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Creative Paths to Freedom?

Arts and Humanities-Based Approaches to Addressing Contemporary Slavery as a Development Issue

Dr Lennon Mhishi
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CREATIVE PATHS TO FREEDOM? ARTS AND HUMANITIES-BASED APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING CONTEMPORARY SLAVERY AS A DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The reflections that follow constitute part of the work of the Antislavery Knowledge Network (AKN) and aim to contribute to a critical conversation on modern slavery and the value of methods from the arts and humanities in addressing it. Rather than being an exhaustive survey of the field, we focus here on the intersections of arts and humanities-based approaches to the modern slavery agenda as a development issue. These different aspects are inevitably broad, and what follows is an exploration of how they are intertwined. The report forms one of the outputs of the Antislavery Knowledge Network (AKN).

ABOUT THE AKN – THE ANTISLAVERY KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

The AKN is one of a group of international academic networks funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and led by universities based in the UK. They have been set up to conduct collaborative arts and humanities-based research into some of the world's most pressing development challenges.

The five networks are funded from the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), using the AHRC's 'Network Plus' model. This is designed to bring together a wide range of UK arts and humanities research expertise with researchers and non-academic partners in low and middle income countries.

The core members of the Antislavery Knowledge Network link the UK with West Africa joining three of the main centres on research into slavery in the UK (CSIS – University of Liverpool, WISE – University of Hull and Rights Lab – University of Nottingham) with the University of Ghana, Legon.

Together we aim to grow our network and explore how approaches from the arts and humanities can address contemporary forms of enslavement by adopting a community-engaged, human rights focus that delivers development impacts.

The second phase of the AKN began with the commissioning a new group of projects. We invited applicants from NGOs, universities, research institutes, arts or cultural organisations, or social enterprises working in low and middle-income countries in Africa to submit proposals that addressed, via innovative approaches from the arts and humanities, how slavery is a core development challenge and how to deliver community-engaged antislavery work.

Focusing on the centrality of communities, the projects all continue to champion the use of the arts and humanities as a resource for social change. They concretise one of the core aims of the network in exploring the ways in which participatory arts-based strategies, rooted in heritage and memory, can empower Global South communities to play a central role in tackling contemporary slavery.

We asked our second phase projects to relate to at least one of three overarching themes: 'Voices for Freedom', 'Liberating Heritage', and 'Picturing Emancipation'. Each of these themes was designed to encourage projects to develop innovative, interdisciplinary and rights-based challenges to slavery and related forms of exploitation (including child labour and forced marriage). The first theme, 'Voices for Freedom,' centres on narratives and the lived experience of slavery, with projects imagining new and challenging ways to collect, record and archive testimony from individuals and communities in the area of focus. The 'Liberating Heritage' theme joins projects that connect space, place and memory around slavery with contemporary human rights and development challenges. Finally, 'Picturing Emancipation' covers projects that utilise visual arts and photography to expose and reflect upon the experiences and legacies of slavery and efforts to resist and overcome its consequences.

Contemporary slavery, human trafficking, and other forms of exploitation constitute today an area of heightened concern. Part of an evolving and contested arena, modern slavery can be seen as presenting various challenges as well as opportunities, conceptually in how we frame conversations around exploitation, and how these operate historically and in the present. It also obliges us to focus on the attendant material consequences of such conceptualisations. How we cast what we claim to be a problem, a prognosis of sorts, shapes our responses. In exploring the entanglements of the modern slavery agenda with, on the one hand, the arts and humanities, and, on the other, the development agenda, we confront questions such as:

> Why have such a diverse set of phenomena come to be understood and addressed as 'modern slavery'?
>
> How, and with what effects, has this discourse become significant in the development agenda?
>
> How could, or should, the arts and humanities play a role in addressing these issues?

This review is an attempt at responding to these questions, and explores some of the salient currents of the present concern with 'enslavement', cast in specific terms as the deprivation of the 'freedom' of other human beings. From the perspective of the UK this is an 'evil' often understood (others might even say misunderstood and misappropriated) in historical terms through the lens of the transatlantic slave trade, the legacies of which we still live with today. The arts and humanities have obvious applications in terms of scholarly inquiry into the meanings and significance of the modern slavery agenda. These approaches and methods can also be central to the critique, and enhancement of, government, policy-centred, legislative and regulatory frameworks that respond to these phenomena.

As a powerful source of knowledge that is human centred, the arts and humanities are well-placed to shed light on how claims and interventions relating to antislavery simultaneously exist within the realms of the socio-political and the economic; between historically-shaped relationships of power and knowledge, research and political agendas; and among communities that exist as the subjects and at the same time objects of these agendas. As others have pointed out, participation and creativity are essential to contemporary international development. The dominance of established economic structures and ideologies means it is essential we explore the vitality of creativity in improving developmental outcomes with increased participation and engagement.[1]

The arts refer to different forms of practice and theory around creative expression, including the visual arts, music and literature. Broadly speaking, we understand the humanities as the study of human society and culture, including (but not limited to) the academic disciplines of history, archaeology, languages, philosophy, law and politics. It is worth noting here from the outset that this understanding of the arts and humanities may be in some ways a conventional one, and the significant overlaps make it unwise to establish strict boundaries around what is to be included or excluded as "arts" or arts and humanities-based, considering the wide gamut of disciplines and forms that can be understood as such. This is especially so working from the position of multi-disciplinary intersections, creativity and innovation and engaging work that spans academic, research and non-academic spaces.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) recognises that arts and humanities research is part of a wider cultural system comprising the artistic, creative and heritage sectors.[2]

Such an understanding is crucial to the work of the Antislavery Knowledge Network, with that consideration of arts and humanities-based creative methods encapsulating research as well as engagement with the wider creative cultural economy.

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1 Martin Keat 2020 Imagining Power: Development, Participation and Creativity, in Participatory Arts in International Development, (eds) Paul Cooke & Inés Soria-Donlan (London: Routledge/ CRC Press) 21-38

2 See, for example the AHRC 2013-2018 strategy document: https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/strategy/ahrc-delivery-plan-2016-20/ as well as its latest 2019/20 Delivery plan: https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/publications/the-human-world-the-arts-and-humanities-in-our-times-ahrc-strategy-2013-2018/

A MODERN SLAVERY AGENDA?

