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Performance as a Means of Participatory Development for Kenyan Community Based Organizations

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PERFORMANCE AS A MEANS OF PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT
FOR KENYAN COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

by

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B.A., University of Texas, 2007

A thesis submitted to the
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Performance as a Means of Participatory Development
for Kenyan Community Based Organizations
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Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
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Performance as a Means of Participatory Development
for Kenyan Community Based Organizations
Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Mara Goldman

ABSTRACT

Participatory development was introduced as an alternative to the top-down development programs that dominated international development processes since World War II. The goal of participatory development was to ensure that the people participating in development programs could have some voice in how the programs were designed and implemented. However, critics of participatory development point out that participatory projects have largely failed to achieve their goal of incorporating participants' voices. Critics maintain that most participatory development projects are simply another form of top-down development placed in a new package. This thesis explores Theatre for Development (TFD) as a field which might offer some techniques to make participatory projects more truly participatory. I selected TFD because it is a field influenced by the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Since Freire's work was one of the early influences on participatory research techniques in the early 1980s, it stands to reason that TFD might offer some techniques to make projects more closely reflect the initial goals of participatory development. Therefore, this thesis explores the question: "Can TFD techniques address the critiques of participatory development methods?" To answer this question, I conducted fieldwork in Kenya during the summer of 2009 to analyze two TFD workshops I facilitated in a low-income settlement near Nairobi and a village in western Kenya. I argue here that theatre is already used by Kenyan community-based organizations to engage in the international development process, and that the act of performance engages participants in a visceral, creative activity which encourages an environment ripe for participation.

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T.S. Eliot wrote “We shall not cease from exploration/ and the end of all our exploring/ will be to arrive where we started/ and know the place for the first time.”¹ Looking back on the explorations of this thesis, I feel I have arrived where I started. Theatre has been a constant passion throughout my life, and I’m honored to have the chance to share this interest with others. I’m privileged to have so many people in my life who encouraged me in this interest, beginning with my family. My parents, Don and Betty Wade, and my sister, Kristyn, encouraged me to pursue my passions and curiosities since childhood, and continue to support me at every step of this thesis process. You taught me to have faith in my abilities, and this thesis is for you.

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¹ “Little Gidding,” *The Four Quartets*

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Introduction

“If the participatory ideal could, in simple terms, be redefined by such qualities as attention, sensitivity, goodness or compassion, and supported by such regenerative acts as learning, relating and listening, are not these qualities and gifts precisely impossible to co-opt?”

— *Majid Rahnema*²

Participatory development was initially a movement to give the participants of international development projects more voice in the planning process. In recent years, however, participatory development has been critiqued for falling far short of its goal (Mosse, 1994; Ribot, 1996; Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Despite the movement’s good intentions, critics note that participatory development is just another top-down, expert-driven development project which does not allow participants to have real decision making power or ownership over the process (Rahnema 1992a, Henkel and Stirrat, 2001). Given these shortcomings, those who believe in the philosophy that people should have control over the changes in their lives hold some hope that the international development process can still be improved in some way.

In this thesis, I explore theatre for development (TFD) as a set of techniques which might improve projects which are designed to be planned in a collaborative manner with all involved. I chose to explore TFD because although participatory development and TFD were two fields that were both influenced in their formative years by the pedagogy of Paulo Freire and stand to have much in common with each other, it appears that the two fields currently have little information shared between the two. Both could benefit from the strengths of the other (McCarthy, 2004). As Robert Chambers, founder of early participatory research techniques, said in the forward to

² 1992, 129

McCarthy's book (2004), "If we are serious about empowerment in development, we have to go beyond rhetoric and words to realities and actions, and beyond the brain to the heart. Theatre has so much to contribute here" (vi). This thesis is an attempt to bridge the gap between these two fields, and explore what techniques TFD might lend to development, and how participatory development might inform TFD projects.

Therefore this thesis explores the question "Can Theatre for Development (TFD) address the critiques of participatory development methods?" In this thesis I will show that through theatrical performance participants are able to create a fictional space which can be used by a community-based organization (CBO) to address several different scales of interaction with the international development process. At the smallest scale, performance may be used to develop confidence speaking in front of others, which could lead to more confidence in a person's ability to vocalize desires offstage as well as onstage. At the largest scale, I illustrate that a CBO may have used the performance of a play in Mathare as a way of engaging with representatives from international institutions in Nairobi, and thus wield some power over those who traditionally have the most decision-making power in the international development process. In addition to my use of scale as a lens of analysis, this work uses the geographic theme of place to demonstrate that, in my research, "place" very much influenced participants' responses to the workshops, as I found that theatre is already commonly used by many Kenyan CBOs to talk about development issues.

To answer my research question, I analyzed participant responses to two TFD workshops I facilitated in Kenya during the summer of 2009. One was a four-day workshop in the low-income settlement of Mathare, outside of Nairobi. The other was a two-day workshop in the village of Segeru in western Kenya. I facilitated both workshops with the cooperation of a

community-based organization in Mathare, the Mathare Youth Talented Organization (MYTO). Through qualitative research methods such as ethnographic participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and while acting as both facilitator and researcher, I explored in what ways theatrical performance might open up new spaces of engagement with the international development process. To do this, I used the pedagogy of Paulo Freire as a framework to define an ideal participatory process and analyze how workshop participants' responses reflected elements of my definition of ideal participation. The concept of performance is central to my thesis, and here I define it as an act of creative, momentary self-transformation in front of an audience. Thus, this thesis explores the unique opportunities for dialogue that are provided by a more creative, interactive process which is lacking in most participatory development techniques.

Outline of the thesis

In chapter one, I present my process first by explaining the emergence of participatory development, five common critiques of participatory projects, and the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. I conclude the chapter with three characteristics that might define "ideal" participation, as supported by the philosophy of Freire. The second chapter presents TFD as a technique also based on Freire's pedagogy. I explain the history and applications of TFD, as well as some TFD techniques in detail. In the third chapter, I explain the details of my study location, the TFD workshops, and my methodology.

Chapters four and five present my research analysis. In chapter four, I refer back to the three characteristics of "ideal" participation presented in chapter one in order to examine how the TFD workshop did or did not promote each of the three criterion. Chapter five takes a different approach to the research question by examining how the participants themselves might have

understood the workshop in the terms of words such as “development,” “participation,” “theatre,” and “performance.” This chapter is an effort to examine the workshop through the experiences of the participants rather than through the lens of the literature. I conclude with a discussion of the research results and propose future avenues of research on the participatory development process.

It is my hope that readers interested in facilitating TFD workshops may learn from my mistakes and successes as a TFD facilitator. It is also my hope that those who have no experience with theatre may here begin to imagine the dangers and possibilities of incorporating the creative arts into the field of international development in which such approaches are mostly absent. Yet is also my hope that, as the field of international development continues to evolve and transform itself, both those familiar with the creative arts and those who are not might enter into a dialogue in which both the theatre facilitator and the development practitioner might learn from each other about the realities, shortcomings, and possibilities inherent in both approaches to the development process.

Chapter One: Freire's Philosophy as the Foundation of Participatory Development

“What we should not do is abandon the notion
that people should engage in the planning of their own lives.”
—*Susan Vincent*³

1. Introduction

Participatory development, once hailed as the panacea for international development failures, is now criticized for continuing to manipulate the very populations they were designed to include (Mosse, 1994; Ribot, 1996; Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Many participatory development projects have fallen short of their goal of empowering participating communities by giving them decision-making power and significant input on development projects. Despite the many criticisms of participatory development that have emerged since the mid-1990s, it is still difficult to abandon participatory development altogether. There still remains something promising about the philosophy that communities should have control over the way in which their lives do or do not develop. It seems that there is a persistent potential found in participatory development for those in the international development field who believe that development, when defined and controlled by the communities themselves, can be a force for positive social change.

This chapter presents the philosophy of Paulo Freire as the foundation upon which any truly empowering participatory development project can be built. In fact, Freire's critical pedagogy was the philosophical foundation of an early research technique of participatory development: activist participatory research. The first section describes activist participatory research and the emergence of the participatory development field. The second section describes the beliefs and principles of Freire's critical pedagogy, to better understand the philosophical

³ 2004, 119

foundations of participatory development. The fourth section demonstrates that recently many participatory development projects are critiqued for not giving participants a voice in the development process. In the final section, I argue that participatory projects have fallen short of their goals because they have not successfully applied Freire's philosophy. The next chapter of this thesis promotes Theatre for Development (TFD) as the set of participatory development techniques that best puts Freire into practice. In effect, the argument presented in this chapter is the first step in presenting TFD as a participatory development methodology which might provide the much-needed reforms in the participatory development field.

2. Development and the Emergence of “Participation”

In Harry Truman's inaugural address on January 20th, 1949, he invited the world to join him in a new endeavor: the quest of helping “underdeveloped” countries. “The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing” (Truman, 1949). In this speech, Truman created a new mandate for economically wealthy countries to help those countries with struggling economies to pursue “development.” Before Truman's speech, “development” generally referred to Marx's concept of development as a historical process that progresses much as the natural process of evolution (Esteva, 1992). This draws upon the older, biological concept of development as a concept of transformation (Ibid). Therefore, before Truman's speech, “development” in both biology and the social sciences referred to a natural, linear evolution from the less perfect towards the more perfect, towards an ideal. It was Truman's speech that gave “development” a colonial connotation and suggested that it was a social, moral duty for economically advanced countries to help the less developed along in their natural, linear movement towards increased national wealth. These post-WWII origins of

development were based upon the idea that development meant simply *economic growth*. Economists concluded that the best method of development was increasing levels of industrialization to yield a larger Gross National Product (GNP).

Development programs focused on economic improvement continued to dominate international development policy through the mid 1980s and early 1990s, that is, till the general failure of structural adjustment programs (SAPs). SAPs were conditions accepted by developing countries in exchange for loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that would help relieve the countries' debt after the oil crisis of the mid 1980s (Willis, 2005). The conditions of the SAPs, however, were based on neoliberal economic policies and in many cases, the economic restructuring programs such as devaluation of the currency and the removal of trade tariffs worsened the economies that the IMF ostensibly intended to improve (Ibid).

Thus, the 1990s saw attempts at examining the many dimensions of poverty and addressing them through factors other than economic growth. The World Bank and the IMF began to search for new development alternatives and focused on a "New Policy Agenda." This new agenda, while still founded on neo-liberal economics, sought a bottom-up approach using NGOs to create small-scale projects. In addition to the recognition of the need to include social indicators of development, international concern for environmental degradation was increasing. This led many to question the impacts of development projects on the environment, and to wonder at what expense natural resource sustainability could be compromised for immediate economic improvement. It was during this decade that the concept of *sustainable development* was born, a concept linking both concerns for the environment and for people. It was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission as "development that meets the needs of the present

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (in Willis, 2005, 159).

In pursuit of “sustainable development” and in conjunction with a more neoliberal approach to economics and politics which distrusted state control, the World Bank began to reject large, national infrastructure projects in favor of small-scale, local projects that were posited as being more environmentally friendly. In addition, international institutions began to rely on local NGOs and the private sector rather than on state control and foreign development practitioners to orchestrate projects (Willis, 2005).

This decade also saw the emergence of post-development thinkers such as Gustavo Esteva and Arturo Escobar. Esteva (1992) suggested that the concept of international development had failed and was dead; what could emerge now were new forms of development that rejected the idea that anyone was even “underdeveloped” in the first place and that “scarcity” was something to be avoided, since it was a construct of capitalism. This line of thinking promoted the idea that there was no one ideal towards which all societies must progress. Each community could and should define what development means to them. As Esteva wrote, “Neither in nature nor in society does there exist an evolution that imposes transformation towards ‘ever more perfect forms’ as a law. Reality is open to surprise” (1992, 23).

Similarly, Escobar (1992) critiqued the way development programs presented themselves as rational, scientific programs free of political bias and couched in terms of “planning.” Development strategies crafted in the name of social planning, Escobar writes, have objectified the populations they service. Instead, as with Esteva, Escobar suggests that instead of development alternatives, such as new programs based on the same neo-liberal programs, we

instead need to search for alternatives to development (1995) in the acts of resistance on the local level.

Others have suggested that, instead of scrapping the idea of development altogether, it should be reframed as a political enterprise to better serve the interests of those affected by development projects. For example, McKinnon (2007) draws upon Laclau's (1996) concept of hegemony as a process in which competing ideologies endlessly compete against each other. Hegemony is never absolutely fixed and dominant, and there are no "counter hegemonic" movements either but simply endlessly proliferating hegemonies which push against each other. Each hegemony draws followers together around a shared political identity, which Laclau calls the "empty signifier." It is an empty signifier because more important than what it stands for is the fact that it stands for a special something, some identity which can capture imagination and mobilize people. Development, then, may be thought of as a movement rallying around an empty signifier: "a fuzzy ideology that holds up values of justice, rights, and global equality as its core" (McKinnon, 2007, 779). Therefore, McKinnon pushes us to see development not as a universal good but as a field for endless social struggle and political engagement. In conclusion, it is during this movement towards more culturally specific forms of development, adopted both by neoliberal institutions and critical post-development theorists, that participatory development emerged.

3. Elements of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Development

Interest in more participatory forms of development emerged out of the acknowledgement of the failures of top-down approaches. Particularly influential in the push for development reform was Robert Chambers, whose analysis of rural development programs in East Africa in the early 1970s cried for reform in four main areas: a shift from an urban bias to

rural; from a focus on plan formulation to implementation; from capital projects to recurrent resource management; and from authoritarian administration to a more decentralized, democratic management of field staff (Chambers, 1974; in Chambers, 2005). In addition, Chambers criticized the negative attitudes of development professionals towards the knowledges and practices of the people they interviewed, instead calling for evaluation techniques that would involve reciprocal learning and sharing of ideas (1994a). This new kind of “participatory” development advocated by Chambers and others (Uphoff, 1985) sought to make “people” central in the development planning process over which they previously had little or no influence. This recognition of local people’s knowledge, perspectives, and priorities was seen as a departure from the donor-driven model of development used previously. These programs were presented as being more sustainable, relevant, and empowering (Cooke and Kothari, 2001).

Chambers presented participatory rural appraisal (PRA) as a methodology which could make the data extraction stage of development programs more participatory. Chambers defined PRA as “a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act” (1994a, 953). PRA was based on an earlier survey technique known as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). RRA was developed in the 1970s as an answer to three main problems with current poverty appraisal techniques: First, because development professions mostly visited cities or semi-urban areas, interviewed mostly men, and visited during the seasons with better weather, there was the belief that the worst poverty and deprivation was not assessed. Secondly, the questionnaire surveys were extremely time-consuming for both the interviewer and interviewee. Finally, there was an emergence of interest in accessing non-western modes of thinking through non-western techniques (Chambers, 1994a).

“Participation” was used in RRA handbooks starting in the mid-1980s, influenced by the emergence of the term in World Bank documents such as *Putting People First* by Michael Cernea (1985, second edition 1991). In 1988, the National Environment Secretariat and Clark University produced a handbook which first described an RRA as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Chambers, 1994a). Since then, PRA emerged as a methodology distinct from RRA by putting special emphasis on four distinct areas (Chambers, 1994b): First, PRA emphasized that the participants themselves facilitate the investigation and the analysis while the investigator acts only as a catalyst in the process. Secondly, PRA required facilitators to continuously and critically examine their own behavior and attitudes during the research process. Third, PRA practitioners were instructed to not rely on codified manuals but to always “use their best judgment at all times.” Finally, facilitators were encouraged to share information gathered from the field with the participants as well as other practitioners and NGOs.

Besides RRA, Chambers says that PRA was influenced by three other development techniques which emerged since the late 1970s and had not been picked up in mainstream development practice: activist participatory research, agroecosystem analysis, and applied anthropology (1994a). Agroecosystem analysis was developed in 1978 at University of Chian Mai Thailand to analyze agricultural ecological systems. Techniques associated with it are transects (walks through rural communities and noted observations from informal interviews), informal mapping, and diagrams such as seasonal calendars and flow charts. Second, applied anthropology developed in the 1980s and promoted the use of ethnographic methods to better understand and communicate with participants. Applied anthropology promoted the idea of field learning as flexible art rather than rigid science, and the value of field residence for development.

However, it is the influence of activist participatory research on the development of PRA and the concept of participation more generally which is most important to demonstrate for the purposes of this thesis. Activist participatory research uses dialogue and participatory methods to encourage self-reflection and empower participants to act on the changes they desire to see in their own lives. These methods were based on the philosophy of Freire (which will be explained in the next section) and were employed in the adult education movement. Some of the first institutions to promote participatory research were the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (1982) and the Highland Center in rural Appalachia (1991) (Chambers, 1994a). Techniques used in activist participatory research are collective research through meetings, sociodramas, and recording oral histories—mostly to encourage and aid participants who want to take up political action on the issues they desire.

PRA, presented by Chambers as a methodology to make the process of development planning more participatory, helped encourage interest in the concept of “participation” in general. “Participation” by the mid-1990s grew into the concept of “participatory development” favored by international development institutions and even governments (Rahnema, 1992a; Henkel and Stirrat, 2001; Mosse, 2001). Rahnema (1992a) gives several reasons why the concept of participation spread like wildfire in the development field, such as the realization by governments and institutions that participation would make projects more economically efficient, that participation would be a good fund-raising slogan, and that participation could help the private sector become more directly involved in the development business.

