

Traditional Dance in Transformation: Opportunities for Development in Mozambique



Figure 1



Figure 2

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Bettina Holzhausen

Introduction

It had been a long day. We had visited two villages to meet dance groups and had to wait in pouring tropical rain for several hours. The drums were still vibrating in my ears and the feeling of all the children pushing around me, curiously observing my every movement was still very present. These villages of the Makonde in Northern Mozambique were as far as I could think of having ever been away from 'my civilisation and culture'. The dances I had seen there were not the kind of traditional dances I had expected to see in Africa; they seemed not really to me 'authentic' because they were actually new, so called 'danças novas', which had only recently been created by individuals or small groups of the community.

I became even more confused about authenticity when we visited the discothèque in Mueda¹ that night. *Takatuka* (Makonde for 'get up'), is the only bar in the little town with electricity, where some old overused CDs are played on Friday nights, a shabby meeting room decorated with some coloured lights. Local youth gather there, some of them walk 20-30km to come to this rather uninviting place and listen to old American hits and dance. They let the music through their bodies, mixing the movement patterns of their own dances with their fantasy about the American way of dancing and being cool. The result is something very authentic; the Makonde-way of dancing to pop music. 'Everything is the authentic version of *something* [...]. Indeed, the only form of „unauthenticity“ [...] is a nostalgia for the 'purity' of the past' (Copeland, 2001: 57). An authentic expression is a creative response to the realities of the present cultural, social, economic and technological situation of a society and not a matter of conserving elapsed traditions.

These young Makondes were not concerned about the purity of the past. They were reacting to present opportunities with the knowledge and skills they had learned in the past. This reaction leads to transformed forms of expression and still is authentic.

I have been dancing, creating and observing others dancing for many years, but I had rarely seen a collective creative process which was so organically developing in the subconscious of a community. What happens on Friday nights in the little discothèque in Mueda might be the seed out of which another of these ‘danças novas’ of the Makonde will develop. The fact that there is now electricity to play CDs in Mueda is an achievement of development and whether we want it or not it will influence the development of the local culture, because ‘culture evolves in response to outside influences and to the fact that people innovate and create new cultural traits’ (Verhelst and Tyndale, 2002: 10).

Which opportunities does traditional dance offer for development and how can the dynamic of traditional dance become consciously part of a development process? What is needed to make traditional dance a more useful medium for cultural and social development in Mozambique?

Firstly these questions that are the basis of this paper led to a discussion of the impact of arts activities, especially dance, of groups or individuals, on a community. Secondly, I will outline how these activities are linked to development. In this context it was also important to clarify links of culture and development and to explain uses of dance in development.

¹ Small town on the Makonde plateau in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

In the second chapter I will present my case study about dance groups in northern Mozambique and the observations I made on a research trip in December 2003. Based on the findings of the research and the discussion of the relationship between culture and development I will draw out some recommendations for the support of dance culture in Mozambique and its implications in a development context. Part of this is the presentation of a specific project I was asked to design in collaboration with the Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança in Mozambique and which will be realised in Ilha de Moçambique in November and December 05.

Culture, Development and Dance

Culture as an agent of transformation

Culture is like a seashell wherein we can hear whom we have been and listen to what we can become. (Carlos Fuentes in Verhelst and Tydale, 2002: 11)

Carlos Fuentes does not understand culture to be a static set of traditions and art forms but rather as a media to express actual and contemporary joys, sorrows and ideas, using existing forms enriched with the thoughts and ideas that will eventually develop into some of the future's cultural affluence. This interconnection, through culture, of the past, the present and the future accentuates the continuous transformation that any vivid culture is constantly undergoing.

According to Raymond Williams culture is 'one of the most difficult words in the English language' (in Allan, 2000: 444) and Verhelst and Tyndale point out that 'no culture is ideal, nor is any culture static' (2002: 13). UNESCO emphasises that culture is to be interpreted in its widest sense:

[Culture is] the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs. (World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City 1982 in UNESCO, 1997: 9)

These various definitions of culture show that it is intrinsically a variable concept. It is not always an agreeable, positive force but since it is inseparable from humanity it might reveal destructive energies of human nature as well. It can become a source of division and therefore plays an important role in conflicts around the world. It is certain though that culture is a fundamental element in the life of every individual and community; it is what we share with those who live around us, it is what makes our social being, what joins us to a group. Thus the concern with culture provides insights into

social life as a whole and leads to a 'deeper understanding of the connection between things' (Allan, 2000: 465).

Culture is a means to express and communicate what is going on in people's lives using spiritual, intellectual or emotional features. Whatever happens inside or around a community will affect their culture. The transformation of culture can occur alongside changes in the social-economic situation of a society, such as the growing urban drift and the subsequent urbanisation of former rural societies. The following example from Congo illustrates how such external changes of social, economic and political realities influence the transformation of dance culture.

During the 1950s urban drift in Congo started to increase. People attracted by the prospect of wage labour left their villages and moved to the cities. Prior to this, dances in the cities were either European dances performed in rather chic colonial dance clubs and dressed in European 'elegance' or African working class 'tribal' dances, which expressed predominately affiliation to a specific ethnic group trying to renegotiate new identities in an urban environment: Since African women in Belgian colonial society were excluded from wage labour they depended on male company in order to have access to money. Money and male-female relationships became strongly interconnected. Under these conditions music and dance became the ideal vehicle to show off, seduce and subsequently negotiate individual economic matters. Unlike men, once women got married they did not frequent dance bars any more. For men, however, they became a location where they could confront their maleness amongst each other and test their masculine power of seduction on women through dance. These dances, which developed out of the new habit to going out to bars in order to impress and seduce, were 'exploring

new methods of extension and exploitation of space along with unprecedented conceptions of tempo and gymnastics' (Annan Mensah in Jewsiewicki, 2001: 109).

This is just one of countless examples of how external factors influence people's lifestyle, knowledge, resources and beliefs, and the evolution of their culture. Such factors include the transformation of the environment as well as social, economic or political changes, improvement of education and development of new technologies. Urban drift and migration influence culture and art considerably as different groups and cultures mix and hybrid forms of expression evolve. New experiences and living situations might enlarge modes of expression and boost the creativity of groups and individuals. At the same time they might let people forget or neglect techniques and activities that used to have great importance in their culture before.

The dynamic of culture and its ability to adapt to new situations are crucial tools for people to makes sense of their lives, find guidance and control modes of expression. Especially as globalisation accelerates processes of economic and technological change culture has to be given the attention, the freedom and the means to develop alongside (Midman, 1998: 10). Petrella argues that our societies need direction and that this fundamentally concerns cultural development. It is crucial though that cultural development does to not only concentrate on object culture (buildings, infrastructure, goods and capital) but much more on subject culture, which is committed to make sense of things, to develop links and social skills between people and create new forms of co-existence (in Verhelst, 1994: 3).

Culture and Development

By underlining the transformative character of culture its connection to development becomes obvious. Although development has many different notions it intrinsically contains an element of progress or 'good change' (Chambers, 1997: 1) – a (positive) transformation of the present situation. Development can also generally be associated with the reduction of poverty and the stimulation of economic growth. The question remains as to which efforts have the potential to achieve change for the better and reach those people who most need it.

The frequent failure of large-scale investment and development projects shows that the concentration on economic and technological progress alone is likely to leave out the human side of development. The poorest and most disempowered people's needs and problems tend not to be considered and risk gaining nothing out of large-scale projects. Amartya Sen proposes that poverty should not only be seen as a situation without financial and material means but also as a vulnerable position of people without choices and capabilities (in Allan, 2000: 14). Today there is growing recognition that development cannot just be done to people but on the contrary people have to become its agents and set their own priorities.

Parallel to the recognition of participation of people in development over the past twenty years, the understanding of culture has moved slowly from some kind of 'beautification factor' to an aspect to be considered in development alongside gender equality, environment and sustainability. Culture should develop parallel to economic, political or social changes. Therefore Verhelst and Tyndale claim polemically that 'any

development process must be embedded in local culture, or development will simply not take place' (2002: 11).

The introduction of a cultural dimension into the overall development effort shows evidence in the launching of new cultural policies as has been done by a number of development agencies and NGOs. The Swiss Development Cooperation SDC intends, for example, to 'support cultural campaigns that can contribute to development and transition processes' and to contribute 'to the formation and preservation of independent and diversified cultural landscapes' (2003: 3).

These are good intentions and a number of sound and useful cultural projects are carried out as a consequence of the increasing awareness of the importance of culture for development. The research of Marsh and Gould (2003), exploring the use of cultural approaches to development within several UK development agencies, demonstrates that the success and sustainability of such projects depends on the effort that is made to analyse and understand local culture.

Marsh and Gould observe a strong tendency of development agencies and NGOs to use culture as a tool to promote development targets (HIV/AIDS prevention, literacy, hygiene education etc.) and argue that in many cases 'the wider role of culture in development is not well understood' (2003: 7). They argue that there is a need to develop practices of cultural auditing and therefore propose a model that defines three levels of culture in the development process: Culture as context, culture as content and culture as method (2003: 15).

Culture as 'context' is concerned with the underlying values, beliefs, and traditions of a community. The understanding of such concepts opens possibilities to

integrate people's potential and power in the project design. The 'content' of culture is related to the local cultural resources or the concrete translation of the cultural context in life with its symbols and practices as ways of working, social organisation and traditional heritage. The tangible expression of culture is its 'method' and refers to the use of any cultural form including song, drama, dance, music etc (Marsh and Gould, 2003: 15).

