In the Shadow of the Sheraton: imagining localities in global spaces in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Moyer, E.M.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (http://dare.uva.nl)
Afterword:
Completing the Circle

Kifo, kifo, kifo hakina huruma
Kifo, kifo, kifo hakina huruma
Kifo, kifo, kujua mbaya kifo
Watu wanakwenda hospitalini
Nakuta wengine wanaliala
Wengine wana miguu tena
Wengine wana vidonda
Wengine wana vipele
Wengine wana ukurutu
Wengine wamekuwa
Shauri yako wewe kifo

Death, death, death has no pity
Death, death, death has no pity
Death, death, to know a bad death
People, they are going to the hospital
I meet others they are crying
Others they are walking again
Others have sores
Others have skin eruptions
Others have rashes
Others are dying
Your plan, you death

-Kifo, Remmy Ongala
Completing the Circle

I never intended for this book to have a conclusion. As stated in the introduction, it has always been my intention to raise more questions than I answer here in hopes of offering a glimpse into some of the more complex daily processes that help contribute to high HIV rates in Africa. It is my contention that while AIDS is routinely recognized as the complex medical and social disease that it is in the so-called developed world, in Africa it is too often simplified. It is imagined and portrayed in dominant Western scientific discourses as an infectious disease that will continue to wreak havoc in the lives of Africa's countless victims until salvation is delivered from the West (Treichler 1999). While many of those who are engaged in AIDS work in Africa are acutely aware of the medical and social complexities of trying to prevent and treat AIDS in a continent as diverse as Africa, they continue to simplify matters if for no other reason than to garner international financial support for their programs. Funding agencies do not want to hear that what works in Kampala or Nairobi may prove relatively useless in Dar es Salaam, nor that what works for Dar es Salaam street youth may have the opposite effect when applied to middle class youth in the same country. Instead, both contemporary and historical differences are glossed over to paint a unified picture of "AIDS in Africa" that is difficult for Africans as well as long-time scholars of Africa to recognize. Aside from perpetuating the pervasive development ethos (and apparatus) that is tied to AIDS prevention and treatment in the so-called developing world, it is hard to imagine what interests are served by such portrayals. According to Stuart Hall, "AIDS is . . . a question of who gets represented and who does not" (1992:285). I would add that it is also a question of how they get represented.

When I set out to do the research for this book it was, in part, with the intention of finding a better way to represent one of the highest HIV/AIDS risk groups in Dar es Salaam. In many ways this book has been a struggle over representation: how to portray one of the most marginalized groups in society in a way that honors their humanity? Yet, I also wanted this book to say more. Initially, I had hoped that it would offer more generalized information about AIDS and African youth, or even more generally, poor urban youth everywhere. Perhaps it has that capacity. I wanted this book to convey the types of new insight that attention to the particular has to offer. I am not suggesting that the insights produced by ethnography and particularity are better than those produced by other scientific means, only that through its interpretive capacities ethnography might have something else to offer, something new in terms of the ways we can conduct research. I will not suggest that my research has brought any new insight to the problem of "AIDS in Africa," AIDS in Tanzania, or even AIDS in Dar es Salaam. As well, I think it would be difficult for the reader to miss my political and personal engagement with this subject. What I hope this book provides is a degree of insight into different methodological and representational approaches for understanding the ways people strive to make meaningful lives for themselves and their families in the face of AIDS.
Choosing not to place AIDS at the center of my inquiries in Tanzania allowed me to witness how AIDS serves as a point of departure for discussing some of the most contested issues in modern Africa today. Treichler tells us "(i)n Africa, analysis of AIDS must inevitably confront questions of decolonization, urbanization, modernization, poverty, endemic disease and development" (1999:113). Instead of focusing on AIDS in this text, then, I have chosen to turn my attention on some of these related issues. If nothing else, AIDS is a disease of relationality. There are so many factors contributing to its spread in Africa today that one hardly knows where to begin. Obviously poverty helps to create conditions where AIDS can thrive. Yet, drawing connections between poverty and AIDS is no easy task. It remains difficult for some to imagine the ways that poverty can shape people's everyday lives, can shape the very way people think about themselves, their lives, and their futures. Among those with whom I worked most closely the struggle against poverty was the one that most marked their lives. None of them had any difficulty imagining the links between poverty and AIDS nor, for that matter, a multitude of other illnesses that plagued their lives. But I did not want this to be a book about poverty either. I wanted it to be a book in spite of poverty and in spite of AIDS. I wanted it to say that no matter how hard science tries to subject marginalized people to any number of disciplining discourses - medical, subaltern, sexual, socialist, capitalist, liberal, or conservative, to name just a few - they will remain people. They will resist our efforts to codify, order and confine. And it is this spirit that I wanted to celebrate. Yes, the lives of those who were kind enough to help me with this research were marked by poverty, but they were not defined by it, at least not entirely. The stories they chose to share with me about their lives were filled with contestation. They have not given in to the daily drudgery of getting by but, instead, continue to work to shape and reshape their lives in the face of odds that are more than daunting.

