THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

AUSTRALIA

Theatre for Peacebuilding: the role of arts in conflict transformation in South Asia

Nilanjana Premaratna

BA (Honours), University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2006

Master of International Studies (Advanced), The University of Queensland, 2008

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

The University of Queensland in 2015

School of Political Science and International Studies

Abstract

The theory and practice of peacebuilding tends to be dominated by approaches that stress institution building, democratic procedures and abstract rights. Critics have repeatedly pointed out that these often neglect to deal with local complexities and fail to include conflict resolution practices located at the ground level. I address this gap in knowledge by examining the role of arts in South Asian peacebuilding processes. Arts play an important role in local societal life but have so far received insufficient attention by peace studies scholars.

I focus particularly on the potential and limits of theatre to contribute to peacebuilding processes in South Asia. I closely examine three local theatre groups in Sri Lanka, India and Nepal. With each case study, I look at the group practices and theatre approach to peacebuilding.

This thesis argues that the dialogical and multi-voiced form of theatre is particularly well suited for assisting societies to come to terms with conflict complexities and to open up possibilities for conversations between different parties and narratives of the conflict - thus creating an important precondition for sustainable peace. Theatre works in diverse ways: In the Sri Lankan case, theatre builds peace by creating a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together. With the Indian case, theatre brings out prevalent but less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse, thereby aspiring for a culture of peace. In the Nepalese case, theatre contributes to sustainable peace by making excluded citizens' perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict.

The contributions of this thesis are twofold: firstly it contributes to the academic discipline of peacebuilding by broadening its boundaries. It opens windows into and clarifies the interrelation of peacebuilding with salient areas such as the role of emotions, performance studies and social mobilisation. Secondly, this thesis provides practical insights that are pertinent to developing initiatives that promote the use of theatre in peacebuilding processes.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

I acknowledge that an electronic copy of my thesis must be lodged with the University Library and, subject to the policy and procedures of The University of Queensland, the thesis be made available for research and study in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968 unless a period of embargo has been approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

I acknowledge that copyright of all material contained in my thesis resides with the copyright holder(s) of that material. Where appropriate I have obtained copyright permission from the copyright holder to reproduce material in this thesis.

Publications during candidature

Book chapters:

Premaratna, Nilanjana. "Existence, Accessibility and Practice of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms at The Katunayake Export Processing Zone (KEPZ)." In *Reframing Democracy: Perspectives on the Cultures of Inclusion and Exclusion in Contemporary Sri Lanka*, edited by Jayadeva Uyangoda and Neloufer De Mel. Sri Lanka: Social Scientists' Association, 2012.

Premaratna, Nilanjana, and Roland Bleiker. "Art and Peacebuilding: How Theatre Transforms Conflict in Sri Lanka." In *Advances in Peace and Conflict Studies* edited by Oliver Richmond. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

Publications included in this thesis

Premaratna, Nilanjana, and Roland Bleiker. "Art and Peacebuilding: How Theatre Transforms Conflict in Sri Lanka." In *Advances in Peace and Conflict Studies* edited by Oliver Richmond. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010. Publication incorporated as Chapter 3.

Contributor	Statement of contribution
Nilanjana Premaratna (Candidate)	Conception (60%) Analysis (50%) Drafting and writing (50%)
Roland Bleiker	Conception (40%) Analysis (50%) Drafting and writing (50%)

Contributions by others to the thesis

No contributions by others.

Statement of parts of the thesis submitted to qualify for the award of another degree

None.

Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classifications (ANZSRC)