What can be referred to as the 'modern slavery agenda'[3] has recently gained traction, particularly in the last 15 years or so. It is constituted by several strands, including the establishment of an international anti-trafficking regime in 2000, the resurgence of a transnational antislavery movement and more recently the UK's modern slavery legislation (2015). A joint statement in 2018 by the governments of the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada establishing principles to guide government action to combat human trafficking in global supply chains illustrates an increased prioritisation of the agenda.[4]

In parallel with this, various incidents in Africa have also been couched in the language of modern slavery. Since the end of 2017, reports have emerged of African refugees and migrants being sold in what have been termed 'modern slave markets'[5]. These reports led to outrage in many African countries, with protests ensuing for instance in Nigeria and Ghana. The President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, is reported as having proposed that Rwanda would over several years take up to 30,000 African migrants from Libya[6]. This is also in the context of increased militarisation of border controls by the European Union, with Libya being utilised as a boundary area to stop Africans seeking to reach Europe[7], making Europe arguably complicit in the production of the conditions of vulnerability and the nature of the responses to these forms of exploitation.

In Nigeria in 2014[8], the abduction of schoolgirls in Chibok made international headlines, galvanising a social media response that garnered support from different sectors and heightened awareness of Boko Haram. Here, the challenges of the sexual slavery of children intersected with issues of extremism and security, as well as the possibilities of resurrecting or strengthening particular versions of the logic or illusion of rescue, especially functioning against the perceived inadequacies of state responses. The illusions and logic of rescue have been well elucidated, for instance by Teju Cole, in what he termed the 'white saviour industrial complex'[9]. With documentaries being produced on the Chibok girls[10], and many other platforms continuing to engage with the precarious lives of women in different settings, this incident provided an opportunity for important transnational conversations as well as a means of revitalising work towards challenging these forms of

exploitation. At the same time, the multiple narratives emanating from the social media campaigns and the questions as to what happens after are important. They are reminders of how the structural factors that shape these kinds of exploitation demand in-depth understanding and engagement, and long-term sustainable responses and interventions led by communities themselves.

Other examples around child soldiers, use of children in domestic service and in mining and fishing industries reveal the complexity of the challenges of exploitation, and the importance of exploring different avenues to tackle the socioeconomic and political challenges that accompany or engender contemporary forms of exploitation. The sheer complexity of different forms of exploitation make it important to continue asking the value of a modern slavery policy agenda. How well does it encapsulate, and engage with the entanglements of global and local structures and hierarchies of power and inequality, of linkages between history and the present? These are the kind of issues that the AKN confronts, recognising the potential of the arts and humanities and partnering with communities, to support such work. The AKN emphasises collaborative partnerships, with opportunities to grow the network as new work emerges, and different communities mobilise in confronting the various developmental challenges they face, in this case contemporary forms of exploitation.

One of the landmarks in the successful rise of the modern slavery agenda has been the insertion of the term into the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, with their intersecting concerns of poverty, social justice and socio-economic development.

The different Sustainable Development Goals, which stand as separate conceptually, but are materially interdependent, the accomplishment of which relies on the progress of the others accordingly

Gomez-Mera points out that a several decades ago international cooperation against human trafficking was almost non-existent. This changed considerably at the start of the new millennium, in 2000, with the signing of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish

The different Sustainable Development Goals, which stand as separate conceptually, but are materially interdependent, the accomplishment of which relies on the progress of the others accordingly

Trafficking in Persons (TIP), especially Women and Children[11]. This regime overlaps with international laws on human rights, migration and labour standards. Similar and intersecting frameworks such as the Council of Europe Convention of 2005[12] and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Forced Labour Protocol[13], with several historical antecedents, mean that multiple interpretations and conceptual creep or slippage are likely[14]. Scholarship on this regime inhabits a disciplinary space of International Relations (IR), International Political Economy (IPE), and Sociology lending itself to explorations of structural factors and complexities.

The complex intersections between trafficking laws, labour and migration regimes[15] and social systems[16] have led to a range of criticisms of the modern slavery agenda. These include how its amorphous nature makes it amenable to manipulation for nefarious purposes, especially in forms of border control[17] or victimisation in the name of rescue, particularly allied with some of the gendered, racialised, and morally inclined aspects of the criminalisation of certain groups and mobilities[18].

With different non-state actors taking on the mantle of anti-trafficking, at times subsumed under the modern slavery agenda, geographical unevenness has been noted, a point to be returned to in exploring the relationship between antislavery, development and Africa. A lot of the non-governmental organisations working on trafficking are headquartered in Europe, Asia and the United States of America,

according to a study by Stephanie Limoncelli.[19] This, in itself, is not ample evidence of lopsidedness, but may be read in other ways as exemplifying the manner in which what we come to regard as developmental agendas for the Global South are set and consequently enacted through the Global North.

UK- and US-based NGOs (notably Antislavery International, the Walk Free Foundation and its Global Slavery Index (GSI), and the Global Fund To End Modern Slavery (GFEMS)) have been at the forefront of building on, enabling and fighting for a global understanding and effort in tackling the challenges of modern slavery. Together they have put forward a moral, social and economic case for action, mobilising different tools and technologies, as well as state and non-state actors to respond urgently to the experiences identified. An interdisciplinary perspective, informed by the arts and humanities, is helpful in interrogating this modern slavery agenda, the methods it employs and the relationships of power that undergird the forms of exploitation encountered as a result of it. At the same time, it can help us discern what other innovative and creative approaches may be appropriate. The Global Slavery Index and its estimation of prevalence have provided crucial evidence to underpin the case for action. The GSI figures have become widely cited, alongside the Trafficking In Persons reports prepared by the US State Department, as a measure to diagnose the problem and assess 'progress', but McGrath and Mieres have argued that the index uses questionable statistical methods[20] and underplays issues of global interdependence to instead frame modern slavery as an issue rooted in the Global South. From a methodological perspective, there are problems with extrapolating from specific country contexts to make generalised regional assertions. If modern slavery is presented primarily as a challenge associated with countries categorised as developing or low income, this risks exculpating the Global North from its continuing role in exploitation and perpetuating a politics of rescue.[21]

The emerging research into modern slavery in global supply chains places a greater focus on the role of business and regulation, as is evidenced in recent programme of work funded by DFID and the British Academy[22]. One of those projects, led by University of Liverpool,[23] highlighted the relationship between labour exploitation and the failure of global brands to enhance or encourage enforcement of local labour laws and local struggles around workers' rights. Such complexity is

