

**IMAGINING NEW APPROACHES:
THE DICE ARTIST COMMISSION**

INTRODUCTION

Artists are visionaries, innovators and storytellers who can communicate complex ideas in singular, compelling and memorable ways.

So when we received a commissioned paper about cultural relations approaches to international development, we decided to convene a group of 12 artists from six countries to help us understand and interpret it.

This paper, *The Cultural Relations of Negotiating Development: Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies at the British Council*, was written by Professor J.P. Singh of George Mason University. It focuses on the example of the British Council’s DICE (Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies) pilot programme to help us better understand how cultural relations approaches can contribute to international development efforts.

A recent review of cultural relations from the Goethe-Institut and British Council defined cultural relations as:

reciprocal transnational interactions between two or more cultures, encompassing a range of activities conducted by state and/ or non-state actors within the space of culture and civil society. The overall outcomes of cultural relations are greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue between people and cultures, shaped through engagement and attraction rather than coercion.¹

Professor Singh points out that while international relations ‘imply interactions among nation-states; cultural relations brings in non-states actors.’ He notes that, ‘power configures as a central element in thinking about inter-state relations, and in the liberal version exchange and reciprocity

are key elements,’ while ‘for international cultural relations, the central concept is trust.’

In his paper, Professor Singh explores topics such as paternalism, the principle of the hiding hand, and ecological approaches to development, and he analyses the DICE approach of promoting creative and entrepreneurial approaches to address social and environmental challenges.

The artists recruited to help us make sense of these themes came from Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa and the UK – the six countries in which the DICE programme operated.

Bringing these artists together with Professor Singh and his text was itself an act of cultural relations. The discussions between and among the artists and academic were fascinating and illuminating – as were the works of art that were produced as a result of these encounters. They include digital illustrations, a video animation, a linocut print and a folk song. These pieces illuminate some of the broad themes in Professor Singh’s paper but also explore some of the nuances in cultural relations approaches to development.

The images, video and quotes that follow capture the excitement, creativity and ideas that this unusual collaboration generated.

We hope that they inspire viewers to read the paper and think about how cultural relations approaches can enhance support for reducing inequalities and building trust between people, while generating creative and impactful solutions to some of the shared social and environmental challenges we face.

¹ Goethe-Institut and British Council. 2018. *Cultural Value: Cultural Relation in Societies in Transition*. London and Munich: Goethe-Institut and British Council.

COUNTRY KEY

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	SOUTH AFRICA	<i>From video animation to digital illustration, linocut print to short story, explore the works of art created through the artists’ engagement with J.P. Singh and his text.</i>

1

‘THE OVERALL OUTCOMES OF CULTURAL RELATIONS ARE GREATER CONNECTIVITY, BETTER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, MORE AND DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TRANSACTIONS AND ENHANCED SUSTAINABLE DIALOGUE BETWEEN PEOPLE AND CULTURES, SHAPED THROUGH ENGAGEMENT AND ATTRACTION RATHER THAN COERCION.’

J.P. Singh, *The Cultural Relations of Negotiating Development: Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies at the British Council*

05

KAZZ MOROHASHI

BLOSSOM

‘My response to J.P.’s paper came out as a short animated film about a flower lover becoming a recognised floral artist, with gentle help along the way. I’m using this idea of flower as a metaphor for aspiration and entrepreneurship.

What I took away after reading J.P.’s work and learning about DICE is that [...] we were really talking about co-creating – coming together to create something new – and collaborating – coming together to labour, to work together.



Blossom, Kazz Morohashi. Page 17

I took away the idea of ‘co-crafting’ as a method of developing a community of practitioners, where committed individuals come together to master their own craft within a long-lasting ecosystem of creative support.

J.P. also mentioned the community of the project as women, young people, and the LGBTQ+ community, and I wanted to integrate that by using a lot of female characters but also these boys [who] are in a relationship. It’s looking at stereotypes but also using flowers as a way to connect with each other.’



Blossom, Kazz Morohashi. Page 17

J.P. Singh Quote

‘DICE accords special attention to the creative aspects of the cultural turn and connects the local actors with their global (other local) counterparts. In doing so, the DICE programme extends the culture of creativity to those excluded from economic opportunity in society. At the same time, it mobilises a global network across several layers of actors from grassroots entrepreneurs to policymakers in high places, and the possibility of the grassroots and high-placed groups co-designing incentives and initiatives.’

CAROLINA GAESSLER

‘I came up with three different pieces. I’ve tried to organise all my ideas. The three pieces talk about flow and mutuality which I think are the main ideas I got from the text.

FOUR FIGURES PASSING SEEDS

We have this ‘flow’ idea through the text. We are always talking about how ideas should flow from the bottom up and from top to bottom and horizontally as well, and this was something that I really felt working with DICE. [...] The idea that is really important is that you are nurturing

something that is already inside people. We could always use some help, but we already have something within us that can flourish. And we pooled our ideas and our knowledge together and we became something new. And the idea that we are unfinished pieces to the end. I think that's really beautiful.'



