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“Invisible Theater in Mozambique – difficult to see?”

Abstract

Theatre is perceived as a common tool in communication for development. It can be a grassroots method that is simple and cheap. It is close to the people and therefore it has certain credibility. Theatre also has a long tradition on all continents.

This study tries to explore a certain technique of theatre. It is called Invisible Theatre (IT), and it is often perceived as a kind of guerilla theatre. Spectators will never be enlightened that they were a part of a theatre performance.

It was conceptualized by the Brazilian theatre pedagogue Augusto Boal. It is based on the Pedagogy of the Oppressed developed by Paulo Freire in the 1970s. Freire is Brazilian too, and his pedagogy is strongly influenced by the experiences of military dictatorships in South America. How to deal with oppression was one of the key questions that Freire addressed in his pedagogy, and later Boal in his theatre.

Invisible Theatre, which is under investigation on the following pages, is an especially crucial technique for NGOs and their communication in development context. One of the main obstacles is that any probable impact is hard to measure.

Therefore this research was double layered. On the one hand, it explored to what extent Invisible Theatre is able to be performed under so-called Third World circumstances. Four performances took place in the north of Mozambique. Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in Africa. On the other hand, it tried to find out if NGOs based in Mozambique show a certain interest in using Invisible Theatre for their communication. Ten NGOs were asked about their attitudes towards Invisible Theatre.

The study shows that most of the NGOs show a great curiosity towards Invisible Theatre, though they do not have any experience with this particular theatre technique. The performances showed that the impact wasn't too big; only a few *spect-actors* reacted to the role plays. What only can be assumed: What do the witnesses take home and does it lead to any further discussion? Therefore, Invisible Theatre can only be recommended as one element in an extensive campaign in a communication strategy by NGOs. IT also requires professional training.

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PROLOGUE

At the end of a show, actors prepare themselves for the applause.

We prepared as nervously for invasion.¹

[Augusto Boal]

Imagine there is turmoil in a train wagon, in a crowded marketplace or in a restaurant somewhere in the world. People are shouting at each other because they disagree on a certain topic. Or something happens that most of the audience does not like – somebody is accusing someone (perhaps without reason), or people are mistreated because they are different. Reasons for anger and misunderstanding are numerous all over the world.

But what if this conflict we are witnessing incidentally is not real? What if the whole aggression was pre-planned? What if the turmoil was staged by a director and his actors? What if most of the witnesses, the audience (including you and me), have no clue that they are being employed by a theatre play? And in consequence: Why are they doing it – staging a play without informing the employed that they are part of theatre?

The topic of this thesis will be under the great umbrella of Entertainment-Education (EE). To be more precise, this thesis analyzes a certain technique of theatre. The technique which will be investigated and was described before is called Invisible Theatre, and it was developed by the Brazilian theatre pedagogue Augusto Boal. Invisible Theatre is one of the techniques that comprise Boal's theatrical form Theatre of the Oppressed.

Invisible Theatre is well explored, and many rich experiences during the last decades have already been explored – worldwide. But this thesis is not only about developing a theatre play, performing it in public, and analyzing its probable impact. This thesis addresses Invisible Theatre because it is to some extent crucial and its course is hardly predictable. Therefore this research will also deal with the question of whether Invisible Theatre is an interesting tool for organizations that have experience with theatre or are interested in using certain types of

¹ Babbage, F. (2004), p.15

edutainment for their dissemination of information in the context of communication for development.

The research takes place in Mozambique: One of the poorest countries in Africa! Mozambique is a young democracy and full of national and international development organizations.

More than 30 years after its conception, Invisible Theatre is not a widely used tool in the theatre world; the same is true in Mozambique. Though theatre traditionally has a great importance and popularity in the southern African country, Invisible Theatre has hardly been used.

Therefore this study tries to describe the process of this project which lasted about two months: From the selection of the theatre company, to developing the play, until the performance and analysis of the plays.

This thesis does not limit itself to the theatre, but also investigates the question of whether this already described turmoil is of any use for development organizations who are trying to communicate their knowledge. Can Invisible Theatre be used by NGOs working in Mozambique? Can it be an interesting tool in addition to more classical and approved communication tools like workshops, radio dramas or printed material? This is precisely where the focus of this thesis lies.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The central research question of this thesis is:

- Is the Theatre of the Oppressed – especially Invisible Theatre - a feasible tool for development organizations in Mozambique?

It has to be taken into consideration that Invisible Theatre is/was hardly used in Mozambique². The results could lead to suggestions for NGOs to consider whether Invisible Theatre is of any use for them or not.

² In Boals's book *Theatre of the oppressed - Games for actors and non-actors* he explains briefly his theories, mostly through stories and examples of his work in South America and Europe. He then lists every

Invisible Theatre can be seen as an icebreaker and bring certain (hidden) aspects and topics to the foreground. I am a 'lifetime theatre enthusiast' and want to combine the spontaneity of Mozambicans and the creativity of the Invisible Theatre as a tool, which deserves to be scrutinized scientifically.

THE WAY TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This superscription can only be answered by trying. Working for the Catholic University of Mozambique as a consultant in the Communication Department, the researcher wanted to utilize some fine theatre actors/actresses of the university's own voluntary theatre group.

In the theoretical part of this thesis, there will be a closer look at the impact of theatre in the EE context. The emergence and use of Theatre of the Oppressed and its Invisible Theatre in EE will be discussed in detail. There will also be an approach of theatre in Africa in general.

The research is also trying to address the following specific research questions.

SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Does the Theatre of the Oppressed, especially Invisible Theatre, create a public discussion of taboo topics in Mozambique?
- How do the spectators react when they get involved in unconventional debates?
- To what extent is Invisible Theatre feasible in Mozambique with local actors and directors?
- What do NGOs think of Invisible Theatre as a communication tool for development?

drama exercise that he has found useful in his practice. It contains many practical examples for drama practitioners and is less academic. None of these examples refer to African experiences, last of all to Mozambican.

THE STAGE

The research was carried out in Mozambique, to be more precise in Nampula, the so-called capital of the north. I lived there with my family for three years and worked as a development worker and advisor at the Catholic University of Mozambique (UCM). Besides my personal familiarity with the reality of this southern African country, there are numerous reasons that it is interesting to evaluate Invisible Theatre in Mozambique.

MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique achieved independence in 1975, after a coup in Portugal led to the release of that country's colonies. The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), a guerrilla group that had long fought to oust the Portuguese, was subsequently installed as the sole legal political party; its leader, Samora Machel, became president. Independence was followed by a 16-year civil war that pitted the Soviet-allied FRELIMO against the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) – supported first by Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and later by South Africa. A peace accord was signed in 1992, with RENAMO agreeing to lay down arms and operate as a political party in a multiparty democratic system.³

Today 20, 5 million people live in Mozambique, most of them under very poor conditions.⁴ The country is still marked by decades of war. Poverty is omnipresent: Be it a lack of schools and teachers, or poor infrastructure. The city of Nampula, where the research was executed, counts around 400.000 inhabitants⁵ and is the third largest city in Mozambique (after Maputo and Beira).

WHAT MAKES THE STAGE SPECIAL

This young democracy is one of the favorites of international development aid. Half of the Mozambican state budget is donor funded.⁶ Despite this, Mozambique remains one of the world's poorest countries. According to the UNDP Human Development Index, Mozambique ranks

³ United Nations; History of Mozambique

⁴ Based on statistics of the 3rd National census held in 2007

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lloyd, Robert B. (2008) UNHCR, Freedom in the World - Mozambique

172nd out of a total of 177 countries – the lowest in the Southern Africa Development Community.⁷ And this poverty affects everyday life in Mozambique.

Officially, nobody is oppressed in Mozambique. Though human rights like freedom of speech or freedom of religion are guaranteed in the constitution, life in Mozambique is marked by multiple constraints.

The juridical system is weak and corruption is widespread; these are hallmarks of Mozambique's daily routine. In a recent UNHCR report we read that:

[T]his widespread vigilantism is due in part to a lack of access to the formal judicial system and a relatively low level of incarceration compared to other African countries. These developments underscore the state's lack of legal and judicial capacity. The police are widely seen by Mozambicans as corrupt. Training is inadequate, and deaths due to HIV/AIDS both deprive the government of trained police forces and necessitate the training of additional police officers each year.⁸

Therefore it is not surprising that Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranked Mozambique 99th out of 163 countries surveyed. The CPI score (10 being the least corrupt) was 2.8, the same as for the previous two years.⁹

Looking at the indicators of press freedom, the figures are slightly encouraging. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranks Mozambique 45th out of 168 countries in its 2006 press freedom index.¹⁰

Many observers believe that Mozambique's press has flourished since the devastating 16-year civil war ended in 1992. However, journalists are still haunted by the 2000 murder of Carlos Cardoso, who was killed for his aggressive investigative reporting on a 1996 corruption scandal involving the state-controlled Commercial Bank of Mozambique.¹¹ The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) assesses press freedom in Mozambique rather positively though in its

⁷ United Nations; Mozambique-Key-Development-Indicators

⁸ Lloyd

⁹ Transparency International "Corruption Perceptions Index" 2006

¹⁰ Lloyd

¹¹ Ibid

2006 annual report it lists incidents that prove the government is striving for more media control.¹²

It cannot be expected that Mozambican society is fully informed of these reports and statistics because of a lack of access to information. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that people are aware of the problems and that most of the citizens have directly or indirectly experienced inequality. It therefore can be assumed that life in Mozambique is not marked by frankly open speeches on each and every topic, especially taking into consideration centuries of Portuguese colonialism and decades of civil war.

There is no proof that the actual Mozambican society is comprehensively oppressed, but there is also no hint that Mozambicans are comprehensively free. Mozambique therefore offers numerous applications for Invisible Theatre.

¹²

TECHNIQUE

How to communicate development? The answer for development communication practitioners is wide ranging. Specialists and organizations are confronted with a multitude of communication approaches and techniques that they can adopt to pursue specific programmatic goals. There is a bundle of strategies at hand. Some of the most widely used communication strategies are: Entertainment Education (EE), Social Marketing, Interpersonal Communication and Listening to Indigenous Knowledge.¹³

Research undertaken by the World Bank looking at trends in communication approaches and techniques shows that Entertainment Education is the second most used communication strategy in development¹⁴ after interpersonal communication. Authors like Tufte¹⁵, Singal and Rogers¹⁶ confirm the popularity of EE as a communication strategy.

EE AS A TOOL

But what does EE stand for and where does it come from?

Entertainment education is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms and shift overt behaviors.¹⁷

This is one definition of EE, but it is not *the* definition. Other researchers (e.g. Tufte) do encapsulate more or less the same guidelines but do emphasize differently. In general, EE can be perceived as a strategy to bring social change. It is using media to bring along – in a light and entertaining way – the message. A central idea underlying the EE strategy is that people learn from positive role models with whom they can identify.

¹³ Inagaki, N. (2007), p.14

¹⁴ Ibid, p.15

¹⁵ Tufte, T (2005), p.160

¹⁶ Singal, A. (2004), p.7 From their point of view, numerous development organizations, media professionals and communication departments of universities are now involved with EE. "Today a map of the world would show EE almost everywhere."

¹⁷ Singal, p.5

For Tufte¹⁸, one of the first examples of EE is the comic figure Popeye; though he was not originally designed to change behavior or attitudes. In the 1930s, the cartoon character saved the crisis-torn spinach industry in the US. Meant as a marketing tool, Popeye succeeded in raising the sales of spinach, but in a second step the figure changed children's negative attitude towards spinach in particular and vegetables in general.