3   Craig, G et al 2019 The Modern Slavery Agenda, Policy Press
4   See full statement here: https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/mp_mr_180924.aspx?w=E6pq%2FUhzOs%2BE7V9FFYi1xQ%3D%3D
5   E.g. Fatima Naib 2018 'Slavery in Libya: Life inside a container' Al-Jazeera 26 January 2018 https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/slavery-libya-life-container-180121084314393.html
6   Mugisha and Olingo 2019 'Rwanda offers migrants stuck in Libya, Niger a safe haven' The East African: https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Rwanda-offers-migrants-stuck-in-libya-niger-a-safe-haven/4552908-5230986-dyvo6vz/index.html
7   Amnesty International 2017 'Libya: European governments complicit in horrific abuse of refugees and migrants', 12 December 2017: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/12/libya-european-governments-complicit-in-horrific-abuse-of-refugees-and-migrants/
8   Mbah 2019 'Nigeria's Chibok schoolgirls: Five years on, 112 still missing' Al Jazeera 14 April 2019 https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/nigeria-chibok-school-girls-years-112-missing-190413192517739.html
9   Teju Cole 2012 The White Savior Industrial Complex: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/
10 Amanda Holpuch 2018 Stolen Daughters: What Happened After #BringBackOurGirls: https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/oct/22/bring-back-our-girls-documentary-stolen-daughters-kidnapped-boko-haram
11 Laura Gomez-Mera 2017 The Global Governance of Trafficking in Persons: Toward a Transnational Regime Complex. Journal of Human Trafficking 3:4, 303-326

12 Jean Allain 2010 Rantsev v Cyprus and Russia: The European Court of Human Rights and Trafficking as Slavery, Human Rights Law Review, 10:3, 546–557
13 Anne T. Gallagher 2006 Recent Legal Developments in the Field of Human Trafficking: A Critical Review of the 2005 European Convention and Related Instruments. European Journal of Migration and Law 8, 163-189
14 Nicola Piper et al 2015 What's in a name: Distinguishing Forced Labour, Trafficking and Slavery . Antitrafficking Review 5 ,1-9
15 Maria Fernanda Perez Solla 2009 Slavery and human trafficking international law and the role of the World Bank.Social Protection discussion paper no. SP 0904. Washington, DC: World Bank.
16 Orlando Patterson and Xiaolin Zhuo 2018 Modern Trafficking, Slavery, and Other Forms of Servitude. Annual Review of Sociology 44:1, 407-439
17 Georgios Papanicolaous 2011 The Global Prohibition Regime on Human Trafficking. In: Transnational Policing and Sex Trafficking in Southeast Europe. Transnational Crime, Crime Control and Security. Palgrave Macmillan, London
18 Julia O'Connell Davidson and Neil Howard 2015 Migration and Mobility: Beyond Trafficking and Slavery (eds) https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/bts-short-course/
19 Stephanie A. Limoncelli 2016 What in the World Are Anti-Trafficking NGOs Doing? Findings from a Global Study, Journal of Human Trafficking, 2:4, 316-328,
20 Ronald Weitzer 2014 Miscounting human trafficking and slavery: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/miscounting-human-trafficking-and-slavery/
21 Siobhan McGrath and Fabiola Mieres, F 2014 Mapping the politics of national rankings in the movement against "modern slavery": https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/mapping-politics-of-national-rankings-in-movement-again/
22 DFID/BA programme: 'Tackling Slavery, Human Trafficking and Child Labour in Modern Business' https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/tackling-slavery-human-trafficking-and-child-labour-modern-business
23 Project title: Clothes, Chocolate and Children: Realising the Transparency Dividend' https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/politics/research/research-projects/ccc/

often elided in sweeping statistical generalisations about modern slavery. While this may be useful in drawing attention to the scale and severity of the problem, methods and approaches from the arts and humanities approaches may be best-placed to provide the all-important
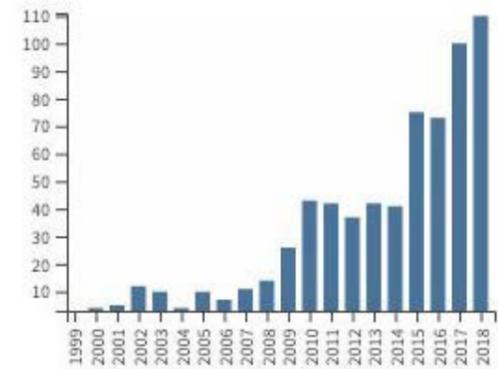
contextual work that makes sense of a complex issue.

Several SDGs include reference to human trafficking, but SDG 8.7[24], commits specifically to '...tak[ing] immediate and effective measures to
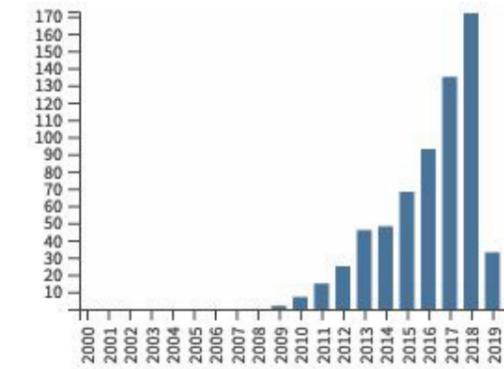
eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms'. An ambitious goal, like all the other SDGs, this serves to illustrate the global nature of efforts to 'end' modern slavery, and establishes it as a concrete and fundamental global challenge that is eradicable within the decade. This also means tackling modern slavery as a development issue, locating it within SDG 8 (decent work) and connecting it with economic growth as a development aim. The modern slavery agenda has thus taken a trajectory that finds it being part of a conversation around poverty and development. The figures and graphs[25] below, sourced from Web of Science database, show a clear rise in publications and citations of material containing the term 'modern slavery', as well as a similar rise in work featuring human trafficking and modern slavery.

The visualisations in figure 1, 2 and 3, over a period of almost twenty years, highlight the increase in the use of the term modern slavery, dominated by the discipline of history. The relationship of historical and contemporary slavery here is apparent at a cursory level, and may point, in other ways, to the conceptual and definitional challenges of modern slavery. Common understandings of slavery continue to relate to its historical manifestations[26], and the fractious, yet in many ways foundational, relationship of slavery to modernity poses questions around what was less "modern" about historical slavery during its time and what "slavery" means in this contemporary moment.

Similarly, figures 4, 5 and 6 show a rise in the mentions of human trafficking together with modern slavery, illustrating a growing tendency for the terms to be used interchangeably.[27] This raises questions about the relationships and intersections between competing definitions, and concerns over how such conflation can conceal or downplay policy dilemmas, e.g., over the trafficking and exploitation of women and the critical conceptual and regulatory responses to sex work[28], or the rights of non-citizens versus restrictions to freedom of movement through immigration regimes[29].