As participation became a mainstream development concept, Chambers foresaw that in practice, what could be considered “participation” could vary widely and sometimes not include the participants’ empowerment. He wrote, “Moreover, as PRA becomes increasingly

fashionable, some may be tempted to label and re-label their work as PRA when it is still extractive rather than participatory, and when their behavior and attitudes are still dominant, top-down, and unchanged” (1994a, 959). Therefore, Chambers defined participation as a ladder in which many different kinds of participation exist along a spectrum in which the level of empowerment increases as one moves up the ladder. There are essentially eight levels on the ladder of participation:

Figure 1.1 The Ladder of Participation *Sources:* Chambers, 2005, 108 and Schwarz, 2009, 60.

- 1.) *Totalitarian:* The outsider takes on the role of dictator and uses the local community’s participation only to further their own political power. Participation in this sense does not involve free will on the part of the participants. They unwillingly partake in activities.
- 2.) *Nominal:* The outsider is a manipulator and co-opts participation as a means of legitimating the outsider’s own plans. The local population is coerced into partaking in activities.
- 3.) *Extractive:* The outsider takes on the role of the researcher or planner and works with the local community to extract knowledge for planning or research purposes.
- 4.) *Induced:* The outsider is the employer who offers employment as a means of participation. The local community has incentive to participate for material gains.
- 5.) *Consultative/Instrumental:* The outsider gets input from the local community on project planning simply to improve effectiveness or efficiency. The project is still under the ultimate control of the outsider.
- 6.) *Partnership:* The outsider is a co-equal partner who shares responsibility/ownership of the project with the community, usually through legal contracts and stipulations. The local community has decision-making power.
- 7.) *Transformative:* The outsider is the facilitator/catalyst whose work aids the local community in creating/expanding their own development programs.

The ladder can be used as an analytical as well as a descriptive tool. It can be used to reveal the fact that not all projects which are labeled “participatory” imply the same level of empowerment. Furthermore, Chambers warned that “ladders of participation are not enough”

(2005, 107). The danger of the ladder is the assumption that more participation is always better. For example, a spontaneous “self-help” project which does not take into account gender equity will fall high on the ladder of participation but will mask injustices.

The ladder may be generally divided between active and passive participation. Passive participation is defined as including local communities in the benefits of a development project (Goldman, 2003). Active participation, on the other hand, incorporates communities in the ownership and management of development projects (Ibid). Steps 1-5 may be defined as passive participation, while steps 6-8 may be defined as active participation. As the next section discusses, Freire’s pedagogy is one that promotes active rather than passive participation—which critics say that many participatory development projects have failed to do.

4. Paolo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

In the previous section, it was explained that activist participatory research influenced the development of more participatory research techniques such as PRA. Activist participatory research practices were inspired by Freire’s critical pedagogy. Therefore, this section explains the beliefs and principles central to Freire’s critical pedagogy to better illuminate the central philosophical foundations of participatory development, which, as the next section in this chapter demonstrates, has not been reflected in many participatory development projects.

Paolo Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher whose ideas in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) laid out his theory about education as a practice of liberation. As an educator working in adult literacy programs in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s, Freire witnessed first-hand how the power of critical thinking and reading (“critical literacy”) liberated his students to examine their lives in new, transformative ways. He was influenced by the work of psychotherapists such as Franz Fanon and Erich Fromm and such philosophical currents as

phenomenology, existentialism, Christian personalism, humanist Marxism, and Hegelianism (O’Cadiz and Torres, 1994). In addition, Freire was strongly influenced by the liberation theology movement which was also ongoing in Latin America in the late 1960s. Liberation theology draws on Christian theology to argue that people of all social classes should act in order to end oppressive social structures. Gustavo Gutiérrez, often called the father of the movement, suggested that God is revealed only in the context of the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, and therefore society meets its fullest potential by liberating the marginalized (Stenberg, 2006).

Freire’s synthesis of his own personal work and current philosophical trends led to his own theory of liberation education, or, critical pedagogy, which has since influenced countless educational projects, ranging from grassroots literary programs to national educational politics (Glass, 2001). Long before his death on May 2nd, 1997, Freire had gained a “mythic stature” among progressive educators, social workers, and scholars who believed in Freire’s vision of how education can be a vehicle for social and economic transformation (McLaren, 1999). Fresh analyses of his works are still actively produced, which situate his critical pedagogy as the progenitor of a new domain of educational inquiry and practice (Glass, 2001). In short, “Freire’s legacy is unprecedented as an educator” (Glass, 2001, 15).

The impact of Freire’s work stemmed from his pioneering theory that the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized can and should be encouraged to analyze their position in society, reflect on the economic, cultural, and political structures that put them there, and assess how their own strengths and resources can be utilized to move them out of their oppressed status. According to Freire, the first step in liberation is recognizing that praxis, or, “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970, 36), is a central defining feature of human life. Through reflection, Freire encouraged people to realize their own “historicity,”

which is the realization that history and culture make people even while people are making that very history and culture (Glass, 2001). Once people realize that their situation is not an unchangeable, concrete reality but one created by historical and cultural influences, they will hopefully realize that their lives present situations that they have the power to influence and change. “They see that life (including themselves) could be different, and the more clearly they discern *why* things (and themselves) are as they are and *how* they could be otherwise, the more effective their interventions can be to enable greater self and community-realization” (Glass, 2001, 18, emphasis in original).

Freire refers to this process of reflection as *conscientisation*. This process of struggling for freedom, Freire thought, was not only an optional human endeavor; it was fundamental to the experience of being human (Freire, 1994, 97). Furthermore, it was the role of *education* to facilitate such a process. He labeled education which does this as “liberation education,” or, “critical pedagogy.” Critical pedagogy is defined as “a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community” (McLaren, 1999, 51). Educators and facilitators can encourage *conscientisation* through promoting learning through dialogue. Rather than following a “banking model of education,” in which the educator deposits ideas into the minds of students, Freire advocated that knowledge should be founded on dialogue. In this process, knowledge is co-created. Since it is not prefabricated by those in power, the dialogue process respects the everyday language and experiences of the students. Because it seemed to Freire that the dreams of the poor were always dreamt by distant others, the process of dialogue allowed them to articulate their own goals, using their own vocabulary, and situate them in their everyday realities (McLaren, 1999). This

kind of knowledge “reaches behind the way things are to grasp the way things came to be” (Glass, 2001).

Conscientisation leads to the second step, which is the realization that the situations of the oppressed are not individualistic experiences but part of a collective experience shared by those who are also oppressed. This, Freire hoped, would develop a “critical consciousness” of their formation as a subaltern class. This would allow them to recognize the dehumanizing systems within society and find their own resources to challenge them. Schools and other educational spaces were, for Freire, a place to practice the kinds of open communication and uncoerced interaction that is necessary in democratic societies (McLaren, 1999). However, Freire did not see himself as a political organizer and did not elaborate on the specific ways in which such democratic tendencies might spread out from the schoolroom to restructure political institutions. When asked if he supported the use of violence by the oppressed, he deferred to questioning the unrelenting violence of the oppressors (Glass, 2001). However, Freire did note that one of the tasks of liberation education was to make the oppressed aware that their weakness could turn into a strength capable of converting the oppressor’s strength into weakness, (Freire, 1994), which Glass (2001) noted was exactly the strategy of militant nonviolence. Glass promotes the idea that Freire would have advocated militant nonviolence as a political strategy.

In addition to his not being explicit about political strategies, others have noted additional shortcomings of Freire’s philosophy. For one, educators have complained that Freire did not outline specific methods for incorporating his philosophy into the classroom (McLaren, 1999). However, Aronowitz (1993) pointed out that Freire’s work was not meant to improve cognitive learning or improve self-esteem but to liberate the oppressed as historical subjects (in Glass, 2001). In addition, others have noticed that Freire’s theory does not recognize the possibilities of

contradiction in the experience of being oppressed because people often have multiple identities; for example, someone might be oppressed because of their sexual identity and not because of their race or class. Finally, others have noted that the process of self-knowledge and the knowledge of the self as seen by others is an incredibly complicated psychoanalytic task which cannot easily be accomplished or measured and evaluated (Ibid).

Despite these shortcomings, educators have come up with their own ways to incorporate Freire's philosophies into their educational programs. The Movement of Literacy Training for Youths and Adults, or Movimento de Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos (MOVA), a Brazilian NGO started by Freire himself while he was Secretary of Education, helped start the Interdisciplinary Project (InterProject), a curriculum reform project for schools. The InterProject helped construct locally relevant curriculum that also related to larger community and societal problems (O'Cadiz and Torres, 1994). O'Cadiz and Torres (1994) observed the use of Freire's philosophy in a literacy class run by MOVA. The facilitator first led a discussion about a topic relevant to the students (in this case, how the favela was formed), and wrote a series of words created by the dialogue on the board. Next, the facilitator asked certain students to read these words and then construct short sentences or compositions using the phrases on the board. The students then read their compositions aloud and the facilitator wrote some words from their compositions on the board. A new discussion arose from these words on the board, and the entire process started over again.

In conclusion, Freire's critical pedagogy presented a new way of thinking about how the oppressed and the marginalized can realize that their position in society is a constructed one, and therefore, one that can be deconstructed. Central to this pedagogy is the idea that these analytical processes should be discovered by the individual; such processes cannot be taught. If we go back

to Chamber's Ladder of Participation in Figure 1.1, Freire's pedagogy would most likely fall under the 7th step, "Transformative," whereby the facilitator works to aid the participants in creating or expanding their own development programs. This falls into the category of "active participation." However, as the next section will show, critiques of participatory development projects show that such projects often do not promote active participation, and therefore are not aligned with Freire's pedagogy or the foundational philosophy of participatory development.

5. Critiques of Participatory Development

The concept of "participation" has been critiqued ever since participatory development entered mainstream development programs. This section summarizes five main critiques of participatory development, and while this summary is not meant to be exhaustive, it will highlight the most commonly referenced arguments, which will again be addressed in the final section of this chapter.

First, one of the main critiques is that participatory projects do not allow participants to truly have decision-making power. The notion of empowerment affiliated with participatory methods was only meant to help development regain legitimacy in light of the dissatisfaction with top-down development failures (Rahnema, 1992a). Critics note that "empowerment" was just a fashionable label and participatory development projects are, in practice, just another top-down model of development (Mosse, 1994; Ribot, 1996; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hildyard et al, 2001; Goodwin, 1998). Goodwin (1998) noted that community-based wildlife conservation organizations were also adopting participation as a management tool to achieve a predetermined product. For example, Walley (2004) observed that the Tanzanian government officials running a community-based marine park near Zanzibar were also co-opting the term "participation" to serve their own purposes. Officials were able to keep tight control over park processes by hiding

behind bureaucratic red tape, such as refusing to translate park documents into Kiswahili or refusing to issue fishing permits to local fishermen. In these cases, institutional expectations and goals in pre-planned projects used participation as a means of getting consent rather than giving the communities decision-making power. In addition, demonstrating that the project was “participatory” was a good way to attract donors (Rahnema, 1992a; Mosse, 2001). These projects could get away with such passive participation by creating minimal requirements for “participation.” For example, in some participatory development projects, attendance at a PRA planning meeting is considered “participation” (Mosse, 1994). Goodwin (1998) explains that a more effective form of participation would focus on participation as a process in which the objectives are not pre-determined.

Secondly, a commonly-cited explanation for why participatory development does not encourage decision-making power is because the techniques themselves are not designed to encourage active participation. Mosse (1994) found that the PRA public meetings created an environment in which dominant views were exaggerated and minority or deviant views were suppressed. This is because communities often demonstrate the most solidarity when in communication with an outsider, using statements like “we think” or “we believe” which might overshadow conflicting group interests. In addition, Mosse (1994) goes on to note that the public nature of the PRA meetings present many obstacles for women’s participation. It might not be culturally acceptable for women to voice their opinions in the public sphere. In addition, PRA meetings often take place at a time and location which conflicts with women’s busy work schedules, as they often must balance work outside and inside of the home. Secondly, even the informal manners of discussion promoted by participatory development might not ally local communities’ fears and suspicions about development, especially if the community has had a

tumultuous experience with development in the past. Mosse documented one woman's suspicions about informal discussions: "today you are sitting on the ground, tomorrow you will be sitting on our heads" (1994, 505). Finally, Mosse (1994) notes that, as a set of techniques, PRA can give the false impression to local communities that the only relevant planning knowledge comes in the form of diagrams, charts, and completed PRA exercises. Hailey (2001) notes from observations of successful South Asian NGOs that closeness to communities comes not from following established, formulaic methods but through long-term efforts by NGO staff to build personal relationships with community members—something impossible to accomplish by following a PRA handbook.

Third, a central reason why PRA techniques fall short of accessing local knowledge is because the endeavor of trying to access such knowledge is, inherently, a complicated task which often carries implications about power dynamics between investigator and the local community. Many have argued that knowledge is not a homogenous source that will yield the same result regardless of who is interviewed. There exists much "knowledge" which is not codified in a form that is easy to access as 'information' but is constantly utilized and transformed by active agents (Goldman, 2003; Nadasy 2003). Moreover, the knowledge that *is* codified and which is most accessible to outsiders is most likely to be an area of knowledge which, at least when expressed publicly, is associated with authority (Mosse, 1994; Kothari, 2001). So by accepting these codified forms of knowledge, PRA is in danger of ignoring the unequal power relations within the community and thereby affirming the agenda of the elites and most powerful actors. PRA also needs to be aware that much knowledge is non-linguistic (Bloch, 1991). Furthermore, Mosse (2001) notes that local communities, through the PRA process, learn the kinds of knowledge that

investigators seek and thus acquire a new “planning knowledge.” Communities can then manipulate the kinds of information given to researchers.

Fourth, there are also those who critique the concept of empowerment itself as a goal of development. Henkel and Stirrat (2001) argue that what participatory development claims is “empowerment” is actually subjection. In particular, they critique the visual techniques of PRA (such as community mapping and diagramming) which, they argue, favors Western-style frameworks over local ones and thus overlooks the pre-existing cultural contexts and local meanings attached to specific locations on the map. “PRA, as it were, provides the grid: the local people can fill it in as they like” (182). Rahnema (1992a) recognizes a philosophical flaw in the concept of empowerment: When someone wants to empower another, they assume that the person is lacking power or does not have the right kind of power. This, Rahnema argues, is false. He points out that “oppressed” populations often do demonstrate their power in forms of resistance that often go unnoticed by those from the developed world. “It is constituted by the thousands of centers of informal networks of resistance which ordinary people put up, often quietly, against the prevailing power apparatuses” (123). These authors call for increased attention to the different forms of power that exist among those thought to be “oppressed.”

Finally, just as critics call for participatory development facilitators to be more critical of the process of empowerment, others remind them to be more self-reflective of their role in the development process. Mosse (1994) reminds us that the development process is deeply impacted by the local community’s perceptions which are influenced by the history of development in the area. Past development failures will cause a community to demonstrate deep suspicion or hostility towards development. In addition, development (and conservation) projects must tailor benefits to match community needs. Walley (2004) reminds us that some communities will not

appreciate monetary benefits of development projects as much as items that could be traded or used in the daily reproduction of life. Finally, the recent popularity of ethnographic techniques in research on development projects emphasizes the importance of being self-aware of one's presence in a community. As Stacey (1991) wrote, "fieldwork represents an intrusion and intervention into a system of relationships, a system of relations that the researcher is far freer than the researched to leave" (113).

In conclusion, the five main critiques of participatory development listed here call for more attention to be given to a local community's knowledge, power structures, culture, history, and desires. The next section demonstrates the philosophical similarities between the goals of Freire's critical pedagogy and the critics of participatory development.

6. The Importance of Freire's Philosophy in Participatory Development Projects

Freire's pedagogy influenced activist participatory research, which was one of the fields informing early participatory research techniques, as discussed earlier. Therefore, this thesis proposes that a response to the current critiques of participatory development might be a return to the beliefs and principles established in the formative years of the field which drew from Freire. Freire's critical pedagogy encouraged the marginalized to analyze their position in society and reflect on the economic, cultural, historical, and political structures that might have put them there. Freire referred to this analytical process as praxis, or, "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, 36). Praxis then allows the thinker to realize what strengths and resources they can draw from in order to change their position in society. Therefore, Freire places similar importance on the same issues that the critics of participatory development do, namely a community's knowledge, power structures, culture, history, and desires. Freire promotes the idea that the marginalized can discover and articulate the same

elements that the critics say participatory development projects should become aware of. To more clearly show how incorporating Freire's philosophy is necessary to reform participatory development as critics desire, I compiled a list of three characteristics that define ideal participation and demonstrate how Freire's pedagogy upholds each of them. These three characteristics are central to the thesis and will be referred to throughout the work.

1.) *Participation should build dialogue through a cooperative process.*

A central concept in participatory development is that knowledge should be produced and exchanged in a conversation, not in a one-way flood of information from an expert. From one of Chambers' first articles promoting more participation in development, written in 1974, the objectives of participation included "making known local wishes, generating development ideas, providing local knowledge, etc" (in 2005, 87). The concept of dialogue is utilized often in the current work on indigenous knowledge which emphasizes a conversation and exchange of ideas between science and local knowledge (Goldman, 2007). As mentioned above, critics such as Mosse (1994) and Hailey (2001) point out that PRA techniques such as mapping, diagramming, and informal interviews often produce knowledge not in a collaborative manner but in a way that prioritizes Western frameworks. These techniques only succeed in finding the kinds of answers investigators are looking for (Mosse, 1994). Finally, critics noted that any assumption that it is easy to access local knowledge is blind to the complexities, cultural nuances, and power structures that go into the creation and expression of knowledge (Mosse, 1994; Kothari, 2001; Goldman, 2003; Nadasy, 2003).