EE as defined generally began in developing countries, though it was first conceptualized in the USA in the 1960s and earlier in England in the 1950s¹⁹. One of the reasons why EE became popular in developing countries was a technical change, too. It is the rapid increase in radio and television receivers in poor countries since the early 1970s. The number of radios in developing countries, for example, grew from 82 million in 1965 to 997 million in 1995.²⁰

Tufte underlines that EE is based upon social marketing. "Social marketing is one of the key origins of today's EE-strategies, and it is still at the core of many first generation EE-communication strategies."²¹ One of the pioneers of using EE in the developing world was Mexican Miguel Sabido, who was responsible for the world's first family planning television serial drama, *Acompáñame*, which started in 1977.²² According to statistics, the intervention was a success: Mexico's population growth rate declined from an estimated 3, 1 % to 2, 7% in one year²³.

Tufte distinguishes the history of EE into three generations. The first is driven by its Social Marketing characteristics, while the second and third generations have "a stronger focus on communicating structural inequalities, representing and working with power relations and social conflict in the everyday life of the characters, and the representation of such problems stimulating debate and collective action."²⁴

¹⁸ Tufte, p.159

¹⁹ Tufte, p.162 and Poindexter; p. 21

²⁰ Melkote, S. (2001), p.139

²¹ Tufte, p.162

²² Poindexter, D. (2004), p.27

²³ Ibid.; p.28

²⁴ Tufte; p.163

THEATRE

EE AND BOAL'S THEATRE

EE typically seeks to instruct its audience by embedding lessons not only in television and radio serial dramas (telenovelas/radionovelas), but also in other familiar forms of entertainment such as cartoons and comic books, internet and theatre. Later we will see that the analyzed Theatre of the Oppressed and its technique Invisible Theatre by Augusto Boal fits mostly into the definitions of the second and third generation. The reasons for this are the high level of participation (2nd Generation) and the greater importance of giving empowerment to the people; or to say it in the words of Freire and Boal – giving the powerless a voice.

In order to break down the theory of EE on the Theatre of the Oppressed and its Invisible Theatre, that is, to connect EE and Theatre of the Oppressed, it is interesting to consider what Bradley Greenberg wrote about the efforts of EE:

The premise of these efforts is that receivers will benefit because they learn a new idea, think differently about some idea, or behave differently as a result of their exposure, especially because of the message that was embedded in an entertaining context.²⁵

This can be seen as theoretical and practical guidelines for the Theatre of the Oppressed.

THEATRE IN AFRICA/MOZAMBIQUE

Before we look more closely at the characteristics of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, we should first embed theatre in general in the Mozambican context and try to answer the question: what does theatre stand for in Mozambique?

Mozambique was colonized by the Portuguese in the 16th century. But it was only after the Berlin-Conference of 1884/1885 that the hinterland became vastly explored. Therefore, indigenous theatre was conserved for a long time. But traditional pre-colonial theatre in Mozambique, like in many other African countries, is difficult to compare with a Western notion of theatre.

²⁵ Greenberg, B. (2004), p.192

Cristina Maia Caetano provides a detailed description of the different forms of theatre in Mozambique. Traditional pre-colonial Mozambican theatre was mainly a mix of dances and role play with a narrator. The stories were coined in the oral tradition. The traditional theatre narrates quotidian stories of everyday life, today mainly mixed with an educational undertone.²⁶

After independence in 1975, theatre was used in the service of the revolution and to establish the new Marxist-Leninist orientation.²⁷ Traditional pre-colonial theatre was displaced by a theatre which Luis Mitras, writing in 2004, describes as follows:

It is probably true to say that the most innovative and technically proficient [theatre] work in Mozambique has been produced in the last 15 years. But a broad look at the theatrical scenario shows that the quality of the work remains uneven. There is still no tradition of writing and publishing plays, and companies tend to rely on foreign (European, Portuguese, Brazilian, South African) text. In addition, theatrical productions are mainly limited to the capital city of Maputo.²⁸

Various NGOs and governmental organizations in Africa have discovered theatre as a tool for dissemination of their ideas. Awam Amkpa, writing about theatre in Africa, argues that “[T]heatre for development emerged as one such cultural practice that helped communities produce forms of resistance by using performance traditions not only to tell stories of their oppression but also to galvanize them into action.”²⁹

The Ghanese Osita Okagbu does not deny the importance of theatre in a development context, but he criticizes the way it is used:

My argument then is that the majority of Theatre for development programs and practices in Africa seem not to be aiming to achieve the transformation of the theatre process into a

²⁶ Caetano C. (20004), p.95

²⁷ Mitras, L. (2004), p.391 The theatre production Chibalo which was an comprehensive attack on imperialism and colonialism ended with a chorus of a rather predictable slogans to educate the audience:
Long live FRELIMO!
Long live the Unity of the Mozambican People!
Long live Independence of our People!
Down with racism!
Down with tribalism!
Down with alcoholism!

²⁸ Ibid, p.393

²⁹ Amkpa, A. (2006), p.161

potential context and the theatre itself into a language of exploration and expression for the deprived communities in which their Theatre for Development activities are pitched; and then even when and where they are aiming to achieve this objective, they are, in the main, unable to do so.³⁰

Explicitly excluded by the critique of Okagbu is the Theatre of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal.

³⁰

Okagbu, O. (1998), p.24

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

BOAL

*The Theatre of the Oppressed, in all its various modalities,
is a constant search for dialogical forms,
forms of theatre through which it is possible to converse,
both about and as part of social activity, pedagogy, psychotherapy, politics.*

[Augusto Boal]

Augusto Boal is of Brazilian origin and was born 1931 in Rio de Janeiro. He came from a wealthy family, and he studied chemistry. However, he was more impassioned about theatre, and he wanted to live his theatrical ambitions. After his graduation in Brazil, he went to New York to continue his studies in chemistry and enrolled in a theatre course at the Columbia University. There he got in contact with the playwright John Gassner. Gassner argued that “the audience need not be given *either* realism *or* theatricalism, but can enter into a performance’s sense of reality at one moment”³¹ and in the next moment enter into the sense of the theatrical.

Boal returned to Brazil in 1955 with a strongly developed awareness of theatre’s potential. For the next 15 years, he worked as playwright and director at the Arena Theatre in São Paulo. The relatively liberal working conditions at the theaters in Brazil changed after the military, under the leadership of General Branco, overthrew the government in 1964. Increasingly restrictive measures were introduced by the new regime, and during the succeeding years Arena’s activities became progressively more threatened “first by censorship, then by the physical aggression of the military and its ultra right-wing supporters.”³²

In 1971, the aggressions reached their peak; Boal and other theatre activists were detained. After a few months, he was sent into exile and went to Argentina. There, Boal more fully encountered

³¹ Babbage, F (2004), p.8

³² Ibid, p.15

the pedagogy of Paulo Freire and his methodology that was based on *conscientização* (broadly: consciousness-raising).^{33 34} It was the hour of birth for the Theatre of the Oppressed.

The Theatre of the Oppressed is strongly influenced by the Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Boal's compatriot Paulo Freire.

Arvind Singhal states: "Theatre of the Oppressed's techniques – based on Freirean principles of dialogue, interaction, problem-posing, reflection and conscientization – are designed to activate spectators to take control of situations, rather than passively allowing things to happen."³⁵ Boal's theatre is highly participatory. Through the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed, he dissolved the classical relation between actor and spectator (sender and receiver) and turned the spectator into an actor, or as Boal coined it: *spect-actor*.

Spect-actors become active, so that they explore, show, analyze, and transform the reality in which they are living. The final goal of the Theatre of the Oppressed is that the participants should become aware of their oppression, or as Singhal puts it: "Its main purpose is to make the unequal equal and the unjust just."³⁶

There are different forms of the Theatre of the Oppressed, such as *Newspaper Theatre*, *Forum Theatre*, *Invisible Theatre*, and *Image Theatre*. These were mainly developed in Latin America during the period of military dictatorships (1971- 1976)³⁷. The most popular form of the Theatre of the Oppressed is probably the *Forum Theatre*, where the audience participates after a certain moment (usually the climax of the drama, the point of culmination). Audience members come up with suggestions of how the drama should end. They can even participate and perform their suggestions with the actors. Another form of the Theatre of the Oppressed is the *Newspaper Theatre*, where the participants try to stage the content of newspaper articles.

³³ Ibid, p.20 "In developing this process, Boal has moved significantly beyond Arena's *agit-prop* theatre of the early 1960s. In presenting plays designed to rouse working class audiences to rebellion, the company had adopted an equivalent of the top-down process that Freire criticized: They sought to enlighten their audience with readymade answers."

³⁴ Ibid, p.19 Boal met Freire for the first time in 1960. Later, in exile, Boal was confronted with the pedagogy of Freire again. Boal was contracted by the ALFIN project (Operacion Alfabetizacion Integral) in Peru to eradicate illiteracy using theatre techniques. The project was based on the pedagogy of Freire.

³⁵ Singhal, p.384

³⁶ Singhal, p.385

³⁷ Babbage, p.21

The form of the Theatre of the Oppressed which is in focus of this research is the *Invisible Theatre*. Here the spectator is not aware of being a spectator. The Invisible Theatre is first rehearsed by actors and then performed in public without the public's knowledge. The actors are trying to provoke and involve people by debating and discussing crucial topics. Their stages are mainly crowded public spaces like restaurants, markets or trains.

NEDERVEEN & CO.

The Theatre of the Oppressed embodies a profound shift in the relationship between audience and actors; between active performers and inert spectators. This shift is analogous to what has happened in the historic evolution of communication for development.

The cooperation between developer and developed went through several phases and critiques after the Second World War. A widespread approach in the 1950s and 1960s was based on the *modernization* theories, which were also stimulated by the spirit of the Enlightenment. The world was in state of emergence after World War II. Rebuilding (from ruins) on the one side, and liberalization from colonial rule on the other, were the pillars of the Zeitgeist.³⁸ In a top-down approach, poor countries had to be redeveloped fundamentally. Development researchers Schech and Haggis argue that “[n]ot only the economy had to be transformed, but also the educational system, the ways of thinking, acting and living.”³⁹ The ultimate goal was the welfare state of the global north.

Expectations of the modernist approach failed. As a consequence, the development community started focusing on a moderate, so-called *basic needs approach*, where more attention was brought towards the most vulnerable (women and children) populations in Third World society. Accesses to safe drinking water up to individual freedom were the keywords.⁴⁰ A more substantial critique of modernization was presented by the so-called *dependency* or *underdevelopment* theories. In general, they argued that the underdevelopment of the Third World has to be seen in the same world-historical process of development that the First World

³⁸ Servaes, J. /Malikhao, P. (2005), p. 92

³⁹ Schech, S./Haggis, J (2000), p.9

⁴⁰ Compare definition of basic needs by the International Labor Organization formulated in 1976, Schech/Haggis: p.12

underwent.⁴¹ Dutch sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse defines mainstream development as that which was achieved up until the 1970s. Consequently “dissatisfaction with mainstream development crystallized into an alternative, people-centered approach to development.”⁴² Nederveen sees *alternative* development as a development from below and community orientated, which is based on participation.

Adding now the communication aspect to development theory, we can refer to the communication scientists Jan Servaes and Patchanee Malikhao, who emphasize that “[T]he most developed form of participation is self-management. This principle implies the right to participation in the planning and production of media content.”⁴³

Looking at the Theatre of the Oppressed, we can conclude that it is incompatible with the modernization approach of the 1950s and 1960s, where communication flows (mainly done by mass media channels) were hierarchical, one-way, and top down. The concept of the Theatre of the Oppressed fits more into the idea of alternative development coined by Nederveen or the notion of self-development which gained popularity in the 1970s. Srinivas Melkote believes that:

“[U]ser-initiated activity at the local level was considered essential for successful village-level development. Thus, the emphasis was not so much top-to-bottom flows for information and messages from a government official to a mass audience, but importantly, bottom-up flows from users to sources, and horizontal communication flows of communication between people. People need to have open discussions, identify their needs and problems...”⁴⁴

This detour around modernization shows that the Theatre of the Oppressed is not only developed in the spirit of dictatorial regimes in South America. It can also be seen as a countermovement to established communication theories.