Four Figures Passing Seeds, Carolina Gaessler. Page 18

J.P. Singh Quote

'Development thinking has undergone several mutations in the post-Second World War era to become aware that ideas informing development practices must not be just vertically top-down but also bottom-up and need to horizontally flow across development actors and networks. Cultural relations foster collective understandings and trust among these actors and networks. With its record of addressing cultural issues in development, the British Council is uniquely positioned

to address the current challenges in development.'



The Oppressed's New World, Carolina Gaessler. Page 19

THE OPPRESSED'S NEW WORLD

'I wanted it to resemble the old maps which depicted the old world and the new world [side by side] with an old structure, but now they are stitching a new kind of earth or globe that is made from everyone's hands and facilitated by DICE. [...] You have to create this bridge [made of yarn between the hands at the bottom] which connects the old world and the new world that otherwise wouldn't connect. And then I wanted to bring some quotes from Paulo Freire's work, which I think has a lot to do with what DICE is doing. Basically, it says, 'The unjust social order is the root cause of the inequality and other bad things in the new world.' And what I wanted to say here is that DICE is doing something else. It's a different thing. It's not generosity by itself. It's not fake. It really tries to listen and to realise the needs and to put everyone to work at their best.'

J.P. Singh Quote

'The cultural turn in development theory would emphasize the importance of the local context: a bottom-up approach that began to be articulated by the 1980s. This narrative began emphasising people's ability to problem-solve their circumstances rather than become

recipients of ideas that did not speak directly to their lives, what Paulo Freire termed the 'embankment approach'. Instead a problem-solving approach would allow the oppressed to find a cultural voice to name their world 'as a limiting situation they can transform' (Freire 2018, 49). Therefore, a cultural approach to development is inherently participatory and seeks to localise development (Mansuri and Rao 2013).'

NADINE NOUR EL DIN

THEATRE OF NEGOTIATIONS

'To explain my process, I've done a close read of Professor J.P. Singh's paper and I picked up on key themes that I wanted to illustrate to produce a total of eight illustrations. With my interpretation I really wanted to use pictorial cartoons as my visual references. I was looking specifically at illustrations that have appeared in magazines and newspapers in 20th century Egypt. And I find that looking back at cartoons from that period, a number of themes resonate with cultural policy and development. [...] And then I created these illustrations based on my research and synthesized the various visual references to produce my own interpretation of those themes. The first of these is The Theater of Negotiations.

J.P. Singh Quote

'DICE is responding to what Elinor Ostrom (2005) terms an 'action situation' that features habits of argumentation, negotiation and deliberation: actions situations are 'spaces where individuals interact, exchange goods or services, solve problems, dominate one another, or fight.' This theatre of negotiation offers a deeper engagement with questions of trust and reciprocity in cultural relations. Cultural relations values such as exchange,

reciprocity and dialogue are negotiated both in functional and constitutive ways [...] In a functional sense, building trust and reciprocity can lead to a greater impact in international development projects.'



Theatre of Negotiations, Nadine Nour el Din. Page 20

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

The Elephant in the Room was one of the trickiest ones to conceptualise. And so here really what I was looking at first was the elephant, and I realised that it wasn't the right language for it because in these cartoons the elephant usually references India. And then there were other depictions of colonialism that showed protests, but then I came up with this. So, Egypt was often depicted as a woman, and there's an entire book devoted to the subject called *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender and Politics* by Beth Baron and that's where these illustrations are from. And so I zeroed in on [an illustration called] Egypt and the Negotiations and I've re-interpreted it for this project here. The history and legacy of colonialism in Egypt and Pakistan is the elephant in the room with North-South engagement, and this depicts the paternalistic relationship between the UK, Egypt and Pakistan in a familial setting.'

J.P. Singh Quote

'The most challenging debate in international development currently is the paternalism

inherent in any external intervention. Paternalism is an infantilising narrative, and directed from the Global North to the South in international development efforts. DICE presents international development through cultural relations as a way of building trust with participants and overcoming problems of collective action. Like any development effort, DICE will have paternalistic connotations, but its cultural relations approach is equally sincere in attempting to reduce power hierarchies.'



The Elephant in the Room, Nadine Nour el Din. Page 20

HANDRIYANTI DIAH PUSPITARINI

CLAW MACHINE

'I really like the idea of the impact of external variables on the actors, which is mentioned in J.P.'s paper. So I took the idea of the claw machine, which represents the external variables that can affect the actions or emotions of the actors, and the actor must choose and adapt wisely to those variables.'

The colour of the claw machine is like the earth. The blue of the machine is like the sky, the brown [inside the machine] is like the earth, and the

green [around the joystick] is for the vegetation. There are buttons that can be used as a substitute for the joystick [in operating the machine] because there are always other ways to reach our aims.

The player uses the joystick to wisely choose balls from inside. Each of the balls has its own environment. In some cases, there is water and oil inside the balls, and even if you shake the balls the water and oil can never truly mix. There are also balls that have colours in them, and the colours represent various cultures. And there is a ball that only has one element inside. We don't know if it's a model environment or the boring one. The actor herself is illustrated as a girl. We know that the voice of women is usually unheard compared to men, and this is especially true of kids. She was able to obtain a colourful ball from the machine, and she's shaking it, so that all of the elements inside are mixed up. It means that if you do your best you can make these various cultures become one and it represents cultural solidarity.'