As expressed in the previous section, Freire promoted the use of dialogue to develop knowledge collaboratively. "It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about

their view and ours” (1970, 85). While Freire does not outline how to evaluate when “true” dialogue occurs, he does maintain that if an educator does not try to promote dialogue at all, education will be a one-way conduit of information. Therefore, a project that does not try to encourage dialogue will only be another model of “banking education.” Freire thought that it would be a contradiction in terms if true dialogue—founded on “love, humility, and faith”— did *not* produce a climate of mutual trust, which is fundamental to cooperation (Freire, 1970, 80).

2.) *Participatory work needs to be aware of power relations.*

Critics of participatory methods have stressed the importance of recognizing both the existing power structures in the local elite and how power relations run through the entire social structure (Mosse, 1994; Ribot, 1996; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hildyard et al, 2001; Goodwin, 1998). Chambers has recently recognized that recognition of power is a latecomer to the development agenda (Chambers, 2005). However, he emphasizes that it is indeed *central* to the fundamentals of participation: “Participation is about power relations. It is about much else, as well; but power relations are pervasive: they always there, and they affect the quality of process and experience” (Chambers, 2005, 113). Given that a challenge to existing power structures could threaten those in power, it is perhaps not surprising that this approach has not been picked up by mainstream development programs. The focus on power relationships is also evident in critics’ call for facilitators to be more self-reflective of their *own* power in the communities they enter (Mosse, 1994; Stacey, 1991).

As explained earlier, central to Freire’s theory is the notion of praxis, of self-reflection upon one’s historicity with the intention of action. This is a process that is meant to reveal the dehumanizing forces and power structures at work in society, so that the oppressed can find

opportunities to challenge the limits of oppression (McLaren, 1999; Glass, 2001). The process of *conscientisation* is meant to foster the development of this praxis.

3.) *Participatory planning should be a process that is managed by participants.*

In order for projects to be truly “bottom-up,” originating with the participants’ own needs and desires, the process of design must be in their hands from the start. Project leaders cannot arrive to a community with their own agenda and use participation only as a means of securing participant consent (an example of passive participation). Critics argue that participants must have decision-making power in a participatory development project for the project to promote active participation (Uphoff, 1985; Mosse, 1994; Ribot, 1996; Goodwin, 1998; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hildyard et al, 2001; Chambers, 2005). Giving participants decision-making power avoids thinking of the oppressed as those without the power to fix their own situations, as Rahnema (1992a) warned against. In addition, some scholars suggest that encouraging participants’ decision-making power should not be limited to the scale of the project. Rather, development projects need to reframe their intention so that they reflects the concrete, political struggles of the communities they work with. In short, development projects need to enter the zone of political engagement (Nagar, 2002; McKinnon, 2007).

Freire’s critical pedagogy promotes the idea the local communities can produce and learn from educational and social issues that are relevant for them, which provides them a means of *ownership* over their process of liberation, or, development. He wrote, “One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding” (Freire, 1970, 84). Critical pedagogy allows participants to think critically through problems situated in their realities. “I cannot think *for others* or *without*

others, nor can others think for me...Producing and acting upon their own ideas—not consuming those of others—must constitute that process” (Freire, 1970, 100, emphasis in original).

Furthermore, as demonstrated in the previous section, Freire’s argument was inherently political (without outlining how a specific revolution might unfold). He established ethical and political claims which support the position of the oppressed in the struggle for liberation and advocated the use of liberation education as a means of furthering that end (Glass, 2001).

7. Conclusion

Although participatory development was presented as an alternative to top-down development models, critics point out that participatory projects have largely failed to meet this goal. Instead, they note that projects do not take into account participant knowledge, history, power structures, or priorities. Freire presents a philosophy that believes the marginalized can and should discover and articulate their perspectives, and that the role of the facilitator should, as Rahnema suggested, be one of “learning, relating, and listening” (1992a, 129). Since Freire’s critical pedagogy was one of the fields that influenced the formation of early participatory research techniques such as PRA, I suggest that participatory development can be improved with a return to Freire’s pedagogy. Specifically, in this chapter I presented three characteristics of “ideal” participation which are also supported in Freire’s work. They are:

Figure 1.2 Three characteristics of ideal participation

- 1.) Participation should build dialogue through a cooperative process.
- 2.) Participatory work needs to be aware of power relations.
- 3.) Participatory planning should be a process that is managed by participants.

To illustrate this, I explore Theatre for Development (TFD) as a technique which draws heavily of Freire to discover how this technique might be applied to development projects in order to make them more participatory. The next chapter of this thesis presents a brief history of TFD and describes some theatre games and exercises used in TFD workshops.

Chapter Two: Theatre for Development

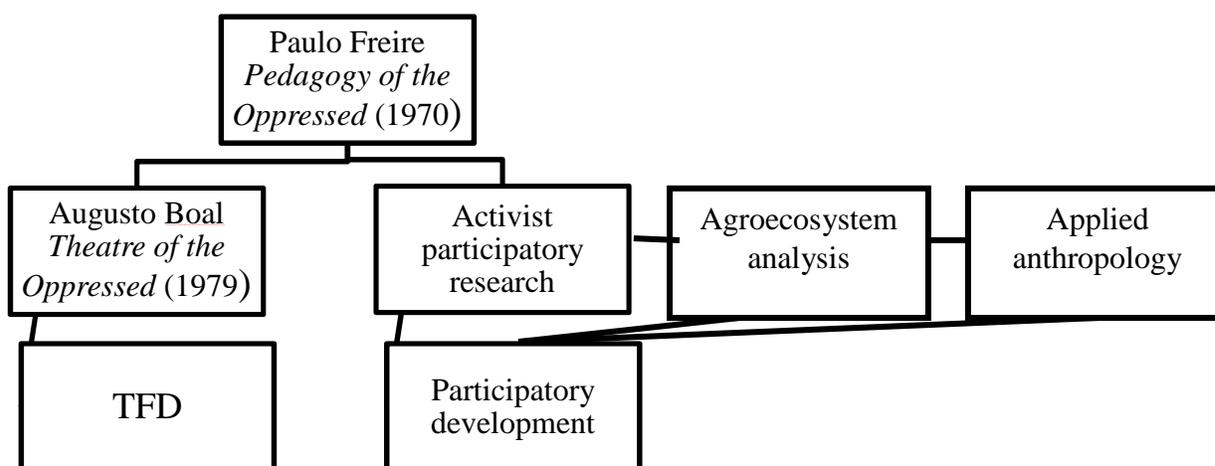
“That’s theatre’s role, to show things that are suffocated,
that cannot be discussed, or that are forgotten.”

—*Natanael, community theatre director
Ratones, Brazil*⁴

1. Introduction

The previous chapter introduced participatory development, its critiques, and a suggested response to these critiques was proposed: a return to an influential philosophy in the field, the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. This chapter will introduce the field of Theatre for Development (TFD) and will demonstrate that, as TFD techniques are also influenced by Freire (see figure 2.1), TFD presents itself as a set of techniques that might be used to address the current critiques of participatory development. In this chapter, I will first present a brief history of the field. Next, I will explain the various contexts in which TFD techniques are used, and the chapter will conclude with examples of TFD games and activities.

Figure 2.1. Relationship between Freire, TFD, and participatory development.



⁴ Nogueira, pg. 230

2. History of TFD

The genesis of TFD can be traced back to two roots, both emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s: popular theatre and critical theory. “Popular theatre,” “people’s theatre,” or “activist’s theatre” was a phenomenon developing in Western Europe before the end of the Cold War (Epskamp, 2006). As opposed to “mainstream theatre,” which uses a literary text as the basis of a public performance, popular theatre is created for or with a particular community or group within a community, and often does not rely on a written script as a basis of performance (Prentki, 1998). Popular theatre was based on the ideas developed in the 1920s and 1930s by Bertolt Brecht, a German Marxist playwright and theatre director, who envisioned a form of theatre that would blur the line between audience and players by stimulating an increased awareness of the audience’s own situation in society. Brecht did this by employing a “modern” form of narrative in which the players would speak directly to audience members, akin to non-Western storytelling traditions (Epskamp, 2006).

During the rise of popular theatre in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a Brazilian philosopher and educationalist was developing a new pedagogy based on dialogue rather than a “banking model” in which the educator deposits knowledge into student minds. As discussed in the previous chapter, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Paulo Freire emphasized that true education requires communication in the form of a dialogic exchange: “Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (Freire, 1970, 65). Freire pushed a model called “*conscientisation*” in which participants become conscious of the fact they can change their own situation by taking their life experiences as points of departure for their education. Freire’s emphasis on starting with real-life experiences makes a clear connection

with the story-telling devices of theatre, and several Theatre in Education Companies, such as the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, sprang up in Britain around 1968 in attempt to bring Freire's models to British classrooms (Prentki, 1998).

However, it was Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal who most clearly linked popular theatre to Freire's critical pedagogy to create the "Theatre of the Oppressed," the cornerstone of TFD practice. Boal developed theatre techniques and games that allowed participants to rehearse intervention in staged social situations—the idea being that they could prepare themselves for future real-life interventions in their communities (e.g. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 1992). For example, in his "Forum theatre," players perform a scene about a conflict situation. Then the players perform the scene a second time. The second time around, any spectator can stop the scene and take the place of any character to change the course of the scene. Therefore, spectators are an active agent in problem solving and discussing situations they face in everyday life. As he says in the foreword to *Theatre of the Oppressed*, "First, the barrier between actor and spectator is destroyed: all must act, all must be protagonists in the necessary transformation of society" (1979). Boal's techniques are discussed in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

Interest in Boal's techniques grew during the 1970s, which lead to the emergence of TFD workshops in Western universities, primarily in the UK. Graduates of these programs often lectured in African universities, which made them the centers of the first experiments in TFD. The first TFD program, "Laedza Batanani," was a Botswanan project that used puppets, songs, and dance to draw community members together to discuss issues raised by the drama (Epskamp, 2006). One of the most influential practitioners was Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, head of University of Nairobi's literary department and coordinator of activities at the Kamĩĩĩthũ Community Educational and Cultural Centre in Nairobi. He developed several plays in the local

Gĩkũyũ language, which explored the history of Kamĩrĩĩthũ through drama and dance. The plays were so threatening to the Kenyan authorities that on March 12th, 1982, three truckloads of armed policemen arrived at the Kamĩrĩĩthũ Centre and razed the open-air theatre to the ground (Thiong'o, 1986). Similarly, the military government of Brazil censored Augusto Boal's Arena Theatre of São Paulo. Boal's continued outspoken opposition to the authoritarian regime led to his arrest and torture. He was freed after three months without being officially charged, but fled to Argentina and later Europe (Boal, 1979). A few decades earlier Brecht faced similar oppression; he was on Hitler's death list and had to flee Germany (Prentki, 1998). The founders of TFD clearly upheld one of Boal's axioms, that "theatre is necessarily political" (Boal, 1979).

Despite the censorship faced by many early practitioners, in 1980 the first international seminar on TFD was organized by Ross Kidd, a Canadian TFD practitioner (Epskamp, 2006). The conference on "The Use of Indigenous Social Structures and Traditional Media in Non-Formal Education and Development" was held in Berlin to discuss the role of the performing arts and small scale media on non-formal education in developing countries. Most importantly, after the conference Kidd and Nat Colletta of the World Bank published the first collection of articles about TFD, *Tradition for Development* (1981), and formal international networking between practitioners began. This emerging network was formalized with the establishment of the International Popular Theatre Alliance (IPTA) in 1984. IPTA, based in the Philippines for its formative years, organized international workshops and also petitioned for the release of TFD practitioners who were imprisoned or exiled.

Therefore, from the 1970s to the late 1980s interest in TFD was spread primarily by practitioners in Western (mostly British) theatre departments and by institutions for non-traditional or non-formal adult education. Although TFD continues to be used in many adult

education institutions, TFD techniques entered the international development field in the early 1990s (Epskamp, 2006). Interest in using theatre to promote development agendas grew out of the switch from a focus on economic development to social and cultural development that was ongoing in the early '90s, as discussed in the first chapter. This turning point was launched at the World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City in 1982 which brought ministers of culture together through sponsorship by UNESCO. Epskamp (2006) says that interest in involving cultural activities with development projects arose for two reasons: 1) culture itself was now seen as an autonomous development activity, and 2) a cultural lens was now adopted by major donor agencies, who now took into consideration factors such as the socio-cultural setting and local visual and performing arts mediums (34).

Epskamp also emphasizes that the emphasis on “culture and development” emerging in the late 1990s should be distinguished as a different initiative than “cultural development.” In “culture and development,” the aim is to see how culture can contribute to sustainable development on a local level through projects facilitated by community-based organizations. In “cultural development,” the aim is to promote citizens’ participation in cultural life in order to promote greater national identity through national governmental programs. An example of a “cultural development” project might be the establishment of national cultural heritage sites or funding more orchestra programs in schools; a “culture and development” program might involve urban youth in creating narratives through mosaics.

Despite the many NGOs, development institutions, schools, and practitioners who developed TFD projects since the early 1990s, TFD techniques still remain unknown to most development workers, agencies, and academics (Prentki, 1998; Chambers in McCarthy, 2004). Prentki (1998) says that the major obstacle to an increased role of TFD techniques in

development projects is the belief that TFD belongs among the arts and cannot lend anything to development practice. In addition, analyses of TFD projects remain limited to theatre publications and is rarely published in mainstream development or academic publications. This may be contributed to the fact that many TFD practitioners come from an arts-based background and are unfamiliar with the research models often used in the social sciences, relying instead on a narrative case-study method of analysis (McCammon, 2007). Furthermore, as with the threats to power that participatory development might inspire (discussed in chapter one), TFD practices also have the potential for challenging those in authority, as we have seen in government's violent responses to some TFD productions. This also might be a reason why TFD hasn't been incorporated into mainstream development practice.

3. Applied Theatre: Classification and application

TFD is, more precisely, a practice existing under the umbrella term “applied theatre” (Prentki and Preston, 2009). Prentki and Preston say the wide range of practices which fall under this umbrella term are united by “the belief that theatre experienced both as participant and as audience might make some difference to the way in which people interact with each other and with the wider world” (9). Although other scholars, such as McCammon (2007), define “applied theatre” as the use of a written text to encourage the audience to start social change, and “applied drama” as the use of workshops to encourage participants (and not an audience necessarily) to affect social change, for the purposes of this thesis I will use Prentki and Preston's definition of applied theatre.

Prentki and Preston unpack the umbrella term of “applied theatre” by distinguishing three different ways that applied theatre work can interact with a community: theatre “for” a community, theatre “with” a community, and theatre “by” a community, as explained in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. Three types of applied theatre *Source:* Adapted from Prentki and Preston, 2009, 10.

- 1) **Theatre “for” a community:** In this category, a theatre group comes into a community to perform a pre-written play. Discussions or other programs might follow the performance in order to reinforce the play’s message.
- 2) **Theatre “with” a community:** Here a theatre group or facilitator might organize a workshop which allows a group to explore certain issues or themes through theatre games and exercises. In this category, the focus is on the benefits from the process of theatre, and not the final product for an audience. Although there might be a final public performance at the end of the project, the performance was not the ultimate focus.
- 3) **Theatre “by” a community:** A community creates, produces, and performs a play for other members of their community. Although an applied theatre artist might help produce in the play in some way, this category of applied theatre involves the lowest degree of outside intervention.

Again, in the applied theatre literature there exists a wide range of ways in which scholars classify different types of applied theatre. Epskamp (2006) uses only two categories, “product-based” and “process-based” work (categories one and two respectively), and similarly, McCarthy (2004) refers to theatre for a community as “exogenous” and theatre with a community as “endogenous.” However, I find it useful to recognize a third category, namely, applied theatre which does not have any outside intervention as all, and therefore for the purposes of this thesis I will use Prentki and Preston’s classification system.

Due to the myriad applied theatre projects designed by those in such diverse fields as theatre, public health, communication studies, media studies, international development, education, and social work, applied theatre projects go by different names according to the field and context of their use. Some of these terms include community theatre, popular theatre, behavior change communication, theatre for social change, theatre in education, playback theatre, interventionist theatre, prison theatre, or theatre for development, to name a few (McCammon, 2007; Prentki and Preston, 2009). A project labeled “theatre for development” by one person may be labeled “theatre for social change” by another, and might fall under any of the three categories above. However, my project for this thesis falls under the second category, *theatre with a community*. Therefore, this thesis is strictly limited to the possible benefits of applied theatre projects that fall *only* within the second category (theatre “with” a community), and I will refer to such projects as theatre for development.

However, so that readers may better understand the scope of the applied theatre field, I will briefly illustrate examples of each of the three types of applied theatre. Readers must keep in mind that although many of these projects are called “theatre for development,” for the purposes of this thesis only the projects that are theatre “with” a community are considered TFD.

