

AC ANTHROPOLOGY,
&D CHANGE AND
DEVELOPMENT

ANTHROPOLOGY, THEATRE, AND DEVELOPMENT

THE TRANSFORMATIVE
POTENTIAL OF PERFORMANCE

EDITED BY
ALEX FLYNN
JONAS TINIIUS



Anthropology, Theatre, and Development

Anthropology, Change and Development

Series Editors:

Laura Camfield, Senior Lecturer in International Development, School of International Development, University of East Anglia, UK

Catherine Locke, Reader in Gender and Social Development, School of International Development, University of East Anglia, UK

Lan Anh Hoang, Lecturer in Development Studies, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Mainstream development studies have tended to neglect important aspects of experience in developing countries that fall outside the conventional preserve of development intervention. These neglected phenomena include consumption, modernity, and mobility and ambivalent experiences such as uncertainty, mistrust, jealousy, envy, love, emotion, hope, religious and spiritual belief, personhood and other experiences throughout the life course. They have most closely been addressed through critical ethnography in the context of contemporary developing societies. We invite submissions that focus on the value of ethnography of these contemporary experiences of development (as change), not only to address these neglected phenomena, but also to enrich social science thinking about development.

Titles include:

Elizabeth Cooper and David Pratten (*editors*)

ETHNOGRAPHIES OF UNCERTAINTY IN AFRICA

Alex Flynn and Jonas Tinius (*editors*)

ANTHROPOLOGY, THEATRE, AND DEVELOPMENT

The Transformative Potential of Performance

Anthropology, Theatre, and Development

The Transformative Potential of Performance

Edited by

Alex Flynn

*British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Anthropology,
Durham University, UK*

and

Jonas Tinius

*Doctoral Researcher, King's College, Division of Social Anthropology,
University of Cambridge, UK*

palgrave
macmillan



Selection, introduction, and editorial matter © Alex Flynn and Jonas Tinius 2015
Individual chapters © Respective authors 2015
Reprint of the original edition 2015

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is a global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-46846-1 ISBN 978-1-137-35060-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137350602

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by MPS Limited, Chennai, India.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>Series Editors' Preface</i>	viii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xi

Reflecting on Political Performance: Introducing Critical Perspectives <i>Alex Flynn and Jonas Tinius</i>	1
--	---

Part I Ethnographies of Political Performance in Developing Contexts

Section 1.1 Interventions

1 Re-imagining Political Subjectivities: Relationality, Reflexivity, and Performance in Rural Brazil <i>Alex Flynn</i>	33
2 Performing Transformation: Cultivating a Paradigm of Education for Cooperation and Sustainability in a Brazilian Community <i>Dan Baron Cohen</i>	53
3 Embodying Protest: Culture and Performance within Social Movements <i>Jeffrey S. Juris</i>	82

Section 1.2 Development and Governance

4 Embodiment, Intellect, and Emotion: Thinking about Possible Impacts of Theatre for Development in Three Projects in Africa <i>Jane Plastow</i>	107
5 Resistant Acts in Post-Genocide Rwanda <i>Ananda Breed</i>	127
6 Governance, Theatricality, and Fantasma in Mafia Dance <i>Stavroula Pipyrrou</i>	147

**Part II Theatre as Paradigm for Social Reflection:
Conceptual Perspectives**

Section 2.1 Theatre and Tradition: Politics and Aesthetics

- 7 Aesthetic, Ethics, and Engagement: Self-cultivation
as the Politics of Refugee Theatre 171
Jonas Tinius
- 8 The Invisible Performance/the Invisible Masterpiece:
Visibility, Concealment, and Commitment in
Graffiti and Street Art 203
Rafael Schacter
- 9 Whose Theatre Is It Anyway? Ancient Choral
versus Modern Drama 224
Clare Foster

Section 2.2 Political Theatricality

- 10 Theatre in the Arab World – Perspectives/Portraits from
Lebanon, Syria, and Tunisia 261
Rolf C. Hemke
- 11 Pussy Riot's Moscow Trials: Restaging Political Protest and
Juridical Metaperformance 279
Milo Rau
- 12 Reinventing the Show Trial: Putin and Pussy Riot 286
Catherine Schuler

**Section 2.3 Theatre as Ethnographic Method:
Ethnography as Theatrical Practice**

- 13 For a Verbatim Ethnography 305
Nicholas J. Long
- 14 The Anthropologist as Ensemble Member:
Anthropological Experiments with Theatre Makers 334
Caroline Gatt

- Index* 357

List of Figures

1.1	Setting the stage	34
1.2	An expectant audience	35
2.1	Final collective portrait (November 2012, left to right): Toím, Crisiel, Renan, Josian, and Romulo pose to celebrate friendship	60
2.2	Bike-ride for Freedom (December 2013): emerging pedagogies cultivating ecosocial care, cooperation, and personal freedom	60
2.3	Transformance (2014): Camila performs her solo 'Roots and Antennas II' in Connecticut, demonstrating dance as intercultural, pedagogic, and transformative language of self-determination	61
2.4	Évany, the community university's youngest teacher, shares her knowledge with Zequinha	61
7.1	The Ruhrorter building in the industrial harbour	186
7.2	During rehearsals on the Ruhrorter stage	186
7.3	Adem instructing participants after rehearsals	187
7.4	During a dress rehearsal on the Ruhrorter stage	187
7.5	During a dress rehearsal on the Ruhrorter stage	188
10.1	Issam Bou Khaled	268
10.2	<i>Banafsaj</i> by Issam Bou Khaled	269
10.3	Omar Abusaada	271
10.4	"Look At the Streets, This is What Hope Looks Like" conceived by Mohammad Al Attar and Omar Abusaada	272
10.5	<i>Sabra</i> by Meriam Bousselmi	276
12.1	Pussy Riot rehearses at an art studio on the outskirts of Moscow, 16 January 2012	287
12.2	The now-iconic Pussy Riot balloons float outside the Khamovnicheskii District Court, 17 August 2012	288
12.3	Pussy Riot in front of the Kremlin	295

