CHANGING THE STORY

Beyond the Development Imaginary: Alternate Policy in Brazil and Colombia

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Chapter Three

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Introduction

Understanding the relationship between *culture* and *development* is complex and contested. This chapter explores the meta-level power relationships that exist between intersecting fields (culture, politics, economics etc.) and how they in turn shape dominant hegemonies. It also investigates the role of the social imaginary in the assembly of hegemonies and the social constructs of both culture and development. An overview of alternate potential constructions beyond current development models will conclude our discussion. The chapter starts with a critique of development and culture's role within it, from the perspective of power, participation and the persistence of particular neoliberalist-influenced transnational policy paradigms. Considering two case studies from Latin America, one in Brazil and one in Colombia, it will then demonstrate some of the problematic elements within cultural development. Finally, in conclusion, a new framework will be proposed, moving beyond development and its 'post-development' critique, to explore how culture and participatory arts may be used for radical social transformation. This chapter does not aim to present a critique of participation; more, it seeks to illustrate how the presence of power fields affects and shapes the construction and lived experience of the communities through the social imaginary.

Culture within Development: Mutuality or Lip Service?

Amartya Sen's (1999) inclusion of 'culture' as a crucial consideration within development interventions cemented the presence of an existential debate within the field, even if now it is seen by many as too narrow and unfinished an argument. Sen's definition of culture within so-called 'social development' can be seen as a hybrid of differing disciplinary definitions regarding culture. Most saliently to this discussion, with regard to fields of power, Sen cites an awareness of different 'cultures' — understood anthropologically — to be essential within development practice, in order to avoid 'the overwhelming power of Western culture and lifestyle undermining traditional modes of living and social mores' (Sen 1999, p.240). Sen sees the transference of Western paradigms, such as particular industries, as well as certain political and social norms, not least democracy, as a 'threat to native cultures in the Globalizing world' (Sen 1999, p.240). He has, however, been widely criticised for failing to address explicitly the power relations that 'cause and reproduce underdevelopment' in the first place (Navarro 2000, p.665). Indeed, it has been questioned whether his approach puts too much onus on the individual and the 'value' of their individual capabilities, rather than addressing the inequality perpetuated by political forces. All actors within the field of development or social transformation should perhaps be mindful that approaches focused on agency, often synonymous with, or closely related to, 'participation' or 'participatory' approaches, can often seek to empower the everyday individual to action, without addressing the adverse, even oppressive, socio-cultural and economic conditions of inequality within which, and from which, these individuals start to act.

Whilst the concept of 'native cultures' can, of course, be contested, Sen's concerns, when applied to 'development' as a constructed field of programmes and expertise,

acquire new significance. However participatory, or 'bottom up', an activity seeks to be, inequalities in terms of power invariably persist when the terms of participation or 'progress' are set by a field of experts intervening as representatives of one country into another. The question of power differences and divisions within development and cultural policy are central to our discussion in this chapter, and in particular to our understanding of the terms 'Global South and 'Global North.' Here we follow IGI Global's definition:

> The generic geographic, historical, economic, educational, and political division between North and South. North America, Europe, and developed parts of East Asia disproportionately control global resources. Disparities of wealth, housing, education, digital media access and numerous other factors underscore the power and privilege enjoyed by the Global North, while the Global South, home to the majority of natural resources and population, is excluded (IGI Global 2017).

A well-trodden critique of development — and the central tenet of 'post-development' thinking — is that development simply perpetuates a Global North-South dynamic. This is manifest through, amongst other more material economic and political hegemonies, the existence of a dominant paradigm — a 'development discourse' that ultimately constitutes 'an efficient apparatus that systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of power' (Escobar 1995, p.10). Within this Foucauldian style discourse, not only forms of knowledge but also values, beliefs and social mores are confined to a relational 'scale' which marginalises 'non-Western knowledge systems' (Escobar 1995, p.13). Sen's (1999) ideas around development interact with Arturo Escobar's critique, whilst still seeing the potential for social development to be an emancipatory process.

