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Picturing Pedagogy: Images, Teaching, and Development

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Picturing Pedagogy: Images, Teaching, and Development

Abstract

Images are powerful. They shape how we see and understand the world and, in the process, challenge (or reinforce) our assumptions and perspectives. The images we use in the classroom are no exception, whether used passively as visual aids or as a “medium through which active learning is energized.”¹ In this article we embrace the “pictorial turn” in university teaching and reflect on the use of images when teaching “development.”² Development is an area that typically attracts students with an internationalist orientation and who seek to make a positive change in the world. Yet the concept of development is fraught in historical and political economic terms. Its complexity is reflected in academic debates about developmental imageries and imaginaries and, in particular, in representing global poverty. We argue that, by using images carefully and reflectively, we can help students think critically about the development project’s history and imperial dimensions whilst nurturing their desire to either struggle against global injustices or improve life and livelihood in particular places. We write from the standpoint of teachers in postgraduate education in both law and cognate disciplines. Our aim is to equip students with the kinds of contextual understandings and critical intellectual tools which help them to become engaged agents of change.

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Picturing Pedagogy: Images, Teaching, and Development

JEREMY BASKIN AND SUNDHYA PAHUJA*

Images are powerful. They shape how we see and understand the world and, in the process, challenge (or reinforce) our assumptions and perspectives. The images we use in the classroom are no exception, whether used passively as visual aids or as a “medium through which active learning is energized.”¹ In this article we embrace the “pictorial turn” in university teaching and reflect on the use of images when teaching “development.”² Development is an area that typically attracts students with an internationalist orientation and who seek to make a positive change in the world. Yet the concept of development is fraught in historical and political economic terms. Its complexity is reflected in academic debates about developmental imageries and imaginaries and, in particular, in representing global poverty. We argue that, by using images carefully and reflectively, we can help students think critically about the development project’s history and imperial dimensions whilst nurturing their desire to either struggle against global injustices or improve life and livelihood in particular places. We write from the standpoint of teachers in postgraduate education in both law and cognate disciplines. Our aim is to equip students with the kinds of contextual understandings and critical intellectual tools which help them to become engaged agents of change.

* We would like to acknowledge our students who have helped us experiment with teaching methods, as well as those who have co-taught with us in various courses, especially Luis Eslava and Ruth Buchanan. Thanks to Caitlin Murphy for her excellent research assistance. Dr. Jeremy Baskin is a Fellow in the School of Government at the University of Melbourne. Sundhya Pahuja is a Professor of International Law and Director of the Institute for International Law and the Humanities, Melbourne Law School.

1. David Roberts, “Higher education lectures: From passive to active learning via imagery?” (2019) 20 *Active Learning in Higher Education* 63 at 63 [Roberts, “Higher education lectures”].
2. On the pictorial turn, see David Roberts, “‘The message is the medium’: Evaluating the use of visual images to provoke engagement and active learning in politics and international relations lectures” (2018) 38 *Politics* 232.

I.	PREVIOUS STUDIES AND PICTURING DEVELOPMENT.....	81
II.	POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT.....	85
III.	INEQUALITY.....	92
IV.	DEVELOPMENT’S GENEALOGY AND HISTORY	97
V.	CONCLUSION	106

IN THE UNIVERSITIES WITH WHICH WE ARE FAMILIAR, a number of courses and departments are arranged around a notion of “development.”³ Many students from the Global South are funded to study development (including law and development) for the benefit of their own countries, and many students from the Global North see, in the area, a means to do good in the world. Whether from South or North, at least when they arrive, a certain idea of “development” exerts a powerful imaginative hold over almost all the students who take these courses.⁴

In this imaginary, development is a proxy for improved well-being. It is linked to an assumption of the need for progress and economic growth. There is often imagined to be a lack that must be filled—of commodities, strong institutions, education, health care, and so on. The lack is understood in a general way as “poverty.” And “poverty” can only be ended through development. So, it is a lack which “development” aims to fill. The imaginary comes with an ethic: “We,” the developed, have a duty to help “lift” the unfortunate billions out of poverty. And it comes with a success story: We are slowly succeeding in doing so.⁵ In crude terms, wanting to live like an American⁶ is how the desires of the Global South are understood in this narrative. It is assumed that the Rest wish to emulate the West, in substance if not always in form. Agency and knowledge, in this view, are

3. We draw heavily on our experiences teaching a variety of development-related subjects at Melbourne Law School and elsewhere, such as International Law and Development; Labour Law; Human Rights and Development; and Investment, Regulation, and Development.

4. Many of our students come from so-called “developing countries” and have some exposure to the development project. Some have worked in development institutions or NGOs, in various roles. At the risk of generalization, our students from “developed” countries often arrive with faith in development as the answer to a range of global problems. Given the class composition of tertiary students, most have not experienced extreme financial poverty in their lives.

5. This is a discourse of improvement and, as Jason Hickel suggests, a questionable one. See “The true extent of global poverty and hunger: questioning the good news narrative of the Millennium Development Goals” (2016) 37 Third World Q 749.

6. See Thomas L Friedman, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why we Need a Green Revolution – And How it Can Renew America*, 1st ed (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

invariably located in the Global North. Law is Occidental law in both form and content. The blame for poor development outcomes is typically ascribed to the inadequate institutions and people of the Global South.

Many students and scholars from both South and North recognize that there are problems with the development project.⁷ But such acknowledgements tend to produce a desire to improve the development project itself. It is still widely assumed that economic growth can and should be sustained indefinitely; that development can be both sustainable, or “green,” and inclusive;⁸ and that human development can be measured, compared, monitored, and achieved using global metrics.⁹ These are some of the imaginaries and default assumptions with which a critical scholar and teacher must engage. We find them to be widely held by students from both Global North and Global South.¹⁰ They also caricature, but only slightly, the hegemonic standpoint of the major multilateral institutions and development agencies. The imaginary of development, in short, is a powerful one. As teachers who seek to cultivate in students the analytical ability to describe the work that the development project does in the world, we need to engage with this imaginary. Part of this engagement means crafting pedagogical strategies that both denaturalize the imaginaries of development and help students to explore the work that the imaginaries are doing in ideological terms.