160607 International Relations 50%

60699 Political Science not elsewhere classified 30%

160805 Social Change 20%

Fields of Research (FoR) Classification

FoR Code: 1606 Political Science 80%

For Code: 2002 Cultural Studies 10%

FoR Code: 1608 Sociology 10%

Table of Contents

Chapter 4: Jana Sanskriti

Chapter 5: Sarwanam

Conclusion

Introduction

My interest in arts goes a long way back: I was in primary school during the 1987-1989 insurgency in Sri Lanka. I have two vivid memories of that time: the first is the smell of burning human flesh one morning and the resulting fear and frenzy, trying to find out whether it was someone we knew. Being children, we were warned not to speak about these incidents in public as they were intimately connected to the politics of the period. Even at home, state actions were questioned only in whispers, only among the family. Questioning the government openly was a guaranteed way to end up on a roadside pyre so there were not many who dared to do it. The second thing I remember about this time is the arts: the songs and the dramas. These were the most vocal critiques of the senseless killings that had been going on in the country for so long. In fact, art seemed to be the only voice that broke through the curtain of silence that blanketed all other public spaces. A handful of artists toured the country, performing and singing in schools and public grounds, raising questions of justice, freedom, democracy, ethnic unity and power. This made a lasting impression on me about the resilience of art: how it survives when nothing else does. And how it can speak when nothing else can. Also, looking back, I see that art gave people hope, a way to come together through the trauma, a way to reconstitute community separated by alienation and suspicion. This is when I started seeing the potential of art to reach into - and make peace with - the core of ourselves: to present a way out of the deadlock in which we find ourselves, during and after a conflict.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the role of theatre in peacebuilding in South Asia. I ask three research questions to this end:

1. How has theatre been used for peacebuilding in conflict situations?
2. How does theatre open up possibilities of conversation between parties and narratives in conflict?
3. What potentials - or limitations - do different forms of theatre hold for peacebuilding?

I look at three theatre groups from South Asia: these are Jana Karaliya from Sri Lanka, Jana Sanskriti from India and Sarwanam from Nepal.

I advance a two-fold argument in answering these questions: a conceptual argument and an empirical argument.

Conceptual argument: The multivocal and dialogical nature of theatre is particularly well suited to express local complexities and open up possibilities of communication between parties and narratives in conflict, thus creating an important precondition for sustainable peace.

Empirical Argument: Each case study demonstrates the conceptual argument in a different way: Jana Karaliya in Sri Lanka creates a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together. Jana Sanskriti uses theatre to bring out prevalent but less heard narratives of structural violence in India. Sarwanam makes excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict in Nepal.

In this introduction, I firstly outline the prevailing academic debates on peacebuilding within which studying theatre as a peacebuilding method finds its relevance. Secondly, I present the research questions arising in response to these debates. The third section outlines the research methodology guiding the study, introducing the selected case studies upon which this thesis is based. The fourth section presents the thesis argument. The fifth section illustrates the contributions to knowledge made through this study, followed by a disclaimer that establishes the boundaries of my research. Finally, I present the chapter outlines of the thesis.

Research Background

The theory and practice of peacebuilding are largely dominated by approaches that stress institution building, democratic procedures, abstract rights, and neoliberal development.[1] Despite adopting a broader definition for peacebuilding that recognises the existence of a range of measures for peacebuilding working at all levels of the society in its May 2007 deliberations,[2] the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission still prioritises institution building through its mandate. The key areas of focus still remain reconstruction, institution-building and development. Addressing the social and cultural aspects of a conflict does not receive its due emphasis within this

---

[1] See Oliver P. Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Oliver P. Richmond, "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace," *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2010) and Roger Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace," *International Politics* 47, no. 2 (2010) for a further discussion.

[2] See Erin McCandless, "Lessons from Liberia: Integrated Approaches to Peacebuilding in Transitional Settings," (Occasional Paper 160, Institute for Security Studies, 2008).

framework. I will further demonstrate this by looking at the prevalent approaches to peacebuilding.

Approaches to peacebuilding

This section looks at approaches to peacebuilding in two ways: firstly, through a chronological overview and secondly, through a contemporary overview. These two lenses capture the dynamics within the discipline from two perspectives.

I adopt Oliver Richmond's four generational trajectory to provide a brief chronological overview of how efforts to build peace have evolved.[3] This influential model is chosen because it succinctly captures the development of the field.[4]

Richmond argues that the first generation of peacebuilding was conducted within a 'limited state-centric discourse', based on the assumption that conflict is 'inherent'.[5] Consequently, this phase excluded issues and actors that are beyond the parameters of the state. Peacebuilding within this paradigm employed a generalised set of tools and structures irrespective of context, strictly based on the traditions and norms of western diplomacy.[6]

The second-generation peacebuilding builds upon the first, taking human needs as the focal point. It takes into consideration concepts such as structural violence and individual injustice, presenting a 'more ambitious vision of a mutual peace and conflict resolution'.[7] While still operating within the state-centric framework, the focus on a shared, universal set of human needs opens up peacebuilding for engagement with non-state actors. But in general the roles of citizens and civil society are limited to basic indicators of needs at the ground level, instead of being seen as active agents of a peacebuilding process.[8] Accordingly, second generation peacebuilding prescribes a universal formula that overrides local specificities.