I have attempted to represent some of this ongoing struggle and contestation. Out of respect for this ongoing struggle I do not want to draw any specific conclusions. I had hoped to come full circle in this text by focusing on the "global" in the "local" in the final chapter and to leave to the reader the task of drawing specific conclusions that would best inform his or her work. By returning to some of the ideas presented in this book, then, I do not propose to close the circle of thinking. Rather, I would like to emphasize the cyclical relationship between the local and the global, the informal and formal, the official and the popular, work and play, life and death. Initially, the relationships between these categories that have so clearly shaped this book may seem binary in character. In fact, they are dialectical, each informing and re-shaping the meaning(s) of the other. A series of dialectical relationships shape the entire structure of the book. The most obvious of these include space and place, local and global, but there are also wealthy and poor, powerful and powerless, peace and violence, Zion and Babylon, legal and illegal, mobility and locality, urban and rural, flow and stasis, work and
Completing the Circle

play, mother and prostitute, pleasure and pain, secrecy and publicity, male and female, life and death, and sex and death.

According to Benjamin, "dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Every epoch, in fact, not only dreams the one to follow, but, in dreaming, precipitates its awakening" (1999:13). As we sit in the midst of the AIDS epoch, not knowing how close we are to nearing its end, it is difficult to fathom future epochs. It is not impossible to imagine a world without AIDS, but it is nearly impossible to imagine a world where the existing conditions related to poverty and inequality, conditions that make it possible for AIDS to thrive, have been eradicated. Where, in our current modes of thinking, is there a space for "dreaming" about the future to be found? Where is this dialectical space about which Benjamin speaks, this space in-between?

If we fail to search for such contestatory spaces we essentially allow dominating discourses of difference and blame to flourish. We allow people to say, "he has AIDS because he is poor, she has AIDS because she is Black, they have AIDS because they are prostitutes, they are gay, they use drugs." And worse yet, we allow them to say these things while believing it is all part of the natural order of things. Poor, marginalized people get AIDS because they deserve it. Strategies of simplification and blame will do little to end an epidemic that thrives in spaces of inequality. The existence of AIDS, which attacks those who are most marginalized in our societies, demands that we take a closer look at the ways inequality is produced and maintained. With this in mind I have striven to fashion arguments inspired by dialectical processes rather than relying on polemics. I have attempted to search out the very places people most often point to when they assign blame, not so much to redirect the accusation somewhere else as to understand the process and the problems involved in allowing the blaming game to continue unchecked. I question what happens to a society that allows itself to believe, for reasons invariably described as moral, that certain individuals can be expected to suffer. What happens when the President of Tanzania simplifies the discourse on AIDS by blaming it on prostitution, pornographic comic books, disrespectful youth, and degenerate music rather than taking the time to open up the debate and ask questions about inequalities within Tanzanian society that encourage the proliferation of these cultural forms? What happens when this rhetoric of blame is reproduced (or perhaps initially produced) in the streets? How can one blame prostitutes without looking to their clients as well, the state without looking to its constituency, youth without looking to their parents, musicians and artists without looking to their publics?

In an attempt to escape the cycle of blame that shapes AIDS discourses throughout much of the world, I have tried to identify the discursive spaces in-between the discourses of morality, poverty, peace, and development and modernization, all of which thrive on perpetuating difference and inequality. Following the lead of the young men and women with whom I worked, I have tried to carve out spaces of hope and possibility. In response to poverty dis-
courses I have attempted to provide a more complex view of class-based pol-
itics in Dar es Salaam, as well as an examination of development and modern-
ity discourses that rely on the perpetuation of dehumanizing poverty dis-
courses for their survival. By offering a brief examination of the way that
many development organizations contribute to views that position the devel-
oped West against the underdeveloped non-West I wanted to draw attention
to the fruitful space in-between these views. If development organizations
continue to engage in the hypocrisy that is typified by the fact that over half
of their budgets go to paying for expert Western advisors who are then able
to maintain lifestyles that far exceed the lifestyles they would have in their
home countries, they can have little hope of being viewed as having the objec-
tive humanitarian aims they claim to have. If they continue to fail to recog-
nize that true expertise is unlikely to be provided by people that have no
sense of local histories, languages, and politics, they have little hope of being
very effective. When some of the young people who worked with me cynical-
ly proclaimed that development was just another business, that it was just
another form of government, and that it really did very little to make their lives
any better, they were not doing so blindly. Similarly, when expatriate develop-
ment personnel cynically proclaimed that African members of their staffs
were more interested in making money than in bringing about change, they
were not always far from the truth. It is necessary to consider the deeper
meanings of such observations, the fact that they were made and by whom,
as well as the degree to which they are true and why. It is high time that
those engaged in development begin to interrogate the connections between
the production and perpetuation of inequality discourses and the ultimate
failure of development objectives in Africa. Until they do, I would expect their
efforts to stem the tide of AIDS to fail, except perhaps on the smallest scale.