Besides the many experiences Boal had during his theatre work in South and North America, where he was influenced by political and historical circumstances, the roots of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed lie particularly with one theory: the pedagogical philosophy of Paulo Freire.

⁴¹ This is one of five key points when Leys discusses the similarities of dependency and underdevelopment theories. Schech/Haggis, p.14

⁴² Pieterse, J. (2001), p. 75

⁴³ Servaes/Malikhao, p.95

⁴⁴ Melkote, p.249

FREIRE

In 1997 when Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire died, Augusto Boal's reaction was: "I am very sad. I have lost my last father. Now all I have are brothers and sisters." There is hardly any pedagogue who was more influential in the last century than Freire. The Brazilian left a legacy of memorable educational and political achievements. Freire influenced everybody: from political activists to church leaders, from adult literacy coordinators and teachers to psychologists, among others.

Paulo Freire was born in 1921 in Recife, and he experienced hunger and poverty during his childhood after his father lost his work and savings. Working as a teacher, he soon understood that the "educator's greatest challenge was to understand, appreciate and respect the knowledge of people's lived experience."⁴⁵

Freire believed that dialogue proposed by elites is vertical. It has two outcomes: It shapes the educated and it prevents the educator from showing what they think. Freire described it as *bank pedagogy*; education is an act of depositing. In this form of dialogue, which was influenced by the dictatorial reality in the 1960s and 1970s in South America, the person who is educated needs to listen and obey. "In order to pass from the stage of ingenious conscience to critical conscience, it is necessary to follow a long path, along which he who is being educated will reject the oppressor who has been living inside him."⁴⁶ During his work, he was striving for a concept of dialogue as a horizontal relationship.

Another key word in his dialogical pedagogy was awareness raising – conscientization! The dialogue should stimulate a process of critical reflection and awareness on the part of the poor, creating possibilities of reflective action that did not exist under a vertical dialogue.⁴⁷ The concept of dialogical pedagogy and its reflection of the oppressor (colonizer) and oppressed led into the well-known book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Published in 1970, the book argues that most political, educational and communication interventions fail because they are designed by

⁴⁵ Singhal, p.381

⁴⁶ Gadotti, M. (1994), p.51

⁴⁷ Singhal, p.383

technocrats based on their personal view of reality which has nothing to do with the reality of those being educated.

Freire's pedagogy did not get along without critique. In the mid-eighties, for example, a discussion broke loose started by Puerto Rican Blanca Facundo. The major argument in her essay, *Freire-inspired programs in the United States and Puerto Rico: a critical evaluation*, can be summarized as escapism:

It may be beautiful to think that we are (1) acting out of love, (2) *non-elitist*, (3) prepared to commit "*class suicide*," and (4) prepared to *learn* from the learners, who we consider our *equals* in a common quest for *effective* ways to *fight* against *oppression* and create a *new world*. Beautiful, but, is it true?⁴⁸

Facundo's critical remarks were widely responded to by a number of pedagogues. And the discussion has not come to an end.

Boal was not irritated by critiques and looked closely at Freire's arguments during the years. Mady Schutzman summarizes their relationship as follows:

In Freire, Boal located dialogue, the belief that the marginalized are not marginal but central to the structure of society, an elaboration of the transitive and dialectic roots of social existence, and a pedagogy predicated on a ever-changing, performative reality. Boal shared with Freire an understanding of praxis – the inseparability of reflection and action, theory and practice – in pursuit of social change.⁴⁹

Consequently, in 1974, Boal published his reflection on Freire's pedagogy and called his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*. It was first published in Spanish, and later, in 1979, it was translated into English. It is considered to be Boal's most influential academical work, in which the reader follows Boal's detailed analysis of the Poetics of Aristotle and the early history of Western theatre.

Boal states that Aristotelian epic is a means of oppressing the masses, the people, the workers and the spectators in favor of stability and the continued dominance of a privileged few. "[T]he world is known, perfect or about to be perfected, and all its values are imposed on the spectators,

⁴⁸ Facundo, B. (1984)

⁴⁹ Schutzman, M. (2006), p.133

who passively delegate power to the characters to act and think in their place. [...] Dramatic action substitutes for real action.”⁵⁰

BRECHT

Though many years have passed, Boal identifies the same concept in the epic theatre of Brecht. In Brecht’s plays, the gap between actor, character and dramatist (the stage) on the one side, and the audience on the other, remains. “By way of songs, narration, and distancing, the dramatist reveals things and in so doing reveals himself. He exposes his thoughts. He doesn’t hide behind his characters; [...] But the stage remains his private property, his space, his territory.”⁵¹

The theatre pedagogue was also reflecting on theatre history. Boal complained about the geography of the ‘classical’ theatre. Numerous experiments were undertaken to break the distance between spectator and actor: from the Elisabethan style where the stage enters the auditorium, up to the Japanese Kabuki stage which surrounds the spectators. However, none of these eliminated the gap between actor and observer. After experiencing various forms and theories of theatre, Boal formulated his new approach: “I, Augusto Boal, want the spectator to take on the role of Actor and invade the Character and the stage. I want him to occupy his own Space and offer solutions.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Boal, A. (2000), p.155

⁵¹ Ibid , p.xx

⁵² Ibid, p.xxi

INVISIBLE THEATRE

Now we shall look closer at the theory behind Invisible Theatre (IT). The above-mentioned approach of reformulating the relationship between actor and observer can be clearly identified in the concept of Invisible Theatre. With the Invisible Theatre, “the spectator is on equal terms with the actor,” Boal believes⁵³.

The Theater of the Oppressed (where IT is one of its techniques) was created in a special context, the dictatorial regimes in South America, where the figure of the Oppressor and the Oppressed were clearly defined. The main goals of the Theater of the Oppressed in its origins were to achieve a pacific confrontation with the social structures of a society dominated by injustice. There were objective Oppressed Protagonists, who could easily identify their Oppressor, the person who limits their aspirations. There was a homogenous group of oppressed people, who were meeting in a forum to try to find alternative solutions to objective, well-defined oppressions. This is the concept of Boal’s Forum Theatre, which clearly follows a common theatrical structure, for example by using a clearly defined stage.

But in the Invisible Theatre, the spectator is going to be involved and turn into an actor without knowing it. The spectator will never be enlightened about the fact that they are part of a play. The Invisible Theatre erupts in a location chosen as a place where the public congregates. All the people who are near become involved in the eruption and the effects of it last long after the skit has ended. That is the theory.

One of Boal’s objectives was to start a public debate about unexpressed topics of the oppressed, because this group of people “wants to communicate an experience, it wants to illustrate something and it therefore draws on sensual means,” Boal explains.⁵⁴ The theatre pedagogue underlines the differences of IT on the one side and happenings and guerrilla theatre on the other.

In both, especially in the latter, we identify theatre where a wall arises between actor and spectator. This is crucial because in Boal’s eyes a spectator is less than a person.

⁵³ Boal, A. (1989), p.35

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.36

In the Invisible Theatre the theatrical rituals are abolished; only the theatre exists, without its old, worn out patterns. The theatrical energy is completely liberated, and the impact produced by this free theatre is much more powerful and longer lasting.⁵⁵

Boal describes this theatrical energy in numerous examples he undertook all over the world: in North and South America and in Europe. The locations Boal and his company chose were markets, trains or streets. The issues performed were as complex: racism, sexual harassment labor rights and so forth. The performances mentioned in *Games for Actors and Non-actors* describe an evident reaction of the people involved. Many examples ended in chaos like a pro-pedestrian plot where actors were having a picnic at a table in the middle of a busy street in Stockholm.⁵⁶

Like all other techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed, Invisible Theatre was invented out of necessity – in creative response to situations for which existing methods had proven insufficient. In dictatorial regimes, it became too dangerous to pre-announce the presentation of controversial material in a public theatre. The idea was born to raise the issue invisibly, without pre-advertisement and the resulting presence of police or military, and without evidence of who is an actor and who is not.⁵⁷

Looking at the development and reception of the Theatre of the Oppressed and its Invisible Theatre, Boal's later work, *The Rainbow of Desire*, re-evaluates the practices commonly associated with the Theatre of the Oppressed for a new purpose. It can be argued that the book is more concerned with creating harmony within society, whereas his early work was concerned with rebellion and upheaval. In *The Rainbow of Desire* he believes that the "[t]heatre is born when the human being discovers that it can observe itself; when it discovers that, in the act of seeing, it can see *itself* – see itself *in situ*: see itself seeing."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Boal (2000), p.147

⁵⁶ Boal (2002), p.14 „The arguments raged. The actors were fired with enthusiasm and went on to improvise well beyond their bounds of their improvised texts. As a result of the marvelous response from the spectators, the improvisation went on a further quarter of an hour, which is a very long time for this kind of theatrical event.”

⁵⁷ Babbage, p. 21

⁵⁸ Boal, A. (2003), p.13

On the other hand, Polish Cultural Studies lecturer at Nicholas Copernicus University, Edyta Lorek-Jezinska, criticizes “that Invisible Theatre is always double-edged; it encourages authentic participation on the part of the audience on the one hand, yet on the other, it is based on ultimate deception.”⁵⁹

THEORIES ABOUT EE AND THEATRE

We have defined EE before; we can summarize and again refer to Singhal and Rogers, who believe that EE is not a theory of communication, but “[r]ather it is a communication strategy to bring about behavioral and social change.”⁶⁰ Singhal and Rogers state that the dominant theoretical basis for most EE research is based on Albert Bandura’s *social learning theory*. Bandura explains:

In an Entertainment Education program, soap opera characters ‘teach’ audience members via modeling that they are able to make a recommended response, thereby enhancing self-efficacy perceptions, and that the recommended response works in averting an unwanted outcome, thereby enhancing outcome expectancies.⁶¹

“A natural fit exists between Bandura’s theory and EE interventions, which often seek to influence audience behavior change by providing positive and negative role models to the audience.”⁶² And to continue at this point we can ask the overall question: to what extent is the audience influenced by what it can see or hear?

This controversy led to various forms, approaches or generations in EE. In a previous chapter, it has been mentioned that EE can be classified in three generations. Tufte points out that there is a shift from social marketing strategies which focus on individual behavior change (1st Generation), to strategies to involve the audience (2nd Generation), to self empowerment (3rd Generation).

⁵⁹ Lorek-Jezinska, E. (2001), p.7

⁶⁰ Singal, p.5

⁶¹ Sood, S. (2004), p.125

⁶² Ibid, p.12

This has led to a recovery of the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire. “Freire’s conscientização could be utilized to secure community involvement in EE strategies.”⁶³ Tufte believes that the philosophy of Freire provides a pathway for connecting interventions “to the questions of power, inequality and human rights.”⁶⁴

While Tufte highlights Freire’s pedagogical concept for EE, Nancy Morris expresses a pessimistic attitude toward EE and its assumed success. Our initial question can be extended: Is EE influential at all? Morris concedes the effects of EE, but also takes into consideration that some practitioners have been misled by the undeniable popularity of EE interventions. Morris argues, “but popularity is not equal to efficacy. Their popularity indicates that these shows entertain. The mixed results of these studies suggest that they do not always educate.”⁶⁵

In this quote, Morris is referring clearly to mass media like *telenovelas*, televised soap operas. She agrees with many other researchers that there is an additional interpersonal communication to mass media as a two step flow process which implies participation. Therefore, under certain circumstances, EE is effective (participation, two steps); but how does it work?