In many cases the production of art for the promotion of development targets fails to touch the real potential of culture because it uses culture as method without considering the deeper lying values and beliefs. Such commissioned art for development purposes is often of minor artistic quality and tends to over-simplify complex social problems. It reduces the artistic freedom of local artists and distorts the production of artwork as the statement of a Mozambican choreographer shows:

'The international cooperation agencies pay us to make didactic performances about AIDS or the necessity to vote in the next elections. And as long as we are dependent on their money, we are obliged to do it to be able to survive as artists.' (Deputter, 2003: 1.3)

The real power of culture for development is its ability to make sense of life, to bring people together and strengthen their self-esteem and creativity, their capacity to work together, and initiate the changes that they consider important for them. Plastow argues that good Theatre for Development projects have the potential to 'raise fundamental questions about how and why societies organise in the way they do' (2004: 6). Or to argue with Paulo Freire who says that any education should not be 'an act of depositing' but an act of communicating (1970: 53); he continues warning that without this communicative process people's creative power reduces (1970: 54).

The sustainability of cultural projects is an important issue. Real empowerment can only be achieved by engaging on a long-term basis and therefore the investment into

the arts and culture has to become a continuous commitment. The example of the *Jana Sanskriti* theatre movement in India shows that the long-term commitment of a small group of people over twenty years now has lasting impact on gender relations (division of labour, reduction of domestic violence) and social structure (acknowledgment of the voices of the less powerful as lower casts and women) in the communities. A movement that started with one theatre group in a West Bengal village in 1985 multiplied over the years not only in West Bengal but in other parts of India, Pakistan and Nepal and has a very large number of active members today. The enduring behaviour changes in the villages that are involved in the theatre activities manifest slowly over many years of practice (Ganguly, 1999). *Jana Sanskriti* theatre groups address the problems that their members come up with during the practice. They play them out and leave space for alternative interventions of audience members (using forum theatre of Augusto Boal). The understanding and new knowledge that people earn during the theatre practice does not contain prescriptions of how to adapt it to reality. People make the transfer themselves, gradually, in their own time.

Short interventions in the form of workshops or training can have good results but have to be prepared carefully beforehand. All the theatre and dance practitioners, I have spoken too during the research for this paper, told me that it is essential to carry out more than one intervention in a community in order to consolidate the knowledge and make sure that local trainers and communities retain sufficient skills to continue the work. Some projects might take off quickly and have good impact as for example the introduction of integrated dance practice (dance with disabled and non-disabled people) in South Africa by Adam Benjamin (interview, 22 Feb. 05). He visited South Africa three

times between 1997 and 2004. Already after his first visit in South African dancers from different provinces started teaching independently and adapted the integrated dance practice they had learned. They taught workshops, created work and kept networking amongst each other. Such quick and broad response on all levels (knowledge transfer, capacity building, creation and organisation) is rare. In the case of South Africa it depended very much on the readiness of dance professionals to engage in social and community work, combined with the opportunities this commitment offered them to earn a living because of the good response of institutions and NGOs.

The difficulty in assessing the effects of culture is one of the biggest hindrances when it comes to its integration as a serious part of development programs. Marsh and Gould as well as Matarasso acknowledge that the impacts of culture in development are complex and difficult to measure. They report that most agencies were 'struggling to identify appropriate forms of evaluation or impact assessment' (Marsh and Gould, 2003: 12) and therefore recommend the development of a new system to measure the impact of cultural projects (2003: 17). Matarasso advises not avoiding the established scientific frames of assessment, but rather admitting that the arts are important to social development exactly because they are getting hold of a dimension of human life which cannot be fulfilled or stimulated otherwise, and which ultimately influences many other factors in human lives: 'people, their creativity and culture remain elusive, always partly beyond the range of conventional inquiry. [...] There are invisible changes and unquantifiable benefits' (1997: 80).

Useful culture and development work has the capacity to let people become the agents of development and set their own priorities. Culture can be the key for true

empowerment and allows people to ‘discover themselves as its [reality’s] permanent re-creators’ (Freire, 1970: 51).

Social impact of community arts and use in development

The specific section of the large field of ‘culture and development’ I want to look at the participation in community art (culture clubs and associations or informal cultural activities) and more specifically the impact of (traditional) dance groups and their activities on the communities.

According to my observations in Mozambique, participation in culture clubs and associations is very common. A single village can have up to ten dance groups. People’s engagement and activities in those groups are an essential part of the recreational, spiritual and convivial life of communities in rural as well as urban environments. Dance groups can be very stable and reliable organisations, which continue to exist despite of major political changes or armed conflicts.

What are the effects of the participation in community art? How can factors like entertainment, leisure, socialising or having fun be useful for poverty alleviation and development?

To answer these questions I compared the eight bases of social power as indicators of poverty (Friedman, 1992) with a study about the social impact of participation in the arts in the UK (Matarasso, 1997). This comparison should provide an inventory of positive correlations of community art activities and poverty alleviation.

Friedman in his ‘(dis)empowerment model of poverty’ looks at poverty as a multidimensional problem and argues that poor households lack the social power to

improve the conditions of their member's lives (Friedman, 1992: 66). This model lists eight bases of social power (defensible life space, surplus time, knowledge and skills, appropriate information, social organisation, social networks, instruments of work and livelihood, and financial resources); the relative lack of any of these bases equally influences a household's level of poverty (Friedman, 1992: 66/67). 'Absolute poverty' therefore is a situation where the household does not have access to any of the eight bases of social power. 'People living at or below this 'line' may be unable to move out of poverty on their own' (Friedman, 1992: 69).

Matarasso looked at the social impact of participation in the arts in the UK. Over 600 participants of over 60 arts initiatives and projects, mostly in the UK, but also in Finland and the United States, were interviewed about their personal development, the quality of the interaction with others, their experiences with group processes and their health and well-being while participating in an arts project. The results turned out to be incredibly positive as for example 91% of participants said that they made new friends, 84% felt more confident about their abilities and 80% learned new skills (1997: vii). In the following table (1) I distributed the most relevant and important statements of the study on the eight bases of social power. The comparison shows that many of the issues that were brought up in the study from the UK match the factors that influence relative poverty and social exclusion of households and individuals. The most relevant matches turn around enforcing social networks and increase of people's self-esteem, the growing confidence in their capacities and creative power. Thus the support of community art seems to be an effective measure for sustainable poverty alleviation because it empowers people, increases their faith in themselves and their abilities and makes them feel better

(Dis)empowerment model of poverty (Friedman, 1992: 66-69)

Social impact of the participation in the arts (Matarasso, 1997)

Bases of social power	Relative access to	Empowerment through	Impacts
Defensible life space	Living space / home: to cook, eat, sleep, keep possessions. Neighbourhood: secure, friendly environment, social network	Feeling secure and at home, household members and possessions are not endangered	Develop pride in local traditions and culture, create community traditions in new towns or neighbourhoods. Make people feel better about where they live
Surplus time	Time for household work and organise basic things, time to go to the hospital, offices and institutions. Free time to relax and recover	Well balanced interaction between gaining an income to survive and organising a living	Help people to extend control over their own lives, allow people to explore their values, meanings and dreams
Knowledge and skills	Education and technical training; 'human resources'	Amelioration of economic prospects, access to wage labour	Increase people's confidence and self-worth, encourage adults to take up education and training opportunities, contribute to educational development of children,
Appropriate information	Access to information about health practice, public services, political situation, job opportunities, etc.	Get access to all kinds of opportunities, resource for self-development	Provide a forum to explore personal rights and responsibilities, gain insight into political and social ideas, help transform the image of public bodies,
Social organisation	Formal or informal membership in groups and organisation like religious groups, political parties or movement, culture and sports clubs, unions, etc.	Convivial life, source of information, mutual support, collective action	Develop community networks and sociability, strengthen community co-operation, help community groups to raise their vision beyond the immediate, encourage self-reliance, project management and creativity
Social networks	Family, friends and neighbours	Physical, psychological and financial support, convivial life	Reduce isolation by helping people to make friends, give people influence over how they are seen by others
Instruments of work and livelihood	Farm land, tools and physical labour, tools and facilities for informal work in the household	Income generation, assures a sustainable livelihood	Provide new skills
Financial resources	Cash income of the household, savings or credit arrangements	Financial means to consume and invest	Income generating, contribute to people's employability

Figure 3

physically and emotionally whilst re-enforcing their social network.

If poverty alleviation is associated with economic growth cultural factors must be linked to economic growth as well. Indeed recent statements of some economists emphasise the positive impact of investment into culture and creativity claiming that

‘The real assets of the modern economy come out of our heads not out of the ground: ideas, knowledge, skills, talent and creativity’ (Leadbeater, 1999: 18)

Matarasso argues in a similar way, saying that economic growth is more and more reliant on cultural instead of natural resources and cultural resources depend critically on human and social development (2001: 3). And last but not least, the notion ‘Social Capital’, an important concept in today’s effort for economic development, suggests that in order to achieve economic development people need to work together for common purposes in groups and organisations and accumulate their individual and social resources; knowledge, skills and partnerships.

‘Social capital refers to the norms and networks that enable collective action. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion — social capital — is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development.’ (World Bank, 2000)

There is no simple recipe of how to best reach social cohesion of a community but it seems that cultural factors play an important role in this process. As mentioned in the previous chapters, culture is a means to express and communicate what is going on in people’s lives using spiritual, intellectual or emotional features and contributes to the social wellbeing of a community. How care of cultural assets and the investment into cultural development influence economic development is very specific from community to community and from culture to culture and in most cases is far from understood.