1) *Theatre “for” a community:*

Theatre for a community is one of the most well-known and oldest forms of applied theatre. Some of the terms in this category are Theatre-in-Education (TIE), Theatre-in-Health Education (TIHE), and Behavior Change Communication (BCC). In the field of education, TIE and TIHE are two forms of applied theatre often used in schools. In these formats, a play is shown to students and then the players or the educators organize a question and answer or discussion session immediately after the performance. The dialogue the performance encourages

is intended to make students more aware of certain issues. Additionally, TIE projects might give teachers curriculum supplements and resource packets to use in their classrooms after the performance for the students. For example, Flabagast Theatre Company of England performed a play about racism and refugees in the UK in twenty-eight middle schools. After the performance, teachers were given a resource packet to help them conduct follow-up discussions and activities about asylum seeking in their classrooms (McCreery, 2009).

In public health and also in communication studies, Behavior Change Communication (BCC) refers to the use of theatre to encourage the audience to stop a practice that is harmful to their health. BCC theatre has been commonly used in East Africa to encourage AIDS prevention techniques (Riccio, 2004; McCammon, 2007). For example, David Kerr worked with a Malawian theatre group, the Tukumbusyane Traveling Theatre company, to create a play called *Za Ukwati* (“Concerning Marriage”) to explore how adultery affects sexual health and food consumption (Kerr, 2009).

A new subfield of BCC is Theatre for Energy Justice, a term proposed by CU Theatre Professor Beth Osnes to describe the use of theatre “as a tool for engaging communities specifically in appropriate sustainable energy development projects” (Osnes, 2010a). Through a partnership with CU’s Center for Energy and Environmental Security (CEES), she has used performances, both by students and community members, to share with communities the positive health benefits of using a cook stove instead of an open charcoal fire in homes in Panama and Guatemala (Osnes, 2010a; Osnes and Bisping, in press).

2) *Theatre “with” a community:*

In this approach, facilitators focus on what participants can gain from the process of being involved in theatre games, activities, or a theatrical production. The most common form of this type of applied theatre takes place in a workshop setting. A facilitator arrives in a community and, sometimes with the help of a community-based organization, leads a workshop, which may last from several days to several months in length. For example, Lois Weaver (2009) led theatre workshops for women prisoners in the UK and Brazil. During the workshops, women were asked to imagine someone or something they have always wanted to be or do. Then, participants performed character-building activities to help them walk, talk, and dress like their role models. Weaver noted that the main purpose of the workshop was not to measure a particular outcome but simply to allow participants to spend time in imagined and improved circumstances.

Educational drama and drama therapy are two other fields that use the process of being involved in theatre to encourage personal transformation. Lee Chasen (2009) found that educational drama activities, which encourage children to respond to curriculum from personal experiences and emotions, can help develop students’ emotional intelligence. Chasen (2003) found that at-risk first graders involved in educational drama programs demonstrated increased reading and writing scores after the program. He says that participating in theatre helps encourage emotional intelligence because students gain practice in shifting perceptions from the real to the fictional, which is fundamental in both cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Finally, playback theatre is another common form of theatre with a community, and one in which a public performance is often the focus. In playback theatre, a facilitator, playwright, or journalist will interview one or several people, usually of a common identity, such as the elderly

or asylum seekers. These interviews may be conducted in private, before a public audience onstage, or in a theatre workshop setting. Then, a group of actors might immediately improvise the person's recounted memories. Or, the playwright might use the interviews to craft a text, which will later be performed for the interviewees by a group of actors. Jonathon Fox (2009) lead a playback theatre training program in Burundi. The project, sponsored by a conflict resolution NGO, trained a Burundian theatre company in the art of playback theatre in an effort to promote healing from traumatic events in post-war Burundi.

3) *Theatre "by" a community*

Theatre "by" a community refers to community-initiated theatre projects. Although these projects might involve an outside theatre practitioner, the practitioner is under the guidance of the community theatre company. This category of applied theatre involves the lowest level of outside intervention. Theatre "by" a community may, in the field of theatre, be referred to as "popular theatre." Popular theatre is defined by Prentki and Selman as "an expression of specific communities' stories, issues, knowledge and needs" (2003, 8 in McCammon, 2007, 955).

Although popular theatre refers to theatre which is created by a community mostly for entertainment, it is different than non-applied theatre because it *also* seeks to somehow use the appeal of popular theatre traditions and forms to present a social or educational message (Osnes, 2010b). Thiong'o's (1986) plays in Kikuyu, which told the history of Kamĩrĩthũ through drama and dance, mentioned in the previous section are an example of an early TFD project "by" a community.

Josie Auger and Jane Heather (2009) tell of a community theatre project about HIV in rural Canada. Auger, a PhD candidate and member of the community, decided to gather the youth of the community together to create a play about HIV prevention. Auger and Heather

found that despite the community's initial resistance to talking about HIV, during the production of the play the community was mobilized to be more open to discussing the topic because of the many contributions the community made: one man donated set materials, another man ran the lights and sound, and the health center designed the program (see also Nogueira, 2006).

4. Examples of TFD techniques and exercises

So that readers may better visualize TFD techniques, I present here four exercises created by Augusto Boal from the book *Enacting Participatory Development* by Julie McCarthy (2004). The page numbers in this section correspond to this book. They are presented in an order that a facilitator might use in a workshop or in a series of workshops.

TFD workshops typically begin with warm-ups. Warm-ups are vital for building group trust and communication. One such warm-up is called "Glass Snake" (60). This exercise is done in complete silence. The group stands in a circle with their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them and everyone closes their eyes. The facilitator explains that they are all part of glass snake which is going to break apart and form back together again. The facilitator then tells the group to get to know the back of the head and the shoulders of the person in front of them only by touch. Once everyone thinks they have familiarized themselves with the person in front of them, the facilitator tells the group to break apart and wander around the room with their arms crossed in front of them, with their eyes still closed. The facilitator makes sure that no one runs into each other or anything else. Then the facilitator says "freeze" and everyone stops where they are. Now they are told to find the person that was originally in front of them, with their eyes still closed. When they have found that person, they put their hands on their shoulders and follow them around them room. Eventually the snake reforms and everyone is told they can open their eyes.

Once a group is comfortable with each other, they can begin using image or “statue” work, which is a fundamental technique of theatre of the oppressed. In the exercise called “Image of the Hour” (78), the group spreads out across the room and the facilitator explains that when he/she announces a time of day, everyone will freeze into a statue representing what they are usually doing at that time. After they have done so, the facilitator can ask everyone to look around the room at the different poses without unfreezing. There are possible extensions of this game: The group can be divided into two groups. After everyone freezes, group A can unfreeze and walk around the “gallery” of statues. The facilitator can then tap members of group B one at a time and have them say what they are thinking in their pose. This exercise creates a kind of “living clock” for the group and allows participants to compare their daily routines. This kind of image work is a good starting point for discussions on gender and class, or relationships. For example, McCarthy included comments on how one group used this exercise to explore father-son relationships. They focused on evening to explore when and if fathers were looking after their babies (78).

Once participants are more comfortable with using their bodies as a medium of dialogue, the group can explore more controversial topics such as power, status, and citizenship. An example is the “Game of Power” (72). To begin, a table, six chairs, and a bottle are arranged in any way in a space. The participants are asked to arrange one chair so that it is in a position of power in relation to all the other objects in the space. Once the group has come to a consensus on this, one participant is asked to place themselves in the scene in a position in which they feel they have the most power, without rearranging any piece of furniture. Next, the participants enter the scene one by one, each placing themselves in a position in which they feel they have the most power over all the others in the group. This exercise demonstrates different forms of power, and

can be the basis of an improvised scene if the participants desire. If not, the exercise in and of itself prompts participants to explore the conception of power. For example, a facilitator used this game to improvise a scene in which two workers are trying to work out an issue with their boss. The scene is replayed several times, each time rearranging the boss and workers in different positions and watching how different positions affected the subsequent scene (72).

Finally, after the group is more comfortable with small scenes, the facilitator can introduce the quintessential exercise of theatre of the oppressed “Forum Theatre” (95). In this exercise, the facilitator is referred to as a “joker,” based on Boal’s description of the game in *Theatre of the Oppressed*. First, a group of actors perform a scene. The scene shows a protagonist who is oppressed and an antagonist who is the embodiment of oppression. Next, the joker explains that the scene will be played again, but at any point a spectator can shout, “Stop.” At that point, the scene will freeze and the person who stopped the scene can say how the protagonist could change the outcome of the scene. The spectator can step up onstage and take the place of the protagonist and the scene is performed again, this time with the spectator as the actor. The goal of this exercise is to explore many pathways of resolving conflict. Furthermore, by performing their suggestions, spectators are encouraged to think and act for themselves. Boal hoped that this exercise might help the audience apply these actions to real life situations: “Dramatic action throws light onto real action. The spectacle is a preparation for action” (Boal, 1979, 155).

5. Conclusion

All the forms of applied theatre discussed here, theatre “for” a community, theatre “with” a community, and theatre “by” a community are united by the belief that participation in the theatre process can somehow improve the participant’s quality of life. Despite this optimistic

belief in the transformative power of applied theatre, practitioners such as Tim Prentki and Shelia Preston (2009) warn of the dangers that lie in supposing that theatre “might be the answer to any problem—the ever-ready bandage to apply to the wounds in the social fabric” (Prentki, 2009, 364). Rather, they reiterate that applied theatre projects are, at best, simply a way to encourage personal rather than master narratives. TFD can also be seen as way to encourage community collaboration in a neoliberal economic order that prioritizes individual action and responsibility. Prentki and Preston’s critical perspective reminds us that any endeavor promoting personal transformation should remain rooted in Freire’s belief in people’s ability to realize their own transformative potential through the telling of their own stories.

In the spirit of Prentki and Preston’s critical perspective on applied theatre, this thesis examines a theatre “with” community project, hereafter labeled a Theatre for Development (TFD) project. In the remainder of the thesis, I examine how a TFD project might improve the practices of participatory development projects. The next chapter presents the details of the project that I analyzed, the project location, the host NGO, and the methodology used to examine the intersection of TFD and participatory development.

Chapter Three: Case Study of Two TFD Workshops in Kenya

“We envision a community in which youth, women,
and children are able to facilitate their own development.”

—*MYTO vision statement*⁵

1. Introduction

This thesis seeks to answer the research question: “Can TFD techniques address the critiques of participatory development methods?” I asked this question in Kenya while looking at TFD workshops in two locations: one in the low income community of Mathare, in Nairobi, and the other in Segeru, a village in western Kenya near the Tanzanian border. Research to answer this question involved a combination of actively conducting the workshops and then critically analyzing the process. This chapter will first present some background to Kenya’s economic development and current issues in Kenyan politics. Next, I will provide a brief history of Kenyan theatre, focusing on the Nairobi area. I will then introduce my two case studies in Mathare and Segeru. Finally, I will explain the research methods used, followed by a concluding analysis of my methodology and my role as both facilitator and researcher.

2. Kenya: Ethnicity, Class and Economic Development

Kenya gained its independence from Britain in 1964, and Jomo Kenyatta was declared the first president of the new east African country. Starting with Kenyatta, Kenyan presidents have had great influence on what parts of the country were developed and who profited from these developments. Therefore, the political and economic situation of Kenya today remains heavily influenced by connections between ethnicity, class, and political power.

⁵ MYTO website, 2010.

Despite the often-cited correlation between the ethnicity of Kenyan presidents and the citizens who benefited during their presidency, it is first important to problematize the concept of “ethnicity” and point out the power-laden relationships inherent in the construction of the term. Many academics claim that ethnic groups and identities are social constructions which were created by colonialists in order to facilitate political organization and control (Lynch, 2006). The influential work of Terence Ranger suggested that ethnic groups were invented by Europeans (Ranger, 1983) and are continually imagined, reinvented, and reworked by Africans (Ranger, 1994).

As Ranger (1994) notes, the use of the term “ethnicity” for political purposes was not exclusive to colonists, but used by Kenyans as well, starting with Kenyatta, who identified as Kikuyu. During colonization, British expropriation of the agriculturally rich lands north of Nairobi caused thousands of Kikuyus to become landless and were forced to resettle in the Rift Valley region (Rutten and Owuor, 2009). During the 1960s and 1970s, Kenyatta appropriated the land formally owned by British colonizers back to many Kikuyus. While many other Kenyans would later blame Kikuyus for holding positions of power in Kenya because of Kenyatta’s patronage, this perspective fails to acknowledge that Kenyatta gave most of this land only to the wealthiest Kikuyu (Kagwanja, 2009). In fact, during Kenyatta’s 15-year rule, most Kikuyus remained poor (Ibid). This favoritism to certain groups of people which were not, in fact, homogeneous ethnic groups, continued with Kenya’s second president, Daniel Arap Moi, who was responsible for creating the Kalenjin ethnic group during his presidency. Several different groups of “Nandi-speakers” were brought together under the newly created Kalenjin identity in order to have a firmer foothold in Kenyan politics (Lynch, 2006).

Due to the observed ethnic favoritism of past presidents, Kenya's political parties have typically been associated with the ethnic group of the party leader. However, such an ethno-nationalistic lens fails to see that political leaders often support specific class divisions, and not an entire ethnic group. Furthermore, Kenya's current major political parties are not as homogeneous as they are perceived. Although Raila Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) is thought to be Luo dominated, and Mwai Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU) as mostly Kikuyu, in reality the ODM is dominated by the Luo, Luhya, and Kalenjin from Nyanza and other western provinces, or members of Nilotic ethnic groups, while the PNU is composed of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru populations coming from central and eastern provinces, or members coming from Bantu ethnic groups (Rutten and Owuor, 2009).

Despite the fact that political power often played out through class rather than ethnic divisions, powerful Kenyan politicians still have manipulated political divisions to fall mostly along ethnic lines. These manipulations were seen clearly in the sharp rise in ethnic nationalism in 2005-2007. Some attribute this to the rise of populism and the failure of current President Kibaki to stem state-sponsored violence which had been ongoing since President Moi (Kagwanja, 2009). The ODM and the PNU began to play up the ethnic differences between the two parties before the presidential elections in late 2007, despite the fact that Kibaki and Odinga had united to remove Moi from power just five years earlier in 2002 (Rutten and Owuor, 2009). Therefore, although political power has been mediated by different factors since colonization, the rise in ethnic nationalism before the 2007 election fueled the flames for the 2008 post-election violence which hit hardest in Nairobi's slums, including the mostly Luo populated Mathare.

After this brief introduction into the connections between class, ethnicity, and political power in Kenya, we will now shift our attention to the way theatre has been used in Kenya's past

to respond to these political inequalities. It is important to note the rich history of theatre in Kenya as the backdrop in which these TFD workshops are situated.

3. Kenyan theatre

One of the most surprising finds of my research was that theatre was alive and vibrant throughout Mathare. During my stay in Mathare, I was approached by two workshop participants who were members of two different community-based theatre troupes in Mathare. I attended rehearsals of both of these troupes, and I found them actively involved in producing both original and scripted plays, in English and Swahili, for local schools and the community at large. Therefore, I left Kenya with the strong impression that theatre is a live and vibrant art form found in many grassroots, community-based organizations (CBOs).

The popularity of theatre in Mathare can be best understood in the historical context of pre and post-colonial theatre in Kenya. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong`o, the Kenyan author, director, and playwright mentioned in chapter two, notes that drama in pre-colonial Kenya was part of the rhythm of everyday life. Rituals of song, dance, and mime were often used to mark important transitions in life, such as birth, death, victory in war, circumcision, or the passing of power from one generation to another, as in the *Ituika* ceremony celebrated by the Kikuyu (Thiong`o, 1986). Although some may argue that these pre-colonial ceremonies are not theatre, Mzo Sirayi (2001) holds that African theatre should nevertheless be viewed as “cultural performance.” Sirayi uses Milton Singer’s (1959) definition of the term and shows that African theatre in pre-colonial times was cultural performance because such ceremonies had a limited life span, a beginning and an end, a place and occasion of performance, an organized program of activities, performers and an

audience.⁶ However, under British colonialism many of these ceremonies were banned, including the *Ituika* in 1925 (Thiong`o, 1986). In fact, a gathering of more than five Kenyans at one time warranted a license under colonial rule (Ibid).

Despite this ban, theatre continued to be a part of public life in post-colonial years and was often a pathway to political engagement. In particular, since the use of non-European languages was prohibited in many colonial education systems, many African playwrights used plays written in indigenous languages as a means of rejuvenating them and presenting myth and oral tradition onstage for younger generations (Kizza, 2001). One of the most famous incidents occurred when Thiong`o developed several plays in Kikuyu, mostly dealing with local peasants' struggle for land. As mentioned in chapter two, Thiong`o was jailed for this and his theatre destroyed (Thiong`o, 1986).

Although puppetry was not widely used in pre-colonial African theatre (Ricchio, 2004), puppetry was introduced in the 1980s by TFD practitioners. Some suggested that because puppets had not been used in African performance before, puppets were a neutral device free of preconceived notations, taboos, or applications (Ricchio, 2004). For example, TFD practitioner and medical doctor David Silver spoke about fellow South African TFD practitioner and puppeteer, Gary Friedman. Friedman's puppet company founded several puppet shows in South Africa such as "Puppets Against Aids," "Puppet Election '94" and "Puppets in Prison" (David Silver, June 2, 2010, e-mail message to author; Friedman, website).