Series Editors' Preface

This book series, 'Anthropology, Change, and Development', fosters engagement between critical anthropology and development studies through the notion of thinking about development *as* change. Both applied anthropology and the anthropology of development have made significant strides in building a more critical engagement between anthropology and development and both are widely acknowledged as pertinent in various ways for students, researchers and, to a lesser degree, practitioners of international development. This recognition inadvertently sustains, on the part of development studies, a somewhat selective engagement with critical historical ethnography, often limited to that which is easily 'legible', as well as a clear disconnect with a wider swathe of critical ethnography about modernity in developing countries (for example Burawoy, 2009; Murray Li, 2007; Ong, 2011). Whilst both can contribute substantially to understanding and valuing change, such ethnographies are mistakenly seen as being less relevant to the concerns of contemporary development. Non-anthropologists and those working from a more pragmatic development orientation may find that they make 'difficult' and 'uncomfortable' reading. However, it is precisely this theoretical rigor and the determination to unsettle conventional perceptions about development that lies at the centre of the value of critical anthropology for development.

This series goes beyond the remit of an 'applied anthropology' framework to include phenomena that have been overlooked by development studies. It focuses precisely on the important aspects of experience in developing countries that fall outside the conventional preserve of development intervention. These neglected phenomena include uncertainty, mistrust, jealousy, envy, and witchcraft, and ambivalent experiences such as love, emotion, hope, consumption, modernity, aspiration, social mobility, religious and spiritual belief, personhood, and other experiences throughout the life course. They might also include the sensory dimensions of life, for example, the pleasures of consumption in festivals and malls, the experience of love, and other less celebrated emotions. Other marginal phenomena include the subjective and relational aspects of life in developing countries that contribute to anthropological and sociological critiques of development and modernity. Rich applications of life course analysis to developing country experiences,

as well as deeper approaches to experiences of time, and related emotions of hope and aspiration, are offering more meaningful ways of understanding how different individuals experience, influence, and are shaped by complex, and often rapid, processes of wider societal change.

The purpose of this series is to bring ethnographic research on these phenomena into conversation with contemporary development discourses and debates and enrich social science thinking about change and development. Contributions to this series such as Cooper and Pratten (2014) show that these phenomena *matter* in contemporary developing societies and in doing so offer new theoretical insights for anthropological engagement with contemporary change and development. Whilst development debate over time has substantially opened up discussion about phenomena previously considered as being beyond its preserve, such as rape, taking a step back from the 'development lens' (Jackson, 2011) makes visible core elements of everyday experience that are still not spoken about within development. Factors like envy, as any practitioner can confirm, are a well-recognised reality in poor communities, and are rarely seen as a fit subject for theoretical analysis within development studies. Placing these phenomena outside the frame of investigation, rather than as analysing them as central dynamics of situated developing contexts, severely undermines the capacity of development studies to develop rigorous theoretical explanations about change. This series makes a contribution towards focusing more direct empirical and theoretical attention on these various kinds of social phenomena.

In doing so, the series deliberately aims to extend the conversation between anthropology and development in ways that will deepen theoretical frameworks and raise questions about development. This is an intrinsically critical endeavor that involves close attention to multi-sited power relations, including those of gender, and reflexivity. Readers will need to look elsewhere for development 'solutions', policy 'recommendations', or visionary 'agendas': instead, the series offers a serious ethnographic treatment of hitherto neglected phenomena that are central to contemporary experience in developing contexts. The series encompasses contributions from anthropologists, other social science researchers, and development practitioners using anthropological and ethnographic methodologies to engage with processes of change and raising questions about what they mean for development.

Flynn and Tinius' edited volume presents a collection of thought-provoking interdisciplinary work on the interrelationships between aesthetics and politics in precarious spheres of social life. Its scope

extends from the dusty towns of sub-tropical South Brazil to a well-appointed German theatre in the post-industrial Ruhr valley, from post-genocidal Rwandan *gacaca* courts to the functional engineering spaces of Copenhagen's central rail station. These political performances across three different continents invoke in vastly different audiences a deep sense of introspective interrogation, shedding new light on political realities, causing them to reflect on the self and moving them to action. Beyond their transformative potential in political spheres, Italian mafia dance, Russian Pussy Riot, street arts, and graffiti are powerful testaments of humanity, sociality, change, and aspiration. By engaging with affective and reflective aspects of cultural politics that have been considered marginal in mainstream development discourse, the volume extends our series' effort to foster productive dialogues between ethnographic research and development thinking. It goes beyond the functional paradigm of Theatre for Development (TfD) to advance our understanding of performances as media not only for political transformation but also for self-transformation. It also juxtaposes ethnography and anthropological theory to highlight how 'political performances can make innovative contributions to international development ... as people's experiences and wishes, for social, economic, political and cultural change can entirely determine what development and transformation mean'.

References

- Burawoy, M. (2009) *The Extended Case Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cooper, E. and Pratten, D. (eds) (2014) *Ethnographies of Uncertainty in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jackson, C. (2012) Beyond testimony: speech, gender and power in *Development and Change* 43. pp. 999–1023.
- Li, T. (2007) *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Roy, A. and Ong, A. (2011) *Worlding Cities, or the Art of Being Global*. London: Blackwell.

Notes on Contributors

Dan Baron Cohen is a community-based arts-educator and cultural activist who lives and works in the Brazilian Amazon city of Marabá. After graduating from Oxford University, Dan developed collaborations with post-industrial communities at risk in northern England and South Wales, and with conflicted communities in the north of Ireland and South Africa. He has dedicated the past 20 years to the development of a *transformance* pedagogy – artistic performance for transformation – across Brazil and in collaboration with arts education networks and universities in Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America, and Europe.