Dance and community dance

Dance is a very old art form and is an element of the performing arts in every culture around the world. It is a language in its own right, not in the way that speech is, it is rather like thought without discursive logic – thought beyond language. It demands that one give oneself over to sensations. ‘It follows a path, a channel of thought – and of meaning. Pontbriand says that ‘dance is a lesson of freedom’ (2001: 18). It is about learning to move, to act and react with one’s body, to channel emotions and to understand how emotions travel through the body. It is a way to learn to free oneself and to think. Dance teaches how to see what is hidden, secret, concealed beneath the layers.

There are a lot of possible and sometimes contrasting origins of dance that are mentioned in the literature². Wherever it might come from, dancing satisfies a variety of essentially human needs and fulfils functions in the spiritual and recreational life of a community. It offers opportunities to explore one’s own or a group’s creativity and capacities without needing anything else other than the human body as an instrument.

Williams lists plenty of reasons for people to dance which give an overview of uses and opportunities of dance. People dance for leisure and entertainment, to relax and have fun. Through dance they communicate with other people and express emotions. Expression through dance can be a symbolic activity divorced from real life and thus can become a stylised artistic language. Moving in general is an emotional and physical outlet or an organic or instinctive need in order to release tension (1997: 56).

² ‘We can read that dance has its origins in sex (Ellis 1920), or in play (Huizinga and Jenson 1949); in animal behaviour (Sachs 1937), in magic (Frazer 1911), or that it represents the “childhood of man” (Froebius 1908) [...] its essence can be found in ancient Greek culture (Flicht 1912), in religion (van der Leeuw 1963), or that it exists largely as a function of an inability to speak (Kris 1952)’ (Williams, 1997: 57).

If there are so many purposes to dance then obviously the meaning of the word ‘dance’ is not unequivocal either; as a matter of fact it has very distinctive connotations in different languages. The meaning includes or excludes elements like music, instruments and songs or refers to spiritual or secular intentions³.

To describe such a complex and varied art form as dance in one generalised definition is a difficult task. Instead of trying to present one distinct definition I will discuss and compare two of them, which cover general aspects and characteristics of dance:

‘Dance is a transient mode of expression, performed in a given form and style by the human body moving in space. Dance occurs through purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group.’
(Keali’inohomoku, 1997: 26)

The anthropologist Keali’inohomoku mentions some important features like the fleeting quality of dance; she talks about form, style, space and time (rhythmical structure), and thus mentions the basic elements of dance theory. Significantly she includes the audience and the performer who both have to agree upon the fact that what they are witnessing *is dance*.

Dance – the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself’ (Encyclopaedia Britannica: 2005).

³ Sometimes separate terms describe different contexts of dance: in languages derived from Latin like Spanish and Italian there are two words for dance: *danza* and *baile* or *ballo*. Dance as a ritual activity (*danza*) and dance in a secular context or popular dance (*baile*, *ballo*) (Royce, 1997: 39). The Makonde word for dance *ngoma* means drums and music as well as the actual dance. In Xhosa (South Africa) *ngoma* is the healer who is dancing himself into trance to receive messages from the ancestors of the community.

The anthropological definition tends to look at dance from a more general perspective embedded in a larger cultural context while the Western academic accentuates on the sensual, emotional and artistic components of dance.

Rudolf Laban's famous statement 'Jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer.'⁴ (Müller and Stöckemann, 1993: 5) might help to link these two perspectives: If everybody can dance because everybody knows how to move his/her body, everybody can relate to a dancing body as it is part of his/her own experience. I therefore agree with Keali'inohomoku that whether someone is dancing or not very much depends on a mutual agreement between the spectator and the dancer. This unspoken accord between dancer and audience is determined by traditional values and expectations towards a performance situation. It might differ significantly from culture to culture.

Western dance historians tend to perceive dance of their own culture as highly developed art form in comparison to so called 'primitive', 'ethnic', 'traditional' or 'popular' dances. This paradigm has led to racially dismissive arguments like the one of Walter Sorell, a renowned dance critic and historian. Sorell wrote in 1967 that primitive dances were 'the expression of a race' and concluded that they were repetitive, limited, unconscious and with 'retardative and closed expression' (in Keali'inohomoku, 1997: 18/19). Nowadays it is mostly agreed upon that 'all forms of dance reflect the cultural traditions within which they developed' (Keali'inohomoku, 1997: 18/19).

Some anthropologists differentiate between 'art-dances and non-art-dances' (Davida, 2001: 76), which proves to be a useful distinction between different dance forms: Art is not identical with culture but it is a part of culture. According to the

⁴ "Every human being is a dancer."

definition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica art is ‘a visual object or experience consciously created through an expression of skills or imagination’ (2005). Thus an artist is someone who takes conscious artistic decisions in order to transmit his/her personal message, questioning the condition of the world around him/her using his/her skills and imagination. On the other hand, non-art-dances develop out of a group or community reflecting its cultural and social identity as described in the definition of traditional or popular culture of UNESCO.

Folklore (or traditional and popular culture) is the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means (UNESCO, 1989).

This definition points out that traditional or popular culture emerges out of the collective, creative processes of a community based on existing forms of that same community.

I am aware that there is as much collective creativity in art-dances as there are individual contributions in the creative process of a community. Communities rely on strong personalities who motivate entire groups with their vision and talent. On the other hand many professional choreographers today see themselves more as facilitator of a creative process of a group than as the creator of a piece of art (Butterworth, 2004: 55).

Traditional and contemporary art tend to be separated from each other. In non-Western cultures contemporary art is often associated with Western art only. Contemporary art is looked at as foreign, a threat to local tradition; links between contemporary and traditional artistic expression are denied. I do not share this view at all. On the contrary, I am convinced that contemporary art is possible everywhere in the world. It is intrinsically art of the present time. Therefore contemporary dance is nothing

other than dance which reflects present times. Such reflections might for example question conventions of the past and transform existing tradition. The British-Indian choreographer Shobana Jeyasingh for example argues that ‘traditional arts need to be locked into the past. They can be transformed by the artist into traditions in use’ (in Jordan, 2001: 114).

I would argue that contemporary dance is art-dance and the result of the friction of an artist with the time he/she lives in, based on his/her experience and culture; while traditional or popular dance is a non-art-dance and evolves out of a collective rather (un)conscious creative process of a group reflecting its cultural and social identity.

Consequently, the local dance groups, like the ones I visited in Mozambique, truly belong to the category ‘non-art-dances’. The function and motivation of the dances and dance groups are closely linked to the notion ‘community dance’, which is a term used in the Western world to describe various dance practices of communities. It is defined to ‘increase access to dance for the benefit of all kind of people’, emphasise participation, and ‘the ‘main’ product of community dance is the process in which participants are involved’ (Foundation for Community Dance, 1996: 3).

Community dance is non-professional although professional dance has an important role for the development of community dance activities. Professional artists are likely to have completed a formal arts education and tend to make a living from it. In developing countries though, studies in the arts do often not exist.

The framework for community dance offers a differentiation of professional and community or non-professional dance, which might help to map the territories of professionalism in developing countries as well:

‘Professional dance has important links with community dance activities but is essentially focused on professional performance itself’ (Peppiatt, 1996: 3)

Thomson argues that community dance should push the boundaries of dance as an art (1996: 9) and professional artists should be part of this process by facilitating this search for new forms of collaborative expression.

This applies well to the situation in Mozambique. Although income generation is an issue for members of many of local, non-professional dance groups, the main focus of their activity is not the performance itself but the fun of the dancing as such. Dance is their emotional and physical outlet. They dance to relax and enjoy, express emotions and communicate with others. They appreciate the company of a group, which shares the same passion and interests and like the contentment of being part of a social network. At the same time offers them the contact with members of ‘professional’, more skilled groups, interesting links with the world outside their community by providing them with important input and inspiration for their practice and the development of their dances.

Dance and development

In what ways can dance contribute to development? Apart from the impacts of community arts in general as described by Matarasso (table 1) it seems important to me to give some examples and ideas of how dance can be useful in development and what possible problems have to be considered.

In many non-Western cultures dance has a particularly important role in people’s lives. Salia Sanou, a choreographer from Burkina Faso, states that dance in Africa accompanies men and women, children and old people through their lives everyday. It is their medium to express joys and pains, their tool to link the spiritual to the physical

world (2001: 216). It is argued by David Abilio, director of Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança CNCD, that in Mozambique the art form of dance is practised by more people than any other art form (2001: 4). But dance is difficult to understand and decode especially for people without much knowledge and experience in this field. In order to illustrate better what dance might be able to stand for I recount the experiences of two practitioners:

The Indian dance therapist Tripura Kashyap observed during her workshops in Sri Lanka how Tamil and Sinhalese people overcame their rejection and hate for members of the other ethnicity:

Many felt they had communicated with each other at a deeper level than they had ever done before. We hardly used any words while the movement experiences were happening. This is what they liked best and felt that it was a cathartic experience in which they got in touch with themselves, their emotions and that of the others. The bonding that happens when we work together physically is strongest, because we find it easy to lie through words but not so with our bodies. (E-mail, 20 March 05)

This example gives an idea the use of dance in the context of reconciliation work after or during an armed conflict. But most of the features mentioned can be detected in peaceful circumstances as well: The choreographer Royston Muldoom reviews his experience of dance work with communities, especially in a development context:

In dance we take away words. Often we use words to say what we don't mean, as a protection from revealing who we are. [...] [The body] always responds to our state of mind. [...] Changes in movement make people change the way they think and behave. [...] It becomes harder to be violent to other bodies, hard to maintain prejudice when you are involved in the intimate, physical, emotional process of problem solving with another human being. (in Plastow, 2004: 134)

Marginalised or traumatised people tend to only claim minimal space, thus make themselves as invisible as possible. As Muldoom points out, the changes in the movement of people reflects the way they think and perceive themselves in the world.