This question is raised by countless theorists. Sood, Menard and Witte give a compact overview of theories behind EE. What is most interesting for this study is the *audience-centered theories* that try to answer why and in what way the audience reacts. In *audience-centered theories* there are three sub-theories:

- Gratification theory
- Parasocial theory
- Audience involvement

What is most relevant for Invisible Theatre is the audience involvement. This means relating personal experience with the just-received message from the media (be it television or theatre). This then leads into the cognition: *this is exactly what happened to me*. Or how Sood et al.

⁶³ Tufte, p. 167

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.168

⁶⁵ Morris, N. (2005), p.129

formulate it, “Critical reflection is the degree to which audience members use their own thoughts and imagination to make sense of a program or a message.”⁶⁶

EE makes things visible by considering quotidian problems (or pleasures). But it is not only about the self-discovery of the recipient, other theories involve the learning effect or outcome of EE. Here the *social learning theory* by Bandura again comes into play.

CULTURE

The previous discussion leads us to an understanding of the impact of EE as a communication strategy in the development or social change context. But Tufte reminds us of another key issue in this context: the notion of culture.

It can be understood as a warning when Tufte argues that in early forms of EE there “has been the lack of connection to ‘the cultural water’ – and the life experience – of the people.”⁶⁷ Dutch philosopher Pieterse makes a rather similar argument when he gives a general description of the current discourse between culture and development (and not only the question of culture and EE). “Culture comes into development studies at a time of retreat from structural and macro approaches in development theory in favour of micro and actor-oriented approaches.”⁶⁸

Pieterse localizes a bundle of difficulties in getting a grasp on the culture-development context. National and local cultures are not homogenous constructs, Pieterse believes. They are influenced by e.g. colonizers, “the trophy gained in the victory over colonialism, was colonialism’s legacy.”⁶⁹ Also, the combination of culture and development is an encounter of two uneven partners. Pieterse suspects that culture is added to the discourse “like an additional coating or a local Vaseline, without necessarily changing the development agenda itself.”⁷⁰ Add culture and stir!

⁶⁶ Sood, p.129

⁶⁷ Tufte, p.171 When Tufte speaks of cultural water he is paraphrasing the notion of Freire who said „you must swim in cultural waters of the people”.

⁶⁸ Pieterse, p. 60

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 64

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 68

Tufte has no solution per se, but noticed that Freire's thoughts are re-emerging after many years away from the EE scene. Freire's pedagogical concepts "are today the epistemological centre of many of the efforts to combat HIV/AIDS"⁷¹ - for example in the theatre work of Boal. Therefore the Theatre of the Oppressed is a contemporary tool within the current EE discussion. It already presupposes culture because of its high level of participation, and it is very far indeed from a technique where culture is simply added and stirred.

⁷¹

Tufte, p.171

LIFTING THE CURTAIN

My research will be conducted in two layers. The first is developing, performing and analyzing the invisible theatre plays. The idea is staging two plays with two different topics. The intention is to observe differences in the perceptions of the *spect-actors* of a crucial and less crucial topic. The theatre research will encapsulate three phases:

- Identifying topics with the theatre group.
- Developing and rehearsing the play with the theatre group.
- Staging the two plays in public, three times, at different places. All together, it should be six performances.

During the play, I will observe the reactions of the *spect-actors*. After the play, I will interview the actors about the content of the debate with the *spect-actors* and their immediate impressions.

A great part of the research is devoted to the analysis of the theatre plays in Nampula. Most likely the most appropriate form of analyzing Invisible Theatre in action is the *Participant Observation*. As Anders Hansen et al puts it, the researcher becomes his own research instrument. “She or he must physically place her or himself in a position from which to make observations and is dependent upon the practical skills of writing – upon field notes.”⁷²

Furthermore, it requires a high level of self-reflection on one’s own intellectual and emotional responses, which can “provide important insights into the norms and, often unspoken, rules, customs and values.”⁷³ Working with the actors, the researcher is an integrated part of the elaboration and analysis of the plays.

Therefore, the methods of the research are observation and later semi-structured interviews with the actors. Another important issue is the discussion of participation during the process. Much has been said about participation, and the literature about it is extensive. A central role in all arguments is played by the *dialogical pedagogy* of Paulo Freire, which “is based on group

⁷² Hansen, A. (1998), p.36

⁷³ Ibid., p.37

dialogue rather than such amplifying media as radio, print, or television.”⁷⁴ Freire furthermore insists “that subjugated peoples must be treated as fully human subjects in any political process.”⁷⁵ The Theatre of the Oppressed considers these elements carefully; the Invisible Theatre technique fits especially well into these definitions.

In parallel – as a second layer of the research - I developed a questionnaire for NGOs based in Nampula. Ten NGOs ⁷⁶were asked about their knowledge of Invisible Theatre and if they were interested in using this technique for their communication strategies.

Using a survey with questionnaires for that part of the research is a suitable strategy. “Sometimes, the data is used to lend support to, or to negate, hypotheses or propositions, but at other times it can simply provide basic information on existing or changing patterns of behavior.”⁷⁷ For this research especially, the latter is important. The questionnaire is ideal because it standardizes and organizes the information and makes the researcher intensively think of direction and limitations of the research.

The questionnaire was designed as a ‘self-completion’⁷⁸ form, and was delivered to NGO offices, where it was answered by coordinators or other experienced leaders of the organization. Therefore, the interviewees have time to think about the questionnaire and complete it on their own.

Finally, it is important to mention that making a survey with questionnaires implies making compromises. “As it is impossible to ask an infinite number of questions of literally every person, it is necessary to decide upon a selection of much more limited number of questions which could elicit the required information.”⁷⁹ Hansen underlines that compromises do not automatically devalue the quality of the research. Or to say it in simpler words: less can be more.

⁷⁴ Servaes, p.96

⁷⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁶ There are about 80 NGOs based in Nampula. There are no official numbers, but after living there for three years and having close contact to the expatriate community, the figure of 80 NGOs appears realistic.

⁷⁷ Hansen, p.225

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Hansen, p.230

Nevertheless, both parts of this study in large quantities of information were analyzed independently. In the final stage, if possible, the results will be compared and summarized.

There was a time limitation for carrying out the research. Rehearsing and performing the theatre plays and the surveys with the NGOs had to be completed before 23 May 2008 at the latest. This was the day of our departure from Mozambique.

ACT I: GRUPO TEATRAL – THEATRE GROUP

Scene One: Selection of Actors

On the following pages I will present the development of the Invisible Theatre project in a more detailed manner. The reason is that the development and implementation of the plays was an important experience for me as a researcher and will give the reader some insights into Mozambican realities. To describe the evolution of the theatre project, I will furthermore use the first person perspective because I was intrinsically involved in the development and analysis of the project.

As already stated, during the run up phase of the project, I was considering with whom or with which theatre group I could carry out the Invisible Theatre performances in Nampula. To find an adequate theatre company was a difficult task.

Scene Two: Grupo Teatral da FEC

During the three years I was employed at the UCM, I became familiar with a student theatre group at the university. They have no specific name and operate as the Grupo Teatral da Faculdade de Educação e Comunicação – the Faculty of Education and Communication (FEC) Theatre Group. They were founded by a few students in the year 2006. I saw them appear several times during festivities at the university.

Their way of performing is reminiscent of comedy theatre that imitates life and specific characters (like teachers or the rector) at the university. It was always performed in a spontaneous way rather than in a strongly rehearsed manner. They also never staged any novel-

based theatre play with given dialogues. Their performances were ad hoc, with a rough sketch of a pre-debated story line, which was never written down.

The size of their cast also varies from month to month. Generally they have about ten members. They are all amateurs and have never undergone professional training; they are all self taught.⁸⁰ Asking them about their motivation for being involved in theatre, they all assert that it is their personal interest and that they do it to have fun.

In April 2008, I acquainted the theatre group with the research project, and they were asked to develop and perform Invisible Theatre. There was a great openness and curiosity for the project, and they assured me that they would help me. A few days later, we had our first meeting.

Scene Three: Constituency Meeting

The constituency meeting with the FEC Theatre Group was held on 24 April 2008, at the UCM Faculty of Education and Communication in Nampula, Room 21,

Present:

Luisa, Nelcia, Delmo, Helio, Alice

Five members attended the first meeting, which we had in one of the rooms of the university. In this constituency meeting of the group, I first took the opportunity to give the students a more detailed explanation of my project and its aims, and to introduce the Theatre of the Oppressed in general, and the Invisible Theatre in particular. I told them that the results of their performances would lead to an academic thesis. I added as well that I could not offer any salary for their help, and that I had a time limit for executing this research. I also underlined that I was thinking of staging two plays with two different topics. The intention was to observe differences in the perceptions of the *spect-actors* of a crucial and a less crucial topic.

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Caetano, p.94 “There are no drama schools in Mozambique, but most companies run their own training departments in their theatres. [...] Most of the actors are students of different disciplines from universities. Most of them abandon their theatre work after finishing their studies because of a lack of professional perspectives.”

After this introduction, I told the students that I would hold off and let them make decisions about the development of the theatre play; I just wanted to give general guidelines. My first appeal to them was to think of several Mozambican topics that might suit the Invisible Theatre as it had just been explained.

The whole brainstorming process took about 15 minutes. They rapidly came up with 6 to 7 topics, and then the process became more hesitant. They noticed that a lot of the topics were somehow interlinked or built upon each other. For example: Drugs may lead into suicide, and drug abuse may be caused by sexual abuse, or unemployment may lead into domestic violence. Other questions were raised, such as whether malaria should be included or not: "Malaria is a reality. You can hardly do anything against it, and we are not oppressed by it." The female students generally made the impression of being more knowledgeable. They referred to news articles they had read, or things they had heard or seen on TV.

In the end, the board was filled with 16 topics. The students then transferred the issues onto small paper cards which I gave them and tried to develop a ranking out of the 16. Again, discussion broke loose about connections and combinations. It was a homogeneous discussion where everybody participated. Until this moment, no mention was made about staging the topics with Invisible Theatre, about which topic would suit most, which less. Finally, they ranked the 16 issues from most to less crucial in the following order:

1. Sexual abuse of minors
2. Trafficking of minors
3. Unintentional pregnancy of minors
4. HIV/AIDS
5. Drugs
6. Crime, especially assassination or lynch law
7. Prostitution
8. Sexual relationship between teacher and student
9. Polygamy
10. Suicide
11. Domestic violence
12. Excessive use of alcohol by minors

- 13. Unemployment
- 14. Inequality between men and women
- 15. Malaria
- 16. Racism

They believed that sexual abuse of minors was the most crucial topic in Mozambique at present. The least crucial topic for the students was racism. Initially, homosexuality appeared on the list as well. During the ranking process, the students decided to erase this topic because they thought that “homosexuality is pretty rare in Mozambique and by far more widespread in Brazil, the USA or Europe.” For them, this topic was insignificant, though the ones who are identified as homosexuals have to suffer a lot. They are expelled from the community, the students had heard.

The next stage was the selection of two topics, one which appeared on the upper part of the list, and one which was lower ranked and therefore considered to be less crucial. I reminded the students that they should consider choosing a *playable* topic. They noticed that they were getting closer to a concrete and binding decision. A bit of a tension was arising. They started whispering.

For the first time (in my presence) they reflected on Invisible Theatre and its probable personal consequences. “If I am going to perform as a prostitute today, tomorrow those who have seen me will still believe that I am selling my body. The attendees won’t distinguish between performance and reality.” Even taking false names wouldn’t resolve the problem.