Ananda Breed is Reader in the School of Arts and Digital Industries at the University of East London. Her current project, *Between Borders: Nomadic Aesthetics of Applied Cultural Forms in Central Asia*, builds on fieldwork conducted in Kyrgyzstan and is informed by practice in other areas of conflict. Applied arts practitioner and scholar, Breed is the author of *Performing the Nation: Genocide, Justice, Reconciliation* (2014), which analyses performances and performatives related to the *gacaca* courts in Rwanda, in addition to several publications that address transitional systems of governance and the arts. Breed is co-director of the Centre for Performing Arts Development (CPAD) at the University of East London and former research fellow of the International Research Centre ‘Interweaving Performance Cultures’ (2013–2014) at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.

Alex Flynn is British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Anthropology, University of Durham. His research focuses on cultural politics, ethico-aesthetic practice, and political subjectivities, and he has conducted ethnographic research on these issues in Brazil since 2007. He is currently writing a book on the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST), and other publications include articles in *Ethnos*, *Critique of Anthropology*, and *Latin American Research Review*. Alex’s current project focuses on the contemporary art world of Brazil and investigates the participatory and open-ended potential of relational aesthetics. He is co-convenor of the Anthropologies of Art (A/A) Network (with Jonas Tinius).

After an MA in the Reception of the Classical World at UCL (2008–2010) **Clare Foster** finished a PhD with Mary Beard and Simon Goldhill at the

University of Cambridge, 'A Very British Greek Play' in 2014. She is a founding co-convenor of the Cambridge Interdisciplinary Performance Network at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH). Formerly a screenwriter based in Los Angeles, she now teaches dramatic writing at Cambridge (the Institute of Further Education and the Faculty of Education) and directs the MA interdisciplinary course 'Ancient Rome on Film' at UCL.

Caroline Gatt is Research Fellow on the Knowing from the Inside ERC project, based in the Department of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen. She is working on a book manuscript entitled *An Ethnography of Global Environmentalism: Becoming Friends of the Earth* to be published by Routledge, based on her doctoral research and previous engagement with Friends of the Earth International. From 2001 to 2006 Gatt also worked with two research theatre groups, in Malta and in Italy, carrying out practice-based research. Recent publications include 'Vectors, direction of attention and unprotected backs: Re-specifying relations in anthropology', 2013 *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 13 Issue 4, and with Tim Ingold, 2013 'From description to correspondence: Anthropology in real time', in Wendy Gunn, Ton Otto and Rachel Smith (Eds.) *Design Anthropology: Juxtaposing Theory and Practice*.

Rolf C. Hemke is a freelance writer and dramaturg for the *Theater an der Ruhr* in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany. He has been curating the Theaterlandschaft (Theatre Landscape) festival in Mülheim since 2007, currently with an emphasis on Arab theatre. From 1992 to 2002, he was a freelance cultural journalist for *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Der Standard* from Vienna, and public radio broadcasters, amongst others. He is also the editor of *Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2010).

Jeffrey S. Juris is Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Northeastern University. He received his PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, and is the co-author of *Networking Futures: the Movements against Corporate Globalization* (2008), *Global Democracy and the World Social Forums* (2008), and numerous articles on social movements and political protest in Spain/Catalonia, Mexico, and the U.S. He is also a co-editor of *Insurgent Encounters: Transnational Activism, Ethnography, and the Political* (2013), and is currently writing a book regarding media and 'free' or pirate radio activism in Mexico City and beyond.

Nicholas J. Long is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of *Being*

Malay in Indonesia: Histories, Hopes and Citizenship in the Riau Archipelago (2013) and the co-editor of *Southeast Asian Perspectives on Power* (2012), *Sociality: New Directions* (2013), and *The Social Life of Achievement* (2013).

Stavroula Pipyrou is Leverhulme Research Fellow in the Department of Social Anthropology, University of St Andrews. She has conducted ethnographic research in Calabria since 2006 on issues of minority governance, civil society, and relatedness. Her publications include a monograph, *Fearless Governance: Minority Politics and Violence on the Fringes of Europe* (Forthcoming), and articles in *American Ethnologist*, *Anthropological Forum*, and *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*. Stavroula's current project in Italy assesses the long-term effects of forced child relocation, showing how political power struggles shape post-disaster relief and impact the lives of stricken populations.

Jane Plastow is Professor of African Theatre and director of the Leeds University Centre for African Studies. She has worked as a director, theatre trainer, and researcher across East Africa for the last 30 years and is currently writing a history of East African Theatre.

Milo Rau studied Sociology, German and Romance Studies in Paris, Zurich and Berlin. From 2003 he has worked as a theatre director with the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, Staatsschauspiel Dresden, HAU Berlin, Theaterhaus Gessnerallee Zurich, Teatrul Odeon Bucharest, and Beursschouwburg in Brussels. In 2007, Rau founded the theatre and film production company *International Institute for Political Murder*, which he has been running since. His theatrical re-enactments and films, including 'Breivik's Statement', 'The Moscow Trials', and 'The Zurich Trials', have been invited to some of the most important national and international festivals while also touring the world. The Swiss newspaper *Tagesanzeiger* recently named him as one of the 'most sought-after directors of today', with the German weekly *Der Freitag* calling him 'the most controversial theatre director of his generation'.

Rafael Schacter is an anthropologist, curator, and author from London. He is currently British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow (2014–2017) based in the Anthropology Department at University College London. He is the author of *Ornament and Order: Graffiti, Street Art and the Parergon* (2014) and *The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti* (2013). The latter was awarded art book of the year at the Los Angeles Book Festival and third best art book of the year by the Huffington Post.

Catherine Schuler is Associate Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her first book, *Women in Russian*

Theatre: the Actress in the Silver Age (1996) won the prestigious Barnard Hewitt Award from the American Society Theatre Research. The University of Iowa Press published her second book, *Theatre and Identity in Imperial Russia* in 2009. She has also published in numerous peer-reviewed journals, including *TDR*, *Theatre Journal*, *Theatre Survey*, *Theatre History Studies*, and *Theatre Topics*, and was the editor of *Theatre Journal* from 2007 to 2011. Her newest project concerns Vladimir Putin and the theatricalisation of Russian politics.