Taking this view, development as a transnational practice, particularly the adoption

of development models within national programmes, including those focussed on making cultural interventions, becomes an exercise in relativism and of domination by one — usually elite — group's construction of certain fields of 'society' over others. When applied to policy construction, in this instance cultural policy, the question becomes: which sources of knowledge are prioritised, legitimised or indeed, excluded? According to the post-development critique of the likes of Escobar, development and policy construction, as professionalised fields, run the risk of creating 'practices outside of national practices' as certain 'regimes' (Escobar 1995, p.53) receive, and in turn re-legitimise, their status within the global market, whilst the space for experience and alternative knowledge by marginalised and subaltern groups is delegitimised. Boaventura de Susa Santos also highlights this inequality as one of the fundamental problems for the concept of development as an emancipatory process, since, 'from the point of view of the pragmatics of social emancipation, relativism […] and hierarchies of validity amongst differing forms of knowledge, [development] is an untenable position' (Santos 2008, xl).

The now highly professionalised field of development can be seen to have constructed self-perpetuating 'practices and regimes of truth' (Foucault 2001, p.74), that is, dominant ways of thinking and action based on values set on the whole by Western elites and transferred through receivership and international networks. These regimes of truth have a corollary with Benedict Anderson's concept of shared values and beliefs defined as social imaginaries (see Anderson 1983; Taylor 2016). Not confined to recognisable rules or policies set by national (in the case of Anderson) or indeed international authorities, they form broader, more ingratiated belief systems within a society, their mechanisms often invisible and

apparently ungoverned. This makes it harder to discern where an intervening regime of truth ends and the 'local', often 'receiving', country's, begins. Development is then 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.

Whether working within the fields of economics, education or culture, these dominant constructions of shared knowledge can be seen to have developed into global paradigms as they travel through the proliferation of increasingly interconnected markets, technologies and globalised international relations. To critique, or reshape, development is not enough to mitigate its negative power relationships. Instead, and with the aim of moving beyond development, Escobar calls for 'the rejection of the entire paradigm altogether' (Escobar 1995, p.215) and the search for 'new alternatives'. Such an opportunity to construct alternatives and create a shift within the field of power will be discussed below.

Conversely, Alf Gunvald Nilsen (2016, p.274) re-problematises development as a fluid and active concept, beyond the rather binary and absolute terms of the post-development critique. Whilst, he suggests, power is constantly exercised through discourses of development, it is also constantly challenged and as a result reshaped. Consequently, the power of development does not simply have to mould the Global South in its own Eurocentric image, despite individual problematic

transnational programmes or the very real presence of dominant Western norms and values within its practice. Considering the concept of development as a power discourse in flux allows for the field of actors involved, their power relationships and cultural action within it, to broaden. In the process, this allows 'development' to encompass not only Global North to Global South power inequalities, but also the role of interior, national elites and transnational power fields which play a significant part in the transfer, perpetuation and mutation of dominant paradigms, including — and particularly significantly — neoliberalism. In practice and theory, there is the sense that 'development', as an argument and a discourse, has become 'an end in itself', legitimising interventions in the Global South in order to accommodate it to Western norms of progress, governance and efficiency' (Nilsen 2016, p.274).

David Bell and Kate Oakley go further still, suggesting that within certain aspects of national and international cultural and social policy, increasingly professionalized fields are 'disturbing the notion of the nation as the prime agent in favour of supranational or regional sub-groupings'. Fields of informed experts, internationally mobile and often supported by legitimising market forces such as — and particularly relevant to our exploration of culture in development — the creative economy, perpetuate systems of values, norms and ideology through 'elite power fields' (Bell and Oakley 2015, p.158). These interface fluidly with transnational 'national' dynamics, representing, as they often do, national agencies, councils and governments. In the process, such elites might seem to create a power field that can problematize the South/North dynamic. In practice, however, this international elite would ultimately seem to substitute one field of power with another. The Western or Global North imaginary also includes an epistemological stance that has been

established at the expense of other epistemologies: what Santos calls 'epistemicide' (Santos, 2014, p.24). This will be explored further in the rest of this chapter via two case studies, where we also discuss what the overarching imaginary of development and its manifestation at a local and national level looks like in practice. Firstly though, we will begin with an overview and contextualisation of each of our case-study countries, exploring key themes.