Third generation peacebuilding takes a multilevel approach to address different dimensions of peacebuilding. It takes advantage of the breakthrough of second-

---

[3] Oliver P. Richmond, *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 16.
[4] I note that the reading Richmond provides here on peacebuilding is largely retrospective. This retrospective reading is important since these early developments shaped the foundations of peace and conflict resolution.
[5] Richmond, *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding:Critical Developments and Approaches*, 17.
[6] Oliver. P. Richmond, "Post Westphalian Peace-Building: The Role of NGOs," (2001).
[7] *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding Critical Developments and Approaches*, 16.
[8] Ibid., 16-21.

generation peacebuilding and opens up the field to engage with a broader stakeholder base. Richmond argues that third generation peacebuilding is largely led by 'requirements and perceptions of policymakers, officials, and actors involved in both a top-down and bottom-up vision of peace, and process based upon both'.[9] The UN Peacebuilding commission adopts this definition in outlining the three key tasks of peacebuilding: bringing together relevant actors, marshalling resources and providing expert advice on post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.[10] This format intends to bring peace through a transformation of key local institutions and practices relating to conflict, both from a state and citizen's perspective.

Third generation peacebuilding is critiqued for emphasising western approaches at the cost of inadequate engagement with local practices and knowledge sources. It allows context-specific renegotiation only at a marginal and superficial level.[11] The heavy emphasis placed on institution building and liberal-democratic practices obstructs the potential for context specific adaptations. Stable political order leading to peace does not necessarily emerge from legislative frameworks or institution building. Protracted conflicts are often divided along social elements such as ethnicity, identity or class. Sustainable peacebuilding requires the transformation of these root causes in addition to the re-establishment of institutions and formal legal processes.'[12] Furthermore, blueprints introducing democracy and liberal economic policies can have negative side effects. Hughes, Thompson and Balfour observe that such measures can profoundly threaten local initiatives working to create a communal foundation for a culture of peace.[13] Failing to appropriately take local practices into account when introducing liberal democracy in post-conflict situations can indeed result in challenging the existing relationship networks and patterns, leading to a sense of alienation and loss of community.[14] The relationship between liberal values and democracy is asymmetrical even though it is perceived to co-exist within the third

---

[9] Oliver P. Richmond, *Peace in International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 160.

[10] United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, "Mandate of the Peacebuilding Commission," United Nations. Accessed April 12, 2013. http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/mandate.shtml.

[11] Richmond, *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, 23-25.

[12] Cristina J. Montiel, "Toward a Psychology of Structural Peace Building', in *Peace, Conflict and Violence: Peace psychology for the 21st century.* eds. Daniel J. Christie, Richard V. Wagner and Deborah Du Nann Winter. 282-294. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2001)

[13] Jenny Hughes, James Thompson, and Michael Balfour, *Performance in Place of War* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2009), 143.

[14] Markus Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects," in *BCSIA Discussion Paper 2000-07* (Kennedy School of Government: Harvard University, 2000). Accessed April 24, 2012. http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/fischer.pdf.

generation approach to peacebuilding.[15] This fusion leads existing heterogeneity to be eroded in favour of creating a homogenous whole.[16] Therefore, pushing for democracy and free markets soon after a conflict can indeed destabilise a fragile post-conflict situation,[17] undermining existing foundations of community and restricting the expression of minority voices. This often results in threatening local cultural shifts toward peace. Thus, pushing towards implementing western approaches to peacebuilding implies a disregard towards local agency, skill and knowledge.

Consequently, prevailing approaches to peacebuilding - primarily falling into the third generation of Richmond's categorisation - cannot adequately address local complexities and fail to satisfactorily include conflict transformation processes taking place at the local context. Ho-Won Jeong criticizes the discipline for its focus on liberal democratic solutions to a conflict at the cost of ignoring economic, institutional and cultural realities at the ground level.[18] These debates, previously located at the fringes of peacebuilding, have become central today. Formerly peripheral concepts such as culture, local practices and religion have become increasingly visible as salient factors in conflict resolution. Failure to allocate due significance to social and cultural aspects of a conflict jeopardises the sustainability of peacebuilding as many international examples like Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia repeatedly demonstrate. Thus, Morgan Brigg calls for a 'democratisation of knowledge' for the discipline to move forward.[19] This increasingly insistent tension is the place from where Richmond articulates fourth generation of peacebuilding.