Jonas Tinius is a PhD candidate in Social Anthropology at King's College, University of Cambridge and a fellow of the *Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung*, Institute for Media Culture and Theatre at the University of Cologne, Germany. He is convenor of the *Cambridge Interdisciplinary Performance Network* (with Clare Foster) at the *Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities* in Cambridge, England and he co-convenes the Anthropologies of Art (A/A) Network (with Dr Alex Flynn). His ethnographic fieldwork in Berlin and the post-industrial Ruhr valley explores the intersection of aesthetics and ethics in political theatre, rehearsal and creative labour processes, as well as art patronage.

Reflecting on Political Performance: Introducing Critical Perspectives

Alex Flynn and Jonas Tinius

Rural Santa Catarina in sub-tropical South Brazil, and Mülheim, a pleasant German city in the post-industrial Ruhr valley. As editors, our field sites are strikingly different and hard to imagine side by side. In Brazil, you arrive along a dusty track to huge concrete gymnasias where state meetings of Latin America's largest social movement, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) take place. Cows stand idly in pens in adjacent fields. Coaches that have transported hundreds of people to the meeting line up in parking lots nearby. Sentries bar the gates and word of mouth communication from a leader is required before they allow you to pass. A brief exchange and they either swing open the broad wooden gates or they turn you back. Once beyond the perimeter, in this rural location outside a small town in the Brazilian interior, the meeting itself is abuzz with energy, people going hither and thither, camping down on a concrete floor in a mixture of tents, old mattresses, and dusty blankets. The meeting will last four days and there is excitement and anticipation about the programme, of which a key part will be the dramatic performances, the *mística*. Images line the main hall. Sebastião Salgado's series on the Landless Workers' Movement has pride of place, hasty photocopies of his work strung out down the full length of one wall. Stands of prize vegetables demonstrate what organic farming can produce. There are pumpkins, squashes, courgettes, apples, and tomatoes proudly on display in a political statement that counters the hegemony of the agroindustrial companies, such as Cargill and Monsanto. On a stage at the front of the hall, there are Brazilian flags, movement flags, and flags of solidarity: Palestine, Bolivia, and Venezuela. A few people are readying a rudimentary mixing desk and public address system. People mill around, waiting for the performance to begin, wearing the red MST baseball cap and the red MST t-shirt, with

Che Guevara or Fidel Castro's image printed on the front and lyrics from a Silvio Rodriguez song, printed on the back. The *mística* will open the day's meeting and coordinators are rounding people up and ushering them into the main hall. There is much fidgeting, much rustling of notepads, chewing of pens and then silence, before the performance starts.

There are fewer cows at pasture in Mülheim. You approach the Theater an der Ruhr down a suburban street in a genteel neighbourhood not far from the region's post-industrial sites. The tree-lined avenue throws glimpses of the theatre premises itself, an elegant 19th-century country house, established as part of a spa complex for public health. Flanked by a freshwater pool, the gardens, designed by the architect Baron von Engelhardt, conduct you through stone terraces and sweeps of steps to the entrance of the theatre, where cosmopolitan artists sip gin in a well-appointed foyer. Theatrical lighting highlights current and former performers, blown up in posters where they strike dramatic poses. Theater an der Ruhr literature sits organised in neat rows on tables, behind which smiling bilingual interns offer to assist and translate. A savvy crowd of theatregoers float around from the foyer to the bar area, where red curtains and carpet, spacious high ceilings, and stucco plaster complement a small stage for seminars and presentations, decked out with a stark black lighting rig and simple table and chairs. There are several performing spaces, and the corridor to the main auditorium transports you from the openness of the public area to an atmosphere altogether more intimate. Again, portraits, paintings, and theatre placards line the wall, to where a large and heavy double door marks the entrance to the reason why people have come; this is where the performance will take place.

Much anticipated and much contested, these instances of performance which occur in dusty towns of the Brazilian interior and in a well-appointed, state-funded German theatre, although seemingly so different, offer important points of analytical similarity. Indeed, these points of similarity can be found in all the performances that are described by the contributors to this volume. Although they occur across three different continents, play to vastly different audiences, and draw numbers of participants from the tens to the hundreds of thousands, they all have qualities that lead us to analyse them conceptually as *political* performance, a choice of term which we will explain a little later in this introduction. What links these political performances for us as editors is a conviction that there is something immanent to their happening that can be perceived as both an ethnographical reality and

as an analytical proposition. There is a powerful ethico-aesthetic quality inherent to these political performances that *moves* people, one that causes them to *reflect* and therefore consciously decide that they will interact with the world in a different manner. The audience and performers in these performances experience a deep sense of introspective interrogation, and through this ethical and affective inquiry of the self, in a shared space, those people present come to new understandings of the world, *together*.

A rigorous anthropological analysis of what occurs in such milieus therefore prompts questions whose consequences for studies of the social are profound. How can we conceptualise the unique second-order reflection of embodied acting of roles that can take place on any stage? What are the potentials of considering political performances as a genre of critical social inquiry? How do these capacities relate to institutionalised structures, political aspirations about democracy, and basic tenets of human development, such as freedom and equality? In this book, the interstices of anthropology, theatre studies, and development studies are the starting points for an analysis that explores how the potential of performance has not only been under-explored by practitioners in its current guise, but has also been under-theorised by scholars within these fields.