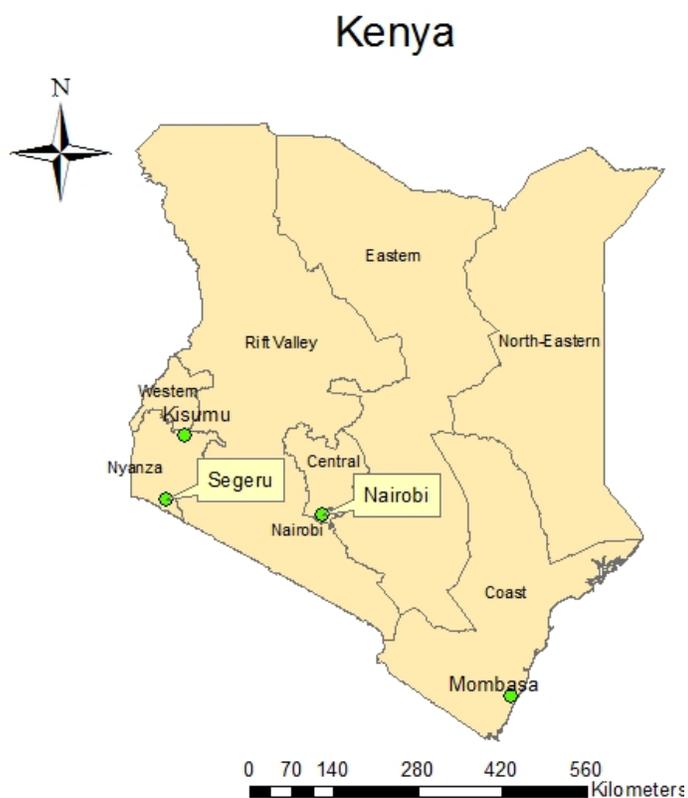
Friedman also helped create a puppet organization for Nairobi's low income settlements. Community Health and Awareness Puppeteers (CHAPS), sponsored by a Kenyan NGO, Family Planning Private Sector (FPPS). CHAPS is an organization of activist-puppeteers that perform in

⁶ Sirayi (2001) also mentions the Association of African Indigenous Doctors who organize events to promote their activities as theatrical performances.

informal settlements around Nairobi on issues such as government corruption, gender inequality, and HIV/AIDS (Riccio, 2004; CHAPS website). Each puppet play is created from interviews conducted with residents of the communities in which the play will be performed. Although the group mainly operates around Nairobi, CHAPS has trained over 400 puppeteers nationwide. As in South Africa, one CHAPS puppeteer near Lake Victoria experienced political oppression when he was jailed for a puppet show he performed about corruption (Riccio, 2004).

With the background of Kenya's political, economic, and theatrical history, our attention now turns to the first case study location in Mathare. The following map shows the locations of the two case studies (Mathare near Nairobi and Segeru) relative to other major cities in Kenya.

Figure 3.1 Map of Kenya *Source: Author*



4. Case Study 1: Mathare

Mathare is a low-income settlement spread across the Mathare Valley, a few miles northeast from the center of Nairobi. An estimated 300,000 people live in Mathare, and an estimated one in five have HIV (Médecins sans Frontières in Kenya, 2008). Mathare is spread out over less than five square kilometers (Delva et. al, 2010), and residents identify different neighborhoods within Mathare, such as Mathare 4A and Mathare 4B. Almost all of the residents I spoke with identified themselves as Luo. Most of the structures in the area constructed of tin, though there are some houses along the main road which are made out of concrete. Two large structures sit in the middle of Mathare, a health clinic and the community hall, which I was told were both built by a German NGO.

According to the residents, NGO employees, and one former aid worker from Suriname, in 2004 Mathare was ruled by vigilante gang violence, where lynching, rape, murder, and theft were common. The aid worker told me it was unsafe for a non-resident to enter Mathare at any time of day. During 2004, three residents were inspired to make a change when they saw a television documentary about youth doing community development work in other parts of Kenya, and thought they could engage the youth of Mathare as well. They joined together and formed the Mathare Youth Talented Organization (MYTO), the community based organization (CBO) I worked with to facilitate the research for this thesis.

MYTO is a mostly Luo organization with thirty-five members who meet weekly to work on community projects. MYTO's first project was a school for orphans and other children who could not afford school fees. Their school did not require a mandatory school fee, but accepted

whatever payment each student could make. Currently, MYTO's three classrooms instruct 153 children from Mathare. In 2006, MYTO expanded their focus to other areas of community need. They began a community trash clean up day, a microfinance group, a music group, a theatre group, an empowerment group for single mothers, and an orphanage, to name a few.

In addition, it is important to note that before the start of this research project, MYTO members had extensive previous experience with theatre. In line with the popularity among Nairobi's CBOs mentioned above, MYTO's theatre group was started in 2006 by David, one of their members. One of their first major projects was a series of performances about malaria prevention in 2008, which was commissioned by the Kenyan Ministry of Health. MYTO performed in Mathare and in surrounding communities in open spaces on the streets. Therefore, it is important to note that many of the workshop participants had previous experiences and conceptions of theatre before the workshop, which probably influenced their readiness to participate and perform in front of others.

A recent focus for MYTO is has been helping residents recover from the post-election violence in 2008. Mathare was the location of burning, looting, murders, and massive riots. The violence in Mathare was mostly created by Kikuyu-identified gangs seeking vengeance for the Kikuyus who were looted and killed after Kibaki's contested victory throughout Kenya (Gettleman, 2008; Rutten and Owuor, 2009; Kagwanja, 2009; informal interviews, 2009). Many Mathare residents often spoke about how the past year's violence set their businesses behind. One woman told me that she lost all the cabbage she sells in the riots, and since 2008 she has been trying to restore her business. Abraham showed me an entire section of Mathare which had been burned to the ground, and each day I would walk into Mathare under a large guard rail on which was painted "No Raila, No Peace."

Mathare's location was a good choice for an urban case study. Because of its proximity to Nairobi, some participants traveled to Mathare for the workshop, and thus the Mathare workshop was able to capture responses from participants with many different ages, genders, and ethnicities. Therefore, my second case study was selected in a rural village in western Kenya: Segeru.

5. Case Study 2: Segeru

About one week after the TFD workshop in Mathare, three MYTO employees and I traveled to the village of Segeru in western Kenya near the Tanzanian border. Segeru is an predominately Luo area, and the village is one served by MYTO's rural branch: the Migori Youth Talented Organization. This organization is named after the nearby town of Migori, and is also called MYTO, but for the purposes of this thesis I will refer to this rural branch as MYTO2.

MYTO2 was started in 2007 by a Segeru resident who was inspired by MYTO's work in Mathare. While in Mathare visiting family, he connected with MYTO's president, Abraham, who helped him establish MYTO2 in Segeru. MYTO2 currently has around 150 members and services six other villages in the Migori area. MYTO2's main project is to support the livelihoods of the area's thirty-three orphans, who live with other families. MYTO2 president John told me that all of the children were orphaned due to the very high rate of HIV in the area. To support the orphans, MYTO2 members sell paraffin, corn, sweet potatoes, kale, and make monthly donations to a group savings account. The group's teenagers are planning on starting a sewing business as well. The orphans meet at least once a week with one of MYTO2's teachers, who teaches the children songs and poetry, which they recite often in the village center, with great joy and dancing.

6. Research Methods

This section will present the methods used to answer my research question, “Can TFD techniques address the critiques of participatory development methods?” Research to answer this question was conducted from July 19th to August 18th 2009 and was approved by the University of Colorado at Boulder Human Subjects Research Committee. To answer the research question, I proceeded in two steps: First, I facilitated two TFD workshops in an urban and a rural area. Secondly, I analyzed the participant responses using qualitative research methods, including ethnographic participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. This first subsection will present how I facilitated the TFD workshops. Second, I will present my research methods in greater detail.

1) *Facilitation of TFD Workshops*

I designed and facilitated all of the workshops myself, drawing from my theatre background, which includes working with a non-profit (the Theatre Action Project, TAP) to facilitate after-school theatre education for low-income elementary schools. The TAP programs are based on Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*, so I adapted some TFD workshop activities from my training as a teacher for TAP. To structure the rest of the workshop activities, I referred heavily to Julie McCarthy’s *Enacting Participatory Development: Theatre-Based Techniques* (2004). In this subsection I will explain the general outline of the TFD workshops.

a) *Mathare TFD Workshop*

The Mathare TFD workshop took place for three and half hours the mornings of July 22nd-25th, 2009. The workshop was held in the Mathare Community Hall, which we had reserved for the purpose. There were two goals of the workshop: 1) to teach participants forms of theatre they can use to create their own plays and 2) to present theatre as a means to discuss

issues important to the group. After the workshop, for two hours each afternoon of July 27th-July 31st we rehearsed the play that the participants wrote on the last day of the workshop. On August 1st, MYTO organized a Nairobi-wide theatre festival which was held outside of the Mathare Community Hall in an empty lot. MYTO rented a stage, set up chairs, and purchased refreshments for the performers. At the festival, singers, dancers, musicians, comedians, school children, and other local theatre troupes performed all afternoon. The festival ended in the performance of the play by the TFD workshop participants.

The workshop participants were almost all members of MYTO and residents of Mathare, though a few came from Nairobi and another low income settlement in Nairobi, Kibera. While many of the workshop participants were Luo (42%), there were also Luya, Kikuyu, Kisi, and Kamba ethnic groups represented in the workshop. There were also more males than females, as we had 62.5% men and 37.5% women. A total of forty-one people participated in the workshops, the following four days of rehearsals, and the final public performance on August 1st. Although attendance was not consistent throughout the span of the project, 55% of the participants attended five or more days of the project, and 57% of all the participants performed in the play for the final public performance. Therefore, given the difficulties in commuting and balancing the workshop with work and family life, I find it significant that a majority of the workshop participants were active in over half of the project meetings.

The goal of the TFD workshop was to equip participants with the skills needed to create and perform their own plays or improvisations on the topics they decide. I did this by teaching the participants about four forms of theatre: statues, statues with sound or movement, one-word scenes, and improvised scenes. This classification system was one I created based on my own experiences in theatre and the way Boal introduced theatre to his students in *Theatre of the*

Oppressed (1979). Since there were four workshop days, each day was devoted to teaching one form of theatre. Figure 3.1 explains the four forms of theatre, as I presented them in the workshop.

Figure 3.2 Four forms of theatre used in TFD workshops

- 1) **Statues:** The actor keeps his or her body frozen in a fixed position and does not move or speak. This creates an image which might tell a story of strong emotion, such as power, fear, anger or love. There might be one actor or a group of actors, all statues, which might portray a scene frozen in time, such as a soccer game.
- 2) **Statues with movement and/or sound:** The actor begins as a frozen statue. When the facilitator taps the statue on the shoulder, the statue can say one line of dialogue, such as what he or she is thinking. In addition, the statue can do one expressive movement while saying the line of dialogue. If there are a group of statues, each statue can say their line of dialogue one at a time to create the effect of a scene.
- 3) **One-word scenes:** Two actors are on stage. One actor receives a word, such as “star.” Another actor receives another word, such as “tree.” The actors perform a scene but the only words they can say are the respective words they were given. The words do not have their normal meanings but rather are used as a kind of gibberish to the actors may experiment with using their voices to express emotion without worrying about what to say.
- 4) **Improvisations:** A group of actors is given a scenario with a problem. For example, “You are family on a road trip and you get a flat tire.” The group has to come up with a short scene showing the characters trying to solve this problem cooperatively.

Although there was a different topic of focus for each day, each workshop included the same progression of activities. I began each workshop with warm-up exercises. Warm-ups are commonplace in theatre practice, as they provide a way for the participants to make their minds, bodies, and voices ready for performance work (see chapter two). They often involve moving in a group rhythm, speaking in a rhyme, dancing, or singing in a call and response style at the lead

of the facilitator. They also promote group trust and cooperation because they help the group to get to know one another. For example, on the first day we did a name memorization game in which one person would say his or her name and do a one motion. Then the person to his or her right would repeat the name and motion, and this would continue rapidly all around the circle of participants.

After warm-ups, we took a fifteen minute break. Next, I introduced the day's form of theatre we would focus on, and I would lead the group in an introductory activity. This introduction would not require participants to stand up and perform in front of the whole group, but rather would work in small groups. This allows the participants to get used to the new form of theatre without the added pressure of performance. After another break, I would conclude the workshop with an activity which requires performance in front of the whole group. This would challenge the participants to apply what they learned about that day's form of theatre to create a group or individual performance to share with the whole group. This was a nice way to end the workshop, as each person has a chance to perform for others, and the group gave great applause to each performance. I ended the workshop with a group activity with all participants standing in a circle, either commenting on the day's work or singing a group song, or dancing. After the workshop, we all enjoyed lunch in the community hall cooked by the Single Mother's Self Help Group, a MYTO project.

Besides teaching the participants forms of theatre they can use to create their own plays, the second goal of the workshop was to present theatre as a means to discuss issues important to the community. The primary activity we used to do this was "The Gallery of Hopes and Fears." Here participants were asked to mold their partner into a statue representing something they are proud of in their community, and then of something that they wish to change in their community.

Once the “statue” was formed, I asked the person acting as the statue to freeze in that position and each artist had the opportunity to explain what his or statue represents to the rest of the group. As the participants discussed their fears, I made a list on a poster of all the things participants said they wanted to change in Mathare.

On the last day of the workshop, I put up this list and asked the group to select the four issues which they wanted to create a play about. They selected violence, education, worry/stress, and diseases. I then asked participants to each chose a topic to work on, and in groups they each created a skit about their topics. Then the group worked together to join their skits into a single narrative play. Their play, which they performed for the community on August 1st, was about a girl from a low income family who wanted to go to school. To do so, she married a man from a more wealthy family so she could pay for her school fees. However, this man was unfaithful and she contracted HIV. The play concludes with the girl returning to her family, who took her to a health counselor. The counselor explained that with consolation and medication, the girl could go on to continue her education and have a good life, and encouraged the audience to get HIV testing and consolation at the local health clinics.

To prepare for the public performance, we met on four afternoons for about two hours each day to rehearse. At first I was afraid that we would have poor attendance, as there would be no lunch provided and we were meeting in the afternoons rather than the mornings. However, we had a strong group of about fifteen very interested participants who attended all the rehearsals. They got the lead roles and were the leaders in creating the narrative of the play. The participants did not use a script but rather improvised scenes based on the loose narrative arch described above. During rehearsals, my role shifted from a workshop facilitator to a director, as I coached

them on such performance techniques as learning to face the audience, not standing in front of others on stage, and speaking loudly enough to be heard.

When August 1st finally came, the participants were nervous yet very excited. The empty lot was packed with around 400 Mathare residents watching from every available space: on the ground, on walls and ledges, in the streets, or standing in the packed, hot crowd. I even saw some families watching from some cliff sides several hundred yards away. When it came time for them to perform, the MYTO performers eagerly filled the stage. The drummers began and the introduction sequence started with several groups of performers freezing in statues to the beat of the drum. The play continued on, all in Swahili, to an interested and responsive audience. They took a group bow and left the stage enthusiastic about the performance. The lead actress later told me, “People felt proud...The acting was nice! Nobody forgot its character. People stayed in character, the way we wanted it to be.”

Finally, in an effort to ensure that MYTO benefited from this study as much as I did, and in an effort to promote project sustainability, I conducted a two-day teacher training program for any MYTO employee interested in facilitating TFD workshops in the future. Based on my previous experiences as a theatre facilitator, I created a handbook explaining some of the most important TFD activities. This training program, I explained to the participants, was strictly based on my personal experiences, and it was largely based on explaining the activities in the Mathare TFD workshop. I did not conduct any interviews on this training program, nor did I include it in the research, as it was meant for the benefit of MYTO.

b) *Segeru TFD Workshop*

Due to my research schedule, I only had August 10th and 11th in which to conduct the Segeru TFD workshop. Three other MYTO employees traveled with me to Segeru and helped

me facilitate the workshop. MYTO2 recruited the workshop participants, and reserved a church near the village center for the purpose of the workshop.

The participants averaged twenty-three years old and were less diverse in gender and ethnicity than the Mathare workshop. There were 64% men and 36% women. Also, given that Segeru is a Luo village, 69% of the participants were Luo, though the rest were Luya, Kisii, and Kuria. We also had three musicians from a village in Tanzania who traveled to Segeru to attend the workshop, as they had heard about it through friends in the village. Furthermore, attendance was less consistent than in Mathare: there were thirty-two participants the first day and only seventeen the next day. Despite this attendance record, there was great interest in the workshop among villagers. Because MYTO2 recruited only its members to participate in the workshop, the village elders were not invited to the workshop. When I arrived, about ten elders, both men and women, told me they also wanted to participate in a workshop as well. So every afternoon, after the morning workshop, I held a separate workshop just for the village elders. Given the little time I had in the village, however, I only had an hour workshop with them each day. Therefore, I decided not to include this elders' workshop in this research study, given that their workshop was so short.

Because my schedule only allowed for a two-day workshop, I condensed the workshop schedule I used in Mathare by teaching the first two forms of theatre (statues and statues with movement and/or sound) the first day, and improvisations the next day. I decided not to teach the one-word scenes, due to time constraints. The structure of each workshop followed the Mathare structure, with warm-ups, a break, an introductory activity, another break, and concluded with final group performances. On the last day, we also did the "Gallery of Hopes and Fears" activity in order to generate some discussion about challenges MYTO2 would like to address.