Fourth generation peacebuilding presents a potential next step. Richmond argues that peacebuilding approaches should be more organic and context specific, thereby addressing the shortcomings of previous approaches. He identifies opening up to the 'cultural, customary dynamics of the local environment' to be the 'next big step' in peacebuilding approaches.[20] In prioritising communities instead of institutional peace,

---

[15] Ibid.

[16] Jason Franks and Oliver P. Richmond, "Coopting Liberal Peace-Building," *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 1 (2008); Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects."

[17] See Roland Paris, "Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997); Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Stephen Baranyi, ed. *The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding Post -9/11* (California: Stanford University Press, 2008).

[18] Jeong, *Approaches to Peacebuilding.*

[19] Morgan Brigg, "Culture: Challenges and Possibilities," in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, ed. Oliver P Richmond (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 342.

[20] Richmond, *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding:Critical Developments and Approaches*, 31.

fourth generation peacebuilding highlights the 'grassroots'. Rather than imposing a liberal state upon the local, it aims to open up to and merge with the existing political, economic, social and cultural traditions at the conflict context.[21] According to Richmond, this requires creating the space for the local and international to engage in 'unscripted conversations'[22] about the unique peacebuilding process in each context. It recognises the need to focus on individuals in conflict contexts and on how conflict is constituted within their lifeworlds. Seeing and addressing the conflict from this perspective is important for effective and sustainable peacebuilding. The focus on the macro level alone is gradually proving to be insufficient: the development of peacebuilding itself calls for focusing on an everyday, micro level approach to peace.

Statebuilding vs societybuilding debate

Having provided a chronological overview, I now examine peacebuilding from a contemporary perspective that captures current debates. I discuss two key themes in peacebuilding that are increasingly becoming visible: statebuilding and societybuilding. This juxtaposition captures the present tensions within peacebuilding.

The intersection of local and liberal approaches is a central point at which key debates in peacebuilding are located at present. The emerging discussion on peacebuilding as statebuilding and peacebuilding as society or community-building is a milestone here. Statebuilding comprises of the top-down, dominant approaches to peacebuilding that emphasise strengthening state institutions as the primary avenue for peace.[23] Prevalent approaches falling within third generation peacebuilding, privileging democratic procedures and liberal values, largely reflect this.

The societybuilding approach to peace is more in alignment with the vision of fourth generation peacebuilding. With its focus of working directly with the communities through a bottom-up approach, societybuilding, as Andrieu argues, has the potential to address certain gaps in the statebuilding approach - especially in relation to societal legitimacy and the rebuilding of resilient post-conflict societies.[24] These approaches

---

[21] Ibid.

[22] Mark R. Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 234.

[23] See Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks, *Liberal Peace Transitions: Between Statebuilding and Peacebuilding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) for a further discussion of peacebuilding as statebuilding and societybuilding.

[24] Kora Andrieu, "Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm," *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 5 (2010): 540.

recommend focusing on people, drawing from the local culture and merging peacebuilding with the existing local practices. Fourth generation peacebuilding accordingly takes an increased interest in the minute particles that make up the peacebuilding process: the particles that are made up of human beings and their lifeworlds. Societybuilding brings these hitherto neglected aspects within peacebuilding to the fore, emphasising the need to pay attention to and work with these in order to arrive at more effective and sustainable solutions.

Challenges

Nevertheless, the societybuilding model has also been challenged on a number of fronts. These overlap with some of the challenges of fourth generation peacebuilding.

I briefly discuss two areas from which fourth generation peacebuilding - and the everyday peacebuilding model it envisions – has been questioned. Roberts critiques the viability and legitimacy of fourth generation peacebuilding. He problematizes the concept of emancipation featuring in fourth generation peacebuilding on the grounds that it is unrealistic to expect this in practice within a globalised context where power relations are not responsive to the call for everyday life and local legitimacy.[25] Richmond asserts that we are yet to achieve fourth generation peacebuilding. This is partly due to the fact that fourth generation peacebuilding largely remains at a conceptual level, devoid of specific parameters that clarify its relationship with the local and resistance towards the liberal hegemony.[26] The attempt to bridge the dominant discourses with the local can disrupt or change the dynamics of conflict transformation arising within local context. Such disruption, at times, results in a loss of legitimacy for the overarching peacebuilding process. From such a perspective, achieving the ideals of fourth generation peacebuilding and a sustainable local-liberal model become debatable. Baranyi agrees;[27] he notes that fourth generation peacebuilding becomes 'even more problematic' when it is considered in terms of sustainability. He identifies the 'mixed international motives' driving such operations and the absence of key local stakeholders within the peacebuilding process as possible reasons undermining peacebuilding's sustainability. Thus, fourth generation

---

[25] David Roberts, "Beyond the Metropolis? Popular Peace and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011): 2555.