These preoccupations were influencing the students’ decision making. Which of the topics was of less consequence? That became the focus in the process. Rapidly they decided that *Suicide* should be the lighter topic, and the more crucial one should be *Unintentional pregnancy of minors*. They chose these two topics because they had a clear idea of these issues and believed they could be performed in a convincing but not harmful manner. With the selection of these two topics, the session was closed and it was decided to continue on 30 April. The meeting lasted almost two hours.

Immediate findings

The group had some difficulties plunging into the construct of the Invisible Theatre and developing self-contained topics. They also had difficulty selecting topics and imagining the play. Therefore, they were generally cautious because they felt like they were entering new territory. Nevertheless, they were curious and interested in continuing the project and in eventually performing the plays in markets and other public places.

Scene Four: Second Meeting

Present:

Luisa, Nelcia, Delmo, Helio, Alice

José, Pedro

The meeting was held on 2 May 2008 at the UCM Faculty of Education and Communication, Room 21. It had been postponed for two days because of time constraints on the part of the students. To my surprise, two more actors who were not part of the company appeared at our second meeting. They told me that they had heard of the project and were interested in taking part. José, one of the newcomers, admitted to having experience with performing Theatre of the Oppressed. He had taken part in a workshop in the capital Maputo, and the Theatre of the Oppressed had been a core discipline at the workshop.

The second new member asked whether he could use the performances and reactions for his own research paper. He was a student in the Education Department at UCM. I had no difficulties with this and found it more important that the group agreed, which they did.

Led by José, the group started with a warm-up which was familiar to me. In the first part of his book *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Boal describes about 100 techniques and games for how to get to know each other, familiarize the group with the theatre and the act of performing, and find a theatrical language with its body – a physical monologue or dialogue.⁸¹ In chapters such as *Listening to what we hear* or *Feeling what we touch*, Boal talks about the stimulation of the senses.

⁸¹ Boal (2002), p.15

The group started walking in the hall. Then they pretended to pick up something from the floor. This exercise was executed very slowly. While doing the exercise, they were “trying to feel and remember all the muscular structures which intervene in the accomplishment of these movements.”⁸² For Boal, it is important to understand the varieties of movements and to learn each muscle.

Other games were played like walking on heels, looking at each other, or lying down. The games created a good spirit between the actors; the ice was broken between the two new members and the core group.

After one hour of exercising, the meeting was closed. Until then, the company had not rehearsed, nor created a scenario about where and how to stage the two selected issues. This was postponed until 5 May. I underlined the necessity of starting to perform the Invisible Theatre soon due to my time constraints.

Immediate findings

It was a positive meeting. The games resulted into a good working spirit, which led into a creative working progress. Unfortunately, it was not used and the meeting was ended before any concrete results were achieved. I felt that time was running out for the theatre project.

Scene Five: Dawn of the End

Present:

Luisa, Nelcia, Delmo, Alice

At the meeting on 5 May 2008 at the UCM Faculty of Education and Communication, Room 6, the two new members did not appear. Helio was also missing. The rehearsal of the first topic was envisaged: *Suicide*. They did not write down any dialogues, though I had asked them to do so. “We don’t think that we need it, it would limit our spontaneity”, they believed. The plot was

⁸² Ibid., p. 31

rather simple: A girl would commit suicide in the market. She would ‘stab’ a knife into her breast and kneel down dramatically. The others would create a loud wailing and shout for an ambulance. They would also ask: “Why did you do this?” Unfortunately, the action got stuck; there was great repetition of the phrases. It got nowhere. I confronted the actors with my perception and urged them to develop a plot and to write down the dialogues. Even so, I found it rather tricky to commit suicide and shout for an ambulance. What if the ambulance showed up? They agreed to my proposal. They assured to do it tomorrow. They wanted to meet alone the next day to reflect on the results and to re-adjust the plot. We arranged to meet in two days time. I reminded them of my time constraints.

Immediate findings

It was not a productive meeting. The company was unprepared and slightly unmotivated. They noticed that it was rather difficult to perform a convincing Invisible Theatre just out of spontaneity. They also did not continue with the warm-up exercises like they did in the meeting before. I had the suspicion that the brief fire of enthusiasm had cooled down by encountering reality. They noticed that I wanted them to get started with the performance.

Scene Six: Unofficial End

The gathering on 5 May 5 was the last we had. The students postponed further meetings again and again. The reasons were ample: first they needed more time to develop the plays. Then they declared not having time because they had to prepare for examinations. At a certain stage, I had to make a decision: to quit my teamwork with the Grupo Teatral.

The probable reasons

It is almost impossible to really get behind the reasons for the failure. Probably the students were too inexperienced to develop an Invisible Theatre, though they would have never admitted this. Another reason was the loose structure of the group. People were coming and going, therefore, they acted spontaneously. They developed and played on the same day, therefore, they did not rely on written dialogues and learning them by heart. What I noticed during my three years in Mozambique was a real lack of concentration by the students. The students often appeared

unstructured. Finally, the project itself frightened them. Not knowing where the performances would finally end up – perhaps at the police station?

The group never spoke openly with me about the real reasons. They chose a camouflaging tactic and pushed other reasons (i.e. examinations) into the foreground.

ACT II: “CASA VELHA”

Scene One: A Second Start

After the unsuccessful collaboration with the student group, I was compelled to find other actors in Nampula to perform Invisible Theatre. One of the most renowned companies in the north of Mozambique is Casa Velha (Old House).

Casa Velha is known for its traditional theatre with dance elements, but also for modern theatre. They are often contracted by NGOs to stage edutaining showpieces in a communication for development context.

Casa Velha was founded in 1997 as an association; all their income serves their community inside and outside the company. The majority of their earnings go into the activities of their own cultural centre, which is located in one of the Zona Militar, one of the poorer, clay hut districts surrounding Nampula. The cultural centre offers workshops in music instruments (especially drumming) and various artistic activities (like dancing) for kids. The number of members varies; according to current members, Casa Velha counts about 20 core members.

The cultural centre itself is a simple but effective concrete building with a spacious yard and a large veranda. Inside are four rooms which serve as an office, two training rooms and a storeroom. The building gives a solid and clean impression, even though it is a bit dark inside due to small windows. The climate inside is a bit oven-like because of the heat outside and the lack of isolation.

The association also owns various musical instruments and a computer – without an internet connection. It is a lively environment; some people are sitting around and looking for shelter in

the shade, kids from the neighborhood run around inside and outside the building. As always in Mozambique, it is hard to distinguish who is member or visitor.

Scene Two: First encounter with Casa Velha

Present:

Rosa, Crimildo, Arnaldo, Pascoal, Silva

I went to the cultural centre on 14 May with the objective of convincing the members to take part in my project. My major argument again was to experience something new and to be part of a scientific work. I would not offer any remuneration.

Arriving at the Casa Velha, I asked for a meeting with five representatives of the association. It was then arranged in the afternoon of the same day. I met five members/actors at the centre. I described the intention of my project work, and explained that I approached them as a student and not as a development aid worker from Germany. I told them about my experience with the student group and received a lot of sympathy. “Students are not really known for being dependable!” admitted one of the actors. I told them that I was looking for reliable alternatives on short notice (my time in Mozambique was running out), and above all non-paid. I explained to them the philosophy of the Invisible Theatre, and its challenges, too.

Surprisingly enough, they agreed on all terms. Their main motive was to help me out and to experience something completely new. Only one member claimed to have heard of Invisible Theatre, but was not clear of its technique and effect.

We agreed on a time schedule with the objective of not wasting time and

- to come up with topics quickly and
- to stage the plays as soon as possible and in a close order

I asked them to reconsider probable topics, topics that suit Invisible Theatre and, more importantly, fit into the Mozambican context. We decided on having the next meeting at Casa Velha the next morning to decide on the issues and to start rehearsing.

Scene Three: Productive

Present:

Rosa, Crimildo, Arnaldo, Pascoal, Silva

The next morning (15 May 2008), the group presented me with 5 issues concerning Mozambican reality:

- Hostility against Rastafarians
- Homosexuality
- Racism
- Malaria
- Gender inequality

Unlike the preparation with the student group, I asked them to select only one topic. My general intention was to not lose time and to start the project immediately. The aim was to concentrate the work in only a few days.

The agreement was to try one topic, and if there were the need and the time to try a second, we would decide spontaneously.

The core question at this stage was to select one topic. What would be the most feasible? My observation was that they were in favor of *Hostility against Rastafarians*, but they were not sure whether it would work out as an ideal topic for Invisible Theatre or not. Generally, I had the impression that they had difficulties imagining how the play would work out in public space.

To give some guidance, I asked them to develop a spontaneous role-play for a Rastafarian conflict. How should it be stimulated, what could be said? Who would be what character? Why should there be any discussion? How to stimulate a controversy? They also asked themselves to what extent they would act as actors or as themselves. Three of them are members of the Rastafarian movement. Under these circumstances, they dropped the Rastafarian topic and decided to definitely act outside their personal circumstances.

Taking into account all the former thoughts and hints, they unanimously opted for *Homosexuality*. They believed that homosexuality in Mozambican society is something which is a highly taboo topic. “Especially in rural areas or even here in Nampula it is something you have to hide from public view,” explained one of the members. They confirmed that they had recently taken part in a workshop from a Dutch NGO, which had addressed the problems of homosexuals in Mozambican society. “Since then, we have a clearer picture about this issue”, they stated. The decision for *Homosexuality* created a certain relief. Immediately after making the decision, they started brainstorming how to stage the play.

Excuse: Homosexuality in Mozambique

The Mozambican Association for Sexual Minority Rights (LAMBDA) points out that Mozambican law does not specifically address discrimination against homosexuals. In their Strategic Plan 2008 – 2010 they write:

“Although it is very common to see in international literature and in vast websites of the internet that homosexuality in Mozambique is a crime, based on the articles 70 and 71 of our penal code, there is no explicit reference to homosexuality, sodomy or sexual acts, even though the vague and not so clear phrase *practices against nature* does appear.”⁸³

Actions were taken by media and civil society groups during the year 2007 to promote the rights of homosexuals, too. In July, a major newspaper published, for the first time, an article arguing in favor of homosexual rights. In the article, prominent journalist Emilio Manhique editorialized that homosexuals "have a right to be different." In October the Mozambican League of Human Rights (LDH) organized the country's first seminar on homosexual rights. The two-day event recommended the inclusion of information on sexuality in the school system, and criticized the censorship of homosexual issues in the media.⁸⁴

Gay activist and founding member of LAMBDA Danilo de Sousa noted that few Mozambican gays are open about their sexuality - but that the number is growing.

⁸³

LAMBDA (2007), p.3

⁸⁴

From: United States of America. US-Department of State; Mozambique - Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

"Many lead a semi-open (or semi-closed) life, while the majority keeps their sexual orientation completely clandestine, or even deny it. One often finds homosexuals married to members of the opposite sex, merely to please their family and society. But they're unhappy and often lead a double life."⁸⁵

Sousa was optimistic - for there are signs that young Mozambicans are more tolerant towards gays than the older generations, "and younger homosexuals are now posing openly the possibility of living their sexual orientation regardless of the wishes of their families".⁸⁶

In 2006 the Dutch NGO Hivos financed a survey on perceptions of homosexuality in Mozambique. It concentrated on attitudes towards gays, and gathered data from 700 people, aged 18 to 56, who were interviewed in four Mozambican cities (Maputo, Beira, Nampula and Quelimane).