Claw Machine, Handriyanti Diah Puspitarini. Page 21

Elinor Ostrom diagram

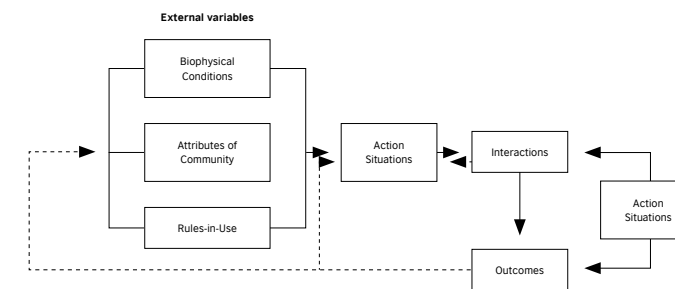


Figure 1. A Framework for Institutional Analysis. Source: Adapted from Ostrom, Elinor. "Background on the institutional analysis and development framework." Policy Studies Journal 39, no. 1 (2011): 7-27.

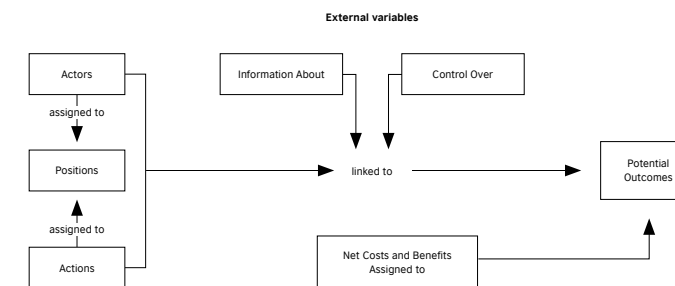


Figure 2. The Internal Structure of an Action Situation. Source: Adapted from Ostrom, Elinor. "Background on the institutional analysis and development framework." Policy Studies Journal 39, no. 1 (2011): 7-27.

NICOLE PURDIE

FIND YOUR VOICE

I wanted whatever I made to be one thing, like a statue or a bit of architecture that is then made up of all these different elements combined together, because that was the overriding feeling I got from DICE – that it's lots of people collaborating with their thoughts and ideas and processes, all connecting to make something amazing.

A lot of my personal work is inspired by the idea of female empowerment and the feminine position in the world, so that's what I took from the paper

and my angle. I've combined different stories of people that have been collaborators with DICE. I feel that their stories mirror my own in the UK in a way, with the very handmade, traditional processes that I use with printmaking, and I've grown this business [Prints by Bay] from nothing, so I was really inspired by all these creative people across the world coming together.'



Find Your Voice, Nicole Purdie / Prints by Bay. Page 22

J.P. Singh Quote

'The global voice is joined in the choir with bottom-up and lateral voices. Aiding these global voices are flows of ideas, peoples, and technologies that produce "sites" of interaction.'

DICE takes an 'ecosystem' approach to nurturing economic inclusion, with a focus on women and girls, young people, disabled people and other often excluded groups. The terms holistic and ecology indicate that the DICE architecture and impact may be greater than a sum of the individual parts.'

HAIDER ALI JAN

CONNECTING

'I started off by reading the paper. It took me quite a while as it's not easy to understand. [...] Afterwards, I wrote down a lot of ideas. So I did four illustrations in a series called Connecting.

The major reference for the first illustration was taken from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel (The Creation of Adam), and it's about trying to build connection with people. The other reference is to traditional Punjabi Bhangra dance, in which you hold your hands high and jump on one foot. I wanted to create a web to create connections between people.



Connecting, Haider Ali Jan. Page 23



People Under the Sky Mantle, Haider Ali Jan. Page 24

PEOPLE UNDER THE SKY MANTLE

In the last one (People under the Sky Mantle) I wanted to highlight the positive aspects of DICE. One reference for this was an old painting of Mother Mary. It had a similar composition – with Mary protecting John the Baptist and others [under her cloak]. There are similar references in other cultures as well.

What I love about this [commission] is that you're so engrossed that things just come out. You can't ignore it – you just have to get it out.'

J.P. Singh Quote

'The overall outcomes of cultural relations are greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue between people and cultures, shaped through engagement and attraction rather than coercion.'

MAARTEN VAN VUUREN

DICE IN DIOGENES

'It's a British room with wood panelling in the Victorian style of the Diogenes Club [of which Sherlock Holmes was a member]. It starts with Sherlock Holmes and Professor J.P. Singh reading a newspaper.

Then there's the image of DICE in a world of chaos, trying to make sense of it all and trying to put everything together, and also move over the globe and spread a message of hope and unification and opening up to other people.

There's an old newspaper from 1902 [*The Illustrated London News*] and an article about the Transvaal War, and there is an illustration of a Brit planning his assault on my people. This is the Anglo-Boer War from the British perspective. And behind the newspaper is the elephant in the room, which is colonialism and the feeling that we have [...] I believe that we all can sit in this room as artists from the world disregarding the elephant – or accepting it and moving forward. [All of the artists who participated in the commission are depicted in the room]. Everybody is building on this puzzle – working on how to rebuild this globe.