Rationale

This collection aims to provide an interdisciplinary analysis of political performance, juxtaposing ethnography and anthropological theory to highlight how dimensions of aesthetics and politics can interrelate to create new forms of sociality. This, we argue, is key to understanding how political performances can make innovative contributions to international development and political debates on the role of artistic expression, as people's experiences and wishes for social, economic, political and cultural change can entirely determine what development and transformation mean on a quotidian level. In Rolf Hemke's chapter on political theatre in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, a participant in such a performance describes very aptly what we see as the central contribution to the theoretical and ethnographic corpus of this book:

We try to reflect with our means, with the means of theatre. Theatre is a method to observe, from some distance, what is happening to us. On the basis of the objectification through one's own work, we can try to understand what changes have occurred and how the crisis

is affecting us. Although we're just small pieces in a large puzzle, we can describe this puzzle much more accurately when going into detail. (Hemke, this volume)

As the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia demonstrates, performance and ritualised stagings can be defining in their potential to create radically affective bonds between actors and audience. By focusing on 'humans embodying other humans', as German philosophical anthropologist Helmuth Plessner described it (1982: 146), contexts of political performance can provide a rich field for anthropological explorations of people's own reflections on humanity, sociality, change, and aspiration. We argue that these affective and reflective aspects of cultural politics are considered marginal in mainstream development discourse, yet are entirely intrinsic to the wider processes upon which such a discourse is premised. As such, this book aims to create new pathways in which critical anthropology can theorise instances of reflected action with an intended transformative *telos*, and therefore development as change, while anchoring our ethnographies in contexts that are pertinent to the international development community.

Our main theoretical concerns therefore organise, but also draw upon, the ethnographic contributions presented in this volume. Key to the theoretical underpinnings of our contribution is to make clear the difference between dimensions of performance as deliberately reflective, metaperformative actions and performativity as action intended to incite transformation. Our terming of the ethnographic realities presented in this volume as *political performance* follows from this conceptual differentiation. Following this important distinction, we also wish to establish the 'political' as a space where dissent can be articulated, even if it may not result in what can be conveniently termed as 'revolutionary'.¹ Following Chantal Mouffe therefore, political performance for us opens the possibility of a more nuanced analysis that can better perceive ethical dimensions of transformation of the self, the collective, and of interests, in their potential if not in their immediate impact. Linked to this idea of 'impact' is our contention that the articulation of these discrete transformations of the self and therefore the elaboration of new collective political subjectivities is a process that grounds wider instances of development. In her contribution, which puts forward both academic and practitioner perspectives, Jane Plastow argues that transformation through performance and commitment to dialogic approaches can result in lasting outcomes as opposed to asserted impacts. In this vein, this volume aims to highlight how the potential

of performance has not been realised by development practitioners in its current incarnation of Theatre for Development (TfD).²

Through the mobilisation of diverse ethnographies, we also aim to explore how political performance offers possibilities for both wider political transformation and also self-transformation. As such, we see a pathway into more subtle readings of the negotiation of how political self-transformation occurs in contexts that can often be subject to dichotomous power-resistance readings. This tension between ethics and politics is felt perhaps most keenly in the counterpoint that can exist between aesthetics and politics: Rafael Schacter, Alex Flynn, and Jonas Tinius, amongst others, all touch on the subtleties of how a performance is staged; the tensions between rehearsal and performance, and how this impacts on people's own projects of self-transformation elaborated within collective spaces. These tensions are important to highlight if we are to consider performance as a method of research. Through Caroline Gatt and Nicholas Long's contributions, this volume aims to put forward performance as a means of reinterpreting research design and output, and understanding such antagonistic points of encounter is intrinsic to this project. Clearly, we do not seek to offer political performance as an ethnographic phenomenon or research technique that is without its problems; on the contrary, the element of critique that runs through this volume calls into question performance as a means of emancipation, the efficacy of performance as a development tool, and also the legitimacy that the complex multiple roles that academics involved as practitioners (or vice versa) can exercise. Indeed, we hope that readers of this collection will find these points of contention productive and be stimulated to engage in the following debates.

Key concepts

In this book, we argue that political performance can bring about radical changes in people's conceptions of themselves and their understanding of wider political subjectivities. Having studied a diverse range of such instances of performances, the need for an analytical tool with which to synthesise what occurs in such processes becomes evident. Recognising this necessity, we propose the concept of *relational reflexivity* as a means to productively theorise what we argue are the key dimensions of political performance. This term, which underpins the volume's theoretical approach, prompts questions that are explored in each of the contributions: what is the role of relationality? What are the roles of audiences and collectives that are always implied in performances? How

is collective meaning elaborated from within relational contexts and yet premised upon reflective processes? Any desire for change implies a conceptualisation of the status quo and conscious envisioning and imagination of a desired state of being; the very possibility of reflection is derived from intersubjective interrogation.

In the elaboration of this definitional proposition, we have drawn together what we consider to be important theoretical perspectives on performance, the political, and relationality, while also attempting to mobilise them in a precise and specific manner. For example, the adjective 'political' is often interchangeably ascribed to a wide variety of collective expressions, ranging (not exclusively) from performance arts, Brechtian and post-Brechtian theatre, bodily alterations, and gender performativity, to reperformances of the European drama canon. Once concepts such as 'performance', and 'political' become all-encompassing and almost tautological, their significance as meaningful reference points for either analytical scholarship or applied practitioners is rendered irrelevant. As such, in the following paragraphs, we seek to outline the theoretical positions that underpin the analytical tool that we propose.

Judith Butler offers perhaps one of the most cogent discussions of the distinction between performance and performativity.³ Having developed J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts⁴ with regard to an analysis of gender identity and articulation, she writes:

There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results. (Butler 1990: 25)

Operating on the basis of work made possible by Foucault's 'archaeological work' (Baert 1998: 116), Butler elaborates the performative dimensions of 'rules of formation which stipulate the conditions of possibility of what can be said' (*Ibid.*). As Butler puts it:

One exists not only by virtue of being recognised, but, in a prior sense, by being recognisable. If language can sustain the body, it can also threaten its existence. [...] Even if hate speech works to constitute a subject through discursive means, is that constitution necessarily final and effective? Is there a possibility of disrupting and subverting the effects produced by such speech? (Butler 1997)

For Butler, performativity is thus a reiterative and cited power (not limited to speech acts) which produces the phenomena that it also

regulates. In other words, each performance of, say, gender, also contains the possibility of its performativity, that is, its execution or enactment. When the Australian-Bosnian model Andrej Pejić self-identifies as ‘in between genders’, preferring ambiguous pronouns and modelling for both male and female designers, such performances on the catwalk *are* perlocutionary acts; they already enact the transformations they imply. There is thus a nuanced and perhaps deliberately ambivalent discrepancy between creating a reflexive and artistic gesture towards an audience (a *performance* of queer identity) and articulating one’s own transformation through this gesture (a *performative* act).

