of the RUF as well. As Jeremy Prestholdt (2009, 198) discusses in relation to the latter, they 'sought broader meaning for their experiences, justification for their actions, and psychological solace from the chaos they were unleashing' in the lyrics of Tupac. Borrowing from Appadurai, he points out how 'Tupac appeals to diverse self-images in ways that constitute and reflect a disjointed community of sentiment across differing, even political landscapes.' Certainly the lyrics of his songs can be said to be 'steeped in the rhetoric of resilience, of overcoming unjust conditions... Tupac's perceived invincibility offered psychological solace for young people who experienced violence as part of their everyday life' (Prestholdt 2009, 201). …At the same time, however, Prestholdt (2009, 206) also suggests that the invocation of Tupac indicated a broader youth discontent—with clientelism and corruption, exclusion, poverty, and inequality.*

In a broader academic context marked by an 'ontological turn' suggesting the incommensurability of cross-cultural communication, at least at the verbal level, examples such as the WSB's and RUF's appropriation of Tupac's gangsta rap perhaps suggests that music holds a particular power to communicate meaningfully across contexts about key development issues that other forms of human expression might not have. Certainly, in a more general way, the frequent crossover of music from one context to another – e.g. the popularity of salsa or tango beyond Latin America, or the ever-increasing influence of Bollywood music beyond the Indian subcontinent, including within mainstream, conventional European and North American musical culture (as evidenced by the Western success of musicals such as 'Basmati Blues' or 'Bride and Prejudice') – suggest that music may well have some form of universality that other forms of communication do not.[30] See from this perspective, a case can perhaps be made, as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow famously put it long ago, that 'music is the universal language of mankind.'[31]

Conclusion

The case for taking music seriously as a realm within which potentially important claims about development are made and contested rests not on providing 'rigorous evidence' that popular culture constitutes an effective 'tool' for promoting more equitable and effective development. Perhaps it can verifiably do this, under particular conditions – on which we would welcome evidence – but that is for others to discern.[32] In our (now long-standing) view, the broader and

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[30] An interesting reverse example is the film 'Blinded by the Light' (2019), which conveys the moving 'true story' of how two Pakistani immigrants to England in the 1980s – living in Luton as factories are closing (rendering parents unemployed) and finding themselves (and their families) the frequent targets of racial taunts and vandalism – are inspired by the music of Bruce Springsteen, with its common theme of hope amidst frustration, isolation, and constraints in depressed communities, to envision and enact alternative futures. In lesser hands such a narrative could be trite or condescending, but as conveyed in this instance it is a thoughtful depiction of how forms of elective affinity can be forged, via music, across lines of age, race, class and nation.

[31] Although such a sentiment is not without controversy – see Kang (2016).

[32] Indeed, we applaud recent efforts by researchers to engage in such studies. See, for example, the World Bank's Entertainment Education program, which attempts to assess the effectiveness of various social media campaigns on behavioral change (see https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/dime/brief/edu-tainment).

vastly stronger arguments are threefold. These arguments apply to the link between popular culture and development in general, but here we have sought to show the distinctive ways in which they apply to music and development in particular.

First, novels, films and music are part of the communicative media through which many citizens in the Global North 'encounter' stereotypical images and perceptions of life in the Global South, and are thereby key mechanisms by which development debates are framed for and experienced by the general public.[33] These mechanisms, in turn, shape the nature and extent of development's broader political support, whether as a stand-alone venture or within the ambit of foreign policy – with corresponding consequences for the resources and legitimacy afforded it. As we have shown here, for example, the mainstream media can itself portray popular culture as a trivial or even profligate use of public resources for realizing development objectives, doing so as part of explicit campaigns to undermine support for it. At the same time, in previous decades, most notably the 1980s, music was mobilized – albeit often in deeply problematic ways – as part of global campaigns to focus attention on those suffering the ravages of war and famine. In today's increasingly globalized world, in which the barriers to producing and sharing music (and related visual material) have been greatly lowered, it is thus to be expected that music will increasingly be used as a medium in and through which the public experiences a wide array of emotive claims pertaining to the strategic importance, moral virtue or political/economic folly of development. We have argued that music derives its distinctive power and influence not through appeals to reason, rationality or 'evidence' but by harnessing and authentically generating shared memory, experience and primal emotions – perhaps especially those emotions uniquely encountered and amplified collectively (e.g., in concerts, in national or religious anthems, military marches, etc.). Therein lies music's potential for political deployment, whether aiding, abetting or challenging prevailing development practice.