Therefore dance can help them to take up more space and make themselves seen and heard.

To finish I want to add one concrete example in order to illustrate the value of community dance interventions especially amongst very poor and disadvantaged communities: as a part of the Adugna Community Dance Theatre's Outreach Program in Ethiopia young dancers of Adugna were assigned to teach a weekly dance class for older people in one of the slums of Addis Ababa. Elderly poor people normally have no opportunities to escape grinding poverty at all. They might just be tolerated in the households of relatives and try to take up as little space as possible in a small scrubby corner of a shack. The weekly dance class brings some alternation and enjoyment into their desolate existence. It provides entertainment, fitness and companionship (Plastow, 2004: 126/27). One dance class a week might improve the quality of those older people's lives because it increases their physical and mental wellbeing, they gain the opportunity to communicate with other people, reinforce their social network and obtain a feeling of still being able to do something at last.

Dance and development might seem an odd combination at first. The look at the opportunities that dance has to offer in empowering people by developing their creativity and self-esteem, their abilities to communicate and interact beyond language and to take up some space at last, shows that dance has a lot to offer though

Traditional dance in Northern Mozambique: Research Report

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Figure 4

The dance in Africa was a revelation to me; I felt with a gratifying certainty that there I had found true dance in its purest and most extensive expression. Let us encourage Africa in its belief in the dance and in its will to continue with the penetration of life and dance. [...] So let us not conserve, but continue, love and create. Tradition must not be a slumbering lake, but an impetuous torrent breaking over the modern world to shake it.
(Maurice Bejart in Acogny, 1984: 10)

Context and purpose of the study

From September to November 2003 I worked as guest choreographer and teacher with the Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança CNCD in Maputo, a project supported by the Swiss Development Co-operation SDC in Mozambique. After completing this project the SDC offered me to travel to the provinces Nampula and Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique. The SDC was interested to have a dance professional looking at the situation of dance groups and dancers there and proposing ideas of how to support and encourage (traditional) dance in the northern provinces of Mozambique.

Support of culture has been part of the activities of SDC in Mozambique since 1996. Culture is mainstreamed in all programs⁵ but also focused through individual events and projects. The growing interest in culture has facilitated projects such as the long-term support of the studies in graphic design at Escola das Artes Visuais (School of Visual Arts) in Maputo (SDC, 2003: 9).

The distribution of power, information and money is very disproportionate in Mozambique because the capital Maputo is in the south of the country very close to the borders with South Africa and Swaziland the rest of the territory especially the northern and western provinces remain distant and have very little access to literally anything.

⁵ SDC concentrates the aid in Mozambique on health, water and sanitation, good governance and economic Management and rural development and civil society (SDC Mozambique, 2001: 2)

Therefore the SDC and most agencies and NGOs in Mozambique are making efforts to decentralise aid by concentrating more on projects in the provinces. This applies to culture as well. Subsequently the ultimate aim of my trip was to assess if there were possibilities to support dance outside Maputo in a meaningful way and if so how.

The research was carried out in collaboration with CNCD and their knowledge and experience was crucial in order to understand and analyse the observations and information gathered during the trip. With his vast knowledge about traditional dance in Mozambique the responsible for documentation and research at CNCD, Atanasio Nhussi, who travelled with me, helped to establish links between different dances and styles and expanded the general picture of traditional dance considerably.

CNCD was founded in 1979, four years after the independence of Mozambique in 1975. In order to promote the beginning of a more equal society the socialist government emphasised the importance and value of Mozambican culture. When a group of around thirty young people from different parts of the country started to work together in Maputo, they attracted the attention of the ministry of culture and soon after became the National Song and Dance Company of Mozambique. The company grew fast and now tours internationally. Apart from being the 'cultural ambassadors of Mozambique', CNCD and its members were always very active in Mozambique itself. They toured nationally with civil education programs to promote peace and disarmament at the end of the civil war (*Ode à Paz*, 1992), the protection of the environment (*Arvore Sagrada*, 1994), and prevention from HIV/AIDS (*Amatodos*, 1999). Alongside those tours and on other occasions members of the company were regularly undertaking investigations of traditional dance and music in all parts of the country. CNCD holds considerable archives

of video, photos and other material, which were repeatedly used as sources of inspiration for choreographies of CNCD.

Over the last five years research into traditional dance and national touring became very rare due to lack of funding, but also because the artistic focus of the company moved more towards contemporary dance. As a consequence the good and regular contact with dance groups and institutions in the provinces, as it existed before, risks fading away, and CNCD becomes alienated from its audiences in the provinces. Therefore the interest of SDC to support dance in the provinces could become a good chance to re-establish exchange with dance groups all over the country and at the same time strengthen its position as the country's leading dance group that gathers important knowledge and information which proves to be indispensable for the development of Mozambique's dance.

Meeting dance groups

To assess the situation of dance in the two provinces, we decided to visit as many dance groups as possible, both in urban and rural areas, on the coast and inland. We wanted to meet larger groups that represent the province as well as local groups in villages and towns. Additionally we wanted to interview key informants like directors for culture of local authorities, directors of cultural centres and instructors of dance.

When we planned the route of the trip (illustration 1 and appendix 1) we had to make sure that we would first visit the capital of each province in order to get the support of the Direcção da Cultura in the form of a recommendation letter that would enable us to get the help of local guides. On arrival in a village or town we would visit the communal

administration, which would call in a guide for us. They were normally competent and had a good knowledge of the variety of dance groups and dances in their village or town and would help us to make choices and organise our program.



Figure 5

Meetings with groups consisted if possible of a showing of some dances, followed by a semi-structured interview (appendix 2) with members of the group. The questions were related to the structure and history of the dance group. Our main interest though concerned creative processes of the groups and the transformation of the dances over time. We therefore tried to facilitate a conversation about the work on the dances, asking how modifications of the repertory were made, new dances created and who took responsibility in this process. I considered it important to get an idea of the creative process inside these dance groups because apart from structure and organisation of the

group I wanted to understand how traditional dances transformed and were (re-)created over the years.

This part of the interview turned out to be a sensitive and at times difficult issue. With many groups it was quite easy to launch a discussion about rehearsals and creation of steps and music, but sometimes we had to accept that a group had not much to say as to them it was such a 'natural' process that talking about it seemed irrelevant. The different responses depended on the capacity of the interviewees to talk about their own creative process and their reflection about it. In some cases it was obviously the first time that such a conversation took place and many members of dance groups were visibly enthusiastic to talk about their activities. They often highlighted that they appreciated talking to a dance professional and exchanging ideas.

We did not know that the Swiss Cooperation was aware that we are practicing dance here. We appreciate very much that they send us someone like you, who knows about dance to find out more. (President of 'Organiza da cidade de Nampula', Nampula, 8 Dec. 2003)

We recorded the dances on video and kept notes during the interviews. The need for translation from African languages into Portuguese was rather rare as most of the interviews were carried out in Portuguese.

During the trip we met fourteen dance groups: four in Ilha de Moçambique, six in the city of Nampula, two in Muidumbe, one in Ilha do Ibo and one in Pemba. After returning to Maputo we decided to meet the group of Casa Velha Maputo in order to round off our research with a group from the capital (appendix 3). Additionally we did five in depth interviews with key informants (appendix 4) including two dance instructors in Nampula, the director of Direcção da Cultura of Cabo Delgado, the director of Casa da Cultura in Pemba and the director of Casa Velha in Maputo. Unfortunately a meeting with

Direcção da Cultura in Nampula was cancelled last minute and time was too scarce to set up another appointment.

General observations

There are incredible numbers of dance groups and dances in every district of the provinces Nampula and Cabo Delgado. On Ilha de Moçambique alone for example there are nine dance groups and over thirty more in the villages on the nearby mainland. As some of the groups in Ilha de Moçambique have an incredibly long history they are very established organisations in the community and sometimes have several hundred members. Roughly estimated that means that several thousand people of a population of around 20,000 are directly or indirectly engaged in dancing.



Figure 6

The dance groups fall into two categories: The local groups in villages and cities which practice one dance only. Their members normally have the same ethnicity and cultural background even though this does not seem to be compulsory. Comparable to the definition of community dance, they mainly focus on ‘the process in which participants are involved’ and provide access to dance for all kinds of people (Foundation for Community Dance, 1996: 3). These groups are the main actors in fostering and transforming traditional dance. They are true amateurs who own the freedom to create and perform the dances as they please.

The groups of the second category have a very different role. They are so called ‘grupos polivalentes’ which refers to the variety of dances that they have in their repertory. In some cases as for example the dance ensembles of Casa da Cultura in Nampula and Pemba, they have an official role and are supposed to represent the music and dance culture of their province. Ideally this would mean that they have frequent contact with many local groups and do fieldwork on a regular basis in order to document and collect dances and update their repertory. Based on this broad knowledge of dance and music they adapt traditional dances for the stage and also create theatre-dance pieces. Many of those groups produced programs for civil education (often about HIV/AIDS and democratisation). In fact their regional role resembles the role of CNCD nationally. They function as leaders of dance culture in their region and are an important link between CNCD and local groups – the link between local, traditional, community based non-art-dance and national, professional, art-dance. They recruit dancers and musicians from local groups by inviting talented young dancers to join and teach them an extended repertory of dances, songs and music.