The penguins came by and they crashed the globe. [...] The penguins are always there. They actually have the most power. We're a small group trying to create change but I think the real answer – and this is just a philosophical thing – is if you can get the message to the penguins – you know the people who are not necessarily online, the people who are leading their lives outside of our vision and outside of our perspective.

J.P. Singh Quote

'The UK and British Council are held in high regard; this despite the history of colonialism in the very countries in which the British

Council operates – three of which are in DICE (Egypt, Pakistan, South Africa). The history and legacy of colonialism are the elephants in the room with North-South engagements. That the UK is highly regarded evidences the ability of societies to move into trustworthy relationships; that the elephant is still in the room means that there are still difficult negotiations ahead.'



Dice in Diogenes, Maarten van Vuuren. Page 25

ISABELLE GROBLER AND SJAKA S. SEPTEMBIR

BREATH OF HOPE

'What I found so interesting was that we visually interpreted an academic text. [...]. To work with language and then translate it into images breaks down some of the limitations that one sometimes has with language. [...] Even though

we resonated around a single text, we were able to bring culturally our own voice visually, which just breaks down so many layers where we could stumble when we try to just work with words. That's also why I leaned more towards using metaphor and trying to speak to what I read in the text as human value. And I think that if we want to relate culturally, our aim should always be to bring together different views and ways of understanding. So it's not just language. It's not just visual. It's not just dance. It's about trying to create an amalgamation. And this whole project felt like that. No matter what your personality or approach is, you were welcome, you could say what you wanted, and we were critical but not judgemental.



Breath of Hope, I. Grobler and S.S. Septembir. Page 26

'We read the paper which has a lot of interesting things to say. And instead of focusing on one thing, Sjava wrote a story and I illustrated it,

and we tried to fill into the dynamics and illustrate the process. Sjava wrote a short story about a child and a parental figure. The child stands for the future, adults are the present. We looked at breath as a way to understand the notion that we all have a wish that we want to realise in the world. and the structure, the mechanisms and the environment around it.

'So at the beginning we have the child and the mother/parental figure. Then the mother makes a wish. She blows a bubble but it pops against the window. The child responds to the mother or parental figure, and the mother blows another one. And then the child runs and opens the window. And then you have the context: an old building, and you can see that they live at the top. The wish goes out of the window. And there's an old man in one of the windows below, who sees the wish fly by as a symbol of hope – but it pops against the old tree. And then the mother consoles the child, and then she picks him up and they both make a wish. (The bubble passes by the old man's window) and then the old man jumps into action and he uses his cane to bump up this bubble of hope (and prevent it from popping on the tree). Then the bubble is threatened by another structure on top of the building, but there's a small figure playing on the structure and it's another young boy (another form of the future), and he's playing with a paper aeroplane and then he blows and adds to this bubble of hope. And the bubble avoids the structure but now it's threatened by barbed wire which we interpret as a fence, but also as economic exclusion and how difficult it is to overcome that. Then we zoom in on the barbed wire. This is a metaphor. But then the 'invisible hand' saves and swishes the bubble over the building, and then everybody starts participating by blowing this bubble up, so each person contributes. The bubble then creates a massive platform of hope and then the young child climbs up and pops it with the little aeroplane – the aeroplane is also a symbol of movement and going places, and the bubble colours half of the building.'

MARINA TASCA

'What stood out the most for me in reading J.P.'s paper was that it openly discussed the idea of paternalism, which could be seen as a critique of the project, and I appreciate that J.P. brought it to our awareness and opened up a dialogue. The key ideas that I tried to represent in my artwork were really the individual being part of the collective and building the collective. So, how the talents and qualities of each human being can add up to the collective. [...] In order to create an image out of a text that someone else wrote, you really have to be open and connect with the idea of the other person. So I think what I will take out from this experience is this feeling and beautiful exercise in co-creation.'



Breath of Hope, I. Grobler and S.S. Septembir. Page 26

J.P. Singh Quote

'After all, finding a voice and naming the world is also about finding oneself to be human. Oppression is about dehumanization. Feeling human through creativity is, therefore, transformational.'

'This essay narrates the role DICE has played in the shift in development thinking from formulas to flows that can be traced back to the Scottish Enlightenment. Scottish Enlightenment philosophers were thinking of the flows within the human body that work beautifully if allowed to do so – in the words of Adam Smith with the force 'an invisible hand'. They also believed in the importance of the social context or milieu or what was then called moral political economy.'



Marina Tasca. Page 27

J.P. Singh Quote

'But what if those seeds of creativity could be nurtured and encouraged? French graffiti artist, JR, transformed a favela in Brazil into

a giant work of art. What if a city had the ambition to become the world's biggest piece of art, or the world's most colourful city? What if artists were challenged to work with the community with the entire city as their canvas? Buildings could be transformed, not through a handful of competing tags, but from rooftop to pavement. Monuments illuminated by digital artworks, constantly changing as young artists upload their designs. People would travel from across the world to visit and live and work in that place.'

