Performing Arts and Sustainability New Prospects for Cultural Transformations

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Abstract:

The performing arts are not just an art form, creative practice, or method of representation, as they are increasingly seen as a vital medium for embodied research and as an analytical framework. The performing arts have a long and significant history of creative engagement with public issues and continue to play an influential role in the development and transmission of ideas, attitudes, and calls to action regarding pressing issues.

Art has a rich history of reflecting on and influencing social change. This paper examines the potentials of the performing arts in the twenty-first century for sustainable development, in which the artist may play a major role through "cultural sustainability". The paper explores the potentially effective role of the performing arts in redirecting behavior and establishing social norms that are sorely being lacking today, where active culture and sustainable development go hand in hand.

Research problem: The research problem is to answer the following questions:

-    What is meant by cultural sustainability? And how can it contribute to achieving sustainable development?

-    How can the performing arts contribute to achieving sustainability as a process of societal change, through reflexive practices?

-    Can sustainability be present and relevant in the performing arts?

Research objectives: The objectives of the research are to study the role of culture and arts in changing societies, in integration with sociology. The research also aims to show the potential role of the performing arts in achieving sustainability through creative practices; where "sustainable development" is a comprehensive concept that revolves around reconciling (social justice) and (environmental safety); to achieve the well-being of all life systems on the planet.

Research Methodology: Through the descriptive analytical approach, the research deals with the concept of sustainable development and its relationship to culture, and how the performing arts can act as catalysts for sustainable development in the stage of reflexive modernity. Through the case study approach, the research presents applied contemporary models of the performing arts for sustainability, where artistic interventions in society can work to change social structures.

Keywords:

Introduction:

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the term "sustainability" became very familiar. The concept of sustainability is usually based on a three-pillar model: economic, environmental, and social. Cultural sustainability is considered the fourth pillar of sustainability practices, but

studies on the role of culture and the arts in achieving sustainability are rare. The cultural pillar is essential for its ability to unite societies and promote diversity as a key component of sustainability. Culture has a critical transformative power to build a sustainable future for all. Community values are the foundation upon which everything else is built. These values and the ways of expressing them are the culture of the community (Hawkes 2001, vii), and cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social justice, environmental responsibility, and economic viability. For public planning to be most effective, its methodology must include an integrated framework for cultural assessment along the lines that are developed for social, environmental, and economic impact assessment.

The concept of sustainable development
The term sustainable development has become widely used nowadays, and the first official reference to it is the report "Our Common Future" issued in 1987 AD by the World Commission on Development and the Environment, which was formed by a decision of the United Nations General Assembly in December 1983, headed by the former Prime Minister of Norway "Grow Harlem Brundtland". According to the committee's report, sustainable development was defined as follows: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Brundtland 1987, 43). Sustainable development is a process of change in which resources are exploited, investments are directed and technological development and institutional change are directed in harmony; with the aim of enhancing current and future capabilities to meet human needs and aspirations. Sustainability refers to the process or strategy of moving towards a sustainable future; with the aim of creating an environmentally and socially just world through natural means and without jeopardizing future generations (Oppku 2004, 40).

Cultural Sustainability
Culture and cultural heritage are the link that binds human societies together. Culture is a complex concept; It includes within it, identity, memory, creativity, sharing, projection, inquiry, learning, recreation and well-being. It is central to the lives of citizens and thus to human societies. Culture provides pivotal exploratory and interrogative approaches to the world and its systems and nurtures the ability to identify and analyze current and complex challenges that require multidisciplinary responses to be understood and acted upon.
There are two related definitions of culture: (1) It is the social production and transmission of identities, meanings, knowledge, beliefs, values, aspirations, memories, goals, attitudes and understanding, (2) It is the "way of life" of a particular group of people: customs, religions, rituals, traditions, rules of conduct, costumes, cuisine, language, arts, science, technology, institutions (Hawkes 2001, 3).
Culture encompasses three aspects: (1) our values and aspirations, (2) the processes and media through which we develop, receive, and transmit these values and aspirations, and (3) the tangible and intangible manifestations of these values and aspirations in the real world (Grogan and Mercer 1995, 12).

Sustainability and contemporary social transformations
In 1934, a prominent book appeared in the philosophy of science (The New Scientific Spirit), by the French philosopher and historian of science Gaston Bachelard (1884-1964). According to Bachelard's view, scientific progress is no longer linear and represents a continuous process of knowledge accumulation. Rather, it has become a permanent process of discovering and correcting errors, and every new scientific practice requires an abandonment of the previous epistemology (Al-Khouli 2000). This was followed by the rise of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who tried to make a difference and he went out to the world with his theory of (Praexeology).

1. Pierre Bourdieu's Praexeology
Bourdieu Sought to understand social life through balanced definitions, which take into account objective cultural and social structures, along with practices and experiences that arise from individuals and groups (Bourdieu 1993a, 3). At the early seventies he developed the terms (Habitus) "Attribute", and the term (Field). Thus (practice) becomes the outcome of the dialectical relationship between the Habitus and the field, or it is the product of the interaction of the Habitus and the field (Harker 1990, 15). Bourdieu's concept of praxis has obvious similarities with Giddens' structuring theory.

2. Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory
Giddens' Structuration theory is a theory of social action, the implication of which is that society must be understood in terms of action and structure; as a binary rather than as two separate entities. As we become social; We absorb the standards and values around us in the learning process. These norms and values become a part of us, we start to act like others and we start to reproduce what we have learned. In this reproduction process; We take out values, routines and practices. (Dieleman 2008, 3-4). Giddens' structuring theory is also related to the concept of "reflexivity", which plays a fundamental role in the issue of arts.

3. Reflexive Modernity
 In his book "The Consequences of Modernity," Giddens talks about Reflexivity, which means that social practices are constantly examined and modified in light of new information about those practices. for Bourdieu, Reflexivity occurs when people experience a "lack of fit" between how to act and goals to be achieved (Giddens 1990). Giddens' ideas reflect contemporary thinking in policy and research circles dealing with sustainability. A common way of looking at sustainability is to view it as a process, rather than as a goal. Giddens' Structuration theory is rooted in ideas about the detraditionalization of society and is linked to notions of reflexive modernity. The central idea of detraditionalization is to increase the Independence of individuals from structures (Habermas 1984).

Aesthetic Reflection, Art, and design in Cultural Industries
The decline in traditional social structures and the new focus on the information and communication sectors of society; leads not only to more reflexivity, but to the 'Aestheticisation' of everyday life as well. Not only were people liberated from traditional institutions; rather, they no longer construct their identities in relation to these traditional structures. As a result,

identity is no longer based on class or racial attitudes in society, but on "personality". In the economy of signs and spaces, traditional social structures based on class and production have become less important and have been replaced by new structures based on (temporary) networks of people and on consumption.

People in these networks exchange symbolic meaning; The flow of these messages, signs and symbols allows them to interpret themselves in relation to their practices. Lash uses the description of "cultural structures" to define this process. Within these structures which are essentially networks of flows; people create 'life spaces' through their reflexive actions, with 'Aesthetic Reflexivity' forming the cultural capital of flowing signs. As a result, images have a great value in identifying and shaping the mechanisms of individuals lives. In this mobility, the role of art and design emerges.

Performing Arts for Sustainability

The performing arts and theater - with their strong human-centered heritage - have been relatively slow to respond to issues such as climate change, species extinction, or pollution and toxicity, etc… However, in the wake of contemporary vigilance towards beings and things; In addition to publications focusing specifically on the environment and ecology, there is a real evidence that academics and practitioners in the field of performance and theater are beginning to make their own contributions to the environmental humanities (Lavery 2016). In current post-drama trends, Performance and theater take place in what (Alan Read) calls an 'extended field', participating in many different forms, some of which may include performance based on: location - innovative work - immersive installations - open results - direct interventions - long-term pieces - large-scale societal events. These trends resist any presuppositions about what is qualified as a performance or performance space (Read 2014).

Sustainability can be both present and relevant in the performing arts, where social learning theory tells us that individuals adopt new beliefs and behaviors by observing and imitating others within their community, and the performing arts and theater, provoke dialogue. Below we present a set of eminent applied models of the role of the performing arts and cultural groups in achieving sustainability, as "sustainable development" is a comprehensive concept that revolves around reconciling (social justice) and (environmental safety); To achieve the well-being of all life systems on the planet.

A. Performing Arts and Social Justice

Many cultural and artistic entities active and concerned with the quest for a just, equitable and inclusive world have emerged. They adopt the sustainable development goals and human rights principles represented in: equality and non-discrimination, the inclusion of marginalized, vulnerable and excluded groups, and the reduction of inequality within and among countries, as part of poverty eradication. In this context, we will discuss one of the globally distinguished models, which is a practical application to achieve social transformations and adjust behavior for the well-being and prosperity of the individual and society. It is the performance group (Olodum), which is considered an important cultural and political project that achieves the goals of sustainability and is an embodiment of the concepts of cultural pluralism, impartiality, and pride in self-identity.

- **Performing Ensemble and Social Movement (Olodum)**

Olodum was founded in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil in 1979 as a performing group in the tradition of Brazilian percussive bands that mainly play their street music of samba-reggae genre. The band was formed of Afro-Brazilian and specialized in carnival percussion. After their first performance in 1980; The group attracted nearly 2000 members and began addressing historical themes of African and Brazilian culture.

The group's first long performance album was titled (Egypt, Madagascar) and was recorded in 1987. It is best known for the song (Pharaoh, God of Egypt) (Faraó, Divindade do Egito). The idea was to honor the cultural and heritage roots of the group and to show "Mother Africa" of the Black Bahian community with the centrality of Egypt for its well-known cultural role, and to show how the group was born (from drums to the influences of African deities). Shortly thereafter, the band began to be known worldwide as an Afro-Brazilian percussive group and performed in Europe, Japan and almost all of South America.

