

# Community, Culture and Globalization

by Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard

In May of 2001, the authors represented in this anthology met at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Study and Conference Center on Lake Como in northern Italy. The villa and its grounds are beautiful, especially when adorned by spring's profusion of leaf and blossom. Succumbing to spring fever, from time to time we abandoned the conference room for a wide lawn overlooking the lake.

One afternoon, Maribel Legarda, artistic director of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA), volunteered to lead theater exercises as a demonstration of PETA's work, kicking off a discussion that was to touch on privatization and commercialization of cultural development. Following Maribel's instructions, everyone assembled by world region into five groups: we joined one that included several people from the United States, one Canadian, one Peruvian and one Mexican. Other groups were just as polyglot: the Asian cluster included someone from Hong Kong, two members from India and three Australians (one born in Vietnam). Our eventual assignment turned out to be silly, ironic and hilarious: devising and performing a mock television commercial for community cultural development. But for a warm-up, Maribel had each group choose a Beatles song to perform with enthusiasm. If memory serves, our group chose "All You Need Is Love." Another group belted out "Yellow Submarine." Without conferring or even knowing the choices the other groups had made, each picked an entirely different Beatles tune.

Here, in microcosm, we have the dialectic of globalization: two dozen community arts practitioners and theorists come from 15 countries on six continents to a meeting in Italy. The meeting's purpose is to share experiences and ideas gleaned from their own work in communities, exploring commonalities as well as differences. Before the meeting, they conduct an introductory dialogue in English via e-mail to introduce themselves and their work, together beginning to formulate an agenda of issues for their face-to-face meeting. At the meeting, their presentations are earnest, diverse, often amazing and about as multifarious as can be imagined: a community dance project in which construction workers performed a pas de deux for tractors; a half-mile-long mural commemorating the suppressed history of southern California; a Vietnamese youth theater; a youth-created video game on unemployment; and many, many more. Their common aims are to help people wrest a meaningful and grounded sense of cultural identity from the jaws of a rapacious market culture and, by engaging with ideas, feelings and expression, to catalyze social action. But when they search for a lingua franca, they turn to the products of that market, from the Beatles—one of the most successful franchises of the commercial cultural industries—to the formulas of television advertising, familiar to each and all.



This anthology was created to raise the profile of community cultural development practice around the world by offering a rich mixture of experiences, ideas and stories that demonstrate the validity of this work as a stimulus to pluralism, participation and equity in cultural life, and as a response to globalization's pull toward the standardization of commercial culture. Our hope has been to create a tool that can be used by anyone to understand the community cultural development field, a book that can serve as a resource for both training and practice.

“Community cultural development” describes the work of artist-organizers (“community artists”) who collaborate with others to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communications media, while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change. In community cultural development work, community artists, singly or in teams, use their artistic and organizing skills to serve the emancipation and development of a community, whether defined by geography (e.g., a neighborhood), common interests (e.g., members of a union) or identity (e.g., members of an indigenous group). The work is intrinsically community-focused: while there is great potential for individual learning and development within its scope, it is aimed at groups rather than individuals. Individual issues are considered in the context of collective awareness and common interests.

Culture—the sum total of signs, beliefs, artifacts, social arrangements and customs created by human beings—is both the container and the content of this work. To be human is to make meaning. Powerful meanings attach to even the smallest matters: the fate of a species of bird or a plot of land; the way a regulation is interpreted or the outcome of a particular court case. Social life offers infinite opportunity for organizing, as is seen wherever people protest against laws and policies they oppose or rally support for their chosen causes. But culture subsumes them all. When we speak of culture, we describe a people’s “operating system,” to borrow an analogy from one of humanity’s most suggestive creations, the computer. Culture underpins all choices, all outcomes. It contains the means of expressing all thoughts and emotions. It enables all associations. And within this encompassing realm, the purest and densest meanings are conveyed through art, through individual and collective creations driven by the desire to express and communicate, unencumbered by extraneous objectives.

Thus, culture rather than a particular art form is the true medium of this work. Within the community cultural development field, projects are remarkably diverse. All artistic media and styles are adaptable. Projects have employed visual arts, architectural and landscape design, performing arts, storytelling, writing, video, film, audio and computer-based multimedia. Activities include structured learning, community dialogues, community mapping and documentation, oral-history collection, the physical development of community spaces and issue-driven activism, as well as the creation of performances, public art, exhibitions, moving-image media, computer multimedia and publications. In all this work, the powerful experience of bringing to consciousness and expressing one’s own cultural values is deemed worthwhile in and of itself, apart from the outcome.

Despite superficial differences, the field’s internal diversity reflects strong common principles and values. The following unifying principles originally appeared in “Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development,” a companion volume to this international anthology, focusing on community cultural development’s definition, history, theoretical underpinnings and current conditions in the United States. (Copies are available free of charge from the Rockefeller Foundation.) Community cultural development projects aim to realize these common principles:

- Active participation in cultural life is an essential goal of community cultural development.
- All cultures are essentially equal, and society should not promote any one as superior to the others.
- Diversity is a social asset, part of the cultural commonwealth, requiring protection and nourishment.

- Culture is an effective crucible for social transformation, one that can be less polarizing and create deeper connections than other social-change arenas.
- Cultural expression is a means of emancipation, not the primary end in itself; the process is as important as the product.
- Culture is a dynamic, protean whole, and there is no value in creating artificial boundaries within it.
- Artists have roles as agents of transformation that are more socially valuable than mainstream art-world roles—and certainly equal in legitimacy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, *Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 2001), p. 14.