– from British Council report *Global City Challenges: The Creative and Social Economy Solution* (2019) quoted by J.P. Singh.



Karina Tungari. Page 28

KARINA TUNGARI

'What stood out for me in J.P.'s paper was making cultural relations and social enterprise grow. It's about finding your cultural and creative voice globally, finding confidence, and recognising the creativity within yourself, and expanding your network through collaboration, and exchanging dialogue. Finally, perhaps, the outcome is to have greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, reciprocity and also deeper relationships. [...]' As I was reading the paper deeper there were so many aspects that you can interpret visually.

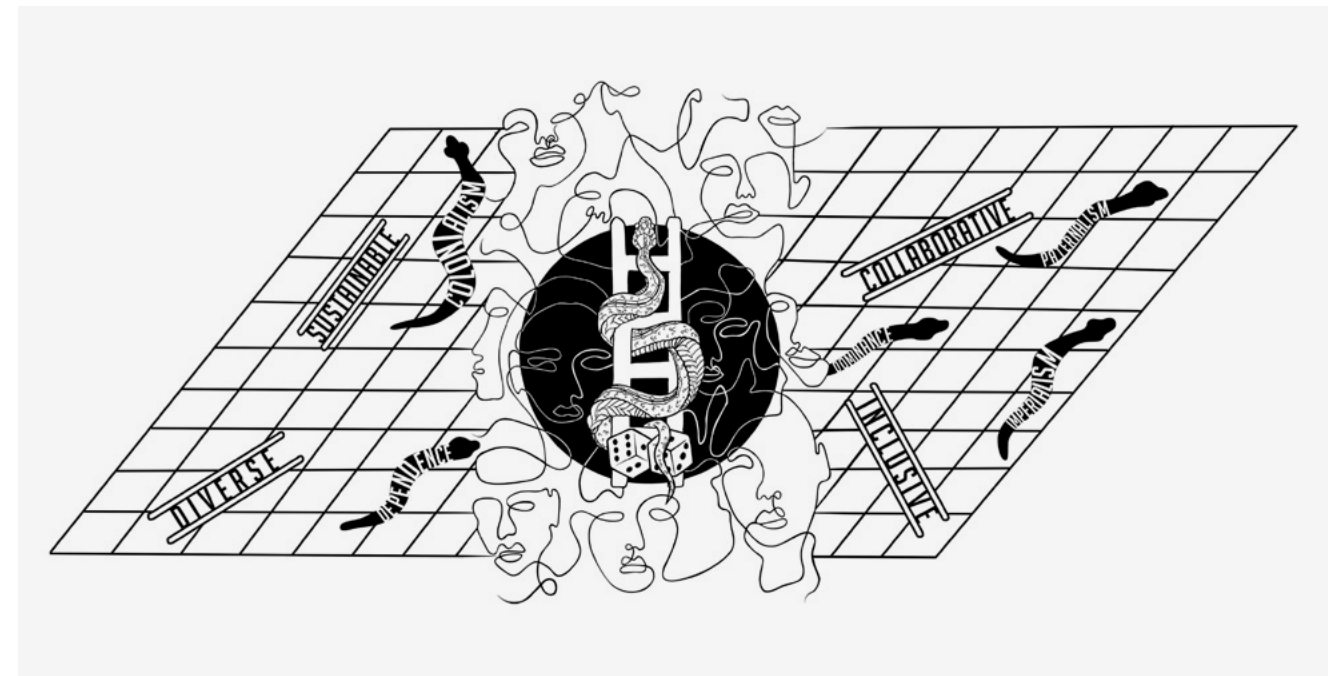
[...] Because of these many aspects, what I tried in my creative process was to summarise these aspects, these complex stories into my illustration through a visual metaphor. I was so grateful to be part of this project with artists from six different countries. It wasn't mainly about the commission to bring the paper to life visually, but to get involved was itself an experience in cultural relations – and this is what DICE aims for.'

J.P. Singh Quote

All development efforts are stories about the world: social science is now according attention to narratives as the glue to collective endeavours. DICE's self-awareness carries over into narrating a story about itself.'



Karina Tungari. Page 29



A Game of Illusion, Anoosha Gul. Page 30

ANOOSHA GUL

A GAME OF ILLUSION

J.P. Singh Quote

'Paulo Freire in his powerful book Pedagogy of the Oppressed notes the process of consciousness awakening that allows the participants to name their world, as opposed to finding it named for them. Colonialism literally named the world for the colonized: Dilli became Delhi, Chattopadhyaya became Chatterjee, Mumbai was Bombay. Participants could not keep their names, let alone trying to name the world. DICE brings in performativity and play into its activities to allow participants to find a consciousness about creativity.'

2

‘THE MOST POWERFUL STORIES THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE BEEN THE ONES TOLD WITH PICTURES. IF WE WANT TO REWRITE ECONOMICS, WE NEED TO REDRAW ITS PICTURES TOO BECAUSE WE STAND LITTLE CHANCE OF TELLING A NEW STORY IF WE STICK TO THE OLD ILLUSTRATIONS.’