[26] See Ibid., and Oliver P. Richmond, "A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism and the Everyday," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 557-80.

[27] Baranyi, *The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding Post -9/11*, 28.

peacebuilding also faces critiques for its inability to clearly outline a path for sustainable peace.

To address these shortcomings of fourth generation peacebuilding, we need to explore initiatives that are practiced within communities. We need to explore initiatives that take an everyday approach to peacebuilding, and effectively draw from and base themselves within the local socio-cultural context. Such community-based initiatives develop and fine-tune strategies to maximise their local agency and legitimacy, even within the unequal power relations that exist in a globalised context. Doing so can provide insights regarding the future directions of peacebuilding. My thesis performs this task by focusing on the role of arts - specifically theatre - in peacebuilding.

The Role of Arts in Peacebuilding

I explore the use of arts as an everyday peacebuilding method that draws from and works within the local socio-political background. Against the backdrop of prevailing debates in peacebuilding, there is a growing recognition that art can play an important role.[28] Practitioners from different conflict situations are increasingly using art as a peacebuilding approach. However, there is insufficient academic literature studying this phenomenon. Even within what is available, there is limited empirical analysis of the ways in which art builds peace at an everyday level. As a result, we know surprisingly little about the exact issues at stake. I intend to address this gap through my research.

Art becomes a part of everyday politics as a fundamental element of life and society, and therein lies its significance for peacebuilding. The presence of art is evident throughout the evolution of human societies. Scholars argue it is a fundamental element of culture that exists in almost all communities even at the most difficult of times.[29] Art's resilience testifies to its salience for human beings. According to scholars like Ellen Dissanayake, the meaning of art goes further: she argues that art is a biological urge, leading to its integration as a cultural phenomenon.[30] The space art provides for expression is a space that is often absent within our regular communication: it works within the real and imagined, thereby opening dimensions

---

[28] See Cynthia E. Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker, eds. *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 2: Building Just and Inclusive Communities* (Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2011).

[29] Rama Mani, "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice," *International Criminal Law Review* 11, no. 3 (2011): 549.

[30] Ellen Dissanayake, *What Is Art For?* (Washington DC: University of Washington Press, 1990).

that might not otherwise be possible within the day-to-day constraints of life. What is expressed within the imagination of art both constitutes and is constituted by the society, simultaneously becoming a reflection of the society and a key agent of its transformation. In treading this fine line between the real and the imagined, art has the potential to elicit social residues and complexities of conflict. Thus, scholars recognise art as a powerful tool in shaping popular discourse as well as in constituting political beliefs,[31] and that it requires further study in this particular role in shaping politics.[32]

Peacebuilding needs to seep into these spaces where public discourse is formed, for peace is intricately bound up with interactions and perceptions on the ground level. As Richards aptly notes, '[i]f war has spread from within, making its own cultural sense as it goes, then the search for peace may have to trace similar paths'.[33] Incorporating arts broadens the bounds of approaches to peacebuilding. It has the potential to encompass *and* transcend the limits of political, security, economic and development paradigms towards peacebuilding. The role of arts in peacebuilding sits within this dynamic transdisciplinary approach between culture and politics. Accordingly, there is recognition that art can contribute to peacebuilding.

Another advantage of art is its capacity to transcend the boundaries of rational deliberations to which peacebuilding is often limited. Elise Boulding is an early theorist to comment on the value of transcending the cognitive or analytic approach.[34] She identified three modes of knowing through which peacebuilding has to work: cognitive/analytic or the rational, emotional/affective and intuitive. She calls for the satisfactory utilisation of the latter two modes, as the prevalent approaches largely focus on the first. Both the emotional/affective and the intuitive can work through imagination and therefore approaches to peacebuilding that draw from and cultivate imagination hold much potential for sustainable peacebuilding. The insights offered through art, as an approach that works primarily through imagination relying on the emotional and intuitive modes of knowing, 'challenges the modern tendency to