Many of the authors whose work is included here are based in the developing world or in marginalized communities within the industrial world. Considered as a group, they represent a departure from the stereotype of the deracinated intellectual described by commentators from Fanon to Naipul, alienated by education and training from heritage culture, yet unable to enter fully into or find deep satisfaction within the transnational imposed culture. Rather than surrender to permanent alienation, these artists and activists have grasped the power inherent in their simultaneous roles of participant and observer. Understanding the new reality of multiple identities and multiple belonging, they serve as catalysts and conduits, dedicating their skills to the development of their communities, to the articulation of suppressed voices.

Although their particular locations differ greatly, these authors respond in their work to realities that now transcend all national boundaries. Every current society is multicultural due to the penetration of virtually all cultural barriers by colonization, immigration and the nearly universal proliferation of electronic media. Every chapter of this volume touches on some of the many and varied challenges this presents. Although most projects described here take place within the bounds of a particular location, every one reflects the reality that community cultural development work is intrinsically transnational and multicultural in scope and outlook—from the work with migrants described here by Judy Baca and Mok Chiu Yu to the second-generation immigrant cultures depicted by Tony Le Nguyen and Gary Stewart to the many depictions of populations straining to shoulder the cultural impact of industrialization.

More fully than any other artistic endeavor or development approach, community cultural development embodies the deep appreciation of cultural diversity described in the first three articles of the “UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity” adopted in November 2001:

### *Article 1*

#### **Cultural diversity: the common heritage of humanity**

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.

### *Article 2*

#### **From cultural diversity to cultural pluralism**

In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life.

### *Article 3*

#### **Cultural diversity as a factor in development**

Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [www.unesco.org/confgen/press\\_rel/21101\\_clt\\_diversity.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/confgen/press_rel/21101_clt_diversity.shtml)

---

Collectively, the essays in this volume assert community cultural development's value as a response to the homogenizing effects of the complex phenomenon known as "globalization." The increasing economic irrelevance of national boundaries and growing interdependence of worldwide trade, capital and population have been a boon to markets, hugely escalating the global penetration of new technologies and cultural products. That practitioners from 15 different countries were able to conduct a pre-conference dialogue via e-mail and to enter so easily and enthusiastically into a global Beatles medley at Bellagio attests to this new reality. These same phenomena have also raised serious concern that commercial considerations will override efforts to protect our cultural commonwealth—from local seed stocks to indigenous architecture to homegrown music—resulting in a world society more reminiscent of a hypermart than a garden of human possibility.

Globalization is a newish term (the Oxford English Dictionary lists the first use in 1962); but to see the phenomenon as entirely novel would be to mistake the label for the contents. In fact, the community cultural development field came into being in response to earlier social forces we now group under the label globalization.

Consider the international phenomenon known as Theater for Development, discussed in David Kerr's essay, Masitha Hoene's interview and elsewhere. By the early 1970s, community workers and artists in the developing world had conducted extensive experiments in the use of theater to educate and involve community members in campaigns to improve their quality of life in the face of economic and social concerns. As Ross Kidd and Martin Byram wrote in their 1978 how-to manual for such work:

Popular theatre can be used for extension work and adult education. As entertainment it can catch and hold the interest of large numbers of people. As a dramatic way of presenting local problems, it makes people in the audience see these problems in a fresh way. Through discussion (which follows every performance) people can talk about these problems with others and see what can be done about them. Often this leads to action.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Ross Kidd and Martin Byram, *Laedza Batanani: Organizing Popular Theatre: The Laedza Batanani Experience 1974–1977* (Gaborone: Institute of Adult Education, University College of Botswana, 1978), p. 5.

Their work was shaped by new geopolitical conditions—the restructuring of local economies, the decline of traditional cultures, the rise of insurgent indigenous movements and governments' repressive responses, all in the setting of post-colonial Africa. Among the typical local problems the Kidd and Byram manual lists are those now associated with globalization:

Young people drift to towns. Women and old people left in villages...  
People forgetting traditional practices...  
Unemployment...  
Inflation...<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.

This early community cultural development work—called by many names, including popular theater, Theater for Development, people's theater—was shaped both by the unique conditions facing each locality and by inspiring examples circulated throughout the growing international network of practitioners.

In preparing this essay, we retrieved from our archives a thick folder of documents from the Third World Popular Theatre Network, a now defunct international alliance that published its first newsletter—composed on an electric typewriter—in January 1982. Some readers may not recall the difficulty of international networking in the years before the advent of the Internet. Some of these archival materials are tissue carbon copies or hand-written letters; still others are mimeographed. All were received by post operating at the snail-like pace of the international mails of two decades ago. The obstacles were formidable: it took a year to compose and circulate the newsletter's first two issues. But around the globe—most actively in Asia and Africa—practitioners of Theater for Development struggled to document and share what they had experienced.

Where conditions permitted work to develop, itinerant theater programs grew out of universities, community organizations and development agencies: Laedza Batanani in Botswana, programs directed at farmers emerging from Ahmadu Bello University in northern Nigeria, the impressively ambitious programs of PETA (still going strong and represented in the present volume by Maribel Legarda), Sistren in Jamaica. Even in its earliest days, Theater for Development's powerful ambitions emerged side-by-side with its populist critique:

Chikwakwa Theatre and Theatre-for-Development attempted to take theatre to the marginalized groups of Zambian society but they have not been able to convert theatre into a tool which popular groups and organizations can use in challenging oppression and victimization in Zambian society. Theatre for Development remains a means for imposing technocratic solutions on the rural and urban poor rather than a tool for analyzing the class contradictions in Zambian society and the real sources of urban and rural poverty.<sup>5</sup>

Holding their own work to this challenging standard, every accomplishment of the international network was matched by a painful setback. Partners from India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Zambia and the Philippines, aided by first-world partners, pulled off an "Asia-Africa Popular Theatre Dialogue" in Bangladesh in February 1983. The statement adopted by participants called for many of the same elements of support that community cultural development practitioners still feel are needed to advance their work, including "Popular theatre networks... at national, regional, and inter-regional levels."<sup>6</sup>