One way that both authors tackle this task is to invite students to engage critically with *images*. In this article, we reflect on the ways in which thinking

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7. See e.g. William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (Penguin, 2006); Joseph E Stiglitz & Andrew Charlton, *Fair Trade for All: How Trade Can Promote Development* (Oxford University Press, 2006); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: the Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton University Press, 1995) [Escobar, *Encountering Development*].
 8. See World Bank, “Inclusive Green Growth: The Pathway to Sustainable Development” (2012), online (pdf): <openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/6058/9780821395516.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
 9. See e.g. the 231 indicators of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. “SDG Indicators” (last visited 8 June 2021), online: *Sustainable Development Goals* <unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list>. See also critical studies of the use of metrics, e.g. Ruth Buchanan, Kimberley Byers & Kristina Mansveld, “‘What gets measured gets done’: exploring the social construction of globalized knowledge for development” in Mosche Hirsch & Andrew Lang, eds, *Research Handbook on the Sociology of International Law* (Edward Elgar, 2018) 101; Sally Engle Merry, *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).
 10. Before teaching the students anything, we elicit these imaginaries and assumptions through a neutrally presented brainstorming exercise about what students understand “development” to be. We are always surprised by the resilience of these imaginaries and assumptions, though we should not be.

about visual imagery can enhance critical understandings of the development project.¹¹ We have found that much can be gained from using images in teaching. Presenting students with an image can prompt class discussion and be a “medium through which active learning is energized,”¹² by literally asking students to reflect on representations that are visual rather than narrative. Images are interpretive objects that do not require prior reading, are not in English, are available to the class at the same time, and make engaging with concepts such as framing comprehensible to students with a very wide range of experience. Inviting students to reflect on representation helps them to learn how to think critically about the frames of reference that underpin dominant modes of action in the world. These frames determine the range of possible outcomes in ways that tend to benefit some and not others.

In this article, we reflect on the ways in which we use visual images in our teaching to trouble the hegemonic account of development. We begin by describing some of the existing studies of the use of imagery in relation to development and development aid. We then describe the way in which we use images in the classroom to prompt critical thinking and encourage engagement with the textual literature. We ask what work various images do in framing the idea of development: either enhancing a critical understanding of development or reinforcing, often inadvertently, many of the standard and pervasive assumptions about development and agency. We use three examples. The first explores the notion of poverty in development. The second looks at inequality and its relationship with poverty. The third looks at the genealogy of development, including the continuities and discontinuities between the civilizing mission approaches of the past and development today. We will conclude with some general reflections on the way that teaching with images can help to make strange the taken-for-granted. Our goal is not only to help students to think critically about the development project, but also to think about how they can develop ways of engaging with the world that are reflexive about both power and the politics of distribution.

11. Both authors engage with the development project when teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate students (in, variously, courses on international law, politics, and the environment).

12. Roberts, “Higher education lectures,” *supra* note 1 at 63.

I. PREVIOUS STUDIES AND PICTURING DEVELOPMENT

There is a large literature engaging critically with the development project.¹³ A number of studies have looked critically at the role of imagery, specifically, in reinforcing or undermining particular framings of development.¹⁴ These studies have mainly been in relation to the use of images by Northern-based International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) providing aid to the Global South.¹⁵

In the 1980s, there were criticisms made of certain images that were both prevalent in mass media and used by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for fundraising. These images commonly depicted hungry and destitute dark-skinned people, often children, begging for help.¹⁶ This was vividly illustrated at the time of the Ethiopian famine of 1984. Jørgen Lissner, in an article titled “Merchants of Misery,” labelled the use of starving child images as unethical and even “pornographic.”¹⁷ He argued that, whilst the use of these images kept donations to NGOs rolling in and may have awakened some to the harsh realities of the world, these were unacceptable depictions, both because they intruded on

13. This is a vast literature. Some examples of key texts in the field include Escobar, *Encountering Development*, *supra* note 7; Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 4th ed, translated by Patrick Camiller (Zed Books, 2014).

14. See e.g. Jørgen Lissner, *The Politics of Altruism: a Study of the Political Behaviour of Voluntary Development Agencies* (Lutheran World Federation, 1977); Henrietta Lidchi, “Finding the Right Image: British Development NGOs and the Regulation of Imagery” in Heide Fehrenbach & Davide Rodogno, eds, *Humanitarian Photography: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) 275; Nandita Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs* (IB Tauris, 2012); Siobhan Warrington & Jess Crombie “The People in the Pictures: Vital perspectives on Save the Children’s image making” (March 2017), online (pdf): <resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12425/pdf/the_people_in_the_pictures.pdf>.

15. INGO representations do, of course, have a pedagogical dimension that shapes how publics in the Global North imagine both poverty and the circumstances of the Global South.

16. Even the description of such images may be uncomfortable for some readers because the images themselves repeat both racist and paternalistic tropes. These are objectionable representations as this article makes clear.

17. Jørgen Lissner, “Merchants of misery” (1 June 1981), online: *New Internationalist* <newint.org/features/1981/06/01/merchants-of-misery>. We have not included these images in this article. Examples include the advertisement as part of the East African Emergency Campaign run by the UK charity, Disasters Emergency Committee, which between 1980 and 1984 reportedly brought in twenty-three million dollars for famine relief in Ethiopia. See Nayanika Chatterjee, “Poverty porn sells, but it isn’t helping the poor,” *The Print* (19 July 2018), online: <theprint.in/opinion/poverty-porn-sells-but-it-isnt-helping-the-poor/90141>.

the privacy and identity of those depicted and because comparable depictions were never used when depicting social disadvantage in rich countries.

For Lissner, bad images also encouraged bad development and foreign aid practices. What was needed, he argued, were positive images of development. Lissner argued that depiction should focus “on images and slogans showing Third World people as industrious and ingenious people who act intelligently within the limits of their resources. People in the high-income countries should not be asked to play God or save humankind, but simply to ‘lend a hand.’”¹⁸ This is in the *hand up, not hand out* stream of development thinking. In response to such critiques, many leading INGOs in the late 1980s and early 1990s adopted guidelines on the use of images in their publicity.¹⁹

Yet similar analyses periodically recur. Controversy accompanied *The New York Times*’s publication on 26 March 1993 of the shocking and now iconic image of a starving Sudanese child being stalked by a vulture.²⁰ The photo of this nameless child won the Pulitzer Prize for the photographer, Kevin Carter.²¹ A number of NGOs reproduced the image in their drive to raise funds to provide food for refugees.²² Whilst it helped publicize the terrible famine in South Sudan, many questioned the ethics of photographing the scene rather than helping the child, whilst others accused Carter of cultural appropriation and NGOs of the instrumental use of vulnerable subjects to aid fundraising.²³

More recently, a study by Save the Children (STC) argued that images and video are “how we connect those who seek to help with those with whom we work. They create empathy, change understanding, and motivate action.”²⁴ It shows that STC is fully aware of the critiques of representation in relation to poverty and development.²⁵ It notes that many INGOs have signed up to codes which commit them “to avoid[ing] images that homogenise, falsify,

18. *Ibid.*

19. Dogra, *supra* note 14.

20. Kevin Carter, “The Vulture and the Little Girl,” *The New York Times* (26 March 1993) 3 (image commonly referred to as “the vulture and the little girl” or “the struggling girl”).