Olodum is an important social movement that achieves sustainability, in parallel with its artistic success the band participates in anti-racism and civil rights and human rights social movements. The band was established in Pelourinho (Portuguese pillory means terrible) an ancient part of the city of Salvador, earning its name for being the historical site of the public flogging and punishment of black slaves. By the 1980s Pelourinho had become home to outcasts, poor families, and prostitutes living in historic two-story buildings, with drug cartels more or less controlling downtown at the time and trying to use young blacks as cheap middlemen. Being young people who did not have many opportunities to obtain legal jobs elsewhere, they were weak and vulnerable to temptation.

Black Bahians then turned to their music, beliefs, and language as an expression of resistance, and by incorporating all these elements, Olodum emerged as a cultural and political project to stand against prejudice. Soon it was developed into a social movement aimed at empowering African-Brazilian youth - mostly black - in Salvador, and giving them more self-respect. Olodum has succeeded in empowering young people and has contributed to restoring the city center from gangs and saving the youth from entering the world of drugs. The band's logo became an icon of protest, self-esteem, and pride, as well as a popular brand.

B. Performing arts and environmental safety

There is a growing number of artists submitting work that responds to environmental issues associated with sustainability; They address questions similar to those that scientists grapple with. Ecological issues are among the most important. Below we present a case study of an important research project that addressed environmental and climate issues through the performing arts, within the framework of ecological theater and outside traditional theater institutions.

- **The Performance Research Project: You, Me, and Our Resilience (2015-2019)**

In a cross-cultural research experience; Professor Katrina Brown directed the performance research project (You, Me, and Our Resilience), which addresses the topic of climate shifts. Procedures were to work with two groups specializing in participatory theater and sustainable social action: (S.A.F.E Kenya) from Mombasa - Kenya; and (Golden Tree Productions) from Cornwall - United Kingdom. The goal was to create performances in the two countries, to

facilitate intercultural dialogue and learning; not repeating activities or comparing and contrasting. Activities were developed in an organic or adaptive manner, closely related to the local context and in response to community visions and issues, rather than in a top-down, pre-determined or prescriptive manner. This enabled the performers to propose and develop the best activities to represent and address the issues and concerns identified by each community (Brown et al 2017).

The project focuses on the field of forum theater, applied theater, and participatory theater; and Site Based Eco-Theatre, where the two cases under study occurred. The project was primarily concerned with public participation and explored various frameworks and understandings of resilience through participatory drama. It contained three principals at its core: (1) Cross-Cultural Education; Based on narratives and lived experiences of resilience to multiple risks (2) using participatory theater as a means to empower communities to change their circumstances (3) promoting engagement with scientists, policy makers and the insurance sectors (Brown et al 2017).

- **(Gangavasi) Performance - Kenya**

Primarily, S.A.F.E. Kenya used an applied theatrical model called 'Forum Theater' with the communities around the villages of Vanga and Gazi in Kwale district on the southern coast, which had recently fallen victim to a series of extreme weather events. The team used the powerful strategic tool (theater of the Oppressed) to create interactive shows, where the audience becomes active; they explore, display, analyze and alter the reality in which they live, according to the term "spect-actors" coined by Augusto Boal. More than 3000 people from 7 villages attended the performances, and several major developments related to sustainability were achieved by the community.

- **(Weathering the Storm) Performance - Cornwall, UK**

The Golden Tree Corporation produced a single performance, (Weathering the Storm), in the port city of Porthleven. As in Kenya, the production was designed as a direct response to information gathered through the actors' interviews with key community members, stakeholders and decision-makers who were affected or involved in the response to a severe coastal storm event in early 2014. The performance was followed by a form of location-based applied theater, taking the invited audience to experience dramatic events at Seaview Terrace - a fictional street close to the beach, where homes were flooded and residents were evacuated during a violent storm, to explore the loss and grief associated with severe weather. The piece featured a Porthleven fishermen choir, the participation of fishermen, coast guards, business owners, local residents, and stakeholders. 215 people were involved in the performance and in the design process leading up to the final production. After the performance, members of the audience were interviewed and asked about their most memorable moments, their understanding of community resilience, and future job opportunities. A series of reflexive workshops were held over three days.

Most Relevant Results and Recommendations

- Sustainability can only be achieved if we consider it a creative project that enhances the culture of the whole society, as there is an urgent need to change the prevailing cultural paradigms which are essentially a cultural model of consumption. Achieving change requires engaging in concrete practices and concrete projects.

- Reflexivity is one of the important mechanisms that can lead to change. The retreat from traditional social structures and the new focus on the information and communication sectors of society; leads to more reflexivity. Identity is no longer based on class or racial attitudes in society, but on personality.

- The performing arts are one of the areas that lends itself to integrating and promoting sustainability, and opens up new spaces for exploring lived experiences, fantasies, emotions and possible solutions around the needed global change.

- We have to value the cultural weight of Egypt and adopt appropriate strategies to emphasize Egypt's leading role in the global cultural movement as a country with a special status in the conscience of peoples, in a manner that achieves the goals and vision of Egypt 2030; concerning strengthening the Egyptian leadership.

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