Only 16 per cent of this sample considered homosexuality a disease. Virtually everybody knows what homosexuality is (98 per cent) and almost all (96 per cent) of the sample confirmed they knew gay people. A more alarming result is that more than half (52 per cent) believe that their family would not accept them if they were homosexual.⁸⁷ It is also important to note that the survey was made in the four largest cities of Mozambique and rural areas were excluded from the survey.

The Mozambican government itself has been cautious on the question of sexual orientation, neither supporting the legalization of homosexuality, nor actively discriminating against homosexuals.⁸⁸ Some politicians are less cautious. On January 21, 2008 the state secretary of the ministry of home affairs, Mrs. Lurdes Mabunda, gave an interview for the fax newspaper *Correio de Manhã* where she argued:

"Homosexuality needs to be forbidden in order to prevent violence against minors by people of the same sex."⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Globalgayz (2006)

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Hivos, p.1

⁸⁸ UNHCR

⁸⁹ Grande entrevista

As in many African countries, gays in Mozambique lead a life which is not supported by law and hardly tolerated by society. Politicians and rural communities appear to be undecided or opposed to the gay community in Mozambique.

From this point on, I was involved rather unobtrusively in the progress of the occurrence. Their concept and staging of the issue as an Invisible Theatre was rather simple and effective. Two men were chosen as a homosexual couple (Pascoal and Silva). Their task was to show their affection openly, for example, they would walk arm in arm or exchange short kisses. Two other actors had the task of stimulating the discussion, if necessary. The part of Rosa was to argue positively about their openly showed affection, Crimildo would be her antagonist.

It was agreed that the couple would not take part in the discussion. They should serve only as a cause of debates. So it was arranged that they appear briefly, like a ghost, and disappear shortly thereafter. Though it was not expressed, I had the feeling that the non-confrontational approach of the couple with the *spect-actors* was a protection shield from potentially displeasing confrontations. The fifth member of the company, Arnaldo, was planned as a spare figure, firefighter and observer.

The rehearsal of the play was of short duration⁹⁰ – approximately 30 minutes. It was mostly about getting used to the unusual tenderness between Pascoal and Silva. I did not want to persist on extending the rehearsals due to my experience with the student group and in order to let them decide on their own in a participatory manner.

After the rehearsals, we had to decide on the venues of their theatre plays. The general feeling was that three to four performances would be sufficient to get a solid impression of what Invisible Theatre was like, how it worked, and how it affected the people involved. The group suggested the following four locations, all of them in Nampula, all of them markets which are generally highly frequented by customers:

⁹⁰

This is in contradiction to how Boal advocates for performing Invisible Theatre: “The Invisible Theatre calls for the detailed preparation of a skit with a complete text or simple script; but it is necessary to rehearse the scene sufficiently so that the actors are able to incorporate into their acting and their actions the interventions of the spectators.” Boal (2000), p.144

- **Mercado de Sul** – which is a market on the periphery of Nampula where mainly fruits and vegetables are sold. The customers are citizens of the bordering neighborhoods (all clay huts), farmers of the Nampula district, and some travelers. Only a few hundred meters from the market is an informal bus stop for buses going to Malawi. The market is situated on a dusty square delimited by two walls. The market stalls look much improvised and only give scarce shade. There are no trees or other shade dispensers.
- **Mercado Faina** – which is a more established market next to the railway station. The stalls are permanent and made out of wood, bamboo and roofed with plastic covers. This market is visited mainly by locals living in the bordering neighborhoods and the centre of the city. There also might be clients from outside who take the nearby train, which goes to Malawi. The products offered are fruits, vegetables, bread and all sorts of cheap Chinese imports like sunglasses and leather bags. The location itself gives an impression of being very unclearly arranged. It is located in a small valley. The overall size of the market is not bigger than two tennis fields. The stalls are close to each other and form shady alleys. It can best be described as a labyrinth. Here and there are also some huge trees.
- **Mercado Nacala** – which is a small market on the east side of the city. It offers basic groceries such as fruits, vegetables, meat, oil, bread and washing powder. It is visited mainly by citizens of the nearby neighborhoods. It basically consists of one alley. There are wooden stands to the right and left covered by all sorts of awnings. The alley is only about three meters wide. Generally one has the impression of walking in a tube.
- **Mercado Zona dos Poetas** – which is a very central place. It is surrounded by concrete buildings of up to four stories high. The stands of the market are made of concrete, too. It was obviously designed on a drawing board. All the stands look the same. Inside, the alleys are very narrow and shady. The salespersons can easily close their shops by using the rolling shutters. It is somewhat reminiscent of an Arabian souk. The products offered vary between food, clothes and electronic devices like radios and mobile phones. The clients are mainly urban people living in the concrete buildings of the centre.

It was decided to start performing at the **Mercado de Sul**. It is only busy during the morning hours (due to the unbearable heat during midday).

The second venue would be the **Mercado Faina**, the third would be **Mercado dos Poetas** and, if necessary, we would visit the **Mercado Nacala**. It was planned to stage the theatres on two consecutive days, with two stages on each day. We would start early the next morning at the **Mercado de Sul**.

Scene Four: Mercado de Sul, Nampula (about 7 a.m.)

Present:

Rosa, Crimildo, Arnaldo, Pasqual, Silva

On the morning of 16 May, I picked up the five actors and we went to the market by car. The atmosphere was calm, and it was obvious that everybody was a bit nervous. Nobody had ever done Invisible Theatre before. The temperatures were quite high already; it was a sunny morning.

We parked the vehicle approximately 1000 meters from the location. The couple went straight to the market, followed by the two agitators a few seconds later. The observer and I accompanied them from a distance, without talking.

Market setup

It was a normal day at the market. Clients were walking around between the stands and making their purchases. Traders were sitting or standing next to their goods. Roughly 100 people were present.

The embraced couple entered the market and walked along the alleys. The two agitators were close by. I was at a distance so that I would not give the impression of being with them.

Reactions

The first reaction to the couple was curiosity. After the gays passed by, the people started gossiping and laughing among themselves. One or two curious kids followed them 'invisibly'.

Instead of being shocked or surprised, the reaction can best be described as amused. The couple went on a zigzag tour through the market, and presented their affection by being embraced and holding hands. At no stage was there an outcry. While the couple was passing by, the two agitators tried to involve the *spect-actors* in a discussion. They confronted the salespersons or clients with “Have you seen these perverts?” or “This should be prohibited!” On the contrary side, Rosa came up with statements like “Let them express their feelings!” or “Why should we confine them?”

The reaction of the *spect-actors* audience was rather dull. At most, the two agitators managed to involve about 10 people in their discussion. Most people were just listening to what Crimildo, Rosa, and one or two *spect-actors* had to say. The interaction did not last long, about two minutes. In a second spot in the market, the two agitators tried to create a new discussion. At that point, the pretending gays were almost leaving the market already.

It could be said that the emotions (if there were any) were already calmed down. For that reason, it was rather difficult to discuss something which had passed by a few minutes ago. My observation here was that the people were amused instead of shocked by the couple and therefore the discussion never reached a level that could be characterized as tense. Here the two agitators ended their work. The whole play lasted about 15 minutes.

Immediate findings

On returning back to the car the actors stated:

- Couple:

Pasqual and Silva noticed very explicitly the gossiping behind their shoulders. They also noticed that kids were amused by their homosexual tenderness. But during their walk in the market, they never experienced any open animosity. In the beginning, they were rather nervous, but they got more used to their unusual appearance.

- Agitators:

Rosa and Crimildo expressed their difficulties in involving the audience in a discussion. They noticed a certain danger of having only an argument between them and that the *spect-actors* only

listened instead of coming up with their own viewpoints. It was difficult to involve the audience. The *spect-actors* seemed to be speechless or at least indifferent. Rosa had the impression that a majority said: “Yes, it is possible that a man loves a man!” One of the most significant statements of one woman was “Let them be like they are!” Some also said: “This is impossible!” Crimildo and Rosa felt more or less comfortable with their roles. The third member, Arnaldo, the firefighter, analyzed: “The reaction was not strong – the people were only busy buying and selling.”

- Researcher:

This first experiment was very interesting to me for various reasons. First of all, after being exposed to Invisible Theatre only in theory, I was able to get a general impression of how Invisible Theatre worked in reality. Second, it was difficult to observe all the reactions correctly because the action took place in at least on two spots – the location of the gays and the location of the agitators. On top of that, I wanted to have a clear distance between the theatre and myself. I was likely the only white person to visit the market throughout the whole day. For that reason it was a difficult task to make an accurate observation, but I was quite pleased with the results achieved.

Scene Five: Mercado Faina, Nampula (about 9.30 a.m., same day)

Present:

Rosa, Crimildo, Arnaldo, Pascoal, Silva

Before entering the market, the group decided to repeat the Invisible Theatre of the first market. They were wondering whether the couple should participate in the debate or continue being silent performers. Rosa ended the consideration with: “With what they do, they say everything; they don’t have to talk!” The only minor difference would be that the agitators would try to provoke discussions separately. The plan was for them to keep a distance from each other.

The car was parked at a filling station nearby. The entrance of the market is a bit concealed: behind a wall, you cross a small trench and the railway track. After that, you walk down about 10 meters to the labyrinth of stalls.

The couple entered first, then Rosa, after her Crimildo, who was followed by me and Arnaldo. The narrowness of the market turned out to be a disadvantage. It was almost impossible to make any observations without being detected. In order not to give the audience any chance of linking my appearance with the occurrence of a gay couple, I decided to leave a clear distance between myself and the theatre play. Unfortunately, the distance became so large that I lost contact and spent my time looking for them. Therefore, I was unable to make any observations at all at this location. Because of this, I was dependent on the descriptions of the four actors. About 20 minutes later, we met at the car – sooner than expected.

Immediate findings

- The couple:

Their experience was more or less comparable with the occurrences at the first market. The people gossiped behind their backs. They were never confronted directly with dislike or support. Their acting only lasted for a few minutes – then they were discovered!

- The agitators:

The two agitators independently of each other had difficulties involving the market visitors in a serious discussion. The few people they could involve had a more or less unconcerned position. After a while one man pointed at Rosa and said: “You are an actor!” Rosa could not identify if it was purely an assumption of the man, or if he had seen her before working as an actor on stage. Rosa told us that the man ran away shouting: “It’s theatre, it’s theatre!” Due to the small size of the market, the information of having a theatre play at the market was disseminated quickly. The couple heard of it, also Crimildo. They then stopped their play and returned quietly to the car.

All members considered the detection as bad luck. There are hardly any possibilities to avoid mishaps like that.

Scene Six: Casa Velha/Mercado Nacala, Nampula (about 8 a.m.)

Present:

Rosa, Crimildo, Arnaldo, Pasqual, Silva

Today it was 17 May. We knew that the **Mercado Nacala** was rather small. While still at Casa Velha, we discussed whether we should change the topic of the theatre play once. Having slept over the experiences of the previous day, everybody thought it would be interesting to have some variety. The group was curious to see if people responded differently to different issues. I felt everybody in the company wanted to leave the topic of homosexuality once and just spontaneously try out another topic from the list of issues made three days ago.

They stated that they were not annoyed by the homosexuality issue, but were keener on exploring the limitations of Invisible Theatre. I had nothing against their arguments and was curious, too.

The company decided to try *Gender Inequality*. They created a simple role-play: Two men, Crimildo and Arnaldo, go to the market and buy something to drink and a snack at one of the refreshment stands. It had to be managed by a woman. They ask for refreshments/snacks, consume them on the spot, and when the time comes to settle the bill, the two would decline to pay. Their argument would be that women are not capable of calculating or running a shop. Women only deserve to wash and cook. Rosa would also take part in the incident as a supporter of the victim and try to involve other people in the alley. After preparing arguments for both sides, we headed to the market.