Unfortunately they lack funding to work on a regular basis. Unlike CNCD, which receives subsidies from the ministry of culture and pays monthly salaries to their employees, the members of ‘grupos polivalentes’ live on fees from performances and occasionally receive support from NGOs. They earn only sporadically and very little. Subsequently they also lack the funding to do the necessary fieldwork and keep active contact with local groups. They are also cut off from any knowledge or skills around dance from outside their region. Against all odds, they still exist, around four of them in each province, assembling gifted dancers and musicians of different ethnicities and backgrounds.

Local groups as well as ‘grupos polivalentes’ perform for private parties, national holidays, religious holidays, official visits, initiation rites and other events. Normally they are paid for performances. In towns payment tends to be in cash whereas in rural areas it can also be food and drinks or other payment in kind. The prices depend on the reputation and popularity of a group. The fact that members of dance groups have opportunities to earn some money from time to time is very important. Especially in female only groups income generation is an important argument for women to negotiate their absence from children and household duties for rehearsals.

Many dance groups are constituted as associations and registered in their provinces. Although setting up the articles of association poses difficulties at times and registration of an association costs some money, most groups seemed to be eager to get officially recognised because their registration makes them known locally and might provide opportunities to perform at regional or national festivals. In remote rural areas groups are less interested in registration and formal status.

The financial resources of all dance groups are very limited. Local groups sometimes ask an entrance fee from new members but most of the income results from performances at various events. If the payment is very low group members are paid first, if the income is better, it is split and a part of the money goes towards the group to be invested into mending or purchase of instruments. Costumes generally have to be provided by the dancers themselves. As mentioned before, some 'grupos polivalentes' managed to receive funding for specific projects from international NGOs. Some 'grupos polivalentes' have already been invited to perform in other provinces, neighbouring countries and even in Europe. Generally though opportunities to perform are rare and often groups do not have the means to replace broken drums or help poor members to buy fabric for their costume.

Fortunately national and provincial institutions for culture are well structured and linked. The Direcção da Cultura in Nampula appointed an instructor for dance who is at the same time director of Grupo de Canto e Dança da Casa da Cultura in Nampula. He has to observe and support the groups in Nampula and advise them artistically whenever they are asked to perform for official events. The municipality of Ilha de Moçambique employs two women who organise the dance groups on the island, arranging their repertory and preparing them for performances.

In Cabo Delgado the situation is less ordered. There are unpaid dance experts in every district we visited who have regular contact with local dance groups and keep local registers. Due to very limited access to communication technologies and transport there is no updated summary of those registers at the central administration of the province and the activities of local dance specialists are rarely monitored or controlled.

All interviewees mentioned that contacts between dance groups were too irregular in order to establish relationships and define common interests or activities. The isolation obstructs effective networking in order to set up provincial meetings and festivals of traditional dance. Structures for the organisation of such events partly exist but their financial and management capacities are too limited.

Dance and community

Each time we visited a dance group we got to know a very different and special combination of people. They had their particular reasons for existence and shared their special rules and codes. The two to three hours that we were able to spend with each group were obviously insufficient to get to know them profoundly but it gave us some insights in the community life and practice of those groups.

We met single sex and mixed groups. In Nampula several groups had clearly divided roles as dancers were female and musicians were male. Sometimes leadership in the association seemed to be authoritarian and in other groups there was a feeling of mutual understanding and decision taking. The group interviews usually revealed some of the existing hierarchies in the groups as men would speak more in mixed groups and sometimes women would not even respond when I directed my questions to them.

All the groups practice two to five times weekly. For many members it was obviously their only and most important leisure activity. The women of *Associação Familiar* in the city of Nampula told me that the dance group was enormously important to them. It was the only leisure time they had and the only occasion to leave family and household to meet friends. They reported that sometimes their husbands would cause

problems but they would put up with any difficulties not to miss a rehearsal. ‘Whatever might happen in our lives, we will continue to dance’ (interview, 7 Dec. 03).



Figure 7

The initial idea to form a dance group normally came from a core group of people. The dance they choose to practice is often a dance that they had learned from older people, during the initiation ritual or had seen somewhere. *Parampara*, a dance that Makua women learn during the initiation ritual, is a dance that many women continue to practice all their lives because it gives them opportunities to celebrate their womanhood and reminds them of their initiation. The two *Parampara*-groups I met in the city of

Nampula assembled women between sixteen and seventy and were important platforms for the exchange of experiences between women of different generations. Sometimes a dance reminds people of the place they originally came from. The *N'sope*-group in the city of Nampula highlighted that everybody in the group originally came from Angoche at the coast and that the dance reminded them of their former home and that this was a way to remind them of their place of origin (interview, 5 Dec. 03).



Figure 8

Certain groups are very stable and have existed for over 400 years, the majority though for around fifteen years or less. Thus they were founded after the end of the civil war. Therefore it might be interesting to ask for the role of community arts groups, especially dance, in conflict transformation and peace building.

Most groups reported that there was some turnover of members but generally they seemed to be very stable. New members progressively learn the repertory of the group. Initially it is not important that a new member knows the dance already. Often group members come from the same village or neighbourhood but they may also live spread out over the whole city or come from different villages. This means that some of them have to undertake considerable walks to come to rehearsals.

Creating traditional dance

An important focus of this research lays in the creative processes of the dance groups in order to understand the transformation and creation of traditional dance. I therefore tried to ask the groups to explain me how modifications of the repertory were done or how new songs or even dances were created and which individuals of a group took responsibility in this process. In this context 'song' means not just text and melody, but one 'number' of the repertory including rhythm and steps, as opposed to 'dance', which stands for a dance style or form as *Parampara*, *N'sope*, *Damba*, etc.

The groups continuously enlarge their repertory. This normally starts with the creation of a new song (text and music) and then continues with the arrangement of movement and steps. All the groups have a 'creative team' of two to four motivated and engaged group members, who have the necessary knowledge, experience and special talents to create music and choreography. The women of *Associação Familiar* reported that the inspiration for text and melody of new songs come during household work and develop slowly until songs were ready to be introduced to the whole group (interview, 7 Dec. 03). Other groups improvise together and progressively create a new song. The

melodies are based on the rhythmic patterns and structure of the dance in a call-and-response model, which is typical of singing all over Africa.

To find identity through merger with a larger social whole is important in the formal structure of singing south of the Sahara, the form called call-and-response or leader-and-ensemble. (Farris Thompson, 1974: 27).

The leader-and-ensemble structure is visible in the dancing as well. Every group nominates its 'chefe da linha', leader of the line, who masters the steps best and is also designated to create new variations.

The research was too short and superficial to find out how fast dances develop. Dances with a long tradition and history like *Tufu* and *Damba* tend to vary less than new dances as *Mashawona* and *Mang'anyamo*, which are still in a state of innovation. A majority of groups had very little contact to other groups and had rarely ever seen other groups dancing the dance they practiced themselves. Although outside influences are few they play a very important role for the development of the group. The *Damba* group in Ilha do Ibo was chosen to represent Cabo Delgado during the *Festival Nacional da Dança Popular 2002* in Maputo. On this occasion members of CNCND coached them. As a result they had changed the structure of their choreographies with a new awareness for spatial setup and audience interaction (interview, 16 Dec. 03).

To my surprise, in some districts, mainly in Cabo Delgado and especially amongst the Makonde, new dances, 'danças novas', are conceived every year. Groups or individuals create not only new texts, melodies and steps but entire dances. It is the pure enjoyment to play, improvise and move that motivates the creation of these dances. They express the physical and mental states, ideas and thoughts reflecting collective and personal realities.

We saw two ‘danças novas’ in Muidumbe, *Mashawona* and *Mang’anyamo*. The origin of *Mashawona*⁶ is unclear, according to the anthropologist Paulo Israel, a specialist of Makonde-culture, it must have been created less than ten years ago amongst the Makonde in the South of Tanzania. The dance wandered from festival to festival and village to village, arriving in Muidumbe in 2000. The group I met consisted of ten young men who had started to dance *Mashawona* after they had seen it performed by a group from Nangade⁷.



Figures 9-12

⁶ In Bantu-languages like Makonde plural is indicated at the beginning of the word: Lishawona (singular), mashawona (plural). Lishawona = what you see, visible thing, mashawona = visible things

⁷ Makonde village on the Plano Alto near Mueda in Cabo Delgado

They never learned steps, songs, or music; they just copied the dance the way they perceived it. Today they proudly claim that they are much better *Mashawona*-dancers than the group they copied from initially (interview, 11 Dec. 03).

Through *Mashawona* these young men have found their mode of expression as it gives them opportunities to show physical power and celebrates their strength and 'coolness' as young men in the community. The group is becoming more popular in the village and attracts new members who want to become part of the subculture of male coolness and nonconformity that *Mashawona* seems to stand for.

*Mang'anyamo*⁸ is a mask dance that originates from Muidumbe. Masks are common in Makonde rituals and dances and every community has its own mask maker. More than ten years ago the mask maker of Muidumbe started to expand the thematic range of traditional masks and began to produce animal masks; leopards, monkeys, buffalos, crocodiles, rabbits etc. In order to use these new masks he founded a dance group. In *Mang'anyamo* the dancers incorporate animals using movement and steps of their traditional repertory but also improvising behaviour of specific animals. Each dancer acts as soloist, appearing and disappearing in the crowd. There is no strict choreographic structure to this dance (yet), instead the dance relays intensely on the interaction with the audience and the inspiration of the dancer.