Next to this statement in our file is a bright green flyer urging recipients to send cables to Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos to express concern at the disappearance of Karl Gaspar, a pioneering popular-theater worker. During the two years when Gaspar was held in military detention in the early '80s, international attention was focused on his situation through the efforts of the network; in 1984, for example, he received the J. Roby Kidd Award of the Toronto-based International Council for Adult Education. Next in the file is a rumpled, fawn colored paper dated 1983 addressed to President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya and other government officials; it exhorts them to release political prisoners and end repression against groups such as the theater of the Kamiriithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre, home base of the imprisoned and exiled playwright N'gugi Wa Thiongo, now Erich Maria Remarque Professor of Languages at New York University.

Or consider an even older example from the United States: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal created employment and subsidy programs to put people back to work during the Great Depression of the 1930s, including massive Works Progress Administration (WPA) programs with major divisions covering visual art, music, theater, writing and history. Artists and scholars employed by the WPA painted murals for public buildings, tramped through cotton fields to collect slave narratives and record folk music, wrote and

<sup>5</sup> Dickson Mwansa, "Theatre for Community Animation in Zambia," *Third World Popular Theatre Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1982, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup>Statement of the Popular Theatre Dialogue, International Workshop, Koitta, Khaka, Bangladesh, Feb. 4-16, 1983 (collection of the authors).

performed plays on social issues and much, much more. New Deal cultural programs were created in response to massive unemployment in those sectors hardest hit by the Depression. Artists suffered in those years in part because of the Depression's general effects: people had less discretionary income to spend on things like theater tickets and art exhibits, so artists earned less income. But the main cause of unemployment in the performing arts was structural and coincidental to the general economic collapse: the new technology of motion pictures was displacing live performance, putting countless authors, actors, designers and technicians out of work. The richness of visual art, theatrical production, music and narrative that emerged from communities during the New Deal—and that inspired so much community cultural development work in succeeding generations—was at bottom a publicly funded response to the encroachment of capital-intensive industrial development in the arts sector.

In other words, before the term globalization came into common usage, community cultural development work was called into being around the world by the same complex of social forces and social dangers known outside the United States by another name: Americanization. While the United States remains the “golden land” that animates the dreams of countless immigrants, to scholars and social critics abroad, Americanization has for decades represented the decline of traditional, participatory cultural practices in favor of consuming their commercial counterparts.

Commentators on both left and right are still making this correlation. For example, here's how Francis Fukuyama (professor of public policy at George Mason University, consultant to the RAND Corporation and author of “The End of History and the Last Man”) responded to the question of whether globalization is really a euphemism for Americanization:

I think that it is, and that's why some people do not like it. I think it has to be Americanization because, in some respects, America is the most advanced capitalist society in the world today, and so its institutions represent the logical development of market forces. Therefore, if market forces are what drives globalization, it is inevitable that Americanization will accompany globalization.

However, I think that the American model that people in other cultures are adopting is from the America of two or three generations ago. When they think of globalization and modernization, many people think of America in the 1950s and '60s: “They put a man on the moon,” John Wayne, and “Father Knows Best.” They're not thinking of the America of the Los Angeles riots and O.J. Simpson. The culture that we exported in the '50s and '60s was idealized. It really presented quite an attractive package. The culture we export now is cynical, and a much less attractive model for other nations to follow.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>From “Economic Globalization and Culture: A Discussion With Dr. Francis Fukuyama,” [www.ml.com/woml/forum/global.htm](http://www.ml.com/woml/forum/global.htm), ©2001 Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc.

As the essays and interviews in this volume affirm, certain aspects of the phenomenon called globalization have positive, liberating potential. Advocates of cultural freedom in Asia can use the Internet to contact counterparts and supporters in Africa, Europe and the Americas, making it much harder for the perpetrators of human rights abuses to keep their misdeeds secret and much more likely that they will be called to account—if not in an official forum, then in the court of global public opinion. Mok Chiu Yu’s essay about Asian popular theater lists a dazzling array of transnational collaborations, suggesting that the problems of migrant workers—enormously exacerbated by globalization—can be addressed by a joint international effort to use theater as an organizing tool, an effort that would undoubtedly be supported by the Internet and other transnational communications and support systems. Martha Ramirez Oropeza is interested in using new communications media to protect and restore indigenous Nahuatl culture in a way that transcends the Mexico–United States border. Gary Stewart’s interview describes working with young people to use music sampling and recording technologies to portray their Asian–British–international youth culture in London, thereby addressing the racism of British society. Dee Davis’s essay describes efforts to document, preserve and valorize rural culture using the tools of mass communications.

Yet both the preservationists among community cultural development practitioners and those who celebrate the syncretic fluidity of contemporary cultural mixing are up against the same formidable opponent, a key assumption underlying the course that globalization is taking: that the cultural products, customs and values of the U.S. marketplace are precisely what the rest of the world should and will have. Here’s how Maude Barlow, national chair of the Council of Canadians watchdog organization, characterizes it:

The entertainment-industrial complex... sees culture as a business, a very big business, and one that should be fiercely advanced through international trade agreements, like the World Trade Organization. This industry combines giant telecommunications companies, movie studios, television networks, cable companies and the Internet working together in a complex web that includes publishing, films, broadcasting, video, television, cable and satellite systems, megatheatre productions, music recording and distribution, and theme parks.

Mass produced products of American popular culture are the U.S.’s biggest export according to the United Nations’ 1999 Human Development Report. A huge, well organized coalition has formed that links the U.S. entertainment, media and information-technology sectors together in a “common front” to oppose cultural protectionism. Companies like Time-Warner and Disney have powerful friends on Capitol Hill and in the White House and they work closely with the U.S. Government which in turn has taken a very aggressive stand in protecting their interests.