This Saturday morning was sunny and warm again. The market alley was not very crowded. An estimated 50 clients were walking along the stands the moment the group started its performance. The two men went up the alley once to scope out an adequate stand where a woman was selling refreshments. Rosa was in their proximity. In the middle of the market, they found a stand that matched the requirements. I was about 10 meters away pretending to be a curious tourist and taking photos. After having their drink, they shouted at the market woman: “We won’t pay you because you don’t deserve it. A woman has no right of running a shop!”

Reactions

The woman was fairly calm and did not respond in the same aggressive tone. Based on what I was told later, she said that she had been here for a long time and knew what to do. Rosa supported her intensively. Though having good arguments, the two refused to pay. About 6 to 8 people approached the spot and mainly listening passively to the exchange of words between the two woman and two men. They did not take a position. After about 5 minutes of arguing, the two men left the stand – without paying. The woman in the shop called out one last time for her money, but she did not run after them. After the two left, the crowd dissolved rapidly.

I returned a few moments after the actors, feeling like I had not been identified as a member of the group.

Immediate findings

- The Agitators:

The overall reaction of all participants was that the issue was too common. Things like that happen frequently. Women are often victims of male disrespect, be it in the market (public life) or in the household. Therefore the concept of stealing refreshments was not intensive enough to create a lasting impact. “There is no need to stage Invisible Theatre for something which unfortunately is very common in our society,” stated Arnaldo. They thought that it could have been more drastic but could not imagine how. The reaction of the *spect-actors* can be summarized with the statement: “Pay her; women have the same rights as men and are not condemned to only working in the household.”

- Researcher:

I agreed fully but was glad to have tried this experience, too. It helped me to envisage the limitations of Invisible Theatre.

With new energy, we headed on to our last performance of the theatre, again with the topic homosexuality.

Scene Seven: Mercado dos Poetas, Nampula (about 10 a.m., same day)

Present:

Rosa, Crimildo, Arnaldo, Pasqual, Silva

The **Mercado dos Poetas** is the most urban site of our project. At the time of our arrival, the market was quite busy. All shops were open and dozens of customers were walking around. The theatrical concept again was the same as the previous day. The couple would openly show their homosexuality by embracing and kissing and the two agitators would try to stimulate a controversy. This market was also the location where my European appearance did not cause any suspicion. Here, I felt less exotic. White people live in the neighborhood and often go shopping at this market.

Reactions

The reactions I noticed from the audience were more drastic than during all previous performances. The couple curved around in the dark and crowded alleys; therefore the view was rather unclear. The people – mainly men – communicated between them that something strange was going on. They formed a group and followed the couple like whispering and gossiping kids. Some of them started laughing. Here, the agitators found their potential dialogue partners. The couple abandoned the spot after about 10 minutes by slowly walking back to the car, which was parked two blocks from the market. The little euphoria calmed down immediately after they had left. The agitators could not sustain interest or energy.

Immediate findings

- Couple:

Again the couple was not approached directly by the *spect-actors*. Behind their back, they had heard some people gossiping. “They couldn’t believe it; some thought that we were women.” For them, it was more or less the same experience as in the two other stages about homosexuality. For them, there was no distinction between the urban people and those who live in the more rural parts of the city.

- Agitators:

The reactions of the *spect-actors* were contradictory. Some thought it was normal, while some recognized it as an illness caused by a virus or by mass consumption of drugs. During their conversations, the two agitators heard statements like “Here in Mozambique it is not normal; it is a disease from Europe.” or “I haven’t seen that before between men, only between women, yes.” In this market, both confirmed to have had the most intense discussions with *spect-actors*. Crimildo added that it might be related to the density of people. The setup or layout of the market is very crowded. Tempers might heat up more easily.

- Researcher:

For me it was the most intense performance of all four. It might have been because of the dense and intensive location or with the routine that was emerging. After several performances, the actors were losing their nervousness and starting to exchange it for professionalism. I was lucky that the performances turned out to be nonviolent and less chaotic than expected. I felt relieved that the plays found a positive end.

Scene Eight: Reactions

I will conduct the concluding analysis of the four performances in two parts. First of all, I would like to present the impressions of the five actors. After the last stage of the Invisible Theatre, I gathered all five actors for an interview, which I will use as their feedback. After that, I will present my own summary of the four events.

Actors

- ▶ OR: After your experience of the two days, is the IT an interesting tool or not?
- ▶ CRIMILDO: I was only experienced in the so-called normal theatre. The IT is a great surprise to me. The experience we had now was very fruitful. Of course we have to develop things better, but what convinces me most is that it takes place under real circumstances. We have seen a lot of positive feedback. This technique is anything else than destructive. Generally it was a very good experience.
- ▶ OR: Do you have the feeling that the IT as you performed it had any impact?
- ▶ CRIMILDO: I am sure. You know I think the people still talk about it at the markets and at home. I think it will have a strong impact on the people who attended.

- ▶ OR: But what makes you so confident? The whole play only lasted a few minutes!
- ▶ CRIMILDO: It's the novelty of it. For most of the people, it was something new. There will be a debate and perhaps a mutual consensus.
- ▶ OR: Are there any other observations about these days?
- ▶ ROSA: No, I agree completely with my teammate. The discussions will not end today. For the people and for us, too. I definitely think the people were touched by it.
- ▶ ARNALDO: The last market was the most intense experience during our series. We had our difficulties to stage the play. But I also think that we improved day by day. Our performance will have a lasting image, I am sure. And we should continue with this theatre technique.
- ▶ OR: Where could the Invisible Theatre take you?
- ▶ ARNALDO: That is difficult to say. It always depends on the issue you want to tackle. We can do everything with this theatre. The topic is certainly crucial. We have seen it today. The gender theatre was less spectacular than the homosexual theatre.
- ▶ OR: How did you deal with nervousness?
- ▶ PASQUAL: At the beginning, we were nervous, no doubt. But when we went to our second performance, we already figured out how it would work. So we gained a lot of confidence in Invisible Theatre. In my opinion, we could go on staging that play for the next several weeks.
- ▶ OR: What could be done better next time, for example to involve more people?
- ▶ CRIMILDO: We should increase the number of actors. To be more powerful and more diverse it would be good to have an Indian or an old man in the company. We could automatically involve more people. More people, more impact.

Researcher

Looking at my notes a day later and reviewing the two days of theatre, the most lasting impression are doubts; doubts about whether the performances really made an impact. The agitation between the actors and *spect-actors* was only for a few minutes and at no time was it very intense. Is this enough to start a process of reassessing sometimes deadlocked opinions, in this case about homosexuality? I am sure that the witnesses will tell their families at home about a homosexual couple walking around at the market and about listening to some debates about the

issue. But will it really lead to change? My answer right now would be: It serves as a beginning, a beginning of a whole campaign about the issue.

Another point bothering me was the question: Were we lacking creativity by not performing the play in different ways? Or were we limited by a certain unspoken fear? Did we therefore not push the limits? Did we shy away from a more extreme presentation? Or was it just because of not rehearsing extensively? It is obvious that the plays were performed by six inexperienced actors, under the eyes of an observer with no practical experience with Invisible Theatre. More preparation would have improved the quality. Because of a lack of spirited discussion, I sometimes had the feeling that the discussion turned more into a survey than an agitation. To get a more profound impression of the impact, it certainly would have been better to perform more pieces with more topics and different actors.

Finally, what stayed with me during the days of preparation – be it with the students group or Casa Velha – is my appearance as a European in a Mozambican context. This might influence the interaction between me and the actors, or the interaction between actors and the *spect-actors*. Who could tell what subconscious thoughts were involved and could have led to other decisions or reactions because of cultural differences? A minor part in the intercultural context was the language issue. Living in Mozambique for three years and working at a university, I worked with and practiced Portuguese on a daily basis. Therefore, I think I did not miss any information (statements made by the actors after the performances) due to a probable language barrier. There was no need to use an interpreter, for instance.

And finally, I am critical with myself: I was inexperienced in performing Boal's theatre. If I had been more prepared, it is possible there would have been better and more diverse performances.

ACT III: “NGOs ON IT”

Scene One: Next Step

Having now gained experience as an active ‘theatre pedagogue’ in Mozambique, who is familiar with the Mozambican reality, I will now bridge over to the second layer of this research: Asking NGOs if Invisible Theatre is of any interest for their communication work.

Excuse: Another Invisible Theatre experiment in Mozambique

A Telephone Interview with Mr. Alvim Cossa, Coordinator of the Mozambican Theatre of the Oppressed Group (*Grupo de Teatro do Oprimido em Moçambique*), 24 April 2008.

The *Theatre Group of the Oppressed in Mozambique* (GTO) was founded in June 2001 in the Mozambican capitol Maputo. According to their webpage, the GTO is active in the area of community development and liaises with about 3000 actors countrywide. Coordinator Alvim Cossa said during the telephone interview that the GTO uses various techniques of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, such as Statue Theatre or Forum Theatre. The topics vary from region to region, but focus points are HIV/AIDS and children’s rights.

The GTO works in close partnership with the Center for Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro, *Centro de Teatro do Oprimido do Rio de Janeiro*, where Augusto Boal himself holds the position of art director. The partner organizations of GTO in Mozambique are, for example, UNICEF and Save the Children. The GTO office in Maputo has 8 staff members, including positions such as secretary, trainer and coordinator. They work with about 30 freelance trainers who are experienced in the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed.

GTO has limited experience with the Invisible Theatre technique. In 2003, they once carried out an Invisible Theatre piece with the crucial topic of ‘sexual abuse of children’. To avoid any unexpected surprises, the GTO previously informed the police about their theater play. This was an obligatory move, believes Cossa. Their place of performance was a ferry boat in Maputo.

During the play, a man was molesting a child publicly. Cossa remembered that the spectators were very reserved and showed a lack of empathy.

Due to financial constraints, the GTO relies on donor money. Cossa stated that NGOs are obligated to collect data about the probable impact of theatre plays financed by donor funds. IT can hardly contribute to these demands. “Invisible Theatre only serves to see an immediate reaction of the spectators. It is almost impossible to measure any lasting impact. Therefore, most organizations keep their hands off Invisible Theatre because NGOs are very research driven.”

The IT experiment on the ferryboat was therefore not an externally funded project. It was more of what Cossa called “driven by curiosity to find out how Invisible Theatre works in reality and to experience other techniques of the TO.” It was their first and last Invisible Theatre experience.

My survey had a scope of 10 development organizations in Nampula. From global players like World Vision and Concern, to small and locally-based NGOs like Felicidade, which is mainly financed by the Dutch organization Hivos. All of them were provided with the same 22 questions. All questionnaires were anonymous. For most of the questions, the interviewee was presented with tick-boxes where he/she could respond with yes or no. I formulated the questions in this way in order to get a clear response – either yes or no. Knowing that most of the interviewees had no experience with Invisible Theatre, I had to ask questions on a more speculative level like “how they would act if...”.

The documents were personally delivered by the researcher, and most of the time the forms were filled out by the branch directors. The forms were completed without me being present; on average the interviewee had about one day to fill out the form.

The questions and their respective answers should give a more detailed picture of whether the NGOs know about Boal’s Invisible Theater technique, and if they would be interested in using the Invisible Theatre for their field work. It should be noted that some of the NGOs do not use any communication for development instruments in their work at all.