Although Butler’s distinction is vital in developing a critique of essentialism (cf. Rorty 1989), it also risks denigrating the performance-aspect in favour of the performative-aspect and thus overemphasising the ‘perlocutionary force’ over the thoughts and reflections on performance’s affects and effects. What this volume intends to propose is to highlight these slippages by shifting attention from *teloi* and physical transformation to their reflection and deliberation. We believe that such a singular focus on performativity (what is *done* by means of performance), which is akin to a development discourse prioritising impact, obscures the relevance of (self-) reflexivity on *how* and *what* is done and performed.

The concept of ‘the political’ in the context of performance and performativity is no less problematic or ambivalent (Butler 2013).⁵ Yet it offers similar potential for a productive refocus on negotiation and the idea of process with a concomitant emphasis on the dimensions of reflexivity that are part of such an approach. Rather than understanding ‘political’ as an adjective indicating instrumentalisation, ideology, or an applied teleological practice, we understand it to be a critical term highlighting deliberation and dissent. Inspired by Chantal Mouffe’s elaboration of the term (1993, 2008, 2013) and what she labels ‘agonistic pluralism’ (Mouffe 1999), we consider the political in our conceptual discussion of relational and reflexive performances to be those kinds of performances that *problematise* negotiation and process, rather than *propagate* fixity and identity.

Central to Mouffe’s reconceptualisation of the political is a critique of the postulation of a rational public sphere, ‘where power and antagonism would have been eliminated and where a rational consensus would have been realized’ (Mouffe 1999: 752). In such a universal-pragmatic model of ‘democratic’ politics, there is no space for the conflictual dimension and ‘its crucial role in the formation of collective identities’ (*Ibid.*). In foregrounding antagonism, Mouffe de-universalises our notion of political subjects. For her ‘the political’ refers to forms of antagonism inherent

to all dimensions of human society that emerge and are constituted by social relations. 'Politics', we agree with Mouffe, refers to the 'ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions that seek to establish a certain order and to organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of "the political"' (Mouffe 1999: 754). This observation rests on a key proposition: seeing 'the other' in political discussion no longer as an enemy to be eradicated, but as an 'adversary, i.e. somebody with whose ideas we are going to struggle but whose right to defend those ideas we will not put into question'. Such a conceptualisation of pluralist politics includes and conceptualises the 'subversion of the ever-present temptation that exists in democratic societies to naturalize their frontiers and essentialize their identities' with the aim to be receptive to 'the multiplicity of voices that a pluralist society encompasses, and to the complexity of the power structure that this network of differences implies' (*Ibid.*, 757).

The notion of the political as defined by process and dissent is deeply significant for our mobilisation of relationality. We understand the idea of performing to transform to be premised within a relational, precarious, and collective context, and as such we mobilise and extend Nicolas Bourriaud's (2002) theory of relational aesthetics. Bourriaud is an art critic and theorist and became well known for his curation of visual artists of the 1990s. Bourriaud argues that these artists cannot be interpreted using outdated notions of art history and art objects and instead puts forward the idea that the value of their work is premised on its potential to bring together the audience as a harmonious community, thus facilitating the creation of shared meaning. We extend Bourriaud's theory of how meaning is elaborated through intersubjective encounters by applying his theory to ethnographic instances of political performances by groups, often in interaction with institutions, in movements, or on stage. Following Bourriaud, we suggest that political performances create ephemeral, precarious, and collective spaces akin to the temporary democratic communities that Bourriaud terms 'micro-utopias'. Similarly, we understand these spaces and practices as fundamentally relational. However, in our anthropological development of this line of thought, we elaborate the relational to encompass the intersection and interaction of juxtaposed and imbricated values and spheres – aesthetic, cultural social, political.

What is particularly productive about Bourriaud's conceptualisation of art works (or performances) as a starting point for intersubjective encounters is the debate that his writings have produced. Claire Bishop's critique of Bourriaud draws heavily on Mouffe's articulation

of antagonism to ask 'what types of relations are being produced [by relational art], for whom, and why? (2004: 65).

Bourriaud wants to equate aesthetic judgment with an ethicopolitical judgment of the relationships produced by a work of art. But how do we measure or compare these relationships? The quality of the relationships in 'relational aesthetics' are never examined or called into question. (*Ibid.*)

Bishop argues that, in the contemporary art world, works that Bourriaud classifies as exemplifying the tenets of relational aesthetics may create intersubjective relations, but they also stray dangerously into the territory of exclusivity to which only the privileged few have access. She cites the observations of an art insider recounting how many art world professionals he met at a Rirkrit Tiravanija exhibition. The artist conducted a performance in which he cooked a vegetable curry and pad thai for those people attending. This cosiness, in what is supposed to be an ethicopolitical intervention, is problematic for Bishop. Addressing Tiravanija's work, which sits as an exemplar of Bourriaud's theory, Bishop criticises the homogeneity of voices that make up these intersubjective relations and calls into question therefore not only the emancipatory potential of this 'micro-utopias', but also the *intentions* of the agent who has created the possibility of these relations.

The importance of Bishop's influential critique of relational aesthetics here is to relate her emphasis on antagonism with concerns around the structure of a political performance; while Bishop questions how open-ended such works as Tiravanija's curry kitchen may be, we interrogate the emancipatory vocabulary of participatory theatre; what are the dimensions of spontaneity and script that lie behind political performances? How might political performance, as much as the exhibitions of contemporary art, be subject to different interpretations of 'rehearsal' and 'performance'? How can 'antagonism' be connected to dissenting performers and those out of step with prescribed choreography?

In such a vein, an antagonistic critique of relationality reinforces our conviction that the 'political' in performance denotes process over fixity. Participants' reflections on the *status quo*, and their desire for change, are not necessarily the tools with which the 'now' can be turned into the 'then', but rather the basis for articulations of *eu-topias*⁶ and contested collective meaning. In our understanding of the antagonistic political, artists no longer produce political theatre, but instead produce it *politically*.