She goes on to sum up the ambitions of globalization:

The corporate assault on cultural diversity is part of a larger political, social and economic global watershed transformation. Economic globalization is the creation of a single global economy with universal rules set by big business for big business in which a seamless global consumer market operates on free-market principles, unfettered by domestic or international laws or standards.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>From "Can National Cultures Survive Globalization?," a talk delivered at the Globalization and the Live Performing Arts conference in Melbourne, Australia, June 23, 2000, available from the Council of Canadians, at [www.canadians.org/publications/publications-speeches.html](http://www.canadians.org/publications/publications-speeches.html).

<sup>9</sup>[www.c-i-a.com/pr0701.htm](http://www.c-i-a.com/pr0701.htm)

<sup>10</sup>[www.nic.at/english/geschichte.html](http://www.nic.at/english/geschichte.html)

<sup>11</sup>Manthia Diawara, "Toward a Regional Imaginary in Africa," in Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 103.

According to the *Computer Industry Almanac*, there were more than 550 million Internet users around the world at the end of 2000, with users in the United States making up just under one-third of the total.<sup>9</sup> Various sources have estimated that from 80 to 87 percent of the approximately five million Web sites active at this writing are in English.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the online dialogue that laid the foundation for our Bellagio meeting was conducted in English, as was the conference itself. Clearly, a common language can be an advantageous instrument, facilitating international exchange and economies of scale that would be prohibitive if the costs of translation had to be borne.

But even the ubiquity of English can be seen as expressing a single nation's program of internationalizing its perceived self-interest. The fact is that for an increasingly large proportion of this planet's residents, the cultural products of the United States are an omnipresent, distorting mirror. Filmmaker and scholar Manthia Diawara describes the power of this "unified imaginary" to shape perceptions in Africa:

There is a globalized information network that characterizes Africa as a continent sitting on top of infectious diseases, strangled by corruption and tribal vengeance, and populated by people with mouths and hands open to receive international aid. The globalization of the media, which now constitutes a simultaneous and unified imaginary across continents, also creates a vehicle for rock stars, church groups, and other entrepreneurs in Europe and America to tie their names to images of Afro-pessimism for the purpose of wider and uninterrupted commodification of their name, music, or church. Clearly, the media have sufficiently wired Africa to the West, from the public sphere to the bedrooms, to the extent that Africans are isolated from nation to nation but united in looking toward Europe and America for the latest news, politics, and culture.<sup>11</sup>

The vast majority of community cultural development practitioners would welcome the globalization—the universal extension—of human rights, self-determination, the means to livelihood, health and safety. But it is the globalization of consumerism, as Fredric Jameson has written, that inspires dread:

...the destructive forces...are North American in origin and result from the unchallenged primacy of the United States today and thus the "American way of life" and American mass media culture. This is consumerism as such,

the very linchpin of our economic system, and also the mode of daily life in which all our mass culture and entertainment industries train us ceaselessly day after day, in an image and media barrage quite unparalleled in history. Since the discrediting of socialism by the collapse of Russian communism, only religious fundamentalism has seemed to offer an alternative way of life . . . to American consumerism. But is it certain that all of human history has been, as Fukuyama and others believe, a tortuous progression toward the American consumer as a climax? And is it meanwhile so sure that the benefits of the market can be extended so far as to make this new way of life available for everyone on the globe? If not, we will have destroyed their cultures without offering any alternatives . . .<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Fredric Jameson, "Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue," *The Cultures of Globalization*, pp. 64–65.

Community cultural development practice is based on the understanding that culture is the crucible in which human resilience, creativity and autonomy are forged. As everyone knows, an unexamined life is indeed possible: any of us might move through our lives in a trance of passivity, acted upon but never acting as free beings. The root idea of community cultural development is the imperative to fully inhabit our human lives, bringing to consciousness the values and choices that animate our communities and thus equipping ourselves to act—to paraphrase Paulo Freire—as subjects in history, rather than merely its objects.

The practitioners and thinkers represented in this volume do not suggest that making theater or murals can substitute for the other social and political acts that create a humane and equitable society. But these community cultural development activities are demonstrably the best available tools to teach the skills and values of true citizenship: critical thinking, interrogating one's own assumptions, exercising social imagination and creative problem solving, simultaneously holding in mind one's immediate interests and the larger interests of the community as a whole.

The computer metaphor invoked earlier may help to make the point clear: many forms of social activism in essence tinker with the surface of society, as one edits a document—substituting this piece of legislation for that one, this social program for that one—meaningful activity, but also often self-contained. When a particular accomplishment of this type is in place—when the edited document is complete—the task begins anew. In contrast, community cultural development work aims to change individuals' (and thereby society's) "operating system," providing new and fundamental tools of comprehension, analysis and creative action that inform all constructive social endeavor. The prospects for improving any social system, no matter how flawed it may be at first, are vastly increased when citizens enter into the tasks of social imagination and cultural development with consciousness of the work to be done and their own roles within it.

Community cultural development theory and practice have been influenced by activist movements for civil and human rights and by theoreticians of liberation including Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist born in Martinique who formulated his revolutionary ideas on the psychology of the colonized and colonizer while practicing in Algeria during its struggle for independence from France; Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator whose “pedagogy of the oppressed” was shaped by literacy campaigns with landless peasants in northeast Brazil in the years preceding his expulsion following the military coup of 1964; and Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal (who at one time served in Rio de Janeiro’s municipal legislature), creator of the social-dramatic forms known as Theater of the Oppressed, Forum Theater and Legislative Theater, among others.