As this brief excursion illustrates, work addressing modern slavery exists in a contested terrain – with often divergent views about what it constitutes, its development as a concept and its relation to history. The rest of this review focuses on the experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the place of the arts and humanities in development work. Examples of some of the creative methods that have been utilised in tackling different challenges will also be considered in an introduction to the AKN database. This database will be a repository and growing and living archive of the numerous projects that have been undertaken to confront contemporary exploitation in its various forms, as well as the projects that the AKN is undertaking. These examples propose the

Figure 1. Total publications "modern slavery" by year

Figure 4. Total publications "human trafficking and slavery" by year
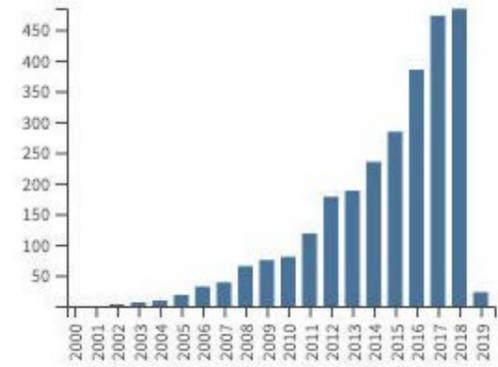

Figure 2. Sum of times "modern slavery" cited by year
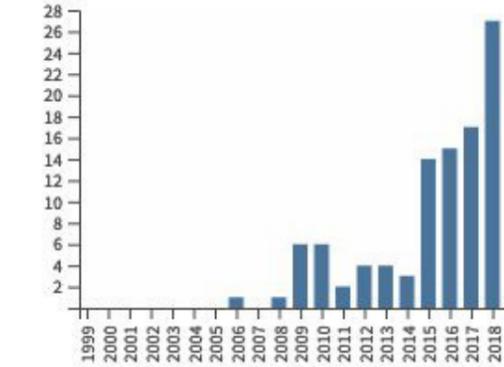

Figure 5. Sum of times "human trafficking and slavery" cited by year

Figure 3. Visualisation of publications mentioning modern slavery by discipline

Figure 6. Visualisation of publications mentioning "human trafficking and slavery" by **discipline**

24 ote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment ancited by yeard decent work for all : https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/
25 As of the time when the database was last accessed for this review

26 Gary Craig et al, 2019 The Modern Slavery agenda
27 Julia O'Connell Davidson 2010 New slavery, Old binaries: Human Trafficking and the Borders of 'Freedom' Global Networks 10:2 244-261
28 Julia O'Connell Davidson 2014 Let's go outside: Bodies, Prostitutes, Slaves and Worker citizens. Citizenship Studies, 18:5, 516-532
29 Julia O'Connell Davidson 2016 De-Canting 'Human Trafficking', ReCentring the State. International Spectator, 51:1, 58-73.

THE ARTS, HUMANITIES AND DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

question and possibilities of creative paths to 'freedom', or at least to challenging the status quo in both conceptual and material terms when it comes to tacking contemporary forms of exploitation.

It is useful as part of this discussion to offer a few insights into the regional context, which here consist of broad brushstrokes as the varying country contexts in different African settings demand, in more detailed studies, rigorous attention to their particularities. What is the general relationship between the arts and humanities and the development agenda, especially as it relates to Africa? In the work of the AKN and its commissioned projects, the focus has been upon foregrounding communities, and their role in tackling contemporary forms of exploitation as a development challenge.

In the foreword to a British Academy report, Thandika Mkandawire reiterates the place of the arts and humanities in African contexts

> *Experience has taught us that Africa needs its humanities and social sciences. Attempts to improve Africa's prospects by focusing on scientific advances and the benefits accruing from them have all too often overlooked the important perspectives which the humanities and social sciences afford; perspectives which draw attention to the cultural and social dynamics of people and places and institutions. Much of the work undertaken to date has, however, been by scholars based outside the continent. The potential for African scholars to respond has steadily diminished, as their research centres have been under-funded and their energies diverted.[30]*

Intersections of art and humanities work and development exists in African countries in different forms, especially at the levels of research, practice and methodology. Most African countries can be argued to have emphasised 'developmentalism', especially within a postcolonial condition dominated by the languages and grammars of development. Many other efforts have since emerged, such as theatre for development, media for development, education for development, all trying to centre creative and community based work which aligns with some of the global concerns. These concerns can be regarded as shared universal objectives, such as those encapsulated by multilateral institutions and ratified in conventions and summits.[31]

Questions around the historical invention of development[32] as a discourse – i.e., a way of thinking about, perceiving and responding to the socio-economic and political challenges of those regarded as "underdeveloped" - and who sets the research and practice agendas in the arts and humanities arise out many factors. One of these is a recognition of the manner in which at times initiatives are fostered which seek to hammer and chisel means and ends that may be at odds with the everyday realities and needs of local contexts.

There are many examples of projects that have utilised the arts to confront various developmental challenges,[33] such as the use of theatre for education and awareness-raising in the area of public health,[34] the use of radio dramas that have better reach in certain contexts, or the use of performance in engaging with trauma in post-conflict settings. Projects claim different kinds and levels of success, and at times identify pitfalls. What is apparent is the recognition that arts based creative methods, and arts and humanities, have a role to play in socio-economic development in different African contexts.[35]

Mahmood Mamdani has constantly reiterated how the university (humanities and social sciences in particular) as we understand and experience it in contemporary Africa, and the researchers therein, have been turned into native informants;[36] they provide data and access to the Global North, where the agendas are set, and produce the overwhelming number of outputs pertaining to the production and dissemination of knowledge regarding arts, humanities and development. In an article for the Mail and Guardian of South Africa, Mamdani poses some important questions,

> *The central question facing higher education in Africa today is what it means to teach the humanities and social sciences in the current historical context and, in particular, in the post-colonial African context. What does it mean to teach humanities and social sciences in a location where the dominant intellectual paradigms are products not of Africa's own experience but of a particular Western experience? Where dominant paradigms theorise a specific Western history and are concerned in large part to extol the virtues of the*

> *Enlightenment or to expound critiques of that same Enlightenment? And where, as a result, when these theories expand to other parts of the world, they do so mainly by submerging particular origins and specific concerns through describing these in the universal terms of scientific objectivity and neutrality?[37]*

One has to be careful not to read this as a rejection of a body of work couched as 'Western' nor as a complete indictment of how the arts and humanities in Africa, a continent far from being a monolith, can confront varied epistemological and political questions in terms of research and practice in relation to the development agenda. What Mamdani's questions do for us is provide an appreciation of histories and the hegemonic ways of knowing and being in the world that come to shape how we engage with knowledge(s). In this instance, how do we engage knowledges of slavery, historical and contemporary, and the resultant prognoses and sometimes prescriptions?[38]

It is in this realm of trying to shift from the centre that conversations around decolonisation abound, a question into which for the purposes of this discussion we will not delve deeply. Suffice to suggest that the continuing conversations on decolonisation point to tensions that remain in the arts, humanities and the disciplined realms of knowledge production; and their relationships to power, and the potency of histories - of racial socio-economic and political subjugation and exploitation - with which we have to contend when we think of arts, humanities and development in Africa.