Similar arguments could be made about individual African nations, and I
would have to insist that they be made about individual nations and not
“Africa” as a whole. Specific histories, pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colon-
ial, must be taken into account, as well as local discourses of difference,
inequality, and blame. Internal histories and struggles must be examined,
along with the positions individual countries occupy globally, within their
respective regions, and within Africa as a whole. In the case of Tanzania, it
is impossible to understand contemporary discourses of poverty and peace
in the absence of an examination of Tanzania’s socialist history. It is impos-
sible to understand the currents of dismay and disgust that shape contem-
porary discourses on urbanization if one fails to recognize the extent to which
the category “jobless” was shaped by both colonial and post-colonial efforts
to control urban space. They are even harder to understand if one fails to
recognize how these efforts have been tied to discourses regarding the
shape of the modern city. Connected to the status quo desire for the mod-
ern city is the condemnation of prostitutes, squatters, and informal laborers
who continue to transform urban space in ways that are decidedly non-mod-
ern.
The rhetoric of peace I observed at Maskani is, as suggested in Chapter Five, undoubtedly shaped by nationalist stereotypes that portray Tanzania as a country of peace. But it is also shaped by global discourses on peace including those connected to Bob Marley’s music and international Rastafari beliefs, as well as to popular global imagery that celebrates both icons of violence and the victims of that violence. Such contestatory thinking about peace and violence makes it not only possible to juxtapose Marley and bin Laden, but probable. This tradition of pitting one side against the other, which is recognizable in so many facets of Tanzanian society, can be traced all the way back to dance societies (see Ranger 1975 and Gunderson and Barz 2000, among others). In this context, it is the competition, the contest itself that is most important. No team, side, or individual is inherently right or inherently wrong. That which calls itself peace often disguises violence, and that which looks like violence often brings peace. The only way to achieve any semblance of balance is to recognize the value of the struggle that keeps each side in check.

Tensions between locality and mobility are pervasive in this text. In some cases, people move to the city in an effort to provide economic support for rural notions of locality. They rely on their mobility and flexibility to succeed in the informal economies of Dar es Salaam, yet they aspire toward a sense of locality and belonging among their friends, their lovers, and fellow exiles from their families and villages. They unite around shared identities, both real and imagined, in an effort to overcome transience and establish meaningful networks of roots. These tensions are mirrored in similar tensions that exist between work and play. The anonymity of the city rewards migrants with certain pleasures but these pleasures are transformed as that anonymity disappears. A prostitute becomes a girlfriend, a drug dealer becomes both a friend and a police informant, and the police provide protection while also being a problem. One engages in work to get money for pleasure (sterehe), but pleasure can often endanger one’s work by drawing the attention of the police. Yet pursuits of pleasure also help to establish the very sorts of social and economic networks that are so desirable for people who have uprooted themselves in search of employment. Work can deliver the possibility of a future worth imagining while pleasure can erase that future by sending you to jail, putting you into debt, killing you with a heroin overdose, or infecting you with AIDS. But what is the point of work without pleasure, or of success without anyone with whom to share it?

These questions and conundrums were faced daily by those whom I came to know at Maskani, Uwanja wa Fisi and Kijitonyama. They talked about the pursuit of a meaningful life (kutafuta maisha) in terms of a confused and anxious struggle (kuhangaika). The paths they had chosen were rarely straightforward and many of them found it difficult to know whom to trust. As a result, it often seemed as if they distrusted everyone, everything. I could have asked for no better teachers to explain the dictum “speak truth to power.” They were aware of, and could articulate, many of the complex fac-
tors that contributed to the difficulties that characterized their lives. And, they were ever hesitant to simplify, I think, because they knew how quickly this might lead to their deaths.

In closing I would like to touch on a question that has been asked of me many times. "What has happened to Maskani since your departure from Tanzania?" In Chapter Seven I discussed some of the emotional difficulties of doing this research and suggested that at times it was difficult for me to build lasting friendships with people who seemed destined to die young. By the time I left Tanzania in 2000 I had begun to think that all of those I had come to know would be dead before I would be able to return. In fact, I found it quite easy to locate nearly everyone when I did go back to Dar es Salaam in 2002. Those who were not around were easy to track through mutual friends. What became obvious to me, however, was the degree to which I had under-emphasized the importance of space in my prior research. The key to finding the people with whom I had worked two years earlier was knowing where to find them. Even if they were no longer in the places I had last associated with them, there would be people there who would know how to find them or to get a message to them. In many ways, this is common sense. If you want to find someone you go to his or her home or place of work. What concerned me, however, was that most of those I knew in Dar es Salaam had neither a place of permanent residence nor permanent employment. I worried that their transience would make them impossible to track down. But there was Maskani and many other maskani as well. These were the sites that linked otherwise transient people together in Dar es Salaam. Though I had already begun to theorize about the importance of place and alternative mapping strategies in the early drafts of this text, it was not until I returned to Dar es Salaam and had to rely on those alternative maps to locate my friends and acquaintances that I realized how valuable they could be.