21. *Ibid.*

22. Arthur Kleinman & Joan Kleinman, “The appeal of experience; the dismay of images: cultural appropriations of suffering in our times” (1996) 125 *Daedalus* 1 at 4.

23. For a discussion of both the context of this particular photograph and the circumstances of Carter’s suicide shortly afterwards, see *ibid.* See also Yung Soo Kim & James D Kelly, “Photojournalist on the Edge: Reactions to Kevin Carter’s Sudan Famine Photo” (2013) 20 *Visual Communication Q* 205.

24. Warrington & Crombie, *supra* note 14 at v.

25. Warrington & Crombie, *supra* note 14.

fuel prejudice or foster a sense of Northern superiority.”²⁶ It has been actively engaged with the Gates Foundation’s Narrative Project initiative, which aims to “adjust...communications strategies” and “Grow the Base of Public Support for Global Development.”²⁷ Yet these approaches are largely shaped by the fundraising imperative. Despite its awareness of the problematic dimensions of representations of starving Africans, STC also knows that even “surprisingly small indications of resilience” discourage donors from donating. “I’d give more to a baby or a child I see suffering than a child with a pencil in his hand,” as one respondent to an STC survey put it.²⁸ STC reported that its participant research panels “understood that, while they may not like watching images of children suffering, such depictions are necessary to raise funds to assist those in need.”²⁹

Many major INGOs today understand the need to avoid “othering” the recipients of their aid and to present them in visual material as partners and stakeholders, as active agents rather than as passive and helpless.³⁰ This involves telling positive stories—what Nandita Dogra terms “deliberate positivism.”³¹ Yet, notwithstanding so-called compassion fatigue,³² INGOs also understand that disaster and tragedy raise funds: If all is going well, why are they asking people to donate and help?

Although such critiques have changed institutional practice, perhaps because of their targets, they have not focused on the development project per se. Approaches using negative or positive images are two sides of the same

26. Warrington & Crombie, *supra* note 14 at 6.

27. “The Narrative Project” (last visited 8 June 2021), online: *The Narrative Project* <web.archive.org/web/20190510090134if_/https://www.narrativeproject.org> (archived at *Wayback Machine*).

28. Warrington & Crombie, *supra* note 14 at 5.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Related debates have occurred, although less publicly and with less anxiety, within multilateral organizations such as World Bank. One blog post quotes Antonio Lambino, then of World Bank, writing of the need to

help build capacity and efficacy at the local level...[by using] images that influence opinion, attitude, and behavior change toward these ends...[T]he process of producing and selecting these images should be audience and context specific — but we can probably agree that poverty porn should be the rare exception to the rule.

“Exploiting the Poor Through the Images We Use?” (5 May 2010), online (blog): <imaging-famine.org/blog/index.php/2010/05/exploiting-the-poor-through-the-images-we-use>.

31. Dogra, *supra* note 14 at 7.

32. See Susan D Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (Routledge, 1999).

coin; both types of approach are committed to the development project, albeit with differing degrees of self-awareness regarding global relationships of power. A different body of scholarly literature focuses more directly on the relationship between power and representation in the development context.³³ Nandita Dogra has written from a post-colonial perspective about visual representations of global poverty in the aid world. She identifies, as the master code, the simultaneous presentation of both difference and oneness.³⁴ At the same time, drawing on Stanley Cohen's work,³⁵ Dogra is critical of the way that images of disastrous events become spectacles when tragedy, dependence, and helplessness are simplified and decontextualized.³⁶

When using images in the classroom, we are alert to how depictions of development can both "other" and remove the agency of their subjects. We are focused less on development aid or humanitarian relief and more on the development project as a whole. Unlike many of the writers cited, we are interested less in making the development project more effective and more in interrogating the development project itself. We are interested less in making poverty history than in understanding how history makes poverty. We are interested in questioning the almost routine equation of the human quest for a better and more meaningful life with the development project. We are concerned less with whether the subjects have given permission for their images to be reproduced and more with what work the images do and what power dynamics they reveal. We are interested as much in the images used as a technology of development as in the images not used at all.

33. This includes texts which relate both to representations in text and visual representations. See e.g. Tim Mitchell, "America's Egypt: Discourse of the Development Industry" (1991) 169 *Middle East Rep* 18; David Lewis, Dennis Rodgers & Michael Woolcock, eds, *Popular Representations of Development: Insights from novels, films, television and social media* (Routledge, 2014); Mitu Sengupta, "A Million Dollar Exit from the Anarchic Slum-world: *Slumdog Millionaire's* hollow idioms of social justice" (2010) 31 *Third World Q* 599.

34. Dogra, *supra* note 14.

35. Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Polity Press, 2001).