Thus understood, 'the political' in our discussions of 'performance' directs our analytical perspective to a critique of instrumentalist rationalities in and beyond development, performance, and theatre studies. Rooted in a critique of instrumentalised art performances, often related, but not limited, to TfD, we seek to reorient scholarship of political performances or the political of/in performances from dichotomous ideas about structure vs. agency, power vs. resistance, and institution vs. individual towards a focus on the potential for self-reflexivity and the desire for self-determined transformation.

Performance, development, and change

Although the contributions of this volume are interdisciplinary, the approach and questions posed in this volume are at heart anthropological: How do I articulate selfhood, subjectivity, or belonging? How do groups, institutions, and movements imagine and articulate themselves as collectives? How do we perceive ourselves in relation to others? This volume, then, asks less 'Is power challenged, or reproduced in political performances?' than 'How do people create precarious relational spaces to negotiate shared meaning by reflecting on their situation, and, by performing to transform, articulate where or who they want to be?' We believe that such an approach can make an important contribution to issues of development that sit beyond the mainstream understandings of the term. Post-development scholars such as Arturo Escobar have placed great emphasis on development solutions that are specifically premised on social movements and place-based politics (2004: 220), and we contend that political performance is intrinsic to this reconceptualisation of how development can take place. Escobar argues that processes which attempt to go beyond conceptualisations of the 'third world' are being enacted by self-organising, non-hierarchical networks that are place-based and thus mobilise at a local level (while engaging with transnational networks). However, Escobar highlights that although such movements of people provide the most realistic opportunity for re-imagining and re-making local and regional worlds, these processes of dissent are subject to two important questions:

What are the sites where ideas for these alternative and dissenting imaginations will come from? Second, how are the dissenting imaginations to be set into motion? (2004: 220)

We argue that analysing political performance through the concept of relational reflexivity can both lead to better understandings of the

sites through which new political subjectivities can emerge, and also, through our focus on the way meaning is elaborated in relational spaces, *how* they can be set in motion. By speaking deliberately to development contexts from an anthropological point of view, the book prompts a vocabulary that sees the aesthetic, the transformative, and the performative as parts of the same conversation about social and political realities.

Following Escobar's emphasis on solutions that can re-make and re-imagine political subjectivities rooted in colonial and imperialist tropes, this book's analysis of political performance builds on and develops the praxis of TfD that for many audiences, represent a straightforwardly didactic tool. The ethnographies of Jane Plastow in Uganda and Ananda Breed in Rwanda foreground how development practice that encourages deep personal reflection on process and negotiation can prompt action and knowledge in entirely separate ways to that directed by the direct impositions of TfD, with its emphasis on results.

From the 1950s onwards, theatre was recognised by development practitioners as a valuable tool. In a manner which scholars like Dale Byam (1999) term as propaganda for colonial government development policies, theatre was utilised by development practitioners to disseminate ideas such as immunisation, sanitation, and cash crop production. As such, development interventions have historically employed theatre in a limited sense, which as Zakes Mda (1993) has stressed, was merely concerned with disseminating development messages, or conscientising communities about their objective social political situations. This situation has indeed persisted; even today theatre is still commonly used in educational programmes relating to HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa, or in wider programmes to 'educate' people about gender equality. However, theories that underpin more progressive uses of political and theatrical performances began to evolve from the 1970s, based on Paulo Freire (1973, 1975) and Augusto Boal's (2000) reconceptualisations. Penny Mlama has identified what she terms as 'Popular Theatre' as having the potential to act as a counterpoint to the development process. For Mlama, popular theatre becomes a mode of expression based on people's genuine participation to 'assert the culture of the dominated classes ... making people not only aware of but also active participants in the development process' (1991: 67). The use of theatre and other forms of performance in this new and radical context of empowerment has attracted huge interest from scholars, practitioners, and activists from around the world with instances of activity encountered across the global south. The Zapatista movement in Chiapas (Barmeyer 2003; Kampwirth

1996), the Mothers of the Disappeared in Buenos Aires (Borland 2006), and the movement to oust President Fujimori in Peru (Moser 2003) have all employed instances of theatre and performance outside of traditional development settings to mobilise communities, while Femi Osofisan (1999) in Sub-Saharan Africa and Jacob Srampickal (1994) in India, among others, have highlighted how theatrical performances are increasingly employed by communities to intervene in political debates.

This interest has come about because, used in these settings, political performances have been employed in a free, profoundly embodied, and non-rehearsed way. Through a reflected and embodied methodology, these performances have elicited recognitions of personal transformation that more straightforward programmes of Tfd have mostly ignored. What is interesting about these more open-ended performances are the inherent connections to participation and participatory models of development. As Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari have compellingly illustrated in *Participation: The New Tyranny* (2001), the mechanisms of participation are easily suborned to accommodate the interests of sponsors, with their powerful and often ideologically driven agendas. One such agenda that can underpin participatory development, as highlighted by Maia Green (2000) and Harri Englund (2006), is the denial of poor people's capacity to bring about change for themselves. In this book we explore how political performances can dialogue with more genuine models of participation through activating the creative potential of interaction and discussion inherent in people's lives. Unlike more didactic models, some of the instances that our contributions explore detail how performance can create spaces that incite people to act out their lives and the issues that are important to them in an emergent, rather than prescribed, fashion. In this sense, these performances, which prioritise negotiation over propaganda engage, as Jane Plastow understands it, with a different ideology to limited ideas of participatory development that can underlie current development thinking. Even to the most reactionary of the development community, it is clear that change in development cannot be brought about in a sustainable manner through an imposition of values and ideals. Engaging with participants in political performances can reveal the fallacy of equality as a feasible aim of development, shifting notions towards more realistic notions of equality as participation (Englund 2011).

This book therefore engages with a contemporary intellectual art tradition that envisages political performance as a 'particular conjunction of contemplative thought, reasoned action (*praxis*) and creative production (*poiesis*)' (Lambek 2000b: 309). As such, throughout this book, we

are detailing the dynamics of a generative process by which, for example, theatre as art and as performance creates a nexus of techniques which can energise spaces with the capacity for change.