Many liberatory ideas converge in community cultural development practice, which asserts each human being’s value to both the local and the world community. The heart of the work is to give expression to the concerns and aspirations of the marginalized, stimulating social creativity and social action and advancing social inclusion. Inherent in this approach is asserting the value of diversity, fostering an appreciation both of difference and of commonality within difference. In valuing community cultural assets both material and nonmaterial, community cultural development deepens participants’ comprehension of their own strengths and agency, enriching their lives and their sense of possibility. By linking the personal and communal, community cultural development brings people into the civic arena with powerful tools for expression and communication, promoting democratic involvement in public life. Essential in an era of globalization, it creates public, noncommercial space for full, embodied deliberation of policies affecting citizens. And as the essays in this volume amply demonstrate, the work is inherently transnational, with strong roots in immigrant communities and deep commitments to international cooperation and multidirectional sharing and learning.

At community cultural development’s core is Freire’s concept of “conscientization” (from the Portuguese *conscientização*). This describes the process by which one moves from “magic thinking” toward “critical consciousness,” breaking down imposed mythologies in order to reach new levels of awareness through dialogue, thus becoming part of the process of changing the world.

Within the community cultural development field, a parallel has been drawn between community artists’ efforts to protect local cultures from unwanted market interventions and developing countries’ efforts to resist the economic and social interventions of agencies of globalization such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and, more recently, the World Trade Organization (WTO). The most passionate critique of these interventions has emanated from impoverished countries where citizens have discovered that the price of securing World Bank largesse is too high to be borne. Typically,

in exchange for certifying governments for much-needed international credit, the IMF has demanded such measures as reductions in public expenditure (often achieved through job cuts, wage freezes or cuts in health, education and social-welfare services); privatization of public services and industries; currency devaluation and export promotion, leading to a conversion from local food production to cash crops, which in turn leads to greater impoverishment as citizens are forced to buy imported food; and so on. For example, here is one account of the impact of such policies on Africa:

Globalization in Africa involves one fundamental project: that of opening up the economies of all countries freely and widely to the global market and its forces.

To this end, it is demanded that, whatever the nature of their economies, their level of development, and whatever their location in the global economy, all countries must pursue a common set of economic policies. In particular, they must permit the free and indiscriminate operation of transnational corporations in their economies: open their economies freely and indiscriminately to imports and concentrate on exporting what they are supposed to be good at; reduce the role of governments in the economy to that of supporting the market and private enterprise; and leave the determination of prices of goods, currencies, labour, as well as the allocation of resources to the operation of the market. Seen in this way, globalization is primarily not an impersonal process driven by laws and factors of development—such as technology—operating outside human control and agency. Rather it is a conscious programme of reconstructing international economic and political relations in line with a particular set of interests (the profit motivations of the businesses, especially the transnational corporations of the advanced industrial countries) and vision (the dogma of the primacy of the free market and of private enterprise in all processes of human development).

For Africa, all the central planks of the process of globalization have been implemented over the past decade-and-a-half as structural adjustment programmes. Countries have deregulated foreign investment, liberalised their imports, removed currency controls, emasculated the direct economic role of the state, and so on. The results have been to further undermine the internal, national productive capacity, social security and democratic integrity of these countries. So that is basically how globalization has impacted on Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Following much the same pattern, globalization of culture inculcates consumerism, substituting mass-produced imported products for indigenous cultural production, and encourages privatization of public cultural-funding apparatus. The result is that market forces determine what aspects of culture will be preserved and supported, and, as in the advanced industrial economies,

<sup>13</sup>Fridah Muyale-Manenji, "The effects of globalization on culture in Africa in the eyes of an African woman," in *Echoes*, No. 12 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997), pp. 13–14.

much of the cultural particularity that continues to exist is expressed through purchases of clothing, recordings, concert and film tickets—through a process of market segmentation—rather than active participation in community cultural life.

It is not that such choices are meaningless: to the contrary, a powerfully evocative recording or insightful film can have great meaning in the life of an individual, and affinities for such products can be part of the basis for even intimate connections. The point is that as an act, consummating purchases can never express the breadth or depth of meaning that inheres in heritage culture or that we invest in our own creations. But the particulars of what is purchased are incidental to the main impacts of the act—enriching the consumer cultural industries and placing our roles as consumers at the center of our lives and communities. By reducing culture to commerce, globalization robs us of so much: our connection to our own histories with their reservoirs of resilience and creativity; our ability to reconceive the past for the benefit of the future; the ease of exploring our boundless creativity.

---

We opened our meeting at Bellagio by asking each participant to envisage cultural democracy: What are we working for? What are the conditions we hope to bring about through community cultural development? People's responses give a flavor of the group—its members' pragmatic idealism, their uncanny ability to engender hope and possibility where others might see cause for despair.

**Tony Le Nguyen:** To give an alternative voice to the community. To allow and accept a different way of thinking and doing things and making decisions.

**Munira Sen:** Not just to respect and tolerate other cultures, but to celebrate other cultures.

**David Diamond:** It has to do with creating the space for authentic voices in the midst of a growing corporate voice. To be in true dialogue is a human right.

**Judy Baca:** What we're struggling with is the creation of a kind of homogeneity that is going across the world, and what we're trying to do is preserve the specificity of various cultures and to amplify those voices in such a way that they become valued.

**Nina Obuljen:** Giving space, on different levels, from individuals to small groups, nations, and eventually coming into something that is globally appreciated.

**Dee Davis:** Finding strategic ways to take cultural voices and frame public discourse.

**David Kerr:** I am interested in cultural exchange, and a big problem is unequal exchange, like when Paul Simon comes and gets Ladysmith Black Mombazo to work on his record, it's not really an equal cooperation. My point is trying to create conditions in which cultures can exchange on an equal basis.