Scene Two: The Questionnaire

- Q1: *Name 3 – 4 key projects of your NGO.*

While editing the answers, it was obvious that there were a lot of overlapping topics and a general difficulty in categorizing notions. For example, is “food security” automatically a health issue? What category is “support of local NGOs”? To what area is this referring? Seven major areas emerged from the data and are listed below:

Health, especially HIV/AIDS:	6
Education:	5
Agriculture:	4
Civil Society:	4
Water Sanitation:	3
Tourism:	1
Gender:	1

- Q2: *Who is your primary and secondary target group? Please name at least three (e.g. women, peasants, school kids, etc.)!*

Farmers/peasants	8
Women	7
Children	6
Local communities	4
Small business	3
HIV/AIDS infected	1

The results of question 2 are rather interesting in light of question 1. Though only one NGO works with an HIV infected target group, six NGOs stated that they work in the field of health, especially HIV. Most likely they do prevention work with, for example, farmers or women.

- Q3: *How do you usually communicate with your target group?*

	<i>never</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>often</i>
Community meetings	0	3	7
Newspaper	9	1	0
Radio	3	5	2
Monthly bulletin	7	2	1
SMS	9	1	0
Computer (emails)	10	0	0
Theatre	3	5	2
Other	4	0	6

Asked for specification for *Others*, the NGOs stated all sorts of meetings. For example: “individual group counseling”, “education sessions” and “training”. These kinds of communication tools can be comparable with *Community meetings*. One NGO stated using marketing materials like posters under the category *Others*.

Looking closer at the results of the seven categories *Community meeting*, *Newspaper*, *Radio*, *Monthly bulletin*, *SMS*, *Computer (emails)* and *Theatre* we get the following four impressions:

- 1) Oral communication is more often used than any written material. The most preferred way of getting in touch with the target group is the community meeting (including trainings, etc.). NGOs rely mostly on interpersonal communication.
- 2) Radio and Theatre are equally rated and signify the second most preferred media for the NGOs. Radio and Theatre also use an oral form of communication.
- 3) Written materials like Newspaper and bulletins, on the other hand, are scarcely used.
- 4) The fourth interesting aspect is the insignificance of ICT. Neither SMS nor emails are relevant for the NGO’s work in the north of Mozambique. Though even in rural areas in Mozambique the reception for mobile telephones is more than reasonable.⁹¹

⁹¹

M-Cel, The researcher noted during his three years living in the north of Mozambique that even in remote towns the coverage of either M-Cel or Vodacom or both were guaranteed. The largest mobile provider in Mozambique, M-Cel, advertises that it has more than 75 % coverage with their network.

After the more general questions, the focus shifted to theatre-specific questions in the questionnaire.

- Q4: *Do you use Entertainment-Education in your NGO (e.g. radio drama, comics, theatre, etc.) to communicate with your target group?*

7 Yes

3 No

The seven NGOs that responded positively in general think that theatre is the most attractive form of edutainment. Some were also interested in community films or radio songs.

The three NGOs who responded negatively are definitely not interested in edutainment. Only one out of these three showed a slight interest in using theatre for their fieldwork.

- Q5: *Does your NGO have specific experience with **theatre** as a tool for development or social change?*

7 Yes

3 No

Those who responded with YES and who have experience with that specific form of edutainment specified the content of the theatre plays. Most of them used theatre to motivate people to get HIV tested and to de-stigmatize HIV. Some used it to improve intergenerational relationships and fidelity. Other topics were nutrition, gender inequality and family planning.

The question “Who developed it?” was answered with: by the NGO itself, or together with the communities or it was produced by the communities alone.

Turning now to the more specific question of this project work the interviewees were asked about their knowledge about the Invisible Theatre.

- Q6: *Have you ever heard of the theatre technique “Invisible Theatre” created by Brazilian theater pedagogue Augusto Boal?*

1 Yes

9 No

The result of this question is rather unambiguous. Hardly any of the NGO representatives had ever heard about the theatre technique of Augusto Boal. Expecting this result, I gave a small description of Invisible Theatre to the interviewees in the questionnaire:

The “Invisible Theatre” is first rehearsed by actors and then performed in public without the publics’ knowledge. The actors try to provoke and involve people by debating and discussing crucial topics. Their stages are mainly crowded public spaces like restaurants, markets, or trains. The spectator is never aware of being a spectator. The aim of “Invisible Theatre” is to start a public discussion, especially of oppressed topics.

Based on this description, the representatives were asked:

- Q7: *Would “Invisible Theatre”, as described above, be of any use to your NGO?*

8 Yes

2 No

Most of the NGOs show an interest in using Invisible Theatre for their communication with target groups, or at least they show a certain curiosity. An interesting side aspect: The two NGOs declining IT are basically interested and experienced in using theatre for their work. In the previous questions they stated having used edutainment and especially theatre for changing attitudes and behaviors.

The following section of questions explores the feelings of the interviewees about IT and its probable impact of their target group.

- Q8: *Invisible Theater is from our point of view an interesting tool because the spectators never know that they are spectators (they believe it is real).*

10 Agree

0 Disagree

- Q9: *Invisible Theater is from our point of view an interesting tool because it involves people, especially people who are hard to reach.*

9 Agree

1 Disagree

- Q10: *Invisible Theater is from our point of view an interesting tool because it creates discussions, even if it might end up in aggression or perhaps chaos!*

8 Agree

2 Disagree

- Q11: *Invisible Theater is from our point of view an interesting tool because it seems to be highly participatory.*

8 Agree

2 Disagree

- Q12: *Invisible Theater is from our point of view an interesting tool because we always have problems to get on a participatory level with our target group.*

4 Agree

6 Disagree

- Q13: *Invisible Theater is from our point of view an interesting tool because Mozambican society definitely needs to discuss oppressed topics more openly.*

10 Agree

0 Disagree

In this section, all interviewees answered relatively similarly. The only discrepancy was around the question of whether the NGOs get to a participatory level with their target group. A slight majority stresses that they do not have problems reaching women, children, farmers, etc.

Therefore, there is no specific need to use techniques such as IT. The other answers show that it seems to be an accepted tool because it looks like something that would stimulate people, and especially get people to openly discuss oppressed topics.

What are your doubts about IT? - this is the overall question of the coming section.

- Q14: *We have our doubts about Invisible Theatre because our actors might get in trouble with (for example) the police.*

5 Agree

5 Disagree

- Q15: *We have our doubts about Invisible Theatre because it seems to be very chaotic, we need it more structured (you never know how and when the play ends).*

4 Agree

6 Disagree

- Q16: *We have our doubts about Invisible Theatre because you can hardly measure an impact (after the play the people go on their own way).*

6 Agree

4 Disagree

- Q17: *We have our doubts about Invisible Theatre because we need to evaluate for our donors to what extent our campaigns change behavior and attitudes.*

5 Agree

5 Disagree

- Q18: *We have our doubts about Invisible Theatre because the people already tend to speak very openly about their problems and need not be stimulated.*

2 Agree

8 Disagree

- Q19: *We have our doubts about Invisible Theatre because with other theatre techniques (where you have a clear distinction between actors and spectators) we have had good experiences.*

2 Agree

8 Disagree

- Q20: *We have our doubts about Invisible Theatre because for our work participatory tools are not too important.*

0 Agree

10 Disagree

- Q21: *On behalf of my NGO, I could imagine, not considering constraints, trying the Invisible Theatre as a communication tool at least once.*

8 Agree

2 Disagree

Asking the NGOs about their doubts about Invisible Theatre, I received results that are less explicit than in the previous category. There is a certain discomfort about the effects of Invisible Theatre. About 50% ask if IT has a measurable output and therefore if it is worth having trouble with the police! There is more agreement when it comes to open debate within Mozambican society. The interviewees believe that participation is an important tool, and that people need to be more stimulated for public debate and common sense. Therefore, besides probable constraints, Invisible Theatre appears to be a tool of interest.

Finally, the respondents were asked:

- Q22: *Perhaps you have an idea for Invisible Theatre. What would be the most useful Mozambican topics (please state several) to use Invisible Theatre as a tool of communication?*

Modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS, condom use, transactional sex between students and teachers, gender difference/inequity, all topics, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, quality of

education, quality of governance, open police violence, lack of empathy, animal cruelty, autocratic behavior, participatory education at all levels.

SCENE THREE: CONCLUDING THE SURVEY

The answers above show a great diversity in applications of Invisible Theatre. Therefore, it can be summarized that there are critical views on Invisible Theatre, but generally the results show that the interviewees view this theatre technique with a certain curiosity and openness. The reservation towards Invisible Theatre is less than expected – particularly taking the experiences of GTO into consideration. For at least half of the interviewed NGOs, the aspect of evaluating the impact of IT is not central. There is a sense that the NGOs are looking for new ways of communication, and that they are driven by the quest for other or new modes to communicate. Many of the interviewed organizations have experiences with edutainment and specifically with theatre. Invisible Theatre is one channel among many, and for all except one respondent this technique was new. The form of the questions forced the interviewees into a mode of speculation about Invisible Theatre (as mentioned above). It is hard to say to what extent the answers were given out of a caprice or sincerity. The questions about their past experiences at least show that most of the NGOs in Nampula use theatre as a communication tool. None of the interviewees showed any irritations (like adding comments) answering speculative questions about Invisible Theatre. Therefore, it can be concluded that NGO representatives are open to IT.

I will now bring together the two layers of the research in the final act: The executed Invisible Theatres and the theoretical conceptions of the representatives of the NGOs.

FINAL ACT

The core question of this research is whether the Theatre of the Oppressed – especially Invisible Theatre – is a feasible tool for development organizations in Mozambique?

The answer to this question is that IT is a feasible tool, but it is not proven to be a tool with great impact. If we look back to the four performances, it is hard to believe that Nampula will change its attitude towards homosexuality. We will never know if the people coincidentally involved

might change their attitude. In addition, they were only a handful of people. But interestingly enough the five actors (compare interview) gave a positive response and conveyed the impression that the spect-actors reacted positively.

It is more difficult to consider the feasibility of IT in light of willingness on the side of actors. Here the research showed that NGOs might envisage problems with the reliability of theatre companies, especially student groups.

The feasibility might be easier with a more professional support from the organizer of the performances, someone who was more familiar with the techniques of Boal's theatre. Unfortunately, the student group quickly lost José, who showed expertise and gave a certain dynamic to the company.

Looking at the specific research questions, it can be summarized that the way Invisible Theatre was performed did not create a visible public debate in Nampula. On the other side we never know what happened after the performances. Invisible Theatre is truly invisible!

But why didn't we create something like turmoil? The reasons might be: Probably unimposing acting, weak dramaturgy, etc.. Therefore, Invisible Theatre cannot be blamed; it is a failure of the production. The topic itself cannot be held responsible, too: Homosexuality is rather controversial in Mozambique and hardly openly expressed.

How did the *spect-actors* react then? They certainly were in control of the situation; they were a part of it. It was a communicated experience. But when the theory speaks of making the unequal equal and the unjust just, it would be exaggerated to compare it with the experiences that unfolded in Nampula.

The final specific question deals with the NGOs perception of Invisible Theatre. A certain openness towards EE and specifically Invisible Theatre was noticeable. Most of the NGOs confirmed that participation is of great importance in their work. The horizontal and participatory cooperation while conceptualizing and performing Invisible Theatre is undeniable and therefore of great interest for them.

The curtain falls

EPILOGUE

RECOMMENDATIONS

To make Invisible Theatre more effective in Mozambique the following recommendations for NGOs can be formulated:

- Invisible Theatre needs professionalism. Therefore, NGOs should spend the money for an experienced Theater of the Oppressed pedagogue.
- To have more control over the theatre companies, there should be considerations about a fair remuneration of all actives.
- To make any impact of Invisible Theatre visible, there has to be a bigger sample of performances.
- To communicate effectively, NGOs should consider the two-step model, where Invisible Theatre can be one step. Invisible Theatre alone will hardly change attitudes or behavior on a broad scale.

Theatre is closed

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