

Abstract

This article introduces and explores issues regarding the question of what constitute valid forms of development knowledge, focusing in particular on the relationship between fictional writing on development and more formal academic and policy-oriented representations about development issues. We challenge certain conventional notions about the nature of knowledge, narrative authority, and representational form, and explore these by comparing and contrasting selected works of recent literary fiction that touch on development issues with academic and policy-related representations of the development process, thereby demonstrating the value of taking literary perspectives on development seriously. Not only are certain works of fiction “better” than academic or policy research in representing central issues relating to development, but they also frequently reach a wider audience and are therefore more influential. Moreover, the line between fact and fiction is a very fine one. The article also provides a list of relevant works of fiction that we hope academics and practitioners will find both useful and enjoyable.

Key words: development knowledge, representation, narrative authority, fiction

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