Kate Raworth, *Doughnut Economics:
Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*

17



Blossom still, Kazz Morohashi.



Blossom still, Kazz Morohashi.

KAZZ MOROHASHI





Four Figures Passing Seeds, Carolina Gaessler

CAROLINA GAESSLER



CAROLINA GAESSLER



The Oppressed's New World, Carolina Gaessler.

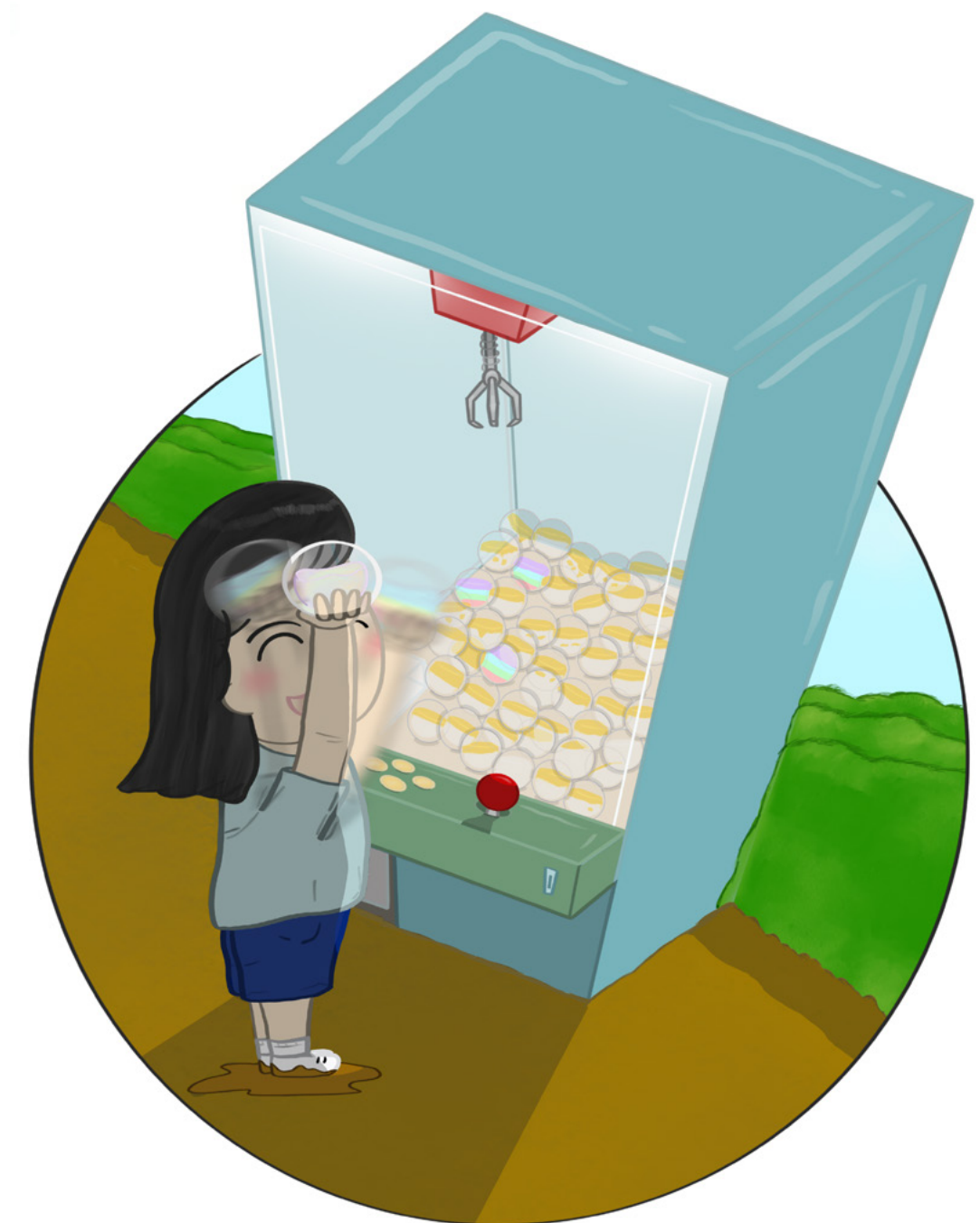




Theatre of Negotiations, Nadine Nour el Din. Page xx



The Elephant in the Room, Nadine Nour el Din.



Claw Machine, Handriyanti Diah Puspitarini



Find Your Voice, Nicole Purdie.

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Connecting, Haider Ali Jan.

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MAARTEN VAN VUUREN





Breath of Hope, I. Grobler and S.S. Septembir.