**Liz Lerman:** One aspect of our work is to insist that art making is a central, critical and crucial aspect of decision making within the culture, and it's not marginal.

**Prosper Kampoare:** To facilitate the empowerment of the population to be actors in their own development.

**Nitin Paranjape:** To create spaces where multiple flows of information are possible, to empower people to believe in themselves, their own values, their own personal strength.

**Mary Marshall Clark:** To create ways of communicating across cultures and all other kinds of barriers; people communicating to create community.

**Maribel Legarda:** We've seen that the political and economic spheres have not really contributed to finding resolutions to our problems. The cultural sphere is the last bastion of trying to struggle against globalization. Coming from culture being an appendage—a thing we did to support political and social issues—the cultural sphere takes the lead role in the changes, insurrections and struggles that we need to be able to let mankind survive.

**Tony Stanley:** For me it's all about connectedness—us as individuals helping other people connect with their own imaginative lives. But more important perhaps is the connectivity between people and through that, the building of cultures and the sustainability of cultures.

**Gary Stewart:** Young people around the world tend to be the most consistent targets of negative global practices. The way I envision cultural democracy is for those young people to have ways of articulating their concerns and ideas with each other that aren't mediated necessarily through adults or other agencies.

**Norm Horton:** Given that there's a lot of economic and cultural and social development that's happening around us all the time, protocols should be established that are particular to place, so that development work is actually informed by the specific place where it's acting and that drives it.

**Sarah Moynihan:** Being able to create a space for dialogue between or amongst the mainstream and all the marginal groups, so that can start to impact on more appropriate development.

**Mok Chiu Yu:** We should work toward everyone becoming active creators of art, not just passive consumers. Cultural democracy means people have control of their lives.

**Brian Holmes:** Discovery—people discover themselves in relation to a community or a group. Expression, confrontation.

**Iman Aoun:** To break the silence and develop the art of listening. By breaking through the walls of each self, we might create a bond.

**Paul Heritage:** I believe in inclusion, but cultural democracy is about exploring the margins. We should watch the margins change as our cultures develop, and find a safe place for the excluded.

**Bárbara Santos:** The challenge is to find the means to stimulate people to find themselves and find their own futures.

**Azril Bacal:** Globalization has bred a lot of hopelessness: how to breed hope? And how to reappropriate and democratize cultural definition and development?

**Masitha Hoeane:** Looking around the room I see the diversity of humanity. In that divergence, those differences, there is a convergence. It is important to redefine culture and how it is perceived.

**Martha Ramirez Oropeza:** To find ways of motivating through participation. The way to motivate the original part within us as well as indigenous people and communities is through self-esteem. Globalization is destroying self-esteem.

**Arlene Goldbard:** To awaken compassion, a passion for justice and freedom.

**Don Adams:** There is a fundamental way we understand our participation in culture. Most people do not think, “What I see around me is a direct result of what I do.”

---

Most community cultural development work is conducted in microcosm, at the level of the individual in community. Paul Heritage’s and Bárbara Santos’ essays share experiences of prisoners and guards in Brazil’s penal system; Liz Lerman talks about employees of a shipyard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Judy Baca recounts the experiences of gang members in East Los Angeles, California. The localism and particularity of this work is both its strength and its vulnerability.

On the one hand, there is no way to mass-produce transformation of consciousness: the individuals who make theater out of their own lives or unearth their own cultural heritage as preparation for creating a history mural or a computer game come to consciousness of the roles they may play in

changing the world precisely because their own minds and bodies are directly engaged in the process of self- and community-discovery. The labor-intensive, time-consuming effort that Maribel Legarda describes in creating a youth theater in Smokey Mountain—a mountain of garbage near Manila where children endanger their health working as scavengers—or that Sarah Moynihan and Norm Horton recount in discussing their work in creating a database of local cultural information with the people of Dajarra—a small, remote, predominantly Aboriginal township northwest of Brisbane, Australia—has dynamic transformative impact that can't be reached by any shortcut. The work's power and its enduring effects stem from its intensely personal nature.

But one of the impacts of globalization has been a cheapening of the local and the particular in favor of the general, and especially whatever gives “more bang for the buck.” What is distended through mass replication or swollen with its own putative significance shows up on the “globalized information network” to which Manthia Diawara refers. Everything else—such as community cultural development projects on the ground in Australia, Mexico, India or Britain—is too small to signify. As one consequence, this democratic community cultural development movement, with its tremendous potential to respond successfully to the negative effects of globalization, has been marginalized by its invisibility in the mass media, and thus lacks the resources to realize that potential. This is a pity, because right now many of those who wish to oppose globalization's most dangerous effects can be seen as acting them out, if only inadvertently.

Consider what has come to be known as the anti-globalization movement, the decentralized network of many thousands of activists who have demonstrated in Seattle, Montreal, Genoa and beyond against the World Trade Organization and other multinational attempts to regulate trade at the expense of local livelihood and culture. Part of the critique of globalization is the globalized media's cynical manipulation of symbols to disguise its real impact: the very concept of “free trade” reduces the meaning of liberty to little more than corporations' unfettered access to world markets. Yet the centerpiece of the anti-globalization movement's campaigns has been symbolic action transmitted through sound bites and film clips on CNN: smashing the windows of a McDonald's, spray painting slogans on the facade of a Gap outlet, temporarily shutting down a world capital's business district in time for the evening news. Certainly these efforts have publicized the fact that there is a serious opposition to the globalization of corporate interests. Certainly they have forced international trade meetings to seek out more remote and secure meeting places. But it is hard to argue they have done much beyond that to slow the advance of globalization's harmful effects or hasten the realization of its liberatory potential.