Later that afternoon as I was preparing to leave the village, I received word that some workshop participants wanted me to come to a nearby village—for what they would not say. I arrived to see a large crowd, of around 200 people, gathered in the center of the village, staring at an open space of grass, waiting for something to begin. I arrived and waited too, until I heard some people arguing behind me. I turned to see a woman from my workshop rush into the grassy space, chased by a man, also from my workshop, who was yelling behind her. They began a scene, and it was then that I realized the participants had self-organized after the last workshop was over and wrote their own play.

The play was about domestic violence and alcohol abuse, and the actors came dressed in costumes and carried props. The play began with husband and wife in conflict, and it was resolved with the police entering and arresting the husband. The fact that the participants decided to create and perform their own play, without my suggestion, is a clear sign that they felt a sense of ownership and confidence in their abilities working with skills learned in the workshop. Furthermore, since participants decided to make the play so public, this demonstrates the strength of their confidence in performance before the workshop as well, as it is unlikely that a two-day workshop can single-handedly be the cause of such performance confidence.

After the play was over, the fifteen participants came running up to me, asking if I liked it, full of energy. They said they planned on meeting once a week to write and perform more plays together. One woman told me they got the idea to create a play when in the workshop they discovered that, “We have talent but we don’t know how to use it...We saw from you that we can say some words and we can perform in front of an audience...so we show that we are using what you are giving us. We are putting it into practice.”

2) *Analysis of the process*

Research methods included ethnographic participant observation of MYTO and the workshops, two focus groups of twenty-five and thirty-six participants each, and nine interviews (three men and three women from the Mathare workshop; three women from the Segeru workshop). While the number of my interviews and focus groups is not high enough in to make strong empirical claims, I combine this data with ethnographically-informed fieldwork to explore the participatory dynamics of the TFD workshops, MYTO, and other CBOs in Mathare.

My participant observations were conducted while spending a month of traveling, working with, and observing MYTO's projects as well as participating as a facilitator of the TFD workshops. When not facilitating the workshops, MYTO's employees often took me on walking tours of Mathare to meet different members and their projects. Therefore, in addition to observing the dynamics of the TFD workshops, through ethnographic participant observation I became familiar with the challenges and successes of a Kenyan CBO.

Secondly, "focus groups" included participants who were present at the start of the first workshop, and those that wanted to stay for an interview immediately after the final workshop. Because participants often had to travel far to attend the workshop, and had to fit in the workshop in between work and family responsibilities, attendance was not consistent between the pre and post workshop focus groups. In Mathare, there were twenty-five participants in the pre-workshop focus group, and eighteen of them were present in the post-workshop focus group. Therefore, 72% of those in the initial focus group were present for the post-workshop focus group. Attendance was less consistent in Segeru than in Mathare. In Segeru, there were thirty-six participants in the pre-workshop focus group, and thirteen of them were present for the post-workshop focus group. Therefore, only 36% returned for the post-workshop focus group. The Mathare focus group questions were conducted mostly in English, while the Segeru focus group

questions were translated into Luo. To record both focus group responses I used paper and pencil.

For the one-on-one interviews, in Mathare I interviewed six workshop participants after the workshop, three women and three men, all residents of Mathare and between the ages of around twenty and forty years old. In Segeru, I interviewed three participants after the TFD workshop, all women. Two were fourteen years old and one was around twenty-five years old. The two fourteen year old women were residents of Segeru; the twenty-five year old was one of my assistants. All one-on-one interviews except for one were conducted in English and I used a digital audio recorder. During the one interview in which a translator was necessary, one of the MYTO employees translated into Luo.

After the data gathering section of my research ended in Kenya, I transcribed all interviews from the audio recorder into one document, replacing all names with pseudonyms. Then, to evaluate the ways in which TFD can promote a more participatory development process, I came up with key terms, phrases, and concepts to look for in the interview data that reflect each of the three criteria for ideal participation listed in the first chapter. With these criteria in mind, I looked for quotes in the interview data from the Mathare focus group, the Segeru focus group, and the semi-structured interviews that reflected engagement with each criteria.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I will present some reflections on the strengths and limitations of this research methodology. First, I have some concerns with the translation techniques. In the Mathare pre and post workshop focus groups, a MYTO employee agreed to serve as my translator from English into Swahili. He translated about 50% of the questions I asked. On some

questions he insisted that the participants understood my question in English despite the fact that only a few responded to them. Therefore, I recognize that the Mathare focus group data will be biased toward those who understood the most English. However, in Segeru, because all participants spoke only Luo, all focus group questions were translated by two MYTO employees who helped me facilitate the workshop.

In the Mathare TFD workshop, the workshop directions were translated by a MYTO employee, albeit a different employee each day. The MYTO employee would not translate every direction I gave; we translated on an as-needed basis. This decision was based on MYTO's preference that I conduct the workshop in English as much as possible. However, in Segeru two MYTO employees, David and Evelyn, were well-trained enough in the TFD workshop activities to facilitate the workshop as much as I did, and at times would explain activities all by themselves. All directions for the Segeru workshop were translated into Luo by either David or Evelyn as none of the participants spoke English.

Secondly, the fact that I was both the facilitator and the researcher might have biased interviewee responses. I recognize that interviewees might have been reluctant to reveal any negative thoughts about the workshop to me, since I was also the workshop facilitator. If I am able to repeat a study on the uses of TFD techniques, I would employ someone to conduct the workshops, allowing me to conduct the interviews. In this way, more honest reactions to the workshops might be recorded.

While I admit some concerns about translation and my role as both researcher and facilitator, I think the selection of Segeru and Mathare as case studies provides a strong scope of analysis which includes both rural and urban locations. Mathare is a representative case study of a CBO working in a low-income settlement outside of a capital city, which is a popular location

for development projects focusing on urbanization, HIV, and youth movements. Segeru is also a representative case study of a rural CBO which, as it is in an area of high HIV infection rates, is also an example location for rural, health-focused development projects. Despite the small number of interviews conducted, combined with my ethnographic participant observations I think the choice of a rural and an urban case study provides an interesting window into two CBOs who are currently working at locations of which the international development industry often speaks about and seeks to understand.

Therefore, this research provides reflection on how theatre might create a unique space for participation among Kenyan CBO members in both urban and rural locations. In addition, it is my hope that readers interested in facilitating similar TFD workshops can, from this chapter, get suggestions on how they could design a workshop, and also be advised on which mistakes to avoid. My analysis of the research results is presented in the following two chapters. Chapter four presents an analysis of how the workshop might address the three critiques of participatory development which were outlined at the end of chapter one. Chapter five is an analysis of how the participants themselves experienced a shift in their perceptions of “development,” “participation,” “theatre,” and “performance,” after the TFD workshop.

Chapter Four: Do TFD workshops address the critiques of participatory development?

“If you are entertaining somebody, you are also teaching them...
That’s why I like doing theatre.”

— *Milfred, Mathare workshop participant*

“Through theatre we can really know the issues in our community
and know how to solve them.”

— *Evelyn, MYTO employee*

1. Introduction

This chapter will suggest ways in which the two TFD workshops I facilitated do or do not address the critiques of participatory development, which were presented in the first chapter. To review them, they are:

Figure 4.1 Five critiques of participatory development

- 1) Participants should have more decision-making power.
- 2) Participatory development techniques should encourage active participation.
- 3) Participatory development techniques need to be aware of local power dynamics.
- 4) Facilitators need to be more aware of local knowledge and areas in which the participants are already empowered.
- 5) Facilitators need to be more self-reflective of their role in the development process.

In the conclusion of the first chapter, I connected these five critiques with the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. I held that a response to the current critiques of participatory development would be a return to the beliefs and principles established in the formative years of the field—namely a return to the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. I then compiled a list of three characteristics that define ideal participation, each of which is upheld by beliefs central to Freire’s pedagogy. They are:

Figure 4.2 Three characteristics of ideal participation

- 1) Participation should build dialogue in a cooperative process.
- 2) Participatory work needs to be aware of power relations.
- 3) Participatory planning should be a process that is managed by participants.

This chapter suggests ways in which TFD can be a technique that can encourage development projects to meet these three criteria. While the TFD workshops I facilitated were not development projects in and of themselves, this chapter examines the ways that TFD workshops could make the development process more participatory. Workshops were conducted in the urban location of Mathare and in the rural village of Segeru in western Kenya. This chapter suggests that the use of theatre as a pedagogical tool can promote dialogues, discussions, and activities that reflect the three criteria for “ideal” participation listed above. For the remainder of this chapter, results are organized separately under each of the three criteria.

2. Building Dialogue

As described in the first chapter, for a project to be participatory it must prove that the development project ideas were formed in dialogue among the participants, rather than participants accepting a pre-conceived plan. In order for dialogue to occur, certain conditions must exist beforehand to facilitate this dialogue. Therefore, I looked through the data to find evidence of ideas being generated, shared, or discussed in the TFD workshops. I also looked for any evidence that the TFD workshops created an environment of mutual trust and collaboration, since such an environment is necessary to promote dialogue.

First, all of the interviewees and both focus groups noted that the workshops helped participants become less nervous. They either noticed changes in themselves or in other

participants in the workshop, and in some cases, both. This was one of the most supported observations in my research. A common theme among the respondents was the idea that in the workshop they discovered a “hidden talent” among other CBO members. They said that in the normal routine of meeting and discussing, they did not realize that certain people in the group could act and overcome their shyness. David⁷, who started MYTO’s theatre group, said “I never knew that some were actors. I only realized when we were here because some of them we just used to meet on the way, and maybe there is some hidden talent within him or her.”

Helping members of a CBO become less nervous speaking in front of other members is a fundamental step in making it possible for the CBO to communicate through dialogue. If people are afraid to speak, they will not contribute their ideas and opinions to the group. According to Milfred, a young woman very involved in theatre in MYTO, “for example, before I can’t talk in front of everybody, but after being trained with theatre I can now face so many people and talk. I get the courage after.”

When I asked participants what helped them become less nervous, they listed a number of ways in which theatre activities made it easier to speak in public. Ryan, a young man who teaches art and drumming to MYTO school children, said that what helped him become less nervous is the fact that he is not himself onstage, but is performing a character. Three other interviewees said that the warm-up activities helped them concentrate better. They said that improved concentration helped them focus on the activity they were doing instead of thinking about what others were thinking about them. Finally, others said that working as a group helped them feel less nervous. Ryan said that the group work made people less nervous and allowed him to get to know other people better, since in MYTO meetings they just discuss project ideas: “What helped them become less nervous is the getting together...I think that was fun because we

⁷ As noted in chapter three, all names of research participants are pseudonyms.

don't have such times in MYTO ... We didn't really get to know each other like we did this time. So I think everybody is free now and is more opened up.”

Interviewees agreed that the theatre activities helped them become less nervous, for a variety of reasons. In all cases, the practice of performing in front of others in the workshop was good practice in being seen and heard in front of others outside of the workshop setting. This leads me to define “performance” as an act of creative, momentary self-transformation in front of an audience. I say “transformation” because the basic principle of theatre is that the actor⁸ pretends to be someone or something else in front of an audience for the duration of the performance. I say “creative” because an actor playing someone or something else necessarily brings to the character shades of himself or herself, and performance is thus an extremely individual act, even if the actor plays a character from a script. Therefore, a performance may be based on an individual's actual fears and anxieties, or an individual's fabrication of other people or places. However “genuine” or “non-genuine” the performance, it is nevertheless an act of creativity.

My definition of “performance” both draws from and diverges from the vast, cross-disciplinary literature on performance and performativity. Theories exist in gender studies, such as Judith Butler's theory that gender is a socially constructed performance (Butler, 1990). In cultural geography, non-representational theory suggests that every day life depends on performative skills rather than consciously planned codings and symbols, or, representations (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000), suggesting that we need to engage in research that is equally performative and creative (Conquergood, 1991; Nash, 2000; Latham, 2003). In political ecology, Ramisch (in press) has suggested that farmers' experiments with agricultural techniques in

⁸ In this thesis, “actor” refers to either a male or female performer.

Western Kenya may be seen as a kind of performance, as their knowledge production is an improvisational, creative process. Furthermore, scholars have also discussed a development project's "performance" which is a socially produced measurement of success contingent on institutional goals (Mosse, 2005).⁹

However, for the purposes of this thesis I focus on the act of performance as an act of creative, momentary self-transformation. This focuses on the agency of the actor, and draws our attention to the effects of the creative act on the individual after the performance is over.

Evidence from my field work suggests that the opportunity to perform in the workshops and in public made participants feel less nervous speaking in front of others when *not* performing—that is, onstage confidence might carry over into offstage confidence. As noted in chapter two, a fundamental belief in the field of TFD is that if participants have the chance to practice speaking in front of others in a workshop, especially about stories from their own lives, they report feeling more self confident after the workshop (Bundy, 2009; Fox, 2009; Nicholson, 2009). Since all the interviewees and both focus groups noted that this practice helped members become less nervous speaking in front of others, perhaps MYTO will use these theatre activities in the future to help members speak more confidently.

The second theme in the interview data which gives evidence that the workshops encourage dialogue is that interviewees said the theatre workshops gave them the time and opportunity to see a different side of the other members than they usually see. This process of getting to know other participants better is connected to the process of getting to know what issues are important to them, or what challenges they are facing—which is an important first step in building dialogue and community development. For example, in one instance, the exchange of

⁹ A good summary of "performance" as a method of five different planes of analysis can be found in Conquergood, 1991, 190.

ideas in a workshop caused a participant to learn of a conflict within the community that she did not know existed. During the Mathare community mapping activity, in which participants drew their three favorite places in Mathare on index cards and placed the cards all over the room as if on a giant map of Mathare, Milfred overheard two men from different neighborhoods discussing who built some illegal buildings in the area. She said that she did not know that some neighborhoods blamed each other for constructing the buildings—it was a new issue she discovered in the workshop.

As participants got to know one another better and learned about each other's issues, there was the realization that one individual's challenges were not his or hers alone; rather, they were often shared by other members of the CBO. As explained in chapter one, central to Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed was the need for the oppressed to realize that their individual struggles are not individual but shared by others—that their oppression is experienced by many. This realization, Freire said, is the first step in organizing to act against the oppression. Iris told me that she liked that we decided to represent the issue of "worry and stress" in our public performance because in her life, as a single mother, she often has worry and stress. Milfred said that this process of sharing her problems with others was, in and of itself, "community development:"

"First you know I thought that developing communities is maybe doing something like something to be seen. For example if I build this house, that is community development. But now you know I see it in so many ways. Like in theatre how I see it, not only building this structure can I develop a community, but even if I share with you my idea, we talk. If you have problem...then I'll help you overcome that problem. That's a development for me....If you are stressed, I'll come have fun with you, make you laugh. I have achieved something there for me."

This evidence suggests that although the act of performance itself might or might not reflect true representations of an actor's life that might allow the audience to get to know the actor himself

or herself better, the dialogues and conversations that occur *in the audience* during TFD workshop activities allows people to get to know what issues are important to others.

The third and final concept that reflects how the workshops build dialogue is the statue activities (described in the previous chapter). When I asked participants what they learned in the workshop or what activities they liked best, the most common response I received was the statue activities. In addition, in informal conversations with participants after the workshops, they continually told me how much they liked the statue activities because they thought it was a new form of theatre that they had never seen before in Kenya. Others liked the statue activities because it allowed them to communicate a message to the audience without using words. For CBO members who are not yet comfortable talking in front of others, statue games allow participants to express themselves without words. This helps to build dialogue as it might encourage shy participants to communicate with the group.

The statue activities also were effective in helping people recognize similar issues among the group. I suggest that this is because, just as in viewing an actual statue, the viewer has the liberty to interpret the statue's meaning. Therefore, in the workshop, participants could look at a statue and suggest many different things that the statue might represent. In the activity called "The Gallery of Hopes and Fears," participants were asked to mold their partner into a statue representing something they are proud of in their community, and then of something that they wish to change in their community. Once the "statue" was formed, I asked the person acting as the statue to freeze in that position and each artist had the opportunity to explain what his or her statue represents to the rest of the group. Figure 4.3 is a table of what each participant said his or her statue represents. The other participants in the room would then agree that they too struggle with the same issue, such as a lack of hospitals, a need for better schools, or for better farming

equipment (the three most commonly mentioned concerns in Segeru). Therefore, it seems that the statue activities allowed members to 1) voice their concerns/challenges in a non-verbal way and 2) to recognize similar issues were faced by other members, both which encourage dialogue within the group. Additionally, these responses bring up community problems which development programs try to illicit from participants, but which critics point out may be difficult for participants to discuss in a formal meeting context (see chapter one).

Figure 4.3 Reponses to the activity “Gallery of Hopes and Fears”

Mathare responses	Segeru Responses
Unclean environment Need a hospital Need food Need more workshops Sanitation Dogs Unity Tribalism Disease No peace Mugger Hunger Old Poor Pastor exploitation Women left alone pregnant Worried/stress Urinating Poor pay On strike Sad	Torn clothes Need a hospital (3 responses) Need education (3 responses) Need fertilizer Yoke needed to plow Need a bike to help disabled children go to school Early marriages Need more efficient pump for paraffin Orphans are hungry Need more churches Want to expand the farming Need a hospital for farmers Need more security from cattle thieves

In conclusion, I found that the TFD workshops encourage dialogue in three ways: First, as with other TFD projects in the literature, the act of performance helps CBO members become less nervous speaking in front of others. Second, TFD workshops allow members to get to know

other members better, which, in turn, helped them form groups to work on community projects. Finally, statues are a way to communicate through a non-verbal form of theatre. In these three ways it is apparent that a more creative, physically and vocally engaging process might encourage dialogue in a way that more formal, static participatory processes might not.