Similar to the seemingly unbalanced presence of non-governmental organisations overrepresented in the Global North, what appears to be a geographical bias in the places that are the preponderant focus of development discourse becomes an expression of historical relationships of power and coloniality. The university, and its disciplinary demarcations in many African settings, becomes in a way a source of mimicry, responding to the demands of global hierarchies of knowledge production that perpetuate understandings of the centre and the periphery, sites of economic power and epistemological forts, and margins that are eternally backward and need rescuing.[39]

The history of what is now understood as development in Africa has been argued to find early expression at the moment of decolonisation – notably as a continuation of colonial, paternalistic and extractive politics by other means. Faced with the end of settler colonialism, it is contended by some that aid and 'development[40]' became critical sites for the perpetuation of ideological and geopolitical interests,

masked behind grammars of philanthropy and assistance. A language of modernisation, steeped in a logic that has divided the world into strata based on ideals of what societies ought to be, on the basis of those who have power and those who do not, is often construed as the exercise of the civilizational project, exemplified in the work of Rudyard Kipling, especially the famed phrase: The White Man's Burden.[41]

Accompanying the end of the Second World War and the rolling out of the Marshall Plan, the period of decolonisation saw the introduction of a new language. As part of his Point Four programme, Harry Truman said:

> *More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate, they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people. . . . I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. . . . What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing. . . . Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge.[42]*

Development, then, becomes a historically produced discourse,[43] with the attendant trappings of the relationships of knowledge and power, and the hierarchies thereof[44]. It is important also, in this regard, to recognise the contingent and historically produced nature of the modern slavery agenda, especially as a development issue, as a moment and site for the possible reinforcement, reiteration, refutation and reclamation, amongst others, of certain kinds of epistemological and ontological positions, aligned to particular political and ideological claims and leanings. This is crucial part of a humanities-led approach – i.e., the adoption of a temporally-inflected lens. This is to say one must be cognisant of the complexities of histories that underpins and are entwined with the modern slavery and development agenda[45].

In addition to what some might call relativist and cultural imperialist tendencies in the histories and the present of antislavery[46], the socio-economic and political challenges faced by many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are both current and historical. They are intertwined with exploitative and extractive colonial histories, leading to a question of the motives of a development agenda that may be seen as functioning

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30 The Nairobi Report: Frameworks For Africa-UK Collaboration in the Social Sciences and Humanities: https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Nairobi-Process-Report.pdf
31 Millenium Development Goals, SDG'S, Conventions, et.c
32 Arturo Escobar 2011 Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World. Princeton University Press
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with the similar modes of accumulation and appeasement[47].

Within the understandings of the universalised bounds of how societies ought to develop, (modernism/modernisation theory)[48] and also in terms of the experiences of many communities in different African countries, there are indications that some of the conditions of deprivation and poverty are prevalent, and have deleterious consequences for those who live in them. The overarching representations of Africa have been ridiculed in such work as the now seminal essay by Binyavanga Wainaina, "How To Write About Africa"[49], in which some of the hackneyed tropes according to which Africa is thought, written and represented were scorned.

As an all-encompassing term, development has subsumed under it the language and work of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and other non-governmental organisations whose presence in Africa remains contested.[50] These range from the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the IMF, and their relationship to an economics of austerity, manifest in the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP)[51] of the 1990s, synonymous with privatisation, the weakening of trade unions and the collapse of safety nets in many African countries; to the work of state funded organisations in different countries such as the DFID in the UK, USAID in the U.S, or CIDA, now known as GAC, in Canada. Touted as organisations that can foster trade and development corporations, they have been similarly seen as extensions of diplomatic and geopolitical influence, especially utilised more to further the interests of the countries they represent, than those they claim to be interested in assisting.

Prescriptive, top-down approaches[52] that have traditionally assumed a knowledge of the needs and solutions have not produced the desired result. Development thinking has since undergone constant refashioning in an attempt to respond to both the failures and criticisms as well as to the changing circumstances of the contexts within which development work is conducted[53]. Attempts to foster different development paradigms[54] can be seen in the emphasis on participatory[55], community-led development, collaboration and partnerships, accompanied by a gamut of theoretical and methodological implications for development work[56].

Competing arguments certainly exist to suggest that development, as a concept and practice, has either been able to attain some of its goals, or remains a vehicle for the propagation of ideology and the

maintenance of relationships of dependency, power and control. Other arguments against the prevailing models of development do not reject the tenets of neoliberalism per se, but argue for a shift towards trade, rather than aid, which cultivates dependency and entrenches corruption and relationships of inequality[57].

In this moment of the United Nations' SDGs, there is the notion from some that we are in a new developmental moment, and that such globalist efforts to tackling challenges such as those set in the modern slavery agenda remain useful.[58]

Confluences of the past and present in shaping work on contemporary slavery is also an important strand in how different communities can mobilise various forms of heritage in the fight against exploitation. These forms of heritage include the tangible and intangible, combining, for instance, some of our work with partners in Ghana on archeological sites related to historical slavery, and cultural experiences of sites related to heritage tourism, such as Jamestown in Accra. As a terrain of multiplicities, heritage offers an avenue for a productive exploration of community value and resources, and how these feature in responding to exploitation and other developmental challenges.

The particular relationship between heritage and development continues to be a significant site of possibility. Not heritage as a reckoning with and preservation of the past, but also a way of inventing and imagining different futures, in this case futures characterised by certain forms of freedom from exploitation. In the words of Paul Basu and Wayne Modest,

> *Even understood as an instrumentalizable resource, there is a need to recognize that the greater value of heritage may lie not in its potential for income generation (through tourism, for instance), but in the kinds of nonmonetized benefits that are often invoked in the culture and development rhetoric, but are all too readily dismissed in practice as woolly, unquantifiable and of lesser importance in an assumed hierarchy of needs. In this respect, emphasis needs to be placed on devoting sufficient resources to investigating whether—and, if so, how—cultural development projects may indeed contribute significantly to bringing about public goods such as social cohesion and well-being, tolerance and resilience, postconflict healing and responsible environmental stewardship. [59]*

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MAPPING THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES IN ANTISLAVERY

One of the tasks of the AKN is to develop a database of projects that have made use of the arts and humanities in addressing different aspects of contemporary slavery. These projects, from different parts of the world, can be viewed as examples to help us consider the possibilities that arts and humanities hold for antislavery work. Our work with different partners also functions as illustrations of the methodologies and approaches that can be adopted, as well as opportunities to make incremental changes, or provide alternative understandings of what can be done differently.