36. Dogra, *supra* note 14 at 8.

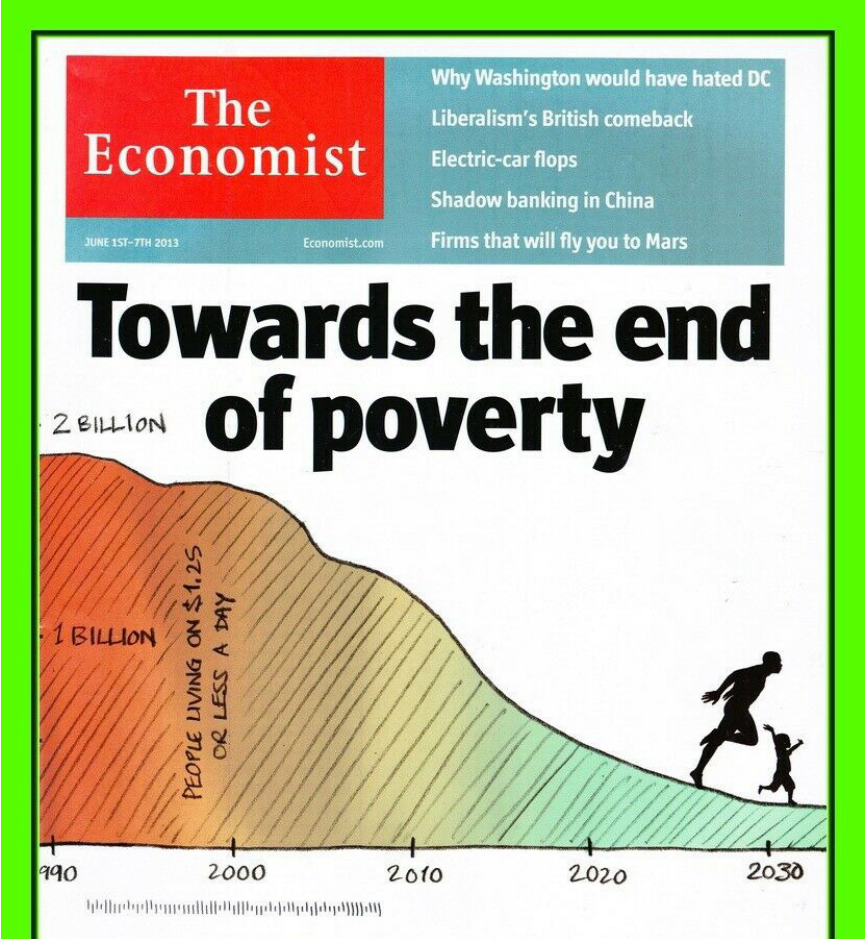
II. POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT

Ending poverty is often said to be the primary aim of development. This claim dates back to the Truman Declaration.³⁷ One of the most widespread narratives in contemporary economic and development writing involves the statement that development has lifted billions out of poverty in recent decades. As then-President of the World Bank Jim Yong Kim expressed in 2018, “Over the last 25 years, more than a billion people have lifted themselves out of extreme poverty, and the global poverty rate is now lower than it has ever been in recorded history. This is one of the greatest human achievements of our time.”³⁸ An image from the cover of *The Economist* captures this narrative well in its depiction of an adult and a child sprinting towards the flatlands at the end of poverty (Figure 1, below).

37. Harry Truman, Inaugural Address (delivered at the United States Capitol, 20 January 1949), published by the National Archives at the Harry S Truman Library and Museum, online: <www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/19/inaugural-address>. See also Escobar, *Encountering Development*, *supra* note 7; Sundhya Pahuja, *Decolonising International Law: Development, Economic Growth and the Politics of Universality* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) [Pahuja, *Decolonising*].

38. World Bank, Press Release, 2019/030/DEC-GPV, “Decline of Global Extreme Poverty Continues but Has Slowed: World Bank” (19 September 2018), online: <www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank>. Interestingly, we observe that the baseline generally used for such claims is 1990, when the collapse of the “Second World” saw the clear emergence of both US global dominance and the claim that, with the “end of history,” remaining problems (such as poverty) could be addressed largely through technical solutions.

FIGURE 1: COVER IMAGE OF THE PRINT EDITION OF *THE ECONOMIST*, 1 JUNE 2013.



SOURCE: Jon Berkeley, *The Economist*.³⁹

When we invite students to consider this image, we ask them first to describe the story the image conveys. As the discussion continues, we ask them to think about what is missing from the image. Here we invite them to work partly from first principles and read the image critically, drawing on their own knowledge

39. The Economist, "Towards the end of poverty" (1 June 2013), online: <www.economist.com/leaders/2013/06/01/towards-the-end-of-poverty>.

and experience. The students from “developing” countries have an advantage in this kind of exercise, itself a useful reversal of the usual pedagogical structure of development-based courses, which generally seek to transfer knowledge to Southern subjects rather than to learn from them. The second layer, a critical description of the image, invites the students to draw on the course readings, many of which provide both empirical and discursive critiques of this improvement story. For instance, the fact represented in the image, that the total number of people living on less than 1.25 USD a day has declined, is not in question. But what we seek to help students realize is the centrality of representation and interpretation to the development story, and the work it does in distributing power in the world.

So, the number of people living on less than 1.25 USD is said to have declined over time. But what are we to make of this? And what is the cover image of *The Economist* inviting us to make of it? What is at stake in presenting the story as one of progress or improvement? Here, the “teaching moment” is enhanced by bringing the image into relation with the course readings. The visual image provides an illustration of the dominant story in a vivid way, speaking for itself about the ubiquity of a particular narrative. Side by side with the discussion of this image, we draw attention to three observations.

First, that the largest part of the decline in “extreme poverty” relates to China.⁴⁰ This is important because China has consistently pursued policies at odds with the Washington Consensus as to how to “develop.” Many countries have been prevented (by the United States, in particular, through international institutions) from following precisely those policies through which the largest “anti-poverty” gains might have been made.⁴¹ In other words, one should not jump too rapidly to the conclusion that the embrace of particular policies was the driver of the decline.

Second, that the social and environmental costs—and who bears them—of achieving this decline in numbers of people earning less than 1.25 USD are excluded from the picture, even as sustainable development is now promoted as a way of bringing social, environmental, and economic growth objectives

40. Jason Hickel, “Is global inequality getting better or worse? A critique of the World Bank’s convergence narrative” (2017) 38 *Third World Q* 2208.

41. See Ha-Joon Chang, *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Anthem Press, 2002); Richard Peet, *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO* (Zed Books, 2003); Michel Chossudovsky, *The Globalisation of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms* (Zed Books, 1997).

together.⁴² We use images showing environmental effects of development including, for instance, the image below of Coltan mining (Figure 2A, below). The social effects of development can be illustrated by the informal settlements accompanying a movement to the cities from the countryside (Figure 2B, below).

FIGURE 2A: COLTAN MINING IN CONGO.



SOURCE: ABC Australia.⁴³

42. This is exemplified in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, "17 Goals" (last visited 4 October 2021), online: <sdgs.un.org/goals>.