Because of my growing respect for such mapping strategies, I was disheartened to find that Maskani seemed to be in danger of disappearing from the popular cartographies on which I had begun to rely. Late in 2001, construction started on a bank at the corner where Maskani was located and the new occupants were demanding that the sidewalks be cleared so that customers could access their premises with ease and free from hassle. Many of those who operated the businesses that lined the sidewalks of Maskani were advised to dismantle their shops and find somewhere else to work. The female food vendors seemed to be most concerned, perhaps because they were all supporting families on the money they earned at Maskani. Mama Tugolepo had approached the building foreman and worked out a deal so they could stay on until construction was finished. She told me she was confident that they would be able to work something out eventually since the people working in the bank would have to eat too. The other vendors were less confident, though, and felt that at least some of them would have to go. The car washers were most concerned about losing the place where they slept. They could continue to wash cars as long as there was water but they usually slept
Completing the Circle

on the foodstall tables in the evening and inside of one of the stores that blocked the entrance to the new bank. Several of them approached me in desperation, asking for start-up funds to establish a more secure business in another part of the city. The Wamachinga who sold car parts would hardly be affected since their part of the corner would not be disturbed by the new construction.

Just as I had not realized the importance of alternative maps until I was in a position to make use of them to find my friends, I was not aware of how rapidly they could change as a result of city planning policies and construction projects. Though vendors were routinely subjected to police harassment, even at Maskani, I realized I had come to think of this one corner as more static than I perhaps should have. I had seen it as a place of relative security and peace but it was only when that security was threatened that I began to comprehend just how unjust life could be for those struggling to earn a living on the streets.

The feelings of insecurity that pervaded Maskani in 2002 contrasted starkly with what I had found there in 2000. This was in part because of the spatial changes that had taken place there, but importantly, it was also because of increasing heroin use among some Wamaskani. The regime of peace that had once ruled at Maskani was in danger of being toppled. Several of the young car washers who had been most committed to peace had decided to move a couple of hundred meters up the street to a new location where they made and sold Rasta-inspired beadwork and sandals. When I asked them why they had moved they told me that Maskani had become Babylon, that certain individuals had started stealing to support their drug habits, and that one was even in possession of a pistol, which they feared he might use. The thieving was attracting unwanted police attention and those who were using heroin had become noticeably more aggressive as they became more desperate for money to buy drugs.

Most Wamaskani also told me that their economic situation had become more difficult since 2000. The Tanzanian shilling was devalued following the devaluation of the South African rand; Tanzania had invested heavily in post-Apartheid South Africa and once again it was the poor who were paying the price for the state’s commitment to African unity. My US dollars were worth nearly twice what they had been on my previous visit but those entrenched in the local economy where paying almost double for the same goods they had bought two years earlier. People had begun to equate daily living with death, ironically intoning “nimekufa,” or “I’m dead,” in response to inquiries about their wellbeing. Though I quickly incorporated this new irony into my own lexicon I was never able to uncouple its acquired meaning from its original one.

As I think is apparent from this text, I was always impressed with the amount of money those at Maskani were able to earn. I had come to see them and many like them who where busy carving out niches for themselves in the new liberalized economy as avant-garde capitalists, relying on flexibility and mobility to locate income-earning possibilities. While this certainly
remained the case in 2002, I began to see that those possibilities were quickly shrinking. As more young people made their way to the city, as city zoning laws became more strict, and as they grew older and longed for more settled lives, it became more difficult to earn a living, to imagine building a meaningful life.

notes


2 See Mkapa’s “Uhuru Torch Race Message for the Year 2000” where he blames youth for spreading HIV, singling out their “unreigned sexual urges,” “reckless abandon,” “over indulgence in alcohol and drug addiction,” “culture of disrespect and cruelty against women,” and “prostitution” which is caused by unemployment (2000:5-7). Also see New York Times (22 Aug. 2001) for a discussion over the banning of comic books thought to contribute to the spread of AIDS.

3 See Timberlake (1986). Also see Treichler (1999, especially chapter 3) for a more detailed analysis of AIDS discourses in the “Third World” as they relate to development and funding strategies and Ferguson (1994) on the intrinsic problems with the development apparatus in Africa as a whole.