Brazil and Colombia

The history of Latin America is complex, contested and never uniform across a wildly heterogeneous social, cultural and economic continent. The region of Latin America offers a unique situation to explore culture and cultural policy. The collision and mixing over 500 years of African, European and Indigenous populations presents distinctive cultural formations and situations not found elsewhere. Secondly, within this Latin American context, Colombia and Brazil are two countries with very different cultures and cultural policies. On first inspection, they both appear to be developing new cultural policies shaped by differing values and influences. In Brazil in the early 2000s, policy appeared to be radically socially transformative, being constructed at the time as part of the *Pink Tide;* as the rise to power of many left-wing governments in these years across Latin America was being described (see Painter 2005; Munck 2015). In Colombia, on the other hand, policy appeared to be more Western-influenced, the country seeming to embrace Western paradigms, albeit in this case often shaped by culturally-specific forms of conflict and violence. Brazil and Colombia also have very different political administrations, representing both the left and right of the political spectrum (at least when this research started they did, pre-impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in Brazil in 2016 and before the swing to

the right and the election of Jair Bolsonaro in October 2018), offering the chance to explore apparently differing paradigms and values employed by social actors engaged in cultural policy.

Brazil

Brazil's history is unique in Latin America, shaped by force through the hands of the conquering Portuguese and later by the finance of Britain and the Dutch, displacing populations and transforming landscapes with silver, gold and sugar. It is the place where Europe, Africa and the indigenous populations collided, later embodied in the constructed, modernist-shaped nation of Brazil, an imaginary of staggering proportions. Many of the social actors interviewed during our research were involved in the turmoil of recent cultural politics and policy-making in Brazil and some of the key themes laid out here will be explored further later in the chapter. Brazil has relatively recently emerged from dictatorship, returning to democracy in 1985, with the first direct elections only taking place in 1989. Key themes in policy are often articulated around culture's instrumental use: culture and social transformation; culture and the strengthening of democracy; culture and citizenship; and culture and identity. It is the fifth largest country in the world and has a population of 191 million. The population is mostly urban, with 84% living in cities and with greater concentrated occupation in the southeast (40%). São Paulo is by far the largest city, with a population of over 11 million. Rio de Janeiro has the second largest population at 6.3 million, followed by Salvador and Brasilia which each have a population of around 2.5 million people. Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion, practiced by 68% of the population.

In 2002, the former left-wing union leader Luiz Inácio Lula de Silva took office as President at the head of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT, founded in 1980). Initially mistrusted by the business sector, he continued with a number of liberal economic principles inherited from his predecessor, Cardoso. At the same time, he introduced a number of progressive policies and oversaw an initial boom in the Brazilian economy. Policies of note included *Bolsa Familia* (Family Grant), an income transfer programme aimed at reducing inequality at work and improving social, gender and racial quotas for federal universities. A rise in the income of some of the poorest Brazilians took place at this time (2003 onwards) alongside a growth of markets and civil society and a sense of growing national pride and identity bolstered by winning the hosting of the Olympics, the Soccer World Cup and the discovery of deep-water oil reserves by the state-owned oil company *Petrobras.*

In 2014 an economic downturn began, alongside a public spending slow down and corruption scandals, leading to both a political and economic crisis. Following months of protest and unrest (the cause of the economic crisis being deeply contested, with each party blaming the other), the elected president, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached and left office, with the presidency taken up by the vice-president Michel Temer. The interim government immediately reduced the number of government ministries, with the Culture Ministry subsumed into the Education ministry. A series of protests by artists and culture movements followed, causing Temer to change his decision and reinstate the Ministry.

Colombia

With an estimated 48 million people in 2015, Colombia is the third-most populous

country in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico. It is also home to the third-largest number of Spanish speakers in the world after Mexico and the United States. It is one of the oldest democracies in Latin America (emerging from the collapse of Gran Colombia in 1830) with a diversified and growing economy, solid functioning institutions, progressive laws, an active civil society, and abundant natural resources.

Colombian history has been marked by a prolonged period of violence (over seventy years), generated by internal armed conflict caused by political struggle, originally between traditional political parties (*Liberal* and *Conservador*), and during the past five decades between the state and left-wing rebels primarily *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), *Ejercito de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) and multiple right-wing paramilitary groups. During the 1990s, the violence increased when the government declared war on organised crime led by the drug cartels. The internal armed conflict primarily affected (and continues to affect) the rural areas of Colombia, perpetuating exclusion and systemic inequality. Since the 1940s, people have left the countryside in search of better opportunities in cities, creating informal/illegal settlements, and generating further poverty and unemployment. This situation has increased in recent years since armed groups, seeking control of territory, have massively displaced entire populations from their hometowns. Colombia has one of the highest rates of internal displacement. The conflict has left 6 million victims, including almost 5 million displaced persons (USAID 2014, p.27). The influence of violence and the continued conflict in Colombia cannot be overstated. It permeates culture and politics through a dialectical struggle, to paraphrase Marco Palacios, 'between legitimacy and violence' (2006). As is so often the case, it is the rural poor, the most displaced group of Colombians, who are the most affected. As with Brazil, but with differing antecedents and consequences,