The database, in addition to being a repository, will also function as a springboard for expanding the network and shaping the potential for future work. We provide here projects ranging from visual and performing arts to research that exemplifies how arts-based initiatives, and explore how the arts and humanities can be used to tackle different forms of enslavement. We also identify how the kinds of questions around how we can approach the challenges differently. The various projects also indicate the numerous human rights, heritage, and development aspects, to mention a few, of the ramifications of contemporary slavery and the work to combat it.

An appreciation of the different methods used to explore forms of exploitation is important, and examples of projects serve to exemplify this. There is no singular method or methodology that is a panacea to the difficulties, yet a grasp of some of the pitfalls of an approach are useful in crafting responses that are sustainable and capable of achieving the intended impacts. The examples also show, in addition to different methods, the numerous forms that creative, arts and humanities based work can take.

MURALS

18+ Ending Child Marriages in Southern Africa
Plan International Mozambique (PIM)
Mozambique

Murals have emerged as an important mode of creative and artistic expression across the world to interrogate, publicise and engage with questions of social justice in public spaces. There is a need also

to ask how can they be utilised in addressing contemporary forms of enslavement.[60]

This campaign selected here was designed to raise awareness of negative aspects of child marriage, to empower girls and change gender norms and practices that drive child marriage. PIM uses a media forum to raise awareness, reflect on how the media portrays women/girls and discuss the role of media in empowering them. Plan International Mozambique is running the 18+ Ending Child Marriage project, also delivered training sessions for staff, partners, government representatives, schools, etc. on sexual and reproductive health rights. The 2017 Global Estimates of Slavery by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), together with the Walkfree Foundation, included forced marriage into measures relating to modern slavery. There are estimated 15.4 million people in forced marriage, and the vast majority of these are girls and women. Over a third of the people who were forced to marry were children, of whom 40% were below fifteen at the time when marriage took place.[61]

At a national level, Plan International Mozambique has supported and contributed to the newly adopted national strategy to reduce child marriage and is a part of the national anti-child marriage coalition, which has enabled the production of a national statistics report on the annual number of child marriages in the country.

A 'Pinkification' campaign was carried out in Maputo, Maxixe and Inhambane where pink billboards were erected, buses were painted and mural paintings were visible throughout the cities.

This project exemplifies the identification of a problem, which in this instance was child marriage, and an intervention that was deemed appropriate to the context. A recognition of the capacity of the community to participate in this work, by involving young girls in schools, as well as the need for convergence at the national and policy levels, increases the chances of a wider embracing of the efforts, and provides a useful foundation for further work in ending child marriages. It is an acknowledgement of the need to raise awareness and get the affected communities at the forefront of the campaign. It also illustrates the possibility of changing regulatory frameworks in order to combat child exploitation.

60 Painting towards freedom: the power of murals and street art for modern antislavery The Rights Lab 2020 https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/mseu/mseu-resources/2020/january/painting-towards-freedom.pdf
61 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, Forced Labour and Forced Marriage: https://www.alliance87.org/global_estimates_of_modern_slavery-forced_labour_and_forced_marriage
62 Zoe Trodd 2019 Campaign Culture Matters: Bringing together Awareness and Evidence: https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/zoe-trodd/campaign-culture-matters-bringing-together-awareness-and-evidence

It becomes important to consider, in the aftermath of such campaigns (as should be the case with all the other examples we give below), what the impact is, and how change can be measured or evaluated[61]. In addition to statistical measures, which are important but not enough on their own, more work has to be done in the area of monitoring and evaluation. Part of the AKN's thrust is then to work with commissioned partners to ensure that we learn from previous projects funded by other means, and are attuned to the gaps that are apparent in the effectiveness of previous projects in attaining measurable or positive change, action and impact.

THEATRE

To Be Like This Rock Umsindo Theatre Projects, South Africa
Anti-Human Trafficking Play

Theatre has historically been important in challenging orthodoxies, provoking conversations, and providing a platform for the multiple representations of human existence. Theatre, in addition to being entertainment, can challenge how we think and enable us to imagine the lives of others, or even a different world to the one we currently inhabit.

The play 'To Be Like This Rock' was first performed at Ishashalazi Women's Festival in South Africa in 2009 and won first prize. It was later developed with mentors Neil Coppen and Debbie Lutge in 2010 under the auspices of Twist Theatre Development Projects, performed at community art festivals and professional theatres.

The play is set in contemporary South Africa in a village outside Durban, where scouts convince some parents that they should let their children travel for well-paid jobs. The theme of the play is the need to escape, first from poverty and then from forced labour. The focus is on the horrors faced by women and children experiencing human trafficking.

The play is an opportunity to dramatize, in accessible and mobile ways, the tragedies of hope and aspiration, embodied in the desire for a better life. The context of poverty is conducive to aspirations that make many susceptible to trafficking. The intricate details for life as trafficked persons, that are not always available of the general public, can then be accessed in theatrical form, simultaneously raising awareness as well as having an effective impact on the audience.

In this instance, the significance of grassroots arts and organisation is shown by the community theatre company that undertakes the play, with impacts on capacity and the profile of that organisation. The emotional currency and power of the dramatized experiences of human trafficking can be evidenced through the reviews the play received. Also, its mobility as a touring production ensured it reached a wider audience, and provoked discussion and debate on human trafficking in South Africa.

MUSIC

Child marriages Concert, Zimbabwe

Music is regarded as being a 'universal language', where the sounds and rhythms become realms of their own grammar, communicating in ways of which sometimes our language in the everyday falls short. In ways similar to theatre, yet distinctive from it, music simultaneously carries, and is carried by social life. Music as social life has the capacity to bring together disparate people, creating, in moments, sonic communities that are amenable to multiple messages. The valence of music, especially in the age of celebrity and the digital reproduction of art, is apparent. As a pervasive language, music can be a powerful avenue for communicating the message of anti-slavery work, galvanising communities to be aware of and address different forms of exploitation.