43. "Coltan Mining & Its Environmental Impacts" (19 April 2011), online: *iphoneproj2011* <iphoneproj2011.wordpress.com/2011/04/19/coltan-mining-its-environmental-impacts>.

FIGURE 2B: MEMBERS OF THE NARMADA BACHAO ANDALAN (SAVE THE NARMADA) MOVEMENT, PROTESTING THE FLOODING OF THEIR LANDS AND VILLAGES.



SOURCE: AP.⁴⁴

NOTE: Banner reads, “Struggle for right to life.”⁴⁵

Do these images also represent development? If not, why not? Are environmental damage and other negative social effects an unfortunate by-product of development, or central to the development story itself? The aim of these questions is to help students think about what effects accompany the decline in poverty and who must bear those costs, and to engage with definitions of development that pay attention to destruction and sacrifice as well as improvement as parts of “normal” development.⁴⁶

44. “Jal Satyagraha: The first of its kind protest” (last visited 4 October 2021), online: *Sify.com* <www.sify.com/news/jal-satyagraha-the-first-of-its-kind-protest-imagegallery-national-mjkmqtegaedsi.html>.

45. *Ibid.*

46. For example, Gilbert Rist’s definition of development is “a set of practices...which require... the general transformation and destruction of the natural environment and of social relations. Its aim is to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared, by way of exchange, to effective demand.” Rist, *supra* note 13 at 13. See also Anne Orford, “Beyond Harmonization: Trade, Human Rights and the Economy of Sacrifice” (2005) 18 *Leiden J Intl L* 179.

Third, we ask students to think about the assumption that rising above 1.25 USD a day equates to being lifted out (or lifting oneself out) of poverty. Here we engage another set of images. In reflecting on the 1.25 USD benchmark, we ask students to think through a number of questions. What does “poverty” mean? How do we think beyond the limited income measure that usually predominates? Are other metrics, such as the Human Development Index (HDI) or the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), adequate alternatives? We pose these questions in conversation with the work of Jason Hickel who argues that if we measure poverty against the more accurate 5 USD per day line, the total poverty headcount rises to 4.3 billion people, which is more than 60 per cent of humanity.⁴⁷ We use images like these (Figures 3A and 3B, below) to ask if those depicted are “poor” or “middle class” according to the literature, and why that might matter.

FIGURE 3A: PERSON COOKING VEGETABLES ON AN OPEN STOVE.



47. Jason Hickel, *The Divide: Global Inequality from Conquest to Free Markets* (WW Norton & Company, 2018) at 16 [Hickel, *The Divide*]. In some literature it is assumed that most of those above the poverty line are now “middle-class!” For a critique of this position, see Roger Southall, “The Poverty of the ‘Middle Classing’ of Development: Key Problems in Southern Africa” (2017) 39 *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 211. The debatable proposition that those above the poverty line are “middle class” has even been promoted by Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences winners Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, who have defined middle class as a daily income between 2 USD and 10 USD (*ibid* at 213).

SOURCE: Donatella Giagnori, Getty Images.⁴⁸

NOTE: What does it mean that, according to the metrics, these people have been lifted out of poverty?

FIGURE 3B: INDIAN CHILDREN GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL.



SOURCE: Altaf Qadri, AP.⁴⁹

NOTE: Is this family middle-class?

The Indian children depicted in Figure 3B, above, are getting ready for school. They form part of the “middle class” category in World Bank statistics.⁵⁰ Hopefully this image spurs conversation about not only income levels but also what constitutes poverty; Sen’s capability arguments;⁵¹ and the importance of context, community, and social embeddedness. The point here is delicately balanced,

48. Rajendra Pachauri, “There’s a silent killer in India’s homes – but it’s not an election issue,” *The Guardian* (1 May 2014), online: <www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/01/silent-killer-india-homes-election-kerosene-biomass>.

49. The image appears in Larry Elliott, “World’s Eight Richest People have Same Wealth as Poorest 50%,” *The Guardian* (16 January 2017), online: <www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/16/worlds-eight-richest-people-have-same-wealth-as-poorest-50>.

50. Martin Ravallion, “The Developing World’s Bulging (but Vulnerable) ‘Middle Class’” (2009) World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No 4816.

51. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Anchor Books, 2000).

because the objective is not to argue either that we still need more development or that we need Chinese-style development. Instead, the juxtaposition is meant to alert students to the importance of framing in the development story and to trouble their embedded assumptions, without resolving or theorizing everything all at once. It also draws attention to the connotations of homogenizing phrases like “middle class” and what work such phrases might do. Some of the bigger implications of this last observation will come out slowly through the rest of the course as we think about the historical and political economic dimensions of development and the distributional implications of a growth-based model.

III. INEQUALITY

What constitutes poverty changes over time. Its definition is socially determined, and it exists in relation to non-poverty (or plenty). In short, wealth and poverty are related ideas and realities. Further, if it is true that there are declining numbers of people in absolute poverty, it is equally true that this decline has been accompanied by rising levels of inequality both within and between societies.⁵² Whilst the development project has generally focused on alleviating poverty, a growing number of voices are asking why the focus is not on inequality.⁵³

We start by showing this image, which depicts wealth and poverty sitting alongside each other (Figure 4, below). We ask if anyone knows the location of this image. More likely than not, the students from the Global South name their own megacity: Jakarta, Mumbai, Mexico City, Bogotá, and so on. It is, in fact, São Paulo in Brazil. But students recognize there is something familiar, at least to those from the Global South, about the situation it depicts.

52. See Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the twenty-first century*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014). See also Jason Hickel, “Is global inequality getting better or worse? A critique of the World Bank’s convergence narrative” (2017) 38 *Third World Q* 2208.

53. Hickel, *The Divide*, *supra* note 47.

FIGURE 4: PARAISÓPOLIS AND MARUMBI IN SÃO PAULO.



SOURCE: Tuca Vieira, *The Guardian*.⁵⁴

We ask the students to reflect on the relationship between the two sides of the image and on the links between poverty, inequality, and economic growth, and relate their reflections to various prescribed readings.⁵⁵ We then ask them to study the picture more closely and describe what they see. On the right side of the image, they typically notice the swimming pool on every balcony, the well-tended greenness of the gardens, the absence of human figures, and the wall or barrier between the two sides. When looking at the left side of the image, students tend to see this as a “poor” area. We press them on the quality of the housing (mainly brick) and roofing (mainly corrugated or concrete), as well as the presence of private vehicles, electricity pylons, and perhaps piped water, given the water (or is it sewage?) running down the street. It soon becomes apparent

54. Interview of Tuca Vieira, “Inequality...in a photograph,” *The Guardian* (29 November 2017), online: <www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/nov/29/sao-paulo-injustice-tuca-vieira-inequality-photograph-paraisopolis>.