Many of the essays in this volume were completed during September 2001, as can be discerned from some authors' mention of the appalling terrorist acts that cost so many lives in New York and Washington. In the aftermath of those tragedies, commentators at all points along the political spectrum have remarked that the World Trade Center was chosen as a target because it was a symbol of American capitalism—just as the Pentagon is a symbol of American military might. As we write, a few months later, pre-September 11 photos of the New York skyline evoke tears, and the twin towers of the World Trade Center have come to symbolize thousands of lost lives. In this context, spray painting anti-capitalist slogans on a McDonald's may read one way to a committed North American or European anti-globalization activist, but how does it read halfway around the world? Consider this account of Asian young people's consumer preferences:

A new GenerAsians survey asked 5,700 children, between the ages of 7 and 18, in 18 cities in 12 Asia-Pacific countries, about their activities, aspirations, food, drink and entertainment. The survey was sponsored by Turner Broadcasting's Cartoon Network, and conducted by ACNielsen in March and April of 1998.

*Food & Drink*

"What's your favorite fast food restaurant?"

"What's your favorite soft drink?"

<b>Australia</b>	McDonald's, Coca-Cola
<b>China</b>	McDonald's, Coca-Cola
<b>Hong Kong</b>	McDonald's, Coca-Cola
<b>India</b>	Suvarna Bhuvan, Coca-Cola
<b>Indonesia</b>	McDonald's, Coca-Cola
<b>Japan</b>	McDonald's, Coca-Cola
<b>Malaysia</b>	KFC [Kentucky Fried Chicken], Coca-Cola
<b>Philippines</b>	Jollibee, Coca-Cola
<b>Singapore</b>	McDonald's, Coca-Cola
<b>South Korea</b>	Lotteria, Coca-Cola
<b>Taiwan</b>	McDonald's, Coca-Cola
<b>Thailand</b>	KFC, Pepsi <sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Reported in "End Games," *Adbusters*, Vol. 6, Iss. 4, Winter 1999, p. 42.

The perpetrators of the September 11 attacks, the corporations targeted on that day and the anti-globalization movement all have this in common: their activities have been staged for the global media network, which they have used to disseminate one-way messages that—whether or not one agrees with any of them—have no organic relationship to communities' own aspirations for their development. Neither embracing nor rejecting consumerism

constitutes a cultural identity nor a platform for social change. Nor can it be demonstrated that the global media themselves have the power to bring about real social change. To the contrary, it has been convincingly argued that their main impact is to solidify the existing social order by broadcasting a continuous stream of official pronouncements and reactions to them, so that there is absolutely no confusing the “center” from which authoritative messages originate with the “margins” where the less powerful reside.

As has so often been pointed out, mass media are fascinated with images of destruction because spectacle—fire, explosion, blood and agitated crowds—makes “good television.” In the days following September 11, news footage of the World Trade Center towers was repeated on CNN with such disturbing frequency that the Red Cross ran public-service announcements during commercial breaks exhorting viewers to limit their TV news watching, thus avoiding the trauma that might result from a permanent mental imprint of the horror. During the demonstrations accompanying international trade meetings in Seattle, Montreal and Genoa, images of demonstrators smashing shop windows and blocking streets and of police smashing demonstrators’ heads were broadcast with proportionate repetitiveness. So far as we have seen, no one has even suggested that the result of these image-wars will be positive social change. Indeed, the main result traceable to both seems the same: an escalation of the barrage of symbols asserting the desired status quo; and new and expanded security measures that promise to constrain the lives of ordinary citizens, if not to deter terrorists.

In times of stress and upheaval, pundits are forever tempted to divide the world into easy dualities: two popular versions are Benjamin Barber’s “Jihad vs. McWorld,” and Samuel P. Huntington’s “clash of civilizations.” In the current fashion, Islamic fundamentalism is placed on one side of the dividing line, with a version of the West characterized by post-Enlightenment ideals of rationality on the other. Implicit in these divisions is the assumption that modernity can only be opposed by the oppressive nostalgia of fundamentalism. But fundamentalism, protectionism and nationalism are based on the fortress paradigm of the walled city discussed in Dee Davis’ essay, something impossible to achieve given the interpenetration of realities already accomplished through globalization. Nationalism and essentialism create disconnection, asserting that a separate destiny somehow awaits each people. But the fate that unchecked globalization threatens would be truly encompassing, rendering all cultures dispensable in the face of market imperatives. Rather than attempting to wall cultures off from each other, the urgent question now is how it will be possible to construct dynamic relationships between communities and the larger world, relationships that allow for agency on all sides.

In community cultural development practice—and this is also supported by what we now know about human consciousness and learning processes—it is understood that no ideological platform can accomplish the shift needed to expand freedom and equality in the world. Declarations inevitably evoke counter-declarations. The only meaningful dividing line is between received ideologies that demand to be swallowed whole and regurgitated intact and the process of questioning that defines human intellectual and spiritual freedom. The passion for global justice does not attach to the human spirit as a good idea: it is acquired through first-person experiences that concretize concepts such as freedom and equality, allowing them to be integrated and to lead to constructive social action. When Nitin Paranjape writes about tribal children in the Indian government’s Ashram Schools discovering their own agency by publishing a “wall paper” in their own words, he shows us this process.

There is infinite scope for books, films and broadcasts about globalization and its discontents. There is infinite room for interesting ideas and analyses, for quotable scholarship and theoretical exploration. It is altogether a good thing that the process of globalization be examined and interrogated, that room be made to assert its constructive powers and condemn its destructive forces. But the only real promise for ordinary people in their own communities to have a say in how their cultures will be affected by the process of globalization lies in efforts like those described in this volume, in which the process of conscientization—discovering one’s own voice and learning to speak one’s own words—emancipates those who experience it, equipping them to enter the public sphere and take action to realize their ideals.