This concert was organised by Padare Men's gender forum, the then Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development ministry, Child Rights Coalition and Women's Coalition Partners, as well as United Nations Women, United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Population Fund. A well-known and respected local musician of Oliver Mtukudzi's calibre headlining the concert brought much needed publicity and gravity to an issue demanding urgent attention. In addition, music conveys the message in a language that is amenable to the general public and music has the potential to also captivate an audience that might otherwise be uninterested in research reports and statistics on child marriage.

Through the work of different civil society organisations with communities, and their advocacy work particularly with the government, a discussion on child marriage as a form of exploitation became widespread amongst the Zimbabwean public, especially in the reporting in national newspapers, as well as on social media.

Although the current Zimbabwean constitution stipulates that no one should be married against their will and calls on the state to ensure no children are pledged into marriage, it was only in 2016, after a constitutional challenge, that a ruling was passed declaring parts of the old Marriage Act unconstitutional, and ruling that no person, girl or boy, should be married before the age of 18.

The Child Marriages concert exemplified a moment of galvanising different members of Zimbabwean and international civil society, together with other members of the community, to spread the message on the detrimental consequences of child marriage, and to also advocate for changes in law.

The efforts of the civil society organisations may be regarded as having succeeded with the constitutional ruling outlawing child marriage. Participating musicians such as Oliver Mtukudzi have gone to write their own songs against child marriage, with one called 'Haasati Aziva' meaning they are not yet of age.

Although this information is not yet available, it will be useful to know, since the passage of the court ruling, how many cases are being reported, the number convictions arising from such cases, and other reports from the various civil society organisations working on child marriages in Zimbabwe to establish the extent and nature of community buy in, as well as the effectiveness of the law. Such information can be a crucial source for monitoring and evaluating the efforts of the different organisations, pointing out what works better, and rectifying what does not

This is especially so in recognising how regulatory frameworks against child exploitation, as with many other aspects of modern slavery, may not always work in tandem with gender, religious, cultural and traditional attitudes to issues such as child marriage. This can also be the case with the various vested interests that may be at stake, such as the structures of traditional authority, and the conditions of poverty and abjection.

ART

Lace & Slavery, Godffried Donkor, Nottingham

The relationship of art to slavery, historical and contemporary, is a complex and contentious one. As means of representation of, resistance to, revisitation of, slavery, amongst many other ways of perceiving it, art has been instrumental in engaging with enslavement. Art also occupies realms of memory and heritage, the tensions around how we remember, what we remember, and why we must remember. Art about slavery's past can offer important lessons for the present, yet it is also a significant way of occupying gallery and museum spaces that can engage the public on an issue which might otherwise exist on the margins of the dominant understandings and representations of art.

The work by Donkor was an opportunity to investigate slavery in ways neglected by the more mainstream abolition events amidst the celebration of the bicentennial[62] of the abolition of the British transatlantic slave trade and to expose its hidden and unexpected aspects, both in the past and present day.

Godfried Donkor: Lace & Slavery was the first instalment of Histories of the Present, Nottingham Contemporary's year-long pre-opening programme of exhibitions and events, taking place at historical sites in and around Nottingham. Lace & Slavery was a collaborative project by The New Art Exchange and Nottingham Contemporary, and one that grew from Donkor's 2007-08 artist residency and exhibition at Wollaton Hall's Yard Gallery.

As part of the contextual framework for Donkor's project, Nottingham Contemporary programmed the symposium Histories of Slavery, in collaboration with the University of Nottingham Institute for the Study of

Slavery, and the lecture series, Culture After Slavery, in partnership with Nottingham Trent University.

The project brought together aspects of research, collaboration and participation, with different institutions working together for a common goal. Art was recognised as an innovative way of making the connections between slavery past and present, and eliciting engagement with the not so obvious aspects of contemporary slavery, that exist hidden in plain sight, or even on our bodies.
For example, Lace & Slavery can be regarded as being evocative of the relationship that contemporary fashion has to historical slavery, as well as to the "sweat shop" that characterises supply chains and modern slavery.
A project of this nature lends itself to inviting the public to engage with and respond to the work of art, and is open to the multiple vantage points from which those who experience the art may be coming. It also enables spaces dedicated of memory, the exhibition of art and heritage to confront the challenges of the past and present, in ways that invite over time different forms and measurements of reach and impact.

FILM/PHOTOGRAPHY

Voice of freedom project, in collaboration with Antislavery International.

The visual is an important part of how we make sense of the world, how we access specific sites of the past and present, or how we imagine the future. We, in common parlance, "visualise" things, understanding and imagining the world in visual ways. Documenting the experiences of, and the aftermath of, enslavement through the visual offers the opportunity to engage with the public and then reveal to them the conditions of enslavement and the importance of anti-slavery work. Without turning the experiences and survivors of enslavement into sensationalised spectacle, visual methods are a useful tool for antislavery efforts.

Voice of Freedom works with women who have escaped trafficking and torture, bringing the voices of the enslaved to a wide public for the first time. The project enables the women to document their lives, feelings and experiences through the camera lens, and supports them as they create texts in their own words to accompany the images. This works within the discipline of participatory photography – a recognised tool for advocacy and social activism.

The agency of the survivors of modern slavery is at the forefront in this project. Narratives of enslavement and survival are made visceral by the visual work, in particular the photographs taken by the women, and the language they use to describe the photographs and why they chose them. Photography becomes a way of them telling their own stories in ways with which they feel comfortable, but rather than

63 Remembering 1807: https://blog.antislavery.ac.uk/2017/05/10/remembering-1807-archiving-2007/

existing as objects viewed through the gaze of someone's lens, they focus the lens on what they would like to share.

In telling any story, representation always matters, and the voices of the survivors of enslavement provide the opportunity for participation by both the survivors, and the general public, in understanding and appreciating the experiences of exploitation, as well as knowing better what those who survive need, or want, and how to better prevent such exploitation from taking place in the first instance.[63]

HISTORY AND HERITAGE

One of the thrusts of the AKN is to enable engagement with heritage and memory around slavery in ways that engender a more nuanced understanding of slavery in history. This provides a reminder of the horrors of enslavement, the factors that were conducive to it, and the continuities with experiences of enslavement and exploitation in the present. A project that typifies work on slavery, memory, institutional collaboration and innovative and creative approaches to heritage is the Antislavery Usable Pasts project (ASUP)[64].

Creating an archive of visual culture and narratives of historical and contemporary slavery, among other things, ASUP asks what lessons can be learnt from histories of antislavery in confronting contemporary slavery. An important recognition emanating from ASUP's work is the tension in what may be perceived as the establishment of seamless continuities between what are cast as historical forms of slavery and contemporary slavery. Foregrounding slavery in the present is faced with the dangers of diminishing the present and lived material legacies of slavery, in colonialism and anti-black racism, and the general afterlives of slavery in the present.