55. Such readings may include, e.g., Jagdish Bhagwati & TN Srinivasan, “Trade and Poverty in the Poor Countries” (2002) 92 *American Economic Rev* 180; Michele Alacevich, *The Political Economy of the World Bank: The Early Years* (Stanford University Press, 2009).

that, according to World Bank classifications, the left side is a “middle-class” area. Is this a development success?

We also ask students to reflect on the question of what the end goal of development is in this situation. Is development’s work complete in this neighbourhood, and is development about assisting those, not in this image, who are close to or actually destitute? Is the goal of further economic growth that the left side of this image develops to resemble the right side? Is it that the right side also gets better, perhaps bigger? Would making the right side less luxurious and closer in substance to the left side, equalizing to some midpoint, count as development? If not, why not? We then ask students to relate the various perspectives that emerge in this discussion to the positions of key institutions, policies, and thinkers in the development space, including the Sustainable Development Goals.⁵⁶

Two further images are pedagogically useful in raising the question of inequality and examining the relationship between wealth and poverty. Figure 5, below, depicts the rock star Bono, whose celebrity is, in part, based on his seemingly self-proclaimed role as a fighter against poverty.⁵⁷ He is at the annual global elite gathering, the World Economic Forum (WEF), whose slogan is “Committed to Improving the State of the World.” The year is 2005. Bono stands alongside Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, and Tony Blair, as well as two slightly perplexed-looking African Presidents, Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo. Money, power, celebrity, and representatives of the world’s poorest continent: Africa.⁵⁸

56. Other texts might include Antony Anghie, “Nationalism, Development and the Postcolonial State: The Legacies of the League of Nations” (2006) 41 *Tex Intl LJ* 447; Meredith Woo-Cumings, ed, *The Developmental State* (Cornell University Press, 1999); John Robinson, “Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development,” *Commentary*, (2004) 48 *Ecological Econ* 369; Luis Eslava, “Decentralization of Development and Nation-Building Today: Reconstructing Colombia from the Margins of Bogotá” (2009) 2 *L & Development Rev* 283.

57. See Bono, “The good news on poverty (Yes, there’s good news)” (February 2013), online (video): *Ted* <[ted.com/talks/bono_the_good_news_on_poverty_yes_there_s_good_news?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/bono_the_good_news_on_poverty_yes_there_s_good_news?language=en)>.

58. “Poorest” in terms of GDP per capita.

FIGURE 5: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM ANNUAL MEETING 2005, DAVOS.



SOURCE: Remy Steinegger, World Economic Forum.⁵⁹

Figure 6, below, is from an advertisement by Louis Vuitton, the global luxury goods brand. The image depicts Bono and his partner, Ali Hewson, seemingly arriving in Africa in their private plane with their Louis Vuitton merchandise. Both Figures 5, above, and 6, below, suggest a “smooth world” with an unproblematic relationship between wealth and power, on the one hand, and poverty and poverty alleviation on the other.⁶⁰

59. World Economic Forum, “Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, Thabo Mbeki, Tony Blair, Bono, Olusegun Obasanjo - World Economic Forum Annual Meeting Davos 2005” (27 January 2005), online: *Flickr* <www.flickr.com/photos/worldeconomicforum/346665560/>.

60. See Anand Giridharadas, *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World* (Alfred A Knopf, 2018).

FIGURE 6: “EVERY JOURNEY BEGAN IN AFRICA” ADVERTISEMENT.



Every journey began in Africa. Ali and Bono wear Edun; Ali carries the Louis Vuitton/Edun collaborative bag. Profits from the bag, as well as Ali and Bono's fee benefit Conservation Cotton Initiative Uganda.

Follow Ali and Bono at <https://twitter.com/edunlv>

LOUIS VUITTON

SOURCE: Annie Leibovitz.⁶¹

NOTE: The ad is part of Louis Vuitton's Core Values campaign.

We present these images and ask students to think about the relationship between wealth and poverty. What is the proper role for the involvement of the wealthy (whether governments or philanthropists) in addressing such issues? Do wealth and poverty simply coexist, both in some sense inevitable and always present? Does wealth generate poverty, or even require it? Is more wealth a precondition for “making poverty history”? To which view does a theory of growth-based development subscribe? We ask students to reflect on which assumptions about

61. Senatus, “‘Every Journey Begins in Africa’ by Bono for Louis Vuitton” (last visited 4 October 2021), online: <senatus.net/article/every-journey-begins-africa-bono-louis-vuitton>.

the relationship can be found in key development policy documents,⁶² and to what effect, and we link the discussions to a number of critical texts.⁶³

IV. DEVELOPMENT'S GENEALOGY AND HISTORY

The idea of “development” can be said to date from 1947 with its largely unplanned and last-minute inclusion in the Truman declaration.⁶⁴ But development has earlier precursors in the colonial era, when it was largely understood as a “civilising mission”: a mission that constituted “the white man’s burden.”⁶⁵

We present a number of images to illustrate how the West commonly understood its relationship to the rest in both the colonial era and the not very distant past. In the first image (Figure 7A), taken from the Library of Congress, we see soldiers fighting for British “civilization” and against “barbarism.” Behind them stand honest, working men coming to settle.

62. See *e.g.* International Monetary Fund, *IMF Governance – Summary of Issues and Reform Options* (Policy Paper), (IMF, 1 July 2009).

63. For examples of critical texts, see Giridharadas, *supra* note 60; Arturo Escobar, “Degrowth, postdevelopment, and transitions: a preliminary conversation” (2015) 10 *Sustainability Science* 451; Arturo Escobar, “Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development and Social Movements” (1992) 31/32 *Soc Text* 20; Luis Eslava, “Corporate Social Responsibility & Development: A Knot of Disempowerment” (2008) 2 *Sortuz: Oñati J Emergent Socio-legal Studies* 43; Susan Marks, “Human rights and the bottom billion” (2009) 1 *Eur HRL Rev* 37; Heloise Weber & Mark T Berger, “Human (In)Security and Development in the 21st Century” (2009) 30 *Third World Q* 263.