3. Examining power relations

Critics of participatory development methods point out that participatory projects do not, as they often claim, transcend existing local power inequalities by offering all participants equal opportunities to contribute and control the project (Mosse, 1994; Ribot, 1996; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Mosse, 2001). Instead, participatory projects often reveal, as did the many development projects that came before, that the development process continues to be controlled by such factors as 1) wider institutional forces that function primarily to mobilize and maintain political support (Mosse 2005), 2) the participants' knowledge and manipulations of the state political system (Li, 1999) and 3) the existing hierarchies of local power (Mohan and Stokke, 2000). Thus, the practice of development operates through a complex system of multiple power relationships (local, state, supranational institutions), which any project seeking to be "participatory" must acknowledge.

To evaluate if participants in the workshop engaged in critical reflection on this complex system of power relations, I looked through the interview data for ways in which these different power structures might be confronted. First, was there a challenge to local power relationships within the communities of Mathare and Segeru? Namely, did marginalized populations take on leadership roles within the workshop? Second, was there a challenge to the power structures that lie within the development processes in Kenya? To answer these questions, I looked for ways in which the public performance might have challenged these power relations, either through the

material discussed onstage or from the audience participation and reactions. In this section, I present two ways in which participants examined power relations in the workshops: In the workshop members of different ethnic groups came together and took on leadership roles in the workshop. Second, the public performance in Mathare brought the wealthier Nairobi residents into an informal settlement, which many had not seen before, causing them to reflect on the differences in wealth and standards of living within Kenya.

First, Abraham, MYTO's coordinator, told me in an informal interview that this workshop was the first time since the 2008 post-election violence that members of different ethnic groups had come together in a workshop setting. Attendance data confirms that in Mathare, a predominantly Luo area, only 42.5% of those attending the workshop were Luo. The rest were Luhya (22.5%), Kamba (17.5%), Kikuyu (12.5%), and Kisi (5%). He and other executive leaders of MYTO were very excited about this fact, and mentioned it several times. In addition, while discussing what things they would like to change in Mathare, ending "tribalism" was one of the most cited goals in the Mathare workshop. Furthermore, because the workshop consisted of people with different ethnic affiliations, we can see that the workshop itself is also working towards the goal of working to end "tribalism" in Mathare.

Given the physical and psychological scars of the post-election violence in Mathare (as discussed in chapter three), participants gave several reasons why they thought theatre was a good medium to promote multi-ethnic cooperation. David explained that theatre can be used to promote cooperation between ethnic groups because, through theatre, a member of one ethnic group can pretend to be a member of another group:

"Let's say I'm acting like somebody from this community and the other person is acting like somebody coming from this community. When we act, maybe on violence or on physical relations against one tribe to another tribe, then we show in the play that we are all Kenyans there is no need of fighting...So through theatre we can try to bring people together and

see what a Kikuyu can do a Luo can do, and what a Luo can do another tribe can do, and can do the same thing. That can bring development in our country.”

Milfred went on to say that because the workshop was composed of members of different ethnic groups, the audience watching their final performance saw that it is possible for members of different backgrounds to collaborate on a project.

From my own participant observations, I saw that not only did members of different ethnic groups come together to work on a project in the workshop, but they often took on leadership roles during the workshop. In a TFD workshop, although the facilitator gives out directions for the activities, many activities are designed to be conducted in small groups. Therefore, it is common that each group will have a leader who encourages and directs others. Therefore, in Mathare I witnessed leaders emerge from several minority ethnic groups represented. Given the context of Mathare as a mostly Luo area in which Kikuyu-identified gangs had wrecked havoc a little over a year before, it is significant that members of the Kikuyu, Kisi, and Kamba ethnic groups participated and took leadership roles in a workshop run by a mostly Luo organization (MYTO).

Furthermore, the TFD workshop shows how theatre can be a technique for identity-making. It has been suggested that election reform in Kenya must de-emphasize political mobilization around ethnicity and cultivate political identities formed through ideological lines instead (Southall, 2009). Conquergood (1991), suggests that culture should be seen not as a noun but a verb—something that is an “unfolding performative invention instead of a reified system” (190). He offers the view that cultural performance is way that marginalized communities can gain visibility and stage their identity. Milfred and David’s observations that staging ethnic group cooperation through performance can influence the audience to think of a national,

Kenyan identity rather than an ethnic one reflects Conquergood's observation that cultural performance allows communities to stage and actively create identity.

As the public performance allowed the performers to stage their own identities and confront power relationships within Mathare, it also brought audience members into Mathare where they reflected on the differences in wealth and standards of living within Kenya. The public performance brought the wealthier, urban Kenyans living in Nairobi into the space of the Kenyans living in the informal settlement of Mathare, who have lower incomes and are recently moved from the rural areas in search of work. Since Mathare residents often go into Nairobi for the goods and the work that is found in the city, bringing Nairobi residents into *their* space turns the existing power structure upside down and places the often higher class Kenyans in a space they are unfamiliar with, appalled by, and probably would not have visited otherwise, as the informal settlements do not have work or services that attract other residents from the city.

For example, Sam told me about one Muslim man from Nairobi who came to see the performances and "saw the suffering and didn't like it at all." At the end of the performances, he spoke to the crowd about what he saw in Mathare and his shock that his fellow Kenyans were living in such conditions. Sam said his speech "really touched the guys. When he was talking everyone became very quiet because he touched everyone. It was very painful." My drivers, two Kikuyu brothers from a village in the Mt. Kenya area, also had never been to an informal settlement before they drove me into Mathare. One thanked me for the opportunity to witness what life is like in these settlements because, he said, "In my village, I always thought we were very poor. But now, after coming to Mathare, I realize that there are Kenyans who are poorer than we are. I had no idea."

In conclusion, I saw that power relationships within Mathare and Kenya were reflected on during the TFD workshop experience. In Mathare, a mostly Luo community still trying to rebuild from the 2008 post-election violence, participants from other ethnic groups both participated and took leadership roles in the TFD workshop. Demonstrating such multi-ethnic cooperation is perhaps also a strong selling point for MYTO, as they are undoubtedly aware of international organizations' interest in trying to promote election reform for the upcoming 2012 elections. Second, the public performance brought wealthier Kenyans into Mathare, a low-income settlement they had not been in before, and a space with which they were unfamiliar. This juxtaposition caused some audience members to reflect on the differences between wealth and standards of living within Kenya.

While the previous section concentrated on the effects of the creative act of performance on the actors themselves, such as the effect of giving participants more confidence to speak in public, this section demonstrated the effects of performance in bringing together different groups of people—either people of different ethnic affiliations (within Mathare) or of different economic classes (within Kenya). On both scales, the gathering of people from different backgrounds caused some to reflect on the power inequalities behind those differences.

4. Participant ownership

The final element of my criteria for ideal participation is participant ownership. Critics of participatory methods have illustrated that the current participatory techniques are not designed to promote true ownership and control over development projects (Mosse, 1994). Drawing from Mosse's (2005) concept of subversive development consumer practices, I looked for ways in which MYTO practiced "participant ownership" by creating uses for the workshop that were not one of the explicit workshop goals. Therefore, I defined "participant ownership" as evidence that

participants used the workshop itself or the public performance opportunity to serve some greater purpose of the CBO. First, I found that MYTO might have also used the public performance on August 1st as a way to attract NGO cooperation for future development projects. By performing a play about a popular development topic such as HIV/AIDS, they maintained their position as the consumers of the dominant development policies while at the same time using their position to push their own development programs. Secondly, many participants told me they want to use theatre as an income generating activity for MYTO.

First, after the public performance on August 1st, several NGO employees from Kenyan and international organizations approached MYTO employees expressing interest in working with MYTO on future projects. Given that the public performance offered MYTO the opportunity to work with NGOs on development projects, we might speculate about the intentions of the workshop participants in performing a play about the need for HIV/AIDS consultation. Because HIV/AIDS has been a common health concern addressed by development workers in East Africa, there is often much funding available for HIV/AIDS related development projects. Therefore, it was perhaps in the best interest of MYTO to self-consciously perform a play about such a topic, because it could attract the attention of development workers who were in attendance from Nairobi.

Drawing from Mosse (2005), MYTO's recruitment of NGO partners may be interpreted as a situation in which the "subordinate actors in development (tribal villagers, fieldworkers, office staff, even project managers and their relation to donors)" (10) used a dominant model of development—an authorized script given by a pre-approved project idea—while at the same time using this model to serve their own interests. Mosse (2005) cites Michel de Certeau's concept of dispersed and subversive "consumer practices" in which an emphasis is placed not on what

products consumers use but the “*ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order” (de Certeau, 1984, xiii, emphasis in original; in Mosse, 2005, 7). Mosse points out that this is also similar to Scott’s (1990) concept of the existence of “hidden transcripts” which are used alongside the “public transcripts” of development policy. In the case of this public performance, we can see that MYTO exhibited participant ownership by performing their social position as the consumers of development agendas, while at the same time subtly playing the role of the producers by taking advantage of the opportunity to connect with NGO employees who could possibly fund projects beyond the HIV/AIDS scope. Thus, the inequalities inherent in development policy are continued while they are discretely transformed at the same time.

Secondly, another way MYTO participants exhibited ownership was their idea to use the skills learned in the workshop to earn income. Both focus groups and six out of the nine interviewees said that they would like to use theatre in the future to earn income. The most common way that participants wanted to generate more money for MYTO was by recording plays and selling them on DVDs. MYTO members frequently told me that one of their biggest challenges as a CBO is recruiting people to work for them, as they cannot offer payment. Therefore, they thought performing and recording theatre could be a good fundraising strategy.

Drawing from de Certeau (1984), Scott (1990), and Mosse (2005), this section examined how the workshop participants displayed participant ownership by using subversive consumer practices through co-opting performance as an opportunity to advance MYTO’s greater goals. MYTO might have used the public performance on August 1st to connect with NGO employees they hoped to work with on future projects. Also, many participants were excited about recording and selling performances to earn income for MYTO. As discussed in chapter three, this provides more evidence that in Kenya theatre is currently considered an effective way to attract attention

from either development-based NGOs or a paying audience in order to advance the CBO's own goals.

5. Conclusion

This chapter examined the ways that TFD can be a technique to address some of the critiques of participatory development. While it does not examine TFD as a development project, it does suggest that TFD can be a technique which might make development projects more participatory.

First, I suggest that the act of performance might help participants become less nervous speaking in front of others, which can help the CBO build dialogue among its members. This is because, as other TFD practitioners observe (Bundy, 2009; Fox, 2009; Nicholson, 2009), practice speaking and moving in front of others in a performance setting can encourage participants to be more confident expressing themselves with more authority in real-life situations. By giving participants the opportunity to speak with authority about issues that concern them, the TFD workshop might empower participants to speak with this authority when relating to others in the development process.

Second, the workshop might challenge unequal power relationships because theatre can be seen as a place to stage and create identity. Drawing from Conquergood's (1991) concept of cultural performance as a way that marginalized communities can gain visibility and stage their identity, I saw that in context of Kenya's post-election violence participants saw plays as a way that they can stage multi-ethnic group cooperation and promote a Kenyan identity over an identification with a specific ethnic group. Given that Mathare is a mostly Luo neighborhood where many contested the current Kikuyu president's election, engaging with issues of ethnicity is also an engagement with class and political power in Kenya. Therefore, TFD workshops might be a space in which new social arrangements can be staged and explored.

Finally, I explored the ways in which TFD might be a technique which encourages participants to take ownership over the workshop. To define participant ownership within the context of international development processes, I referenced Mosse (2005), de Certeau (1984), and Scott (1990) who remind us that the “consumers” of development (those accepting policies) can also simultaneously be the “producers” (typically those with the power to make development policies) by co-opting development programs to serve their own hidden agendas. I found that participants thought that public performances were an effective means of enlisting NGOs and paying audiences to help MYTO achieve its project goals.

Thus, perhaps we see that performance spaces such as the TFD workshop provide the kind of active, creative time and space which encourages participants to speak with more confidence onstage and off, critically analyze unequal power relationships between ethnicity and class, and attract the attention of other actors to help develop MYTO’s community. The next chapter will support these findings by demonstrating how participant’s own conceptions of “development” and “theatre” changed after the workshop to more context-specific definitions of the terms: “development” in terms of a more community-based, grassroots definition of “development,” and “theatre” in terms of a problem-solving, politically engaging theatre often used in Kenya.

Chapter Five: Changes in conceptions of “development” and “theatre”

“Not only building a structure, but even in theatre I see it’s like a development for me. Talking to you, laughing with you, making new friends, making people laugh, that I see is a development for me.”

—*Milfred, Mathare workshop participant*

1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined how TFD might be a technique to improve the participatory development process. To do this, I used the literature on participatory development critiques as a framework to inform and guide the evaluation. This chapter presents a different way to examine the relationship between the TFD workshops and the development process. Rather than consider how the workshop might inform participatory development through the lens of the literature, in this chapter I examine the ways the participants themselves conceptualized the workshop and its relationship to “development.”

To do this, I asked participants in a pre-workshop focus group to give me three words that come to mind when they hear “development,” “participation,” “theatre,” and “performance.” I gave participants each word one at a time. I recorded the responses, and repeated the process in a post-workshop focus group. Figure 5.1 presents responses to “development” and “participation” while Figure 5.2 presents responses to “theatre” and “performance” separately, as I address these concepts separately in the chapter.

While the small sample size of this research prevents me from drawing strong conclusions, the shift in language around the concepts of “development” and “theatre” is illustrative of larger changes that might have been captured if I had a larger sample size. First, I found that participants’ concepts of “development” and “participation” shifted from an externally-defined conception of “development” to a more context-specific definition based on

community led action. Second, participants' conceptions of "theatre" and "performance" shifted from an idea of performance to benefit the audience (either through entertainment or education) to a conception of performance as a space to recreate and explore reality—not for the benefit of the audience but so they may benefit from the experience of performing.

Figure 5.1 Responses to pre and post-workshop focus group questions about "development" and "participation"

	Mathare Pre-	Mathare Post-	Segeru Pre-	Segeru Post-
"Development"	-transformation of life -social, political, economic, positive change	-improvement -a person getting involved in what is taking place, instead of waiting for someone to come in - change -encouragement -unity -something good coming up	-changes which must come -step from one to another -things which can give us development - working as a team -improvement of living standards	-must work as a team if you want development -sharing ideas - solution to solving problems -participation
"Participation"	-something that people are doing to benefit the community -something that comes from someone's heart -transformation of a lifestyle	-something happening - involvement -"where", "when" -everybody has to do something -getting involved, together with others in a certain mission -changing ideas -"about what," "why," and "how"	-unity - to be in unity - to solve problems	-development -each and every member must give their ideas about what are problems in community

2. Changes in “development” and “participation”

Participants’ concept of “development” changed from a conception of an externally defined, traditional model of development in which lifestyle changes are brought in by an outsider to a more context-specific definition of development based on community-led action. In the pre-workshop focus groups in Mathare and Segeru, participants said that “development” made them think of “social, political, economic positive change,” “changes which must come,” and “step from one to another.” However, in the post-workshop focus groups, when they heard the word “development” participants thought of “a person getting involved in what is taking place, instead of waiting for someone to come in,” and “must work as a team if you want development,” “sharing ideas,” and “participation.” This shift from an externally defined conception of “development” to an internal, context-specific definition suggests that the TFD workshop not only provides techniques which might improve the participatory process, but also might transform people’s conception of “development” in general.

Similar to the shift in participants’ conception of “development,” I noticed a shift in participants’ idea of “participation” from a more vague conception of transformed lifestyles to specific ideas about every member contributing something to help change a community. Pre-workshop ideas included “transformation of lifestyle,” and “to solve problems” while some post-workshop ideas were “everybody has to do something,” and “each and every member must give their ideas about what problems are in the community.”

As Mohan and Stokke (2000) explain, the concept of “the local” and locally defined conceptions of development has been co-opted by many players along the spectrum of international development. At one end of the spectrum, labeled the “New Right” by Mayo and Craig (1995), some neoliberals claim that “the local” is the site of civil society, which can exert

organized pressure on unresponsive states. Empowered local groups and NGOs may then partner with state agencies and international institutions. The goal here is to increase the efficiency of the international development machinery as it is, and claims that empowerment of the powerless may be achieved within the existing social order. At the other end of the spectrum, the “New Left” (Mayo and Craig, 1995), post-Marxists hold that the marginalized peoples need to develop a class consciousness (the *conscientisation* Freire advocated for, see chapter one) so they may mobilize to challenge the state and the market. Thus, the New Left holds that the local is a site of empowerment which will topple the existing social order.

By situating my research in connection to Freire in the first chapter of this thesis, my interpretation of this shift to a more locally defined conception of development is more aligned with the New Left’s interpretation. Therefore, I suggest here that a definition of participation based on community-led action might represent a small shift towards MYTO’s mobilization to act on behalf of their own concerns. The use of theatre to exert political pressure is nothing new in Kenya; Thiong’o’s plays written in Kikuyu advocated for more literature written in non-European languages, which aroused a violent response by the Kenyan government (see chapter two).