My hypothesis is that the ability to improvise and a broad knowledge of traditional steps are the key elements for the development of new dances. Improvisation is much used in African dance and music and always departs from a common stock of traditional performance knowledge.

⁸ 'About bush animals'



Figures 13-16

Periodically repeated, unscripted performance, including ritual, music, and dance in Africa, is improvisational. Most performers [...] have been trained from childhood in particular techniques enabling them to play spontaneously with learned, in-body formulas. (Thompson Drewal, 2003: 119)

The performance knowledge of indigenous societies such as the Makonde is large and proves to be a pool of material for the creation of new forms. It seems to reduce when people move away from traditional life. Without the support of a traditional community that shares the same knowledge they seem to lose trust in their creative power, inspiration and ideas. The inventors of 'danças novas' still manage their creativity and

imagination as a matter of course and therefore are strong actors of their cultural development.

Conclusion

The research in Nampula and Cabo Delgado shows an astonishing variety and number of dance groups and dances. These dance groups are not just preserving tradition but are inventing and transforming dance day by day, shaping the tradition of the future. They have great creative potential to do so and they are proud and self-confident practising dance and music in their communities. Those dance groups strengthen the identity of communities and link them to other communities and people and provide at the same time a frame for creative expression and innovation of their members. Dancing seems central for a healthy and active community life and is the imperative leisure activity for a large part of the population. Dance groups prove to be the basis of the affluence of Mozambican (dance) culture and its variety, vitality and creativity needs and deserves care and attention.

Looking at the difficulties and needs that the groups expressed it seems first and foremost important to give them opportunities to meet and define their own priorities and visions. Considering the large number of groups and active dancers, support in form of a project can only involve a selection of groups. The existing leadership of 'grupos polivalentes' and CNCD provides a useful basis therefore and has to be taken into account. The isolation of 'grupos polivalentes' in terms of knowledge around artistic work and technical skills in dance and music should be challenged.

The most efficient and practicable way to support and encourage dance groups seems to be by transmitting skills and know-how and at the same time giving groups possibilities to meet and network. Such workshops should contain a wide range of information around dance involving training in different dance styles, body conditioning, composition and improvisation, teaching skills and basic knowledge of fieldwork.

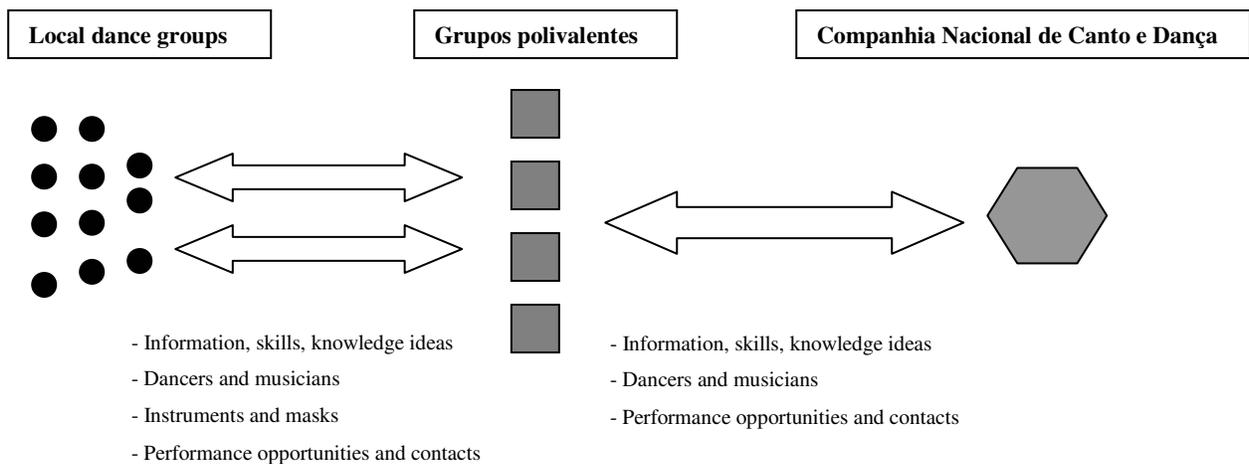
Like everywhere in the world, the arts in Mozambique need continuous financial and structural support in order to build and maintain high artistic quality, encourage young creators and preserve the existing affluence of culture. A poor country like Mozambique is unlikely to have the means to do so, in particular outside economic and political centres. Nevertheless I am convinced that dance groups in the provinces can gain access to additional opportunities and support if they manage to improve artistic and organisational skills and enforce a network and practise communication between them.

Recommendations for the support of dance culture in Mozambique

Creative and artistic leadership

Obviously a project to support traditional dance cannot address all the local dance groups directly, their quantity just exceeds manageable numbers of people. But the existing hierarchy amongst dance groups offers a good structure to work with. The ‘grupos polivalentes’ are the designated leaders of dance culture in the provinces just as CNCD is on a national level. As leaders of dance culture in their region they can pass on knowledge, skills and information and serve as intermediaries for the local, national and even international cultural exchange. ‘Grupos polivalentes’ operate on the cutting edge of art-dance and non-art-dance. As discussed earlier, the collective creativity of non-art-dancers and groups should push the boundaries of dance as an art (Thompson, 1996: 9) and professional artists should be part of this process by facilitating this search for new forms of collaborative expression.

Interaction structure of dance groups (Figure 16)



Therefore firstly it is important that ‘grupos polivalentes’ show artistically and technically good and innovative choreographic work. Secondly it is essential that they remain in contact with local groups, share ideas, information, knowledge and skills. The support of their role as important agents of the cultural life of their province should include the following points:

- Creation and arrangement of dances and music
- Performance
- Teaching dance and music; knowledge transfer in schools and communities
- Documentation and research of dances

Capacity building for ‘grupos polivalentes’

In collaboration with CNCD, I proposed a residential training workshop of three weeks for members of around twelve ‘grupos polivalentes’ of the provinces Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa⁹. It will be led by a team of four specialists of CNCD and one or two tutors from abroad. Main areas of teaching include traditional and contemporary dance technique, improvisation and composition, teaching dance, music technical and creative skills, and documentation and research of dance and music.

Training in traditional dance will alternate with ‘contemporary dance’, which is meant to expand the range and competence in dance technique in general. To improve dance technique and prevent unhealthy training some systematic knowledge around dance is essential. This includes exercises to increase strength and flexibility, ameliorate the placement and posture of the body, transmit some basic physiological and anatomic

⁹ Planned 28 November to 18 December 2005 in Ilha de Moçambique

knowledge as well as improve the understanding of the organisation of movement in space and time.

For the creative part of the work, the arrangement and creation of dances, a variety of strategies and concepts to improve the quality and originality of the choreographic work will be introduced. This will include variations of and experiments with existing dances as well as the creation of new choreographies and the discussion thereof. As 'grupos polivalentes' mostly adapt existing dances the generation of new movement material is not very common and they lack of strategies to do so. This would help though to increase their ability to create innovative work using traditional vocabulary and encourage them to develop an artistic approach beyond the pure copy of existing dances.

As discussed before, improvisation is frequently used in African performance and most dancers and musicians are very enthusiastic to improvise. In my experience they are very open to try out and adapt to different concepts of improvisation and to naturally understand and integrate them into their own dance practise. In every culture improvisation starts from 'a common stock of shared knowledge' (Thompson Drewal, 2003: 119). Throughout the workshop this stock of shared knowledge will expand and be enriched with different concepts of movement improvisation, composition and dance technique.

My experience of the work with dancers in other cultures (Southern India, Latvia, Argentina and Bulgaria) taught me that the exchange of ways of thinking and generating ideas through the body contains the possibility to meet beyond the limits of language and culture. It offers a very fertile artistic meeting ground that normally leads to a boost of

creative energy and provides participants with the courage and inspiration to further discover ways to encounter themselves and the world.

The teaching methodology sessions will provide simple structures for the build up of a class and raise awareness of the needs of different groups of students according to their age and abilities. The dancers and musicians of 'grupos polivalentes' frequently teach local dance groups and in schools and need practical support in teaching methods.

CNCD has many years of experience in documentation and research of dance. They will train participants in how to organise visits in villages and how to proceed in order to learn, understand and document dance.

The overall aim of the residential workshop is to empower the participants to develop dance culture technically and creatively, preserving and inventing dances according to their needs as artists and in their communities. The workshop should encourage and intensify activities of participating dance groups and reach many other groups through them. Additionally the residence of three weeks will obviously provide opportunities to network and exchange thoughts, experience and information.

The assessment of the workshop experience and its impact on participants and groups will determine how things can be pushed further. It seems essential to me that the exchange between provincial groups and professionals from Maputo is encouraged and developed. Ideally the dance groups would gain motivation and inspiration to better organise themselves in their region, initiate local festivals and other activities adapted to their situation. The workshops should empower artists who are spread out on the vast territory of Mozambique and provide them with knowledge and ideas.

Some comments to the use and value of teachers from abroad

Globalisation is ‘about what is happening to us all’ argues Bauman (in Malesevic: 2002: 38) and it has not only impacts in the fields of economics, politics but also in culture.

Artists in Africa are aware that the arts are moving and developing on a global scale and they want to be informed and develop their work in dialogue with what is happening elsewhere. They are eager and curious to learn but find themselves too isolated to get access to the knowledge they would want to receive.

One could argue that it is unnecessary to send European choreographers and dance teachers to work with traditional dance groups because meaningful and enriching cultural exchange is too rare and difficult to achieve. Intercultural dialogue and collaboration might pose more problems than positive effects.