Colombia has been shaped by its colonial past and by the ruthless, self-legitimizing empires and colonies of, particularly, Spain, Britain and the USA. Key themes in relation to culture and policy include the effects of violence, the role of the state and the effects of geography and regionalism on people's everyday lives.

UNESCO (1997) provides a detailed breakdown of cultural policy's historical development in Colombia, especially in relation to legislation and government policy. Growing from the 1994-1995 National Plan for Culture and the 1991 Constitution, the Ministry of Culture of Colombia was created in 1997. The 1997 General Law of Culture was then drafted with the participation of approximately 25,000 citizens, establishing the regulatory framework for the Ministry (Law 397 of 1997). Regarded as a landmark moment in Colombia, the document not only instigated structural changes on how culture in Colombia was to be governed, but created a new definition of culture as 'distinctive spiritual, and material' (UNESCO 1997, p.2) and was seen by commentators as a definition 'which allows ample possibilities for inclusion' (Gautier 2008, p.377), moving away from the patrimonial domain of a 'single culture' recognized by the State. This could be regarded as Colombia adopting a definition of culture more closely akin to that of Raymond Williams' understanding of culture as ordinary (Williams 1989, p.3). Symbolically and seemingly practically, Colombia's radical constitution appeared to open the path to a transformation in the way the link between expressive culture and the construction of society is established through cultural policy by the State (Gautier 2008, p.378). This new institutional framework implied culture's presence in the decisions of the State, with its own ministry and place within the Council of Ministers. Several academics and critics have noted that since the radical constitution, a space has opened up

within government and academia for a critical discourse on the role of culture within Colombia's fragmented and violence-afflicted society; even going so far as to create a public forum in which the idea of culture is an essential domain for the construction of civil society and, ultimately, of a peace process (Gautier 2008, p.378). However, this same group of commentators does admit the absence of research, as well as practical conclusions, on how this 'social role' — which could be seen as socially transformative — can actually be nurtured through policy enactment.

Comparing Brazil and Colombia: Development Discourses and National Policy

With regard to our chosen case studies, Brazil and Colombia offer unique conditions in which to explore the concepts of culture, policy, participation and development. In Brazil, for example, tides of economic progress and recession over the last 30 years mean that the country will soon be ineligible for overseas development assistance, despite soaring inequality and impoverished social and cultural government ministries. Under such conditions, distinctions between interventions via development mechanisms and those initiated by national policies become spurious. Many organisations working through culture with disadvantaged groups have mixed-model funding, as the actors and organisations working within these fields struggle to provide services to a growing population within a fast contracting financial landscape. Secondly, cultural policy in Brazil and Colombia clearly espouses the dominant aims of social transformation, seeing the potential within cultural policy to affect positive change for marginalised, conflict-affected and impoverished groups. In practice, this further blurs the Western view of separate 'professionalised' fields of 'social development' and national policy, with concepts and practices of 'development' at times actually seen as a hindrance rather than a support. Thus, the

rest of this chapter explores our case studies from the perspective of both development and national policy. In so doing, it also ultimately interrogates the very idea of the nation: how it is constructed, imagined and changed.

The case studies of Brazil and Colombia both elucidate how, when working in the field of transnational cultural policy, the tensions, contradictions and blurring of the regimes of development and cultural policy as a national project exist concurrently. Indeed, it often becomes difficult to see where development ends and nation building begins. The relationship between culture and the idea of nation as an imagined community **(**Anderson 1983; see also Bell and Oakley 2015, p.113**)** is a crucial concept that is needed to gain an understanding of the emergence and shaping of national cultural policies through which many development aims are expressed. Nations are social constructs. They are not *real*, but held together by belief. In a real-life echo of Michael Ende's fantasy *The Neverending Story* (1979), the characters in the narrative of the nation only exist as long as the reader believes they exist. As Angela Arruda, interpreting Anderson, puts it:

> Each country chooses its symbolism; each society is instituted in its own way. Each society [has] a central core of imaginary meanings through which that society creates, organizes and gives meaning to the world. Each society 'institutes' its real. A web of meanings is created that paves the way for a country's existence. This is the imaginary institution of the society (Arruda 2014, p.3).