The community cultural development field is still taking shape. As we wrote of the U.S. field in “Creative Community,” there is as yet no consensus on definition or nomenclature. Many different names are in simultaneous use:

**Community arts.** This is the common term in Britain and most other Anglophone countries; but in U.S. English, it is also sometimes used to describe conventional arts activity based in a municipality, such as “the Anytown Arts Council, a community arts agency.” While in this document we use “community artists” to describe individuals engaged in this work, to avoid such confusion, we have chosen not to employ the collective term “community arts” to describe the whole enterprise.

**Community animation.** From the French *animation socio-culturelle*, the common term in Francophone countries. There, community artists are known as *animateurs*. This term was used in much international discussion of such work in the 1970s.

**Cultural work.** This term, with its roots in the panprogressive Popular Front cultural organizing of the '30s, emphasizes the socially conscious nature of the work, stressing the role of the artist as cultural worker, countering the tendency to see art making as a frivolous occupation, a pastime as opposed to important labor.

“Participatory arts projects,” “community residencies,” “artist/community collaborations”—the list of labels is very long. Even though it is a mouthful, we prefer “**community cultural development**” because it encapsulates the salient characteristics of the work:

- **Community**, to distinguish it from one-to-many arts activity and to acknowledge its participatory nature, which emphasizes collaborations between artists and other community members;
- **Cultural**, to indicate the generous concept of culture (rather than, more narrowly, art) and the broad range of tools and forms in use in the field, from aspects of traditional visual- and performing-arts practice, to oral-history approaches usually associated with historical research and social studies, to use of high-tech communications media, to elements of activism and community organizing more commonly seen as part of non-arts social-change campaigns; and
- **Development**, to suggest the dynamic nature of cultural action, with its ambitions of conscientization...and empowerment and to link it to other enlightened community-development practices, especially those incorporating principles of self-development rather than development imposed from above.

Within the community cultural development field, there is a tremendous range of approach, style, outcome—in every aspect of the work.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Creative Community*, pp. 4–5.

Researching the current state of the global field in order to identify participants for the May 2001 Community, Culture and Globalization conference, we began with archival resources. At first, we searched through Web sites and publications for organizations that had been fairly prominent in years past. Some of these—for example, the Third World Popular Theatre Network mentioned above—had effectively disappeared from view. Later, during the online dialogue that preceded our conference, David Kerr e-mailed this story:

In 1983 popular theatre workers from all over the “Third World” meeting in Koitta, Bangladesh, tried to set up IPTA (International Popular Theatre Alliance), to help mobilise work at a global level, with an annually rotating leadership. The first chair was to be Karl Gaspar... Unfortunately, shortly after Karl’s return to the Philippines, he was detained by the Marcos regime, and his files confiscated... IPTA was in disarray. Several others in the original organisation had problems. The police in Malawi simply confiscated virtually

all my mail for two years (my postal arrest I called it!). Dickson Mwansa in Zambia did try to pick up the mantle, and did draw attention to abuses against popular theatre workers (Karl's case, arrested student actors in Malawi, etc.), but it was very difficult. The inertia of involvement in local struggles made it hard for us to unite at a global level.

Such are the conditions faced by many community cultural development workers, making continuity and coordination a perpetual challenge. But we were heartened that even though earlier networks had disintegrated, it proved possible to trace the progress of some of their constituent parts, and thus we were able to learn a little about who is active now and what they are doing.

Within the field as a whole, development has been uneven. Without question, the most vigorous and well-established branch of the community cultural development field today centers on Theater of the Oppressed and other dramatic practices originated by Augusto Boal: fully a third of the essays in this volume touch on such work, and that is representative of the community cultural development work evident around the globe. Related but independent popular-theater practices—such as PETA's "Basic Integrated Arts Workshop," used by many Asian people's theater workers—have had tremendous staying power, enabling community artists to work effectively with an enormous range of social and age groups. As Paul Heritage's essay points out, the effectiveness of such work has been recognized even in sectors that don't normally interact with community cultural development practitioners, such as prisons, and this recognition has aided its expansion.

Co-created public works of visual art—mainly but not exclusively murals—have also had staying power as "sites of public memory," a rubric coined by Judy Baca. Video production has been a viable platform for community cultural development projects since the first portable and relatively low-cost cameras and editing technologies began to emerge in the 1970s. As new media penetrate visual-arts practice, community artists have begun to create Web sites, CD-ROMs, video games, databases and new software as the virtual equivalent of public art, monuments in cyberspace to community cultural development. After popular theater, practices centering on the creation of static or moving-image media expressing community identity and concerns appear to be second in scale within the global field. Approximately a quarter of the essays and interviews in this volume touch on work in these sectors.

As already noted, community cultural development work is adaptable to any arts medium and virtually any style or technical approach. But for complex reasons, there is not as much activity in dance as in theater, not as much work that results in writing as in murals. One factor may be that these artistic practices tend to have higher thresholds for competence. For instance, as Bárbara Santos' essay points out, participants (including those with underdeveloped literacy skills) who engage enthusiastically in theatrical improvisation and character development may easily be daunted at the stage where an improvised script becomes a written document. This anthology contains only one essay dealing with dance, and one that treats oral-history practice, a specific form of literary production often used in other forms of arts work.

No collection of 21 chapters could possibly do justice to this movement in all its diversity and variation. There are significant gaps here in terms of world regions, types of practice and approaches—gaps we sincerely hope will soon be filled by other publications that will contribute to a composite picture of a field full of promise and badly in need of support to realize that promise. In the meantime, consulting the Web sites and publications mentioned in this volume and in the Further Resources section of “Creative Community” will lead any curious reader to more accounts of community cultural development practice.