Second, popular culture offers communicative mediums vastly more attuned to and resonant with the lived realities of marginalized groups, and the 'terms of recognition' (Appadurai, 2004) by which their views are conveyed, received and interpreted. This implies that making development truly more 'inclusive' will entail not only expanding participation in meetings in narrow terms (where such participation can be readily counted and accounted), but enabling marginalized groups to make and defend claims about themselves, their rivals, their concerns, interests, aspirations and priorities in ways they find most resonant and compelling. These modalities of communication are unlikely to be those of educated elites in the policy, donor and research communities, whose medium of choice overwhelmingly consists of lengthy written texts (often in English), numerical assessments (preferably 'hard evidence' derived from 'rigorous methods'), and analytical claims grounded in formal notions of 'expertise'. This is patently *not* how the vast majority of development's ostensible 'clients' communicate with one another, and the rest of the world. Taking inclusion seriously means taking seriously the predominant (and often preferred) modes of communication that the poor, illiterate and marginalized themselves deploy. Music is – unlike novels and films, the focus of our previous analyses of popular culture and development – perhaps the one communicative medium shared by all of humanity, even if 'learning to hear' inherently requires considerable work by all parties. Insights from such material, as we have also previously stressed, should be regarded as a complement to, not substitute for, conventional social scientific

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[33] And vice versa, of course: in our interconnected age, it is also how South increasingly encounters North.

evidence; even so, to the extent a distinctive power of music is its capacity to broadly convey human experience and speak directly to our complex emotions, all participants in the development space surely have much to be gained from exploring it more intentionally and carefully, on its own terms. For better and for worse, music is perhaps, while not immune to the reproduction of class and difference, a 'language' that humanity truly shares – or has the capacity to share. As such, it matters for deep intrinsic reasons, beyond whatever narrow empirical 'case' can be made for or against its instrumental significance.

Third, there are 'truths' about development that are best conveyed in popular mediums. These include the importance of power and representation, and the unequal relationships and 'disjunctures' between key development categories including developers and developed, rich and poor, and West and non-West. This is true of novels and films, as we have previously showed, but it also holds for music. Indeed, across all five of the analytical categories discussed above – Western 'protest' music; musical resistance in the Global South; music-based development interventions; commodification and appropriation; music as a globalised development vernacular – one can readily discern themes and issues which are optimally expressed, and perhaps uniquely express-able, in musical form.[34] Biting political critique, satire and advocacy can be conveyed musically in ways that might otherwise be regarded as seditious or treasonous, even as music can be used to construct and perpetuate patronizing stereotypes. Music can give voice to marginalized groups' experience of development in their own way, on their own terms, even as that same music can also be commodified, in ways that can reduce complex singing styles, lyrics and instrument playing to packaged products sold on global markets, with few of the profits going to the music makers themselves. Today's technology enables music to be a culturally distinctive source of income, and be used to directly convey (or indirectly support) important pro-development initiatives in locally meaningful ways, even as it also risks public ridicule and unwarranted attacks on the entire development community. And yet, despite the vast array of economic, political and cultural differences between groups worldwide, perhaps one of the few forms of common 'language' we share is our ability to make, celebrate and share the human experience in musical form.

At any given time and place, which of the possible development outcomes music can yield will inevitably be a function of innumerable contingencies. But music's status as a unique entry point into the experience of development processes, as a means to championing and resisting development practice, and as an active contributor to mainstream development outcomes, only means that specifying those contingencies more precisely can be a distinctive, interesting and insightful field of research. We invite development scholars and practitioners, especially those in the 'rising generation', to take up this challenge.

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[34] It is not lost on us that we are making these arguments using English academic discourse, but alas conveying them in musical form is, at least for present purposes, beyond our collective talents and far from our comparative advantage (although it should be noted that one of us – Lewis – is individually both an academic and a semi-professional musician – see https://store.cdbaby.com/Artist/DavidLewis1).

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