The relationship between social development and cultural policy will now be explored in our two interrelated case studies, drawn from over twenty elite interviews with actors engaged in cultural policy in Brazil and Colombia, conducted between 2015 and 2017 by Dancey. The interviewees included policy advisors, ex-ministers, civil servants and social activists. They have been anonymised. The aim of these interviews was to explore the influence of international and transnational paradigms

on how cultural policy is constructed in both countries. As Des Freedman argues, 'Policy should be defined in a more dynamic way as a process that concerns the interaction between different actors, the institutional structures within which they work and the objectives that they pursue' (2008, p.13). In so doing, we also highlight how international policy paradigms and international development assistance shape the construction of national policy and the types of programmes this gives rise to. The themes of Global North and South and alternative views of culture and knowledge proved central to the results of this research, and will be examined next in relation to the question of development, neoliberalism and cultural policy.

Social Transformation: Another way is possible

The rest of this chapter does not delve into participation *per se*, but instead explores the overarching development imaginary within which such participation takes place. Recognising the problematic question of who sets the terms of participation, explored by Cooke and Soria-Donlan in the introduction to this volume, we also focus on leadership and activism in culture within Brazil and Colombia and the paradigms they espouse, rather than activity instigated by international agencies or funding. What is striking is how activists in Brazil and Colombia have sought not only to trouble structural approaches to development, but in fact to radically reject the very paradigm of development itself through the construction and invocation of alternative models through national cultural policy, in what at first appears to reflect Escobar's call to 'throw out' the development paradigm and discourse (Pieterse 1998, pp.344-345). Here, participatory arts have an important role to play, helping to empower bottom up, decentred cultural action. In the process, this activity can support a reimagining of *how*, as well as *who*, can participate and cooperate in

changing the countries' social reality: a reimagining that is emerging from the periphery and led from the Global South.

Understanding how ideas, knowledge and models transfer between the Global North and South and how alternative models of culture and knowledge can be created were central themes throughout our interviews:

> I feel we borrowed some developments of the cultural processes from Europe, USA and some Latin American ones, which generated a strange space in Colombia regarding culture (Colombian Academic).

When exploring where policy was adapted, adopted or newly constructed, a view consistently articulated in both countries was of cultural policy and institutions being socially constructed and significantly influenced by a Western understanding of culture and knowledge. As the above quotation highlights, there was also a good deal of discomfort articulated by interviewees towards this influence.

Some actors suggested that what appeared to be in evidence was a drive to inculcate market values and measurement into cultural policy across the Global South. Central to this drive was the concept of the 'cultural and creative industries', which ostensibly promulgated a particular view of culture and, with it, an at times confusing and highly contested, approach to cultural policy that could appear simultaneously reactionary and progressive. The central view of the majority of our interviewees was that terms such as the 'creative economy' or 'neoliberalism' were fundamental to a Western, or Global North imaginary, focused on Western ideas of growth, development and measurement:

> They are a problem of a neoliberal concept. I don't think that the answer is the cultural industries but that culture that has to be capable of being sustainable, which is very different from the concept of cultural industry. Because what

cultural development produce in a community is much more valuable than the money that it makes (Colombian Cultural Manager).

Frequently interviewees argued that terms such as 'the cultural industries' were central to the understanding of culture by government and state networks, which they, in turn, legitimized through the creation and support of 'experts'. This approach to state-endorsed culture is highlighted, for example in *The Orange Economy*, an influential work which sees the 'creative economy' as 'a valuable development opportunity' for Latin America (Restrepo, Felipe and Duque Márque 2013). Whilst acknowledging the dangers of reification and conflation, interviewees in both Brazil and Colombia saw the notion of a 'creative economy' as a clear manifestation of neoliberalism, which they in turn saw as shaping global economic discourse and, with it, public policy at home, including culture and education policy.