‘The confrontation between two persons can only be positive if it is based on respect and the will to know and understand each other’s cultures. If somebody decides to try to impose things, problems will inevitably arise’ (Acogny in Deputter, 2003: 1.4)

The Senegalese choreographer Germaine Acogny speaks from experience. She points out that the crucial question is if the person from outside is ready to listen and take time to understand what is really happening. Chamber’s principles of PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) point in the same direction and might serve as guidelines for facilitators of intercultural exchange as well:

- The facilitator from outside should reflect critically on their concepts, values, behaviour and methods
- Teaching should shift from closed to open, from individual to group, from verbal to visual and from measuring to comparing, learning happens through engagement

and committed action and should involve much of the participants' own investigation, analysis and planning

- The foundation is a partnership and sharing of information, experience, food and training between insiders and outsiders (1997: 108).

The emphasis on partnership and sharing of knowledge and experience is important also in view of the future use of transmitted knowledge and skills. Participants should be able to integrate, adapt and further develop them independently. Therefore the exchange and communication between members of different cultures has to stimulate true reflection and action upon reality and inspire critical thinking. Teachers and students should become 'jointly responsible for a process in which all grow' (Freire, 1970: 61). As big as the effort might be to work together as equal partners one has to acknowledge that the uneven distribution of wealth and power will continue to distort relationships. In order to work against the development of envy or distrust it is important to be aware of the financial and social disbalance, actively develop and deepen friendships and avoid pity and charity.

General recommendations

In general terms I want to point out the following three areas in order to improve both social development in communities and the vitality and affluence of Mozambican dance:

- Strengthening local dance groups' artistic and social role in the communities
- Improving (professional) formation of dancers and musicians
- Increasing regional and national exchange between dance groups (local groups, 'grupos polivalentes' and CNCD or other professional artists)

To maintain or increase local groups' existing impact on their communities they need respect and interest from outside and should be part of a dynamic cultural network. The attention from outside increases their reputation and value inside the community, might attract new members and boosts the group's self-esteem and motivation. More local festivals and events would give groups such opportunities. The groups in Nampula city emphasised their appreciation of the visits and advice of the local dance instructor who is a modest but good example of the governmental engagement in this area in Nampula.

For professional dance artists meetings with local groups are inspiring and enriching. They are at the same time pools for recruitment of young and talented dancers as both 'grupos polivalentes' and sometimes even CNCD engages dancers from local groups. Furthermore, regular meetings with local groups give opportunities to expand research of traditional dance in Mozambique¹⁰.

If professional dancers should become inspiring leaders in their region they have to receive appropriate training. High artistic and technical quality of dance training has to be accessible for talented dancers all over the country. The Mozambican Ministry of Culture supports a National School for Dance in Maputo, which has good infrastructure and sufficient resources but unfortunately very substandard teaching staff. Therefore their students never reach professional levels. A successful reformation of the National School for Dance would be one way to establish the important formation of professionals in dance. In the last years two alternatives were set up in Maputo; young dancers can either

¹⁰ The missionary statement of CNCD asks explicitly for activities of the company to research, collect, preserve, valorise and disseminate dance and music as part of the cultural heritage of Mozambique (Abilio, 2001: 2).

attempt to get an apprenticeship at the CNCD's Junior Company or admittance to the six months training program of CulturArte¹¹. Neither is long and concentrated enough to replace a serious dance training.

There is potential to develop opportunities for good educated dance professionals on the job market, especially in education and community dance: Dance does not only work with 'normal' communities but also stimulates self-esteem, increases physical and psychological well-being of persons at risk or exclusion such as people with disabilities, street children, orphans, prisoners, refugees etc. Urban drift and internal displacement endanger to some extent the continuation of traditions. Therefore several provinces are about to introduce music education in the school curriculum to preserve the cultural heritage of Mozambique for future generations (Interview with Mr. E. Alitenge, Director of Direcção provincial da Cultura Cabo Delgado, 10 Dec. 03). Alongside these efforts dance might sooner or later become part of the school curriculum as well. Therefore I advocate comparable to the Adugna-Project in Ethiopia that performance and choreography is an important aspect of a dance training but students 'have also come to be committed to the vision of spreading their skills across the community, the city and ultimately, the nation' (Plastow, 2004: 144).

Dangers

Young artists are tempted to move to larger cultural centres in and outside the country.

Opportunities for international exchange of young artists from Maputo has increased in

¹¹ Dance studio and production structure for contemporary dance in Maputo directed by Panaibra Gabriel in collaboration with Danças na Cidade Lisbon and a variety of international coproducers (more information in Deputter, 2003).

recent years while the interest and means to do cultural exchange in their own country has reduced. It is unrealistic to believe that such 'brain drain' can be completely avoided. But the support of the cultural life in smaller towns, the encouragement of exchange between different regions and the creation of jobs as dance teachers for schools and communities might take off some of the pressure to leave in search of a better future and fulfilment of artistic dreams.

Whenever groups and individuals are selected to participate in a project there is a danger that powerful groups or people might only allow access to their favourites and exclude others from taking part. Scarce communication technologies and big distances make controlling and monitoring of such processes very difficult. It is therefore important that programs are directed if possible in the provinces and responsible bodies constantly update information about the development of dance groups in their area. Such efforts are partly made by dance instructors and officers of Casa da Cultura but they need more encouragement and support. The several Casa da Cultura in Mozambique lack opportunities to communicate and meet. Also CNCD has established good relationships with dance groups in many parts of the country but lacks the means to renew them on a regular basis.

Conclusion

Which opportunities does traditional dance offer for development?

This simple question led to a broad reflection about the links between culture and development. Changes in the ways of living, the political, social or economic environment, can affect existing culture and vice versa. Development might stimulate the transformation of traditional modes of expression, beliefs and customs but at the same time it needs to be embedded in local culture, otherwise it risks to fail. Thus it is important that culture is considered in development. The understanding of culture as concept (Marsh and Gould, 2003: 15) offers access to a deeper understanding of people's cultural practices. Good culture and development work has the capacity to let people become the actors of development and set their own priorities.

Community arts activities have the potential to increase people's ability of self-organisation, their self-esteem and social networks. Good social organisation and the competence of people to organise and create independently have positive impact on poverty alleviation and development, and even seem to have positive effects on economic growth as well.

A very common arts activity, especially in African communities, is dance. Dance is a language in its own right, it offers modes to think and express thoughts and emotions beyond spoken language. It therefore is difficult to understand for outsiders and its social and individual value is difficult to assess. The examples cited of the integration of dance in development processes reveal various effects from empowering people by developing creativity, self-esteem and physical and mental strength, to the ability to communicate and interact beyond language show that dance has a lot to propose.

The research in northern Mozambique proves that dance groups have an important cultural role and are not just preserving tradition but creating and transforming dance. They are a frame for creative expression and innovation and strengthen the identity of communities and link them to other communities and people. Dance groups and dances there are very numerous and of diverse size and quality.

Indeed dance culture in Mozambique is strong, but in order to preserve and increase its quality it is important to award it some more care and attention. I advocate primarily for the support of 'grupos polivalentes', the representative groups of a region or province. Their competence in the different areas of their activities (technique, creation, research and management) tends to be rather restricted and should improve, lifted up to professional level. They need to develop stronger links amongst each other and with national institutions in order to serve as agencies of the development of dance in their provinces. It would be desirable that the Government of Mozambique finds ways to reform the National School of Dance and to develop it into a nationally acclaimed institution that educates dancers, teachers and choreographers. Their knowledge then has to be made available for communities all over the country.

During the work on this paper I realised that the link between development and tradition seems not very explored neither in theory nor practice. The 'original', untouched state of traditional culture in remote areas of Africa and elsewhere will not remain and its conservation is an illusion. My little story in the introduction tried to illustrate, that one day, electricity, telephone and other things will arrive in these villages. But this does not need to be the reason for the loss of tradition. Features of modern life will unavoidably have an impact on local culture but if tradition is committed to transformation, it will be

able to deal with new influences. In order not to lose cultural affluence it is important that people preserve their ability to react creatively on changes, they have to be the actors of their own cultural development. The penetration of life and dance has to continue (Béjart in Acogny, 1984: 10). Those dances have to continue to function as a physical and mental outlet of people's actual state of mind, not of a past one.

I repeatedly argued that dance is a special way of thinking through the body. The following statement of Mia Couto, one of Mozambique's most prolific authors, from his open letter to President George Bush, advocates a similar kind of active and creative thinking:

We, the people of the smaller countries of this world, have a 'Weapon of Mass Destruction': the ability to think. (Couto, 2004: 2)

Obviously the word 'thinking' in this context implies a lot of different meanings but surely it involves a strong element of action or in Freire's words 'thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world' (170: 58). Action in a sense of culture means creation and performance, innovation and skills. This is the kind of 'thinking' that has to be encouraged and supported in order to build on and preserve the affluence of dance in Mozambique and make it a 'weapon' of true development.