The Antislavery Knowledge Network acknowledges the wealth of historical knowledge in antislavery resistance in the past, and engages with contemporary forms of slavery and other forms of exploitation, not as direct continuities of the transatlantic slave trade, but related to the historical, socio-economic and political challenges in the different African contexts where memory and heritage of slavery may be present. In utilising the visual and other forms of 'representation', we are attuned to the risks of turning the experiences of enslavement and exploitation into a spectacle, and our work continues to be guided by the communities who are at the forefront of the projects and partnerships.

Another example that reveals the wide-ranging possibilities of arts and humanities approaches is the Slave Wrecks Project (SWP),[65] a long-term collaboration between six core partners, including the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC),

the U.S. National Park Service Submerged Resources Center (NPS SRC) and its Southeast Archaeological Center (NPS SEAC), the George Washington University Capitol Archaeological Institute (GWU CAI), IZIKO Museums of South Africa, the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), and Diving With a Purpose (DWP). It integrates research, training and education in the pursuit of new scholarship on the global slave trade, utilizing the lens of slave shipwrecks as its unique point of entry.

Launched in 2008 as the Southern African Slave Wrecks and Diasporan Heritage Routes Project with a seed grant from the Ford Foundation, the initiative initially focused on Southern Africa, launching its first research efforts in the Republic of South Africa. The relationship between heritage and development is prominent in the project. From its inception the work has sought to assist developing-country partners in the advancement of cultural resource management programs that can preserve and protect irreplaceable heritage. This heritage is related to the historical slave trade and to the processes that formed Africa's global diaspora, while also fostering a unique niche for regional cultural tourism with tangible economic benefits and promoting capacity-building for educational, heritage and scientific institutions in partnering countries.

Now in its second phase (2012–2017), SWP has expanded the geographic scope of the project to reflect the global reach and impact of the African slave trade. While the team continues to pursue and expand its activities throughout Southern Africa, the current phase also features the development of activities in other regions as well. Work is currently in progress and partnerships are under development in North and South America, in the Caribbean, in West Africa and in the East Africa/Indian Ocean regions.

LAW/POLITICS/POLICY

In addition to the creative and historical work, another approach to modern slavery from the arts and humanities can be couched in terms of law and politics. The application of the term slavery to describe and define contemporary forms of exploitation has been given legal grounding in the work of scholars such as Jean Allain. Allain's research focuses on providing a definitive legal interpretation to the definition of slavery. Further work through the Research Network on the Legal Paramaters of Slavery led to the development of the Bellagio-Harvard Guidelines on how slavery can be understood or interpreted legaly.

Nicholson, Dang and Trodd have provided an exploration of what they term survivor-led definitions of slavery, which may assist the development of useful understandings of slavery in the present. It may

be useful to note that one of the struggles around legal definitions of slavery in the present is that whereas historical slavery, regardless of the views of the enslaved, was a state-sanctioned enterprise that existed as legal within the frameworks of a racialised hierarchy, plantation economies and the foundations of global capitalism, contemporary slavery cannot be understood similarly[66].

The questions becomes whether work that explores legal definitions can be useful outside of the relationships and structures of history and power that shape the experiences and understandings of exploitation. This becomes even more pertinent within a present where the work of repair remains incomplete, as the conversations around reparations for slavery have shown[67].

The projects highlighted here are a sample of the many others that will constitute the database, chosen to exemplify the multiple forms of art and humanities interventions that can be made, and the potential for doing more. This is especially so in relation to monitoring and evaluation and the measurement of impact, where many exciting earlier projects in the end have little by way of such reporting mechanisms. These are crucial in establishing a foundation for future research and meaningful impact, and to avoid duplication and the repetition of past mistakes. They also reveal the importance of responding to contemporary forms of exploitation as a developmental issue, approached from a critical standpoint, wherein the socio-economic and political contexts within which exploitation occurs are understood and receive an appropriate response.

Our network is exploring the potentially significant role the arts and humanities have to play in addressing contemporary slavery and other forms of exploitation. In addition to developing new ideas and practices to combat slavery, sharpening our conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools, the arts and humanities can also be an important part of how we reimagine the grammars and experiences of compassion, solidarity and the myriad complexities of being human.

64 Photographing modern slavery: recommendations for responsible practice The Rights Lab 2019 https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/mseu/mseu-resources/2019/november/photographing-modern-slavery.pdf 64 Antislavery Usable Past: https://blog.antislavery.ac.uk/
65 Slave Wrecks Project: http://slavewrecksproject.org/
66 Annie Bunting and Joel Quirk (eds) 2017 Contemporary Slavery: Popular Rhetoric and Political Practice. Vancouver, UBC Press.
67 Anna Lucia Araujo 2017 Reparations for Slavery and the Slave Trade: A Transnational and Comparative History. Bloomsbury, London

ENDINGS

This report in no way constitutes a complete, exhaustive or definitive overview, but is meant to provide a glimpse into the kinds of work – complex, varied and contentious – involved in confronting antislavery work as a development issue. For further information on the AKN and the projects it has funded, please visit: www.liverpool.ac.uk/politics/research/research-projects/akn/

To draw definitive conclusions from what remains a living and dynamic project would be premature, so I will borrow from anthropologist Andrew Irving[67] and his inspiring work on inner dialogue, to end this reflection. As a nudge in the direction of the intersections of work on the modern slavery agenda and development, especially in Africa, there is an array of complex issues to confront, different methodological and conceptual positions to assess, and contrasting political and ideological leanings to understand, all of which have to be reckoned with and navigated in doing this work.

Lessons will be learned during the course of the projects, and applied in further work, and it is hoped that these can work as examples for activity in other areas. As part of research and practice based work, it is useful to attend to the possible incremental benefits of the impact of the work over time and the contribution to a body of knowledge. The greatest benefit is, we hope, to the communities at the forefront of this work, and who live within the contexts where these challenges are faced on a daily basis.

The AKN aims to sustain its work within a critical, reflexive tradition that does not make claims to being any hypodermic needle that contains the antidote to the challenges faced in varying local contexts. Rather, we hope to continue to harness (and not in name alone) the multiple creative energies of partners, collaborators and co-creators. As such, we will continue to explore the possibilities of a politically engaged and aware arts and humanities practice that can assist in confronting some of the problems of marginalisation and inequality that produce vulnerabilities and perpetuate exploitation.

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