Other interviewees (a minority) in both Brazil and Colombia saw value in the concept of the creative industries as a way for artists to gain greater economic, and thus artistic, independence by making them less dependent on government budgets. Whilst understanding the creative economy in Brazil as a manifestation of neoliberalism, one interviewee, a high profile cultural practitioner, made an important distinction between the notion of the *economic* entrepreneur, encouraged by this particular economic model, and the idea of a *social* entrepreneur, that should similarly be encouraged via cultural policy:

> Of course, this discourse can be captured for a neoliberalist discourse. And of course my discourse of entrepreneur can be captured by an approach of entrepreneurs for the profit and not entrepreneuring for life. But we are still at the beginning of this dispute. It's very easy for the middle classes to say that culture is not for entrepreneurship; it's only for experimentation because they already have a house, a couch, a hammock. They sell a brownie to their mates in school and make the cover of the newspaper (that actually happened). At the same time, the guy who is selling candies on the suburban train is considered unemployed. So there's a system of legitimization; there's

a dispute going on. For the poor young, if they don't turn to entrepreneurship they won't be able to keep working in the cultural sector (Brazilian Cultural Manager).

This combination of different conceptual interpretations of models such as the creative economy paradigm and how they translate into vastly different and complex social and cultural contexts, such as those of Brazil and Colombia, is significant as an example of the dangers of intervention and policy transfer from the Global North to Global South, within which development remains the dominant paradigm.

Social Transformation

Throughout the interviews, issues around diversity, identity, social transformation and cultural democracy were seen as dominant within Global South discourses connected to cultural policy, invariably mediated and delimited by global neoliberalism. Interviewees in Brazil or Colombia described potential alternatives to the economic models pertaining to current cultural policy, mainly via the construction of a counterhegemonic position focused on social transformation. This focused on the social impact of working through culture, embodied by many actors operating across the fields of culture and social change:

> I was always between social and cultural projects. Every time I'm working for social projects I believe they should be done through culture and every time I'm working for cultural projects I think what we are doing are social transformations. In fact, what we are doing here, under the tone of what makes transformation, is culture. Because what Colombia must do is a cultural transformation (Colombian Cultural Manager).

The instrumentalisation of culture for social change was a particularly dominant view in Colombia, with the legacy of over fifty years of violence dominating the discussion of the role of culture. Interviewees espoused values attached to using culture to

create dialogue and transform their social context, existing within a national policy landscape of peacebuilding, transitional justice and reconciliation:

> The peace process: For example, at this moment, we are in step [focusing] where Colombia will not live anymore, not on what happened but on a hope. And from this hope, we will build. And culture is what makes us equal. The dreams. You've been in the jungle with boots and a gun but you wrote a book with your story. This puts us closer. Right? Your music, the narratives are a transformation (Colombian Cultural Manager).

This faith in the role of culture also connects to existing literature on culture's role in peacebuilding. Several commentators have noted that since the radical constitution of 1991, a space has opened up within government and academia for a critical discourse on the role of culture within Colombia's fragmented and violence-afflicted society; even going so far as to suggest the creation of a public forum in which art and culture could be used as a domain for strengthening civil society and, ultimately, generating a peace process (Gautier 2008, p.378). At the same time, commentators also point to the absence of research and practical conclusions on how the 'social role' of culture — and the concomitant social transformation they hope it can set in train — actually happens through cultural policy enactment.

That said, within the kinds of programmes one finds across Colombia on the ground, the potential of cultural activity to drive social transformation is strongly present. Indeed, a number of interviewees preferred the use of the term 'social transformation' to the word *development,* arguing that the historically and politically loaded concept of development was both problematic and inaccurate in terms of their activity. In UNESCO's view, the term social transformation:

> generally indicates a critical stance towards older notions of the idea of development. The approach of social transformation does not consider the western model as the one that should be imitated by all other nations. Rather, it admits that current forces of change are also creating a crisis for the old industrial nations (UNESCO: 2017).

The UNESCO definition is reflective of the use of the term in prominent academic literature as a non-hegemonic alternative to 'development' (Castles 2000, p.6). Social Transformation (Genov 2000, p.539; Castles 2000, pp.1-6) as a field of study is concerned with the different ways 'in which globalising forces impact upon local communities and national societies […] with diverse political institutions and cultures' (Castles 2000, p.6). Brazil and Colombia provide further examples of how culture can be seen to support social transformation as an alternative to, and a means of critiquing problematic, unequal paradigms propagated via discourses around development and neoliberalism.