Structure of the book: situating contributions

Each of the contributors intervenes in debates pertaining to relational reflexivity in separate ways pertinent to their disciplinary standpoints. The contributions come from different disciplines, but as editors we have structured the book to ensure a productive dialogue between these differing approaches.

The first part of the book, 'Ethnographies of political performance in developing contexts' looks at how performances are mobilised in diverse parts of the world to bring about change. This first part is itself split into two sections, the first of which is entitled 'Interventions'. Alex Flynn's chapter opens this section, discussing how the *mística* of the Landless Workers' Movement of Brazil can be understood as a performance through which change is imagined through the collective elaboration of meaning. The chapter highlights how the MST's stylised form of performance is latent with the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, intending to enable movement members to envisage change within themselves and also collective change in the conception of political subjectivity. Flynn highlights how the spaces in which these performances occur are wholly relational; *mística* performances are embedded into the cultural politics of the MST and are used to open meetings at which hundreds of people are in attendance. In these performances, however, the MST community is represented as embedded within wider schemes of the global political economy; the political symbols of the movement flag, the Brazilian national flag and anthem, and the props that signify the reach and power of multinational corporations all go to demonstrate how political subjectivities elaborated in relational and reflexive spaces are never disengaged from the spheres in which MST leaders understand their struggle to take place. One of the interesting facets about *mística*, however, is the extent to which the performance is subject to control. In the closing section of the chapter, Flynn highlights the tensions that exist between the spontaneity of expression and the improvisation of artistic expression to call into question, from the standpoint of theatricality, the kinds of meaning that can be elaborated by individuals in these relational and reflexive spaces.

Dan Baron Cohen's contribution equally draws attention to Brazilian issues of marginalisation and powerlessness, albeit from a point of view

which is more characterised by his work as a practitioner in a small community in the Amazon. Baron Cohen foregrounds the concept of transformance as an activist cultural politics, a practice that builds performances through pedagogy, singing, and the creation of poetry. As with the *mística* that Flynn discusses, Baron Cohen's work demonstrates that seemingly obscure performances in marginalised spaces are anything but unconnected; indeed, both *mística* and Baron Cohen's work highlight the consciousness that small communities have of global and local frameworks. Central to Baron Cohen's work as a practitioner who mobilises performance is the concept of *transformance pedagogy*. Drawing upon 15 years of ethnographic research, and resisting a clear delineation between academic and activist roles, Baron Cohen illustrates his conceptualisation of transformance pedagogy through his work with young artist producers and how these young people transform their violent lives, streets, and schools in the city of Marabá. Central to his thinking is the idea that transformance pedagogy distinguishes between crude narcissistic empathy and reflexive empathy. Baron Cohen argues that the former is merely an uncritical identification, whereas the latter is inherently affective; a quality that leads to questioning and analytic identification. Sensitive to his position as an activist and practitioner, Baron Cohen echoes Flynn's questioning of performance and how anthropologically it is merely a technique within a wider field of social relations. Although both authors argue that performance can generate radical new understandings of self and change amongst disempowered communities in Brazil, as with much 'participatory development', such processes can be open to manipulation within a wider political framework. Nevertheless, both authors, aware of these critiques, refer to performance's unique artistic language, and its key role in the transformation of sentimental empathy into reflexive empathy in Baron Cohen's work, and marginalised rural aspirations to mainstream political subjectivities in that of Flynn.

To complete this first section, Jeffrey S. Juris' chapter, while also focusing on performance and intervention, specifically puts forward an analysis of the transformative capacity of embodiment and affect, at both macro and micro levels. Juris explores the links between concepts and mobilisations of culture and performance in social movements to make observations on the power that political performance can have. Based on ethnographic data from contexts including the Occupy movement and the movements for global justice, Juris argues that it is through what he terms cultural performance that alternative meanings, values, and identities are produced, embodied, and publicly communicated

within social movements. It is important to note here that such performances are often constructed by media-savvy organisers. As Juris highlights, some groups may operate a mass media oriented strategy that explicitly relies on performance for achieving visibility. For Juris, as for Flynn and Baron Cohen, many of the participants and activists with whom these authors have worked consciously reflect upon the performative, aesthetic, and 'practical' dimensions of their performances. How these reflections are premised within wider, collective notions of protest tactics is a key contribution of this section.

The second section of Part 1, entitled 'Development and Governance' opens with Jane Plastow's chapter, which, seeking to move away from TfD and toward experiential learning through development/image theatre, combines ethnographic analysis with an illustration of the use of performance in developing contexts. With reference to projects undertaken by the author, the chapter explores how relational and reflexive performances have been used with marginalised social groups in three Sub-Saharan African contexts. Plastow highlights how such techniques have been employed to explore participants' lives: their concerns about violence, gender, and schooling. Her work illuminates the generative process whereby, through performance and the use of the body, participants come to their own understandings of questions that were emergent: that is, not outlined as one of the goals of the session. As such, the idea of dialogic learning is fundamental to Plastow's work and echoes Baron Cohen's commitment to processes, which engenders a learning through dialogue between individuals. As with Baron Cohen's work, the body is central in this methodology in the way that it promotes a self-reflexive, and fundamentally democratic activity that evokes the potential of participants' transformative responses within a relational sphere. In this way both Baron Cohen and Plastow emphasise how relational and reflexive performance can be put toward development goals, going beyond the simplistic notion that theatre is effective in development contexts because it allows illiterate people to learn and participate. Indeed, both authors stress that such a commitment to dialogic approaches to theatre making, with and for communities of the marginalised, can result in lasting outcomes as opposed to asserted impacts.

Ananda Breed's contribution to this volume furthers Plastow's concerns with notions of development that sit outside mainstream development discourse. Breed's chapter problematises resistant performances in the context of post-genocidal Rwandan gacaca courts and local dramatic performances, calling into question how performance intersects