Within TFD, the shared experience of participating in or witnessing a theatrical performance has often been harnessed to help mobilize a target group of people toward political action. Beth Osnes (2009) uses her one-woman performance *The Mother Load* to tap into the emotions of the mothers in her audience which, she says, can help them form a collective political identity. As many in the field believe, Osnes writes “The power of the shared experience in the live theatrical setting can be catalyst that moves a person from concern to action” (2009, 137). Helen Nicholson (2009), who worked with two British theatre companies

specializing in retelling the life stories of an elderly community and a South Asian immigrant community in the UK, found that “the performance of memory is inevitably a political act” (268). Nicholson says the performance of real life stories, often the stories of a marginalized community, is a performance which encourages political action for two reasons: First, when people retell their life stories they offer a testimony to the past that is different than the official accounts of history. Second, when memories are retold, the stories are relocated in the bodies and emotions of the audience members, who empathize with the storyteller and thus with a marginalized point of view. Feminist scholar Jill Dolan summarizes the potential of performance to engage “the local” towards political action: “Performance offers us a practice that lets us rehearse new social arrangements, in ways that require visceral investments of bodies, of time, of personal and cultural history” (2001, 16).

It is this “visceral investment” participants experienced in the TFD workshops which is radically different than traditional participatory development methods which ask participants to speak, write, or analyze but not to *do*. As the TFD practitioners noted above, I suggest that the participants’ shift to a locally-defined concept of “development,” which means that development requires community-led action, is because of the unique power of the “shared experience” which demands a “visceral investment of bodies, of time, of personal and cultural history” (Dolan, 2001, 16). The TFD workshop is a physically, mentally, and vocally engaging activity in which the fundamental action requested of participants is to *do* activities rather than verbally or analytically complete them. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, the visceral nature of performance also creates environments which are more open for dialogue than more formal approaches. Thus, the conditions are ripe to encourage participants toward community-led action.

Figure 5.2 Responses to pre and post-workshop focus group questions about “theatre” and “performance”¹⁰

	Mathare Pre-	Mathare Post-	Segeru Pre-	Segeru Post-
“Theatre”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -stage -actors -audience -bringing people together -cooperation -exercise is performed -entertainment -education (2) -nurturing talent (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -drama - music - acting -a problem and a solution (2) -not just entertainment -fun - unity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -performance to audience -conveying message to audience - may have talent but lacks exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -getting knowledge -people together makes us jovial -physically feeling well - confidence in front of audience - improvise different ideas and fix them
“Performance”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -want success -passing the message (3) -maintaining culture -laughing -entertaining people (2) -prayer for success - improving the talent (2) -ashamed -showing the talent -bringing the change -eating something -earning money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -what am I going to say -am I going to do this thing perfectly (2) - how am I going to act, what am I going to do? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -feel jovial (3) -become flexible -gain energy -feel exposed -movement -exchange of ideas - through acting we can bring exposure to group and develop group (2) - play can give teaching message to audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -happiness -feel nice when people are together -feel proud -motivates the audience and performers too - when theatre is going on people get knowledge -warns against immorality within the society

¹⁰ A number next to a response indicates the total number of similar responses.

3. Changes in “theatre” and “performance”

The post-workshop focus groups show a shift in thinking about “theatre” and “performance” from a means of entertainment and education to a process in which they can work out problems together. This shift correlates with interview data in which participants suggest that theatre is a place to recreate real life situations for reenactment and exploration. However, as the pre-workshop data reflects, it is important to note that MYTO, and East Africa in general, has a long history of using drama and performance for various purposes, as discussed in chapter three. Therefore, this section suggests that although I found a shift in language used to define “theatre” and “performance,” it might be that this is not a *new* shift but rather a definition that has historical roots in the uses of theatre in East Africa.

The most significant shift in participants’ concept of “theatre” is that in the post-workshop focus groups, respondents mentioned that theatre made them think of coming up with a problem and finding ways of solving it. Before the workshop, there were no references to this problem solving strategy in connection with theatre. I argue that this new concept of theatre as a means of solving a problem is because of the problem/solution model taught in the workshop. The “problem/solution model” refers to the way I taught participants to improvise: I said that every play is basically about characters trying to solve a problem together. Therefore, to train them to improvise a play, I asked them to come up with a basic problem (such as a flat tire) and show characters trying to solve the problem.

In Mathare, participants emphasized that this model helped them see theatre not just as entertainment, but as a way to spread a message for educational purposes. One member of the focus group said, “Theatre comes out of working with a problem, not just entertainment.” Likewise, Milfred said, “The other groups are just entertaining or something like a comedy...just

laughs. But let's say for example in theatre for development that you taught us, we learned that we have to do a story which, if it has a conflict, we have to build on how to solve it."

The Segeru participants said that the problem/solution model helped them realize that they can solve everyday challenges in their lives. In the focus group, one participant said, "When problems arise, we can find a solution...If the chairperson [of the CBO] is not around we need still need to solve problems." Raina told me that the things she learned in the workshop "are so good that help me in my future life." When I asked her how they can help her in her future life, she said: "For example, the issue with the broken vehicle...I saw how my dad and mom were solving problems. So that is how it can help me. If I grow up...I can solve my problems together with my husband and children." Besides the improvisational skits, participants in the Segeru focus group said that they liked the statue activities because "the statues were reality." This suggests that participants in the workshop were connecting the theatre activities to people's behavior in real life.

Participants could have watched the skits and reported that what they learned in the workshop was how to create a play by coming up with a problem and showing characters trying to solve it. Instead, they said that they can, in the space of theatre, brainstorm solutions to problems that they have faced or would face in their everyday life. In both Segeru and Mathare, participants saw that both the problems and solutions in the skit were not, as is often suggested of theatre, a fictional space outside of reality, but a space in which reality is represented in a way that invites active problem-solving from the participants, and, for educational purposes, from the audience as well. Because participants realized that in the fictional space of theatre they could practice solving the problems they face in everyday life, even when those in charge, such as the chairperson, are not around, they demonstrated that theatre can be a space in which existing

social arrangements can, in the words of Jill Dolan, be rehearsed in a new way (2001, 16). They found that those with decision-making power might be, within the space of a scene, absent and replaced with another person—even if that person is portraying a character who has, if only temporarily, a kind of decision-making power they don't have in real life. But within the moment of the scene, they do.

Using the space of fiction to rehearse reality is a fundamental application of TFD techniques. TFD practitioners find theatre useful because, as participants are the ones to decide how a scene will progress, the TFD workshop does not present the right way of doing things but opens up the space for multiple realities to be explored. As Augusto Boal, author of *Theatre of the Oppressed* and founder of TFD techniques, wrote, “It is not the place of theatre to show the correct path, but only to offer the means by which all possible paths may be examined” (1979, 41). More specifically, TFD practitioners have used theatre to allow people to retell traumatic experiences in their lives, and possibly see them re-enacted by others in a workshop setting, in order to gain some emotional distance from the event (Bundy, 2009; Fisher, 2009). Bundy (2009) explains that since the storyteller is forced to recall events in enough detail to be performed by others, this process of giving form to their story alters the emotional response that the person might feel if they were to recall this event outside of a dramatic setting. Lois Weaver (2009) used theatre workshops in women's prisons in the UK and Brazil to help the inmates imagine themselves living in improved circumstances, and identify personality traits they would like to change about themselves when they are released from prison. All of these examples show how, as the participants in the two TFD workshops reported, theatre can be used as a place to experiment with social arrangements and challenges faced in everyday life.

Since these performances created distance from the everyday, in which participants have the space to reflect on their everyday practices, one might wonder about the actual effect of this reflection on everyday practice. That is, we might speculate about the relationship between the on-stage (the performance) and the off-stage (the everyday life). Other TFD practitioners have investigated the way a performance can change everyday behavior patterns, as Beth Osnes and her team performed skits about cook stoves in Guatemala to see if this encouraged families to replace open charcoal fires in homes (Osnes and Bisping, in press). However, this research did not investigate any everyday life practices as they might have been changed by the workshop or the performances, so such a connection is beyond the scope of this thesis.

In conclusion, despite the participants' shift in thinking about theatre as a way to explore every day life's problems, given the history of theatre use in MYTO and in Kenya more generally, I suggest that this shift in their conception of theatre might not represent a shift from an "old" concept to a "new" one, but rather a shift towards a concept of theatre based on historical uses of performance in Kenya. Plays advocating for more equitable land use by Kenyan playwright Thiong'o and more current development projects such as the Community Health and Awareness Puppeteers (CHAPS) are two examples of ways in which theatre has been connected with development in Kenya's recent past.

As a final note, in both locations there were similar perceptions of what theatre was, even before the workshop. Both pre-workshop focus groups said that theatre is a way of nurturing talents. The concept of nurturing talent or finding hidden talent was a common theme in the one-on-one interviews as well. Therefore, it is clear that it was not the workshop which introduced this idea to the participants. Also, participants mentioned that theatre was not just about entertainment—it was also a tool for passing along a message to an audience. I attribute the

similarities to the fact that both groups had used theatre, song, and dance to educate others previous to this TFD workshop, as discussed in chapter three. Therefore, perhaps much of participants' eagerness to participate in these workshops is due to the fact that MYTO has a long history of using theatre as a means of education, and many workshop participants had performed in front of others in some way (through drama or music) before the TFD workshops.

4. Conclusion

Instead of framing participant responses within the context of the critiques of participatory development, this chapter examined shifts in how the participants themselves conceived "development" and "theatre." First, I found that participants' concepts of "development" shifted from an externally-defined conception of "development" to a more context-specific definition based on community led action. I attributed this shift to the fact that in TFD workshops, participants must physically, verbally, and mentally engage in activities, which sets it apart from other participatory development techniques. I suggest that this visceral engagement, a fundamental concept in performance, might encourage participants to also envision how they can physically and mentally engage themselves in the process of development. Second, participants' conceptions of "theatre" and "performance" shifted from an idea of performance to benefit the audience (either through entertainment or education) to a conception of performance as a space to recreate and explore reality. Given the history of theatre use in MYTO and in Kenya, such a shift might not signify a new conception of theatre but rather a reframing of the TFD workshop within the ways participants have seen theatre used in Nairobi in the past.

Conclusion

“If development is understood as a process in which people’s conditions—material, social, political or cultural—are changed, then theatre with its immense transformative potential seems to be an ideal form through which to explore a community’s developmental aspirations and possibilities.”

—*Thomas Prentki*¹¹

Since I left Kenya in 2009, I have kept in touch with several MYTO employees through email. Abraham told me that correspondents in neighboring countries such as Uganda and Tanzania requested TFD trainings for their organizations. On March 15th, 2010 MYTO performed a play about deforestation for the Mathare community. They will get a chance to perform in the Kenyan National Theatre on December 17th, 2010 along with eight other theatre groups at a theatre festival organized by a visiting German theatre facilitator. The eight participating groups all come from low-income communities near Nairobi. Given MYTO’s interest in theatre before the TFD workshop (explained in chapter three), I do not credit the workshops I facilitated as the sole reason for MYTO’s continued interest in theatre. Whatever the inspiration, it seems that many CBOs use theatre to discuss development in Nairobi, Kisumu, a city in western Kenya (Primestar Youth Group, April 8th 2010, e-mail message to author), and the coastal city of Mombasa in the east (Kwacha Afrika Troupe, 2010).

I went to Kenya wondering if theatre could be used as a form of participatory development. I left understanding that in Kenya it already is. However, despite the widespread use of theatre that I found, to answer my research question, “Can TFD techniques address the critiques of participatory development methods?” I had to examine *how* TFD workshops and performance might be used to engage a CBO in the international development process.

¹¹ 1998, 420.

To answer this research question, I first demonstrated in chapter one that Paulo Freire's pedagogy was one of the early influences in the development of participatory development, and that a way to address the current critiques in the field would be a return to his philosophy. In the second chapter, I introduced Theatre for Development as a technique which is also founded on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. I argued, given their similar philosophical influences it stands to reason that TFD techniques might be able to address some of the critiques of current participatory development practice. The third chapter introduced the two TFD workshops I facilitated during the summer of 2009 in Kenya within the larger context of politics, development, and theatre in Kenya. I introduced the case studies, MYTO, the format of the two workshops, and my methodology.

Chapters four and five presented analysis of my interview data and observation notes. Although each chapter presented a different method of analysis, my conclusions from both chapters reflect two observations: First, at a small scale, the act of performance, which I defined as a creative act of momentary, self-transformation, can create a space in which interpersonal relationships are either rehearsed or recreated. In the workshop participants had practice speaking in front of others, which they said became easier for them as the workshop progressed. Furthermore, I observed a shift in the participants' conceptions of "theatre" after the workshop to include the idea that theatre can be a place to explore everyday problems and possible solutions. As theatre practitioners have observed (Bundy, 2009; Fox, 2009; Nicholson, 2009), practice speaking in a performance setting can translate into more confidence speaking with others in real-life situations.

Not only can theatre be a place to rehearse reality, but it can be a fictional space to reinvent it. Like Jill Dolan (2001), in the TFD workshops I saw that the workshops were a place

in which participants could rehearse new social arrangements. Participants reported that in the improvisations they could practice solving the problems they face every day, though they could solve the problems as *someone else*. That is, teenagers could play adults, and CBO members could play the role of the director. Whether theatre is a place for participants to rehearse or recreate reality, TFD practitioners find theatre useful because, as participants are the ones who decide how a scene progresses, the TFD workshop does not present the right way of doing things but opens up the space for multiple realities to be presented. Allowing the participants to discover multiple solutions to a problem is a fundamental application of Freire's pedagogy which calls for the teacher or facilitator to engage students in dialogue rather than advocating one solution, truth, or reality. Perhaps, then we see theatre as a technique for encouraging Escobar's alternative "development imaginaries" (1995).

Second, at a larger scale, theatre can provide the opportunity for CBOs to recreate their relationships with international development organizations. Drawing from Mosse (2005) and de Certeau (1984), I referenced their theories that the "consumers" of development (those accepting policies) can sometimes simultaneously be the "producers" of development (those with the power to create policies) by co-opting development programs to serve their own purposes. At the Nairobi-wide theatre festival held in Mathare on August 1st, representatives from NGOs and other international development institutions were in attendance. Since participants wrote their play about possible HIV/AIDS treatments, and because HIV/AIDS is a development project in East Africa which receives much attention and funding, perhaps MYTO used the public performance as a way to engage with the NGO representatives from Nairobi on future projects.

Many participants also told me that they were proud that in the workshop and in the final performance members of different ethnic groups could be seen collaborating on a project, which

MYTO told me had not happened since the post election violence in 2008. To use Conquergood's (1991) concept of cultural performance as a way for marginalized communities to gain visibility and stage their identity, perhaps participants saw the play as a way they can stage a multi-ethnic identity and promote a Kenyan identity over an identification with a specific ethnic group. Such nationalistic efforts are also likely to draw attention from international agencies and NGOs, so perhaps MYTO used this theme to attract engagement for their own projects as well.

Do these two observations address the critiques of participatory development methods? I believe that any project which engages both scales, both interpersonal relationships as well as relationships with international institutions, such as this TFD workshop, does to some degree address what critics say is lacking in many participatory projects. While it is on the small scale that dialogue may be built amongst people in a cooperative process, it is on the largest scale that a development project addresses where the power rests in the development process. And on any scale, a project which is based in the creative arts should be, if it is to remain truly creative, in the firm direction and imaginations of the participants themselves. Thus, if we look at the three characteristics of participation in figure 4.2, all three were engaged by the TFD project.

Figure 4.2 Three characteristics of ideal participation

- 1) Participation should build dialogue in a cooperative process.
- 2) Participatory work needs to be aware of power relations.
- 3) Participatory planning should be a process that is managed by participants.

This is not to say that the TFD workshop is a flawless one, or that it is an example of ideal participation. It is to say that performance may create a unique space in the world in which transformation may be rehearsed. Or it may turn an empty lot into a stage in which NGO

representatives visit a low-income settlement where they may meet a CBO face-to-face, instead of over email or in an institutional meeting. The physical, mental, and vocal engagement which creates a public performance space, whether it be in a workshop setting or on a stage before hundreds of people, is a space which I believe holds great potential for a participatory development project.

However, given the widespread use of theatre in CBOs in Kenya, future research on the uses of TFD as a form of participatory development might investigate the uses of a workshop in an area where CBOs have never used theatre before. Another interesting avenue of research would be to investigate the history of theatre and development in Kenya, and trace the origins of the popularity of theatre among Kenyan CBOs. Finally, future research would do well to examine how the community development goals uncovered in a TFD workshop might translate into an actual development project.

Finally, it is important to note that there were parts of these TFD workshops which did not translate into this thesis. This is because there are parts of the creative process which are untranslatable. As Thomas Prentki (2009) explains, theatre is both a means by which people can improve the world and a method of playing, of simply enjoying a space separate from the world altogether. He reminds us that theatre may at times have no greater social purpose other than the enjoyment of using imagination in cooperative play and creation. As a participant of the workshops myself, there were certainly many such moments in the TFD workshops. I am certain that each part of theatre informs the other—that the enjoyment of creation and play encourages a greater social purpose towards which play might strive. I believe it is the nature of this creative experience which has much to offer to future participatory projects.

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