64. See Pahuja, *Decolonising*, *supra* note 37 at 13–18.

65. Jennifer L Beard, *The Political Economy of Desire: International law, development and the nation state* (Routledge-Cavendish, 2007) at 125; Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) [Anghie, *Making of International Law*].

FIGURE 7A: BRITANNIA AS “CIVILIZATION” BATTLING AGAINST “BARBARISM.”



SOURCE: Udo Keppler, Library of Congress.⁶⁶

In the next image (Figure 7B), taken from a French school textbook, is the figure of *La Marianne*, the symbol of France. She is dressed in armour rather than depicted as semi-naked, as she typically is “at home.” Her shield, too, is altered for the journey southwards. She brings “progress, civilization, and commerce” to the colonies, rather than the “liberty, equality, and fraternity” she extols in depictions in France.⁶⁷

66. Ellen Sebring, “Civilization & Barbarism: Cartoon Commentary & ‘The White Man’s Burden’ (1898-1902)” (2014), online: *MIT Visualizing Cultures* <visualizingcultures.mit.edu/civilization_and_barbarism/cb_essay01.html>.

67. Translation by authors.

FIGURE 7B: FRANCE BEARING “PROGRESS, CIVILIZATION, AND COMMERCE” TO ITS COLONIES.



SOURCE: Georges Dascher, *Les Colonies Françaises*.⁶⁸

Figure 7C is an overtly racist cartoon from *Judge Magazine*, a popular publication of the late 1800s, that references Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden.”⁶⁹ We see Britain’s John Bull leading Uncle Sam uphill as they take up the “white man’s burden” of carrying the “natives” of each colonized region to civilization.

68. Georges Dascher, “Les Colonies Françaises” (circa 1900), online <gdascher.jimdo.free.com/couvertures-de-cahiers-scolaires/les-colonies-fran%C3%A7aises> (originally the cover of a French school textbook, reproduced here).

69. Sebring, *supra* note 66; for the text of the poem, see Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” in Peter Faulker & Chris Brooks, eds, *The White Man’s Burdens: An Anthology of British Poetry of the Empire* (University of Exeter Press, 1996) 307.

FIGURE 7C: “‘THE WHITE MAN’S BURDEN’ (APOLOGIES TO RUDYARD KIPPLING),” 1899.



SOURCE: Victor Gillam, Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum.⁷⁰

In Figure 7D, below, an advertisement for Pears Soap draws on similar themes of bringing light to darkness, this time in pursuit of new markets.

70. Sebring, *supra* note 66.

FIGURE 7D: ADVERTISEMENT FROM PEARS' SOAP COMPANY, 1899.



The first step towards lightening
The White Man's Burden
is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness.
Pears' Soap
is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as
civilization advances, while amongst the cultured of all nations
it holds the highest place. It is the light of the world.

SOURCE: Library of Congress.⁷¹

NOTE: Admiral George Dewey is depicted in this advertisement.

71. "The first step toward lightening the White man's burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness" (1899), Library of Congress (2002715038), online: <www.loc.gov/item/2002715038>.

We ask students to analyze these images and point out the tropes and imaginaries that they reflect. Students typically notice the racism, the paternalism, the passivity and gratitude of the “natives” (once subdued), the military technology, the notion of salvation, the role of commerce, and the relationship between the military and the economy. Such explicitly racialized language is not found so readily today. But the images allow us to ask students whether there are continuities between what constitutes progress and development, and where development comes from? And are the racialized narratives still implicit today?⁷² Texts that we encourage the students to read at this point in the course include those which provide genealogies of development and locate development in older practices of world making, including Christianity,⁷³ colonialism,⁷⁴ decolonization,⁷⁵ the Cold War,⁷⁶ and civilizational practices.⁷⁷

We then show students two further images and a slide with a quote. The quote is a vivid one that paints a word image. The first image, Figure 8A, below, is a photo of Bob Geldof, rock star and founder of the Live Aid “Feed the World” initiative established in response to the 1980s Ethiopian famine.⁷⁸ He is strolling, Jesus-like, through camps of displaced and hungry people.

72. See e.g. Shane Chalmers, “The Mythology of International Rule-of-Law Promotion” (2019) 44 Law & Soc Inquiry 957.

73. See Beard, *supra* note 65.

74. See Anghie, *Making of International Law*, *supra* note 65.

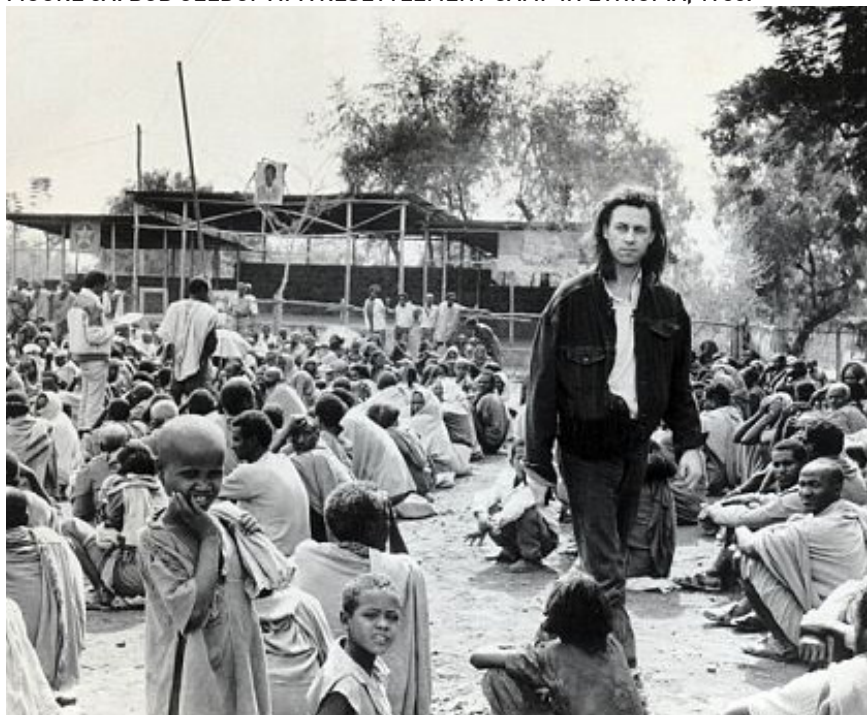
75. Pahuja, *Decolonising*, *supra* note 37.