Bettina Holzhausen, 18 August 2005

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Appendix 1:

Time schedule of the trip to Nampula and Cabo Delgado

- 03/12/2003: Flight Maputo – Nampula
Contact with direction provincial da cultura
- 04/12/2003: Set up of meetings with different groups in Nampula
Travel to Ilha de Moçambique
- 05/12/2003: Contact with the administration of the district of Ilha de Moçambique
Meeting with 4 dance groups of Ilha de Moçambique (children, Tufu, Cunene, Maulide)
- 06/12/2003: Travel Ilha de Moçambique - Nampula
- 07/12/2003: Interview with Sergio Boavida Culana (director of the grupo de canto e dança da Casa da Cultura Nampula and instructor for dance in the province of Nampula)
Meeting with 2 dance groups in Nampula (Massepua, Parampara)
- 08/12/2003: Interview with grupo de canto e dança da Casa da Cultura Nampula
Interview with Association Casa Velha Nampula
Meeting with 2 dance groups in Nampula (Nsope, Parampara)
- 09/12/2003: Travel Nampula – Pemba
- 10/12/2003: Contact with Direction Provincial da Cultura Cabo Delgado,
Meeting with Mr. E. Alitenge (director)
Travel Pemba - Mueda
- 11/12/2003: Contact with the administration of the district of Muidumbe
Meeting with 1 dance group in Miteda / Muidumbe (Mashawona)
Meeting with Paolo Israel (Italian anthropologist studying the dances of Makonde, in particular Mapiko)
- 12/12/2003: Visit of Base Militar in Muidumbe
Meeting with 1 dance group in Muidumbe (Mang'anyamo)
- 13/12/2003: Travel Mueda - Quissanga
- 14/12/2003: Travel Quissanga - Ilha do Ibo
- 15/12/2003: Contact with the administration of the district Ilha do Ibo
Meeting with 1 dance group in Ilha do Ibo (Damba)
- 16/12/2003: Travel Ilha do Ibo - Pemba
- 17/12/2003: Interview with Samuel J. Carlos (director of Casa da Cultura Pemba)
Travel Pemba - Nampula
- 18/12/2003: Flight Nampula - Maputo
- 20/12/2003: Interview with Eusebio Daniel and Lucio de Conceição
(Association Casa Velha Maputo)

Appendix 2:

Questionnaire for interviews with dance groups:

1. General information about the group:

- Name of group
- Name of dance / origin of dance
- Year of foundation / reason for foundation
- Number of members (active / passive, men / women, dancers / musicians)
- Organisation and leadership (association, registration)
- Membership fee / entrance fee / other conditions
- Number of rehearsals a week
- Place of rehearsal
- Number of performances a months (estimation)
- Event of performances / payment / transport / food
- Where are instruments / costumes / masks from?
- Who takes care about the instruments / masks? Where are they stored?
- Who can become member of this group?

2. Creative work:

- How did you originally learn the dance?
- Responsible persons for music / songs / movement
- Where does the inspiration for a new song come from?
- Where does it start, with music, text, melody, movement, mask?
- Development of repertory: new songs / rearrangement of existing songs: Did the dance change over the years? How often are new songs created? Do old songs stay in the repertory or do they drop out?

3. Information and networking:

- Do you know other dance groups? Who are they?
- Do you know Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança? Did you ever see a performance / have other contact with it?

4. Needs and problems:

- What kind of support would your group need?

5. Personal views:

- What does it mean to you personally to be member of this group? Why are you member of this group?

Appendix 3:

Research about dance groups in the provinces Nampula and Cabo Delgado

Dance groups

date	location	name of group / dance	showing	founded	male/female	age	members	ethnicity / religion	legal form	rehearsals	spaces	performances	repertory	revenues
05.12.03	Ilhia de Moçambique / Nampula	"Espada da Ilha" Grupo infantil	yes	quite recent	female	ca. 6-10		Makua, Muslim	n.n.	several times a week	outside in their community, sometimes in the courtyard of the museum	tourism, national & local holidays, representation of the island	small	cash
05.12.03	Ilhia de Moçambique / Nampula	"Estrela Vermelha" Tufu	yes	ca. 1480 (!)	female/male musicians	ca. 20-45	20-40 active, several hundreds passive	Makua, Muslim	association	several times a week	outside in their community, sometimes in the courtyard of the museum	tourism, national & local holidays, representation of the island	20-30 songs	cash
05.12.03	Ilhia de Moçambique / Nampula	Cunene	yes	n.n.	female/male musicians	ca. 20-45	20-40 active, several hundreds passive	Makua, Muslim	association	several times a week	outside in their community, sometimes in the courtyard of the museum	tourism, national & local holidays, representation of the island	ca. 20 songs	cash
05.12.03	Ilhia de Moçambique / Nampula	Maulide	yes	n.n.	male	dancers: 10-25, leaders 50-60	20-40 active, several hundreds passive	Makua, Muslim	association	several times a week	outside in their community, sometimes in the courtyard of the museum	tourism, national & local holidays, representation of the island	-	cash
07.12.03	Nampula / Nampula	"4 de Outubro Bairro Napipine" Masepua	yes	1989	male & female: musicians male, dancers male and female	ca. 20-50	14 men, 24 women	Makua from the coast (Angoche), Muslim	association (5000mts. entrance fee)	3x weekly	outside the house of the president	private parties, sometimes public events	"very big"	cash, food

07.12.03	Nampula / Nampula	"Associação Familiar" Parampara	yes	1998	female	ca. 18-70	38 women	Makua, Muslim	association	2x weekly	outside the house of the president	private parties, initiation rites, sometimes public events		cash, food
08.12.03	Nampula / Nampula	"Pahantikua" Grupo da Casa da Cultura Nampula	no	1993	male/female	ca. 20-30	9 men (4 musicians), 6 women	various from Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa	belongs to Casa da Cultura Nampula	5x weekly (mornings)	waiting for the new Casa da Cultura to be built	private and public events, used to tour	ca. 17 different dances mostly from Northern Mozambique	no salaries, cash from performances, used to have support from NGOs
08.12.03	Nampula / Nampula	dance group of Associação Cultural Casa Velha Nampula	no	1995	male/female	ca. 20-30	14 men & women	various from Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa	association (part of Casa Velha Nampula)	daily	around the pavilion of Casa Velha, behind the museum	private and public events, often invited by NGOs, used to tour	6 different dances, different theatre pieces (AIDS)	no salaries, cash from performances, used to have support from NGOs
08.12.03	Nampula / Nampula	"Organiza da cidade de Nampula" N'sope	yes	5.5.1995	male/female: musicians and bosses male	ca. 20-45	20 women, 10 men	Makua from the coast (Angoche), Muslim	association (15'000mts. entrance fee)	6x weekly	outside the house of the president, group built a hut as club-house	private parties, sometimes public events	"very big"	cash, food
08.12.03	Nampula / Nampula	"Associação Hygiénica" Parampara	yes	25.9.1984	male & female: musicians male, dancers female	ca. 20-50	50 women, 5 men	Makua, Muslim	association (10'000mts. entrance fee)	3x weekly	courtyard of a member's house	private parties, initiation rites, sometimes public events, won traditional dance competition	"very big"	cash, food
11.12.03	Ku-Miteda, Muidumbe / Cabo Delgado	Mashawona	yes	2000	male	ca. 15-20	4 musicians, 6 dancers	Makonde	no	2x weekly	near the house of one member	private parties, initiation rites, sometimes public events	ca. 20	food & drinks, sometimes cash
12.12.03	Muidumbe / Cabo Delgado	Mang'anyamu	yes	1996	male	ca. 20-30	25 men: 5 musicians, 6 dancers	Makonde	no (5000mts. entrance fee)	occasionally 2x weekly	somewhere outside	national holidays, initiation rites, just for fun	ca. 7 different animal masks	food & drinks, sometimes cash

15.12.03	Ilha do Ibo /Cabo Delgado	Madrassa islamia (Islamic school) Damba	yes	ca. 1988 (dance more than 1000 y. old coming from Arab peninsula)	male & female: musicians male, dancers female	ca. 15-20	ca. 120: 15 musicians, 82 dancers (all related to the Islamic school)	Mwani, Muslim	belongs to Islamic school of Ilha do Ibo	2x weekly, on weekends	at the Islamic School	private and public events, represented Cabo Delgado at the festival da dança popular in Maputo 2002	"very big"	cash, food
17.12.03	Pemba / Cabo Delgado	Grupo Canto e Dança da Casa da Cultura Pemba	no	1996	male/female	ca. 20-30	15 (musicians and dancers)	various from Cabo Delgado	belongs to Casa da Cultura Pemba	3x weekly	at Casa da Cultura (which is not a house but an open-air theatre)	private and public events, used to tour	different dances of Cabo Delgado	no salaries, cash from performances, used to have support from NGOs
19.12.03	Maputo	Grupo de Canto e Dança Mascara	no	n.n.	male/female	ca. 20-30	12 (dancers only)	various	belongs to Casa Velha Maputo	4x weekly (mornings)	at Casa Velha Maputo	10-15 performances a month, private and public events	traditional dances from all over Mozambique, small contemporary repertory	no salaries, cash from performances

Appendix 4:

Research about dance groups in the provinces Nampula and Cabo Delgado

Interviews

Date	Location	Interviewee	Function
05.12.03	Ilha de Moçambique / Nampula	Amina	Assistente técnica da Direcção distrital da Cultura
07.12.03	Nampula / Nampula	Sergio Boavida Culana	Director of Grupo de Canto e Dança da Casa da Cultura Nampula and instructor for dance of Direcção provincial da Cultura Nampula
10.12.03	Pemba / Cabo Delgado	Mr. E. Alitenge	Director of Direcção provincial da Cultura Cabo Delgado
17.12.03	Pemba / Cabo Delgado	Samuel Jose Carlos	Director of Casa da Cultura Pemba
19.12.03	Maputo	Eusebio Daniel	Director Casa Velha Maputo
19.12.03	Maputo	Lucio da Concecao	Producer/Collaborator of Casa Velha Maputo