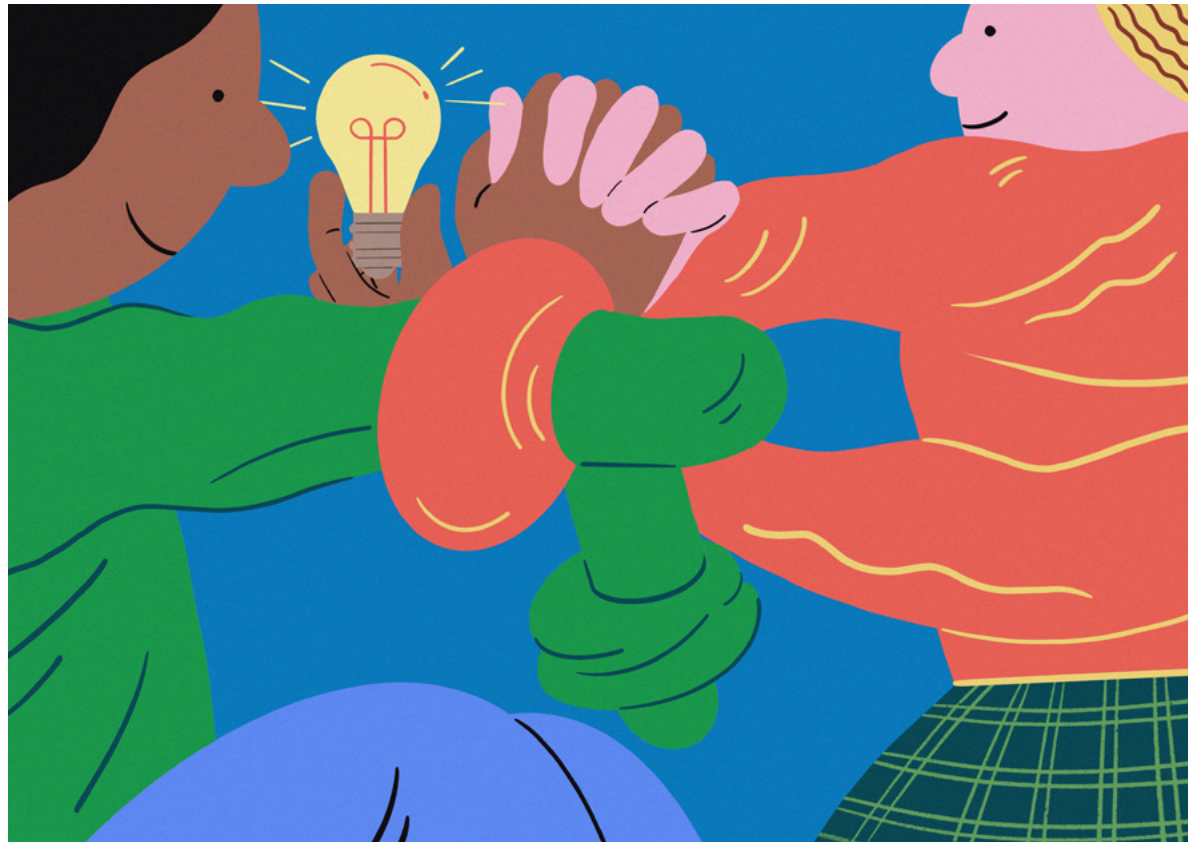
ISABELLE GROBLER AND SJAKA S. SEPTEMBIR



Marina Tasca.