76. Escobar, *Encountering Development*, *supra* note 7.

77. Rist, *supra* note 13. A full syllabus of the course taught by Luis Eslava and Sundhya Pahuja is available on their respective Academia pages. Sundhya Pahuja & Luis Eslava, “International Law and Development” (2021), online: <academia.edu/8191469/International_Law_and_Development>.

78. For a critical account of this initiative, see Robert Keating, “Live Aid: The Terrible Truth” (July 1986, republished 13 July 2015), online: <www.spin.com/featured/live-aid-the-terrible-truth-ethiopia-bob-geldof-feature>. See also Suzanne Franks, *Reporting Disasters: Famine, Aid, Politics and the Media* (Hurst & Company, 2013).

FIGURE 8A: BOB GELDOF AT A RESETTLEMENT CAMP IN ETHIOPIA, 1985.



SOURCE: Brian Aris, *Today*, Rex Features.⁷⁹

79. Brian Aris, "Bob Geldof visiting refugee feeding centre in Ethiopia, 1987," online (photo): www.brianaris.com/images/portfolio/reportage/095-BA003148.jpg.

The second image, Figure 8B, below, is the cover of a recent United Nations report on Sustainable Development.

FIGURE 8B: 2019 GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT COVER PAGE.



SOURCE: Camilo J. Salomon.⁸⁰

80. Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now—Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*, UNDESA, 2019.

The word-image text can change, but is often an extract from the inaugural address of US President Harry Truman in 1949, known retrospectively as the Truman Declaration, which is said to have inaugurated the modern discourse of development:⁸¹

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. 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 skill to relieve suffering of these people. The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques. The material resources which we can afford to use for assistance of other peoples are limited. But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible.⁸²

The juxtaposition of the pictures and the word image is a way of inviting students to reflect on the historical continuities and discontinuities between development and older forms of global ordering and civilizational intervention. We ask the class to reflect on the images, to think about what might be the same, and what might be different, about the contemporary development project as compared to its precursors, including the civilizing mission. Often, the students notice a repetition of the trope of salvation, which remains fairly constant over time.⁸³ They notice, too, the way that the West's role as the self-appointed carrier of a "burden" has been replaced by a language of "duty" or "responsibility," but that the self-authorization remains the same. The British and American figures of John Bull and Uncle Sam have, in the Truman Declaration, become "humanity": Uniquely in possession not of "civilization" but of "knowledge and skill." The explicitly racialized imagery has become more subtle. The distinction is not between Black and white, or civilized and savage, but between "scientific" and "industrialised" humanity on the one hand, and "these people" with a "primitive economic life," living in "misery" on the other. "Civilization" has given way to "development" as the gift being brought by intervention. By seeing them placed in a historical and geo-political context, students can make strange for themselves ideas such as economic growth and measures such as GDP, and think about the

81. Pahuja, *Decolonising*, *supra* note 37.

82. Truman, *supra* note 37.

83. See Beard, *supra* note 65.

way that a new, ostensibly colour-blind hierarchy was inaugurated that in many respects replicated the old, racialized hierarchy.⁸⁴

We might also ask students to reflect on the relationship between the Make Poverty History campaign and the idea that “history makes poverty.” This connects to course readings on the political economy of wealth production, and scholarly work on impoverishment as opposed to a naturalized state of “poverty.”⁸⁵

V. CONCLUSION

The examples used above are by no means exhaustive. We could just as easily cover topics such as agency and resistance, science and technology, health and development, food and poverty, legal plurality, and so on. In each case, visual images can provide ways into discussion, critique, and reimagining. We have also focused on photographs and passed over other visual artifacts we use in class, including maps,⁸⁶ Venn diagrams, graphs, and similar illustrations. We have also generally ignored cartoons in this article. Cartoons can be very useful in teaching, but they need different pedagogical handling as they are often aimed at making a point rather than opening reflection.⁸⁷

The examples we have given are not comprehensive but are aimed at illustrating our approach to using images when teaching subjects related to international development, mainly in law schools but also in other disciplines that engage with development. Our experience is that these methods can make the student who has less experience of life at the bottom of the pyramid more nuanced in their understanding of the world, and more humble in proposing solutions. It can also make them more alert to the ways in which poverty and plenty are connected, and to the links between the development project and larger structures of power in the world.

84. Pahuja, *Decolonising*, *supra* note 37.

85. Upendra Baxi, “Global Development and Impoverishment” in Peter Cane & Mark Tushnet, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Legal Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2003) 455; John Linarelli, Margot E Salomon & Muthucumaraswamy Sornarajah, *The Misery of International Law: Confrontations with Injustice in the Global Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2018); Joseph Stiglitz, “Dealing With Debt: How to Reform the Global Financial System” (2003) 25 *Harvard Intl Rev* 54; Sundhya Pahuja, “Technologies of Empire: IMF Conditionality and the Reinscription of the North/South Divide” (2000) 13 *Leiden J Intl L* 749.

86. See Mitchell, *supra* note 33.

87. See e.g. Julie Matthews, “Visual Culture and Critical Pedagogy in “Terrorist Times”” (2005) 26 *Discourse* 203.

There is, of course, much more that can be said about the dangers of images, particularly about the production of images, the position of the photographer, and the capacity of images to trivialize, “other,” or dissociate representation from power.⁸⁸ Yet many similar, if not identical, criticisms can be made about the production of knowledge more broadly. Being reflexive about the production of knowledge when teaching about development is always crucial.

By using images in the classroom, we hope we are able to initiate active learning.⁸⁹ Images provide students with open-ended ways of engaging critically with the subject. We typically ask students to examine the image closely and be able to describe what they see. We then use the images to begin a critical conversation about a particular aspect of international development. Finally, we ask students to link that conversation with one or more key texts, both scholarly and drawn from key documents in the development project. Used in this way, images spark curiosity, engender discussion between students from North and South that values their different contributions and experience, and open the way to more substantial engagement with the texts that we cover in the courses we teach.

88. Lidchi, *supra* note 14 at 291-92.

89. For the critical benefits of teaching with images, see generally James H Madison, “Teaching with Images” (2004) 18 OAH Mag Hist 65; Paul Hunt, “A critical pedagogy approach to the use of images in the geography classroom” (2018) 43 Teaching Geography 124.