What social transformation might entail in practice in Brazil and Colombia was often seen to chime with some elements of an alternative discourse specific to, and shaped by, Latin America's epistemological and cultural diversity (Santos 2016, xxi). Central to this was a concern with transforming the notion of power and ownership within culture, with diverse, often peripheral voices needing to be brought into the centre of governance, discourse and power in order to fight the inequality existing in both the social and cultural spheres. Interviewees in Colombia, for example, described this in terms of a cultural transformation connected to a recognition of the importance of diverse cultural forms within the country's understanding of itself and its identity:

> There is a lack of pride for itself (Colombian identity) that is just starting to be constructed. And the art played a really important role. Because we started to recognize this through music, dance, culinary and a little bit of the literature, just a tiny bit. We need a cultural transformation: that the blacks are as important as the whites, the natives […] even globally what the natives do is considered craft while what the whites do is considered art (Colombian Cultural Manager).

In Brazil, a number of interviewees critiqued the centrality of the construction of national identity within cultural policy, with the view that the approach merely supported the status quo and existing hierarchies and hegemonies within Brazilian culture, often in opposition to other more emancipatory programmes developed by the government. The peripherality of some groups and their cultures to the centre of power was a major theme that was returned to again and again. The need to bring the periphery into the centre and recognize, support and legitimize its cultural activity, as well as placing peripheral actors in places and positions of power, was frequently seen as important. However, in reality this is not how cultural policy and practice tend to be organised:

> Our imaginary is repressed because we want the poor to express themselves through samba, through funk… and so we have them controlled this way. I think the federal continues on a sociological approach to Brazilian culture. That means they think that culture should favour the national identity. I think that's bad. I think it's bad because our national identity puts the poor as the creators and the middle class as the mediators that will decipher them. We are put as the origin of the culture, the pure ones, and then the mediators come and keep all the best budgets. The intellectuals, the designers will polish it and turn it into cultural products. And the poor remain as folklore, urban culture without any way out (Brazilian Cultural Manager).

Here the interviewee points to connections between policy, the language of development and the values around social transformation discussed above. There is a problem, it would seem, because elite power structures continue to act as the gatekeepers of cultural value, and what can be legitimised as *artistic* production, for all their warm words about peripheral, subaltern cultural practices.

Part of the idea of a Global South perspective focused on by interviewees included the notion of 'the communitarian', a perspective that emphasises the link between the individual and community, with social identity and the social imaginary constructed through the interaction between the two. Influenced by utopian

sociology, the early Chartists (of Wales) and the conceptualisation of social capital (reciprocity, trust, cooperation) engendered by supportive social networks, communitarianism permeated many interviewees' philosophy and approaches to culture. Brazil was seen to be particularly strong in its articulation of the communitarian and an important distinction was, at times, drawn between the urban community approach in the UK and Brazil:

> There's a confusion between communitarian and urban. The idea of communitarian here is stronger: is not only occupying a venue for artistic activities. Here it's the experience itself of art, community, life and territory. I think that this is something we have here in Brazil, that is not structured but it's an expertise. I feel that the idea of community here is stronger. I feel that in the UK communitarian means revitalizing urban areas (Brazilian Cultural Manager)

The argument here was challenged, it should be noted, by Dancey, who identified that the idea of 'community' in the UK was being understood as a narrow London-based *urban* caricature, based on the interviewee's limited exposure to other community-based initiatives.

Counterhegemonic imaginary

The concepts of imaginaries and the construction of national identities was a central theme raised by interviewees in both Brazil and Colombia. Building on the ideas of Jacques Lacan (see Zizek 2006) and others, Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2016 Edition), first published in 1983, links the initial emergence of the idea of 'the nation' with the rise of independence in the Americas. For Anderson, the imaginary is seen (in relation to the imagining of the nation) as a set of interlinked values and symbols through which social groups imagine their social world. Interviewees suggested differences in the way this imaginary operates in Europe and Latin

America, with European nations being constructed through wars and treaties in which they were themselves actors, while the Latin American reality was seen as being explicitly shaped by colonialism and the historical construction of the respective nations by others.

In Brazil, the notion of development and its hegemonic pervasiveness, as adopted by the Brazilian government, was seen as one of the main barriers to creating a counter imaginary. From this developmental perspective, culture was seen as ancillary, or an 'accessory' and not held to have any significant value or meaning in the development of the country. The counter-argument, made by interviewees, on the other hand, was for a new perspective where the idea of development could be understood in a more open way, within which art and culture could play a role. This approach was to be informed by what one interviewee described as a 'South way of thinking'. This was perceived as being:

> a less materialist thinking, a less monetarist thinking, a thinking that is leaning less to this issue of pure economics. Then we would have space to have a policy, an action where education and culture have a more relevant role for constructing (Brazilian Policy Advisor).