MARINA TASCA



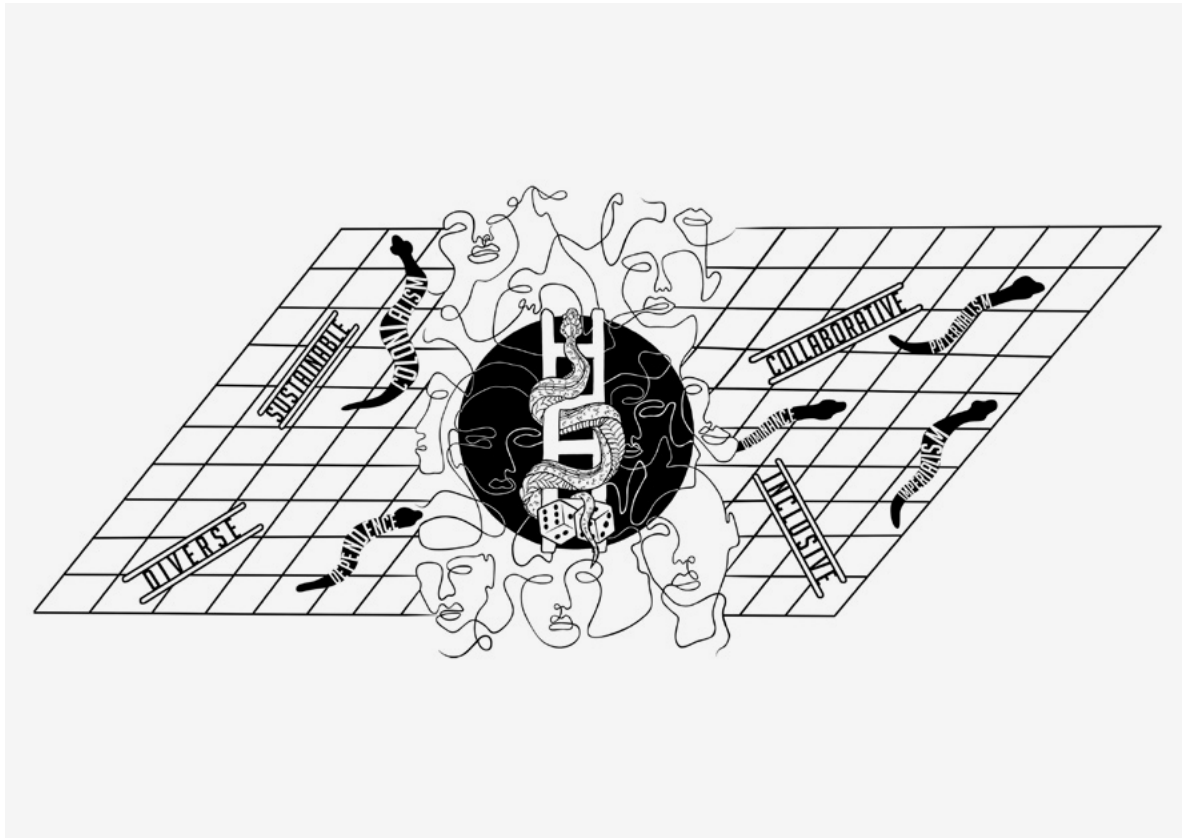


Karina Tungari.



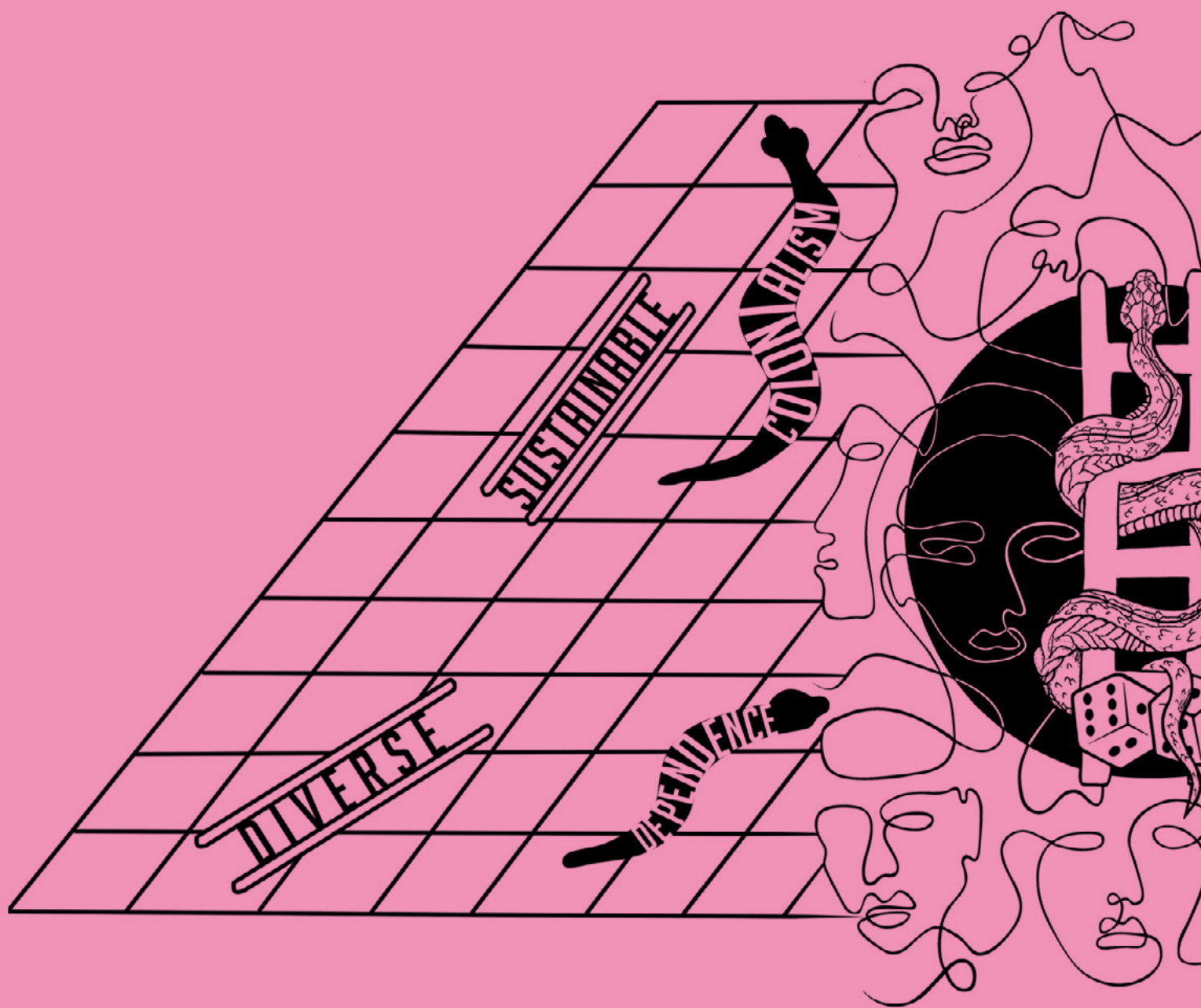
Karina Tungari.





A Game of Illusion, Anoocha Gul.





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