Despite many misgivings about an over emphasis on national identity and a narrow conceptualisation of development by the government, many interviewees were optimistic about the potentially transformative nature of an imaginary that could be constructed around cultural diversity, the periphery, the environment and community:

> I believe that the biggest resource of this country is heavily grounded in culture and nature. So if you don't have these two assets very clear in your mind, you will never make a turnaround. So I think that all of the potential growth of Brazil is grounded in a plan for the imaginary of a nation that makes us understand that we are not Germany, so we will never be the best in constructing cars in the world, that we are not Americans, so we will never be... so what is the stronger we have? We have our culture where the

economic and symbolic structures of this country are grounded (Brazilian Policy Advisor).

In Colombia, as in Brazil albeit not of the same scale, the sheer diversity and hybridity of cultural forms in flux were seen as a strength of cultural life. Interviewees saw different ways of constructing and reconstructing their immediate environment that stood counter to perceived Eurocentric heterodoxies of *development* or national narratives driven by neoliberal, economic discourses. The existence of an imaginary and identity focused on cities was extensively cited, with the distinct contributions and differences of the cities of Barranquilla, Cali, Cartagena, Medellín and Bogotá referenced as discrete sites, but where all had their approach to creativity, and the concomitant sense of resilience this generates, in common.

> I think that maybe the word resilience is what best describes us as well. I think we have the best capacity to become or to overcome. It's that resilience and I think the arts have become a way for survival (Colombian Cultural Manager).

Or, as another of our interviewees put it:

> For me, culture is what identity is. It's something that identifies us as 'being part of'. This is something that differentiates us. We make things big: Our loves, our capacity to stand up, to change. This culture and this identity of the Colombian is for creating: good things and bad things… Culture is to transform imaginaries. Culture transforms negative imaginaries. From culture, we achieve this transformation [….] To appropriate the public space through cultural manifestations. Graffiti. They all achieve these transformations. So culture is a tool for building peace (Colombian Policy Advisor).

Thus, socially constructed cultural imaginaries were seen as crucial to the broader transformation of society, particularly within the context of Colombia, as the country struggles to overcome the legacies of conflict and violence. However, this was also a theme for interviewees in both countries.

Conclusion

The concept of development, in and of itself and when enacted through culture or arts programmes at a national level, was rejected by interviewees not only due to its hegemonic pervasiveness and the way it seems to transfer a problematic policy paradigm from the Global North to the Global South, but also for how it 'co-opts' the creators and actors of culture into a dominant, exclusionary concept of culture and 'expert discourse' operating at the national and transnational level. Development, forming one of these dominant, transnationally mobile discourses and schemes of practice, is itself seen as part of a Global North imaginary. Intertwined with the imaginary of neoliberalism, national policy-led programmes couched to deliver opportunity, particularly in economic terms, become a means by which market values can be infiltrated into periphery communities whilst not moving marginalised communities into the centre of power and policy. The idea that the Global South can provide an oppositional social construction of development and culture, reflecting distinct, and different, social realities and hybridities of cultural form emerged strongly during this research. Themes of diversity, identity, social transformation and cultural democracy were seen as dominant within Global South discourses around and within policy with explicit socially transformative aims, although mediated and delimited by a globalised form of neoliberalism.

The concept of 'the imaginary' as an alternative way of shaping and transforming negative conditions and paradigms within Brazil and Colombia was also strongly present in our research. In order for the imaginary to be effective as a counterhegemonic force, interviewees pointed to the need for other forms of 'bottom-up' knowledge to be accepted, for an epistemological shift away from 'development' towards a South-led concept of 'social transformation' that could make subaltern

control (over knowledge production and their own social conditions) more achievable. Part of this proposed process, conceived as *social transformation*, as proposed in the case studies of Brazil and Colombia, is not just recognition, but also the empowerment of a diverse range of actors and voices, cultural producers and creators, putting them into decision-making positions of power at a local, national and international level. Without this, diverse voices, culture and forms of knowledge will continue simply to be absorbed within dominant fields of power, rather than being freed to realise their own potential to create new imaginaries and effect change for themselves.

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