---

[31] See Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); *The Politics of Aesthetics* trans. Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2004).
[32] Girma Negash, "Art Invoked: A Mode of Understanding and Shaping the Political," *International Political Science Review* 25, no. 2 (2004).
[33] Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest. War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone.* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996), 3.
[34] Elise Boulding, *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990).

reduce the political to the rational'.[35] Rational deliberations alone, therefore, are inadequate in restoring inter-communal harmony after ethnic conflict.[36]

These arguments do not idealise the significance of art: they only emphasise the potential of art in constituting politics. As Agathangelou and Ling assert, 'art is not pristine. Nor is it ideal or devoid of its own politics'.[37] It merely reflects the efforts we put into it, serving 'as a site of struggle and labor, like any other productive enterprise.'[38] Thus, working through arts opens up and provides access to a rarely utilised space where everyday politics takes place.

Consequently, there is a growing academic interest in studying the nexus of art and peacebuilding. Practitioners have increasingly been using art as a peacebuilding approach over the last two decades, but academic interest in the area is more recent. Thus, the existing literature on the topic is somewhat limited. Scholars working on this area stress that arts can effectively contribute to peacebuilding and while some call for exploring the connections between art and peacebuilding – or international relations[39] - others look at specific instances where art-based approaches have been employed in conflict situations.[40]

Need for further study

However, there is limited empirical analysis of the ways in which arts initiate peacebuilding within this literature. There is some exploration on the outcomes of arts-based approaches[41] but studies that look deeper at the process through which art works are still absent. In a 2012 report published on arts and peacebuilding, Cynthia Cohen and Jonathan White highlight the need to research into successful arts-based

---

[35] Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 11.

[36] Cynthia Cohen, "Creative Approaches to Reconciliation," in *The Psychology of Resolving Global Conflicts: From War to Peace*, ed. Mari Fitzduff and Christoper E Stout (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc, 2005), 2.

[37] Anna M. Agathangelou and Lily H.M. Ling, *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds.* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 109.

[38] Ibid.

[39] See Alex Danchev and Debbie Lisle, "Introduction: Art, Politics, Purpose," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 04 (2009): 777; Negash, "Art Invoked: A Mode of Understanding and Shaping the Political"; Debbie Lisle, "The Art of International Relations," *International Studies Review* 12, no. 4 (2010).

[40] See Hughes, Thompson, and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*; James Thomspn, *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Cynthia E. Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker, eds. *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 1: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence* (Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2011).

[41] See *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 1: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence*.

initiatives for the area to 'gain legitimacy as an effective mechanism of social change'. Apart from more documentation, they call for work that identifies the 'strengths and limitations of various approaches' and explores the 'underlying theories of change in such approaches'.[42] Empirical studies exploring this nexus – particularly the process of art for peacebuilding, the issues at stake and the discursive practices through which arts build peace - are also needed for arts to gain more legitimacy as a peacebuilding approach.

Theatre for peacebuilding

This thesis examines theatre for three reasons: theatre brings together a number of art forms; theatre is noted for its capacity to script politics; and finally, theatre has been noted for its multivocal and dialogic form. Theatre provides a rich lens to explore the process and potential of art in peacebuilding.

An increasing number of publications explore theatre's connection with everyday politics and people, testifying to its potential as a peacebuilding method. James Thompson's *Digging Up Stories: Applied Theatre, Performance and War* carves out a niche in between research and creative writing.[43] Together with Jenny Hughes and Michael Balfour, Thompson continues this discussion in the more recent publication *Performance in Place of War*.[44] The authors bring together theatre projects originating from different conflict contexts and seek to understand why performance becomes a significant mode of expression during challenging periods in history. Hughes also looks at the political significance of performance in *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty*.[45] Thus, theatre's capacity to script politics has interested scholars and practitioners alike.

Theatre for peacebuilding as an academic inquiry, however, is still an emerging area. We can apply academic literature from closely related areas to study the potential theatre holds as a peacebuilding approach. A number of theatre forms intentionally developed for social engagement exist. Academic literature on these theatre forms

---

[42] Jonathan White and Cynthia Cohen, "Strengthening Work at the Nexus of Arts, Culture and Peacebuilding " (Search for Common Ground & The Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts at Brandeis University, February 13, 2012), 4.

[43] James Thompson, *Digging up Stories : Applied Theatre, Performance and War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

[44] Hughes, Thompson, and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*.

[45] Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

from disciplines other than peace and conflict resolution offer insights on theatre's potential for peacebuilding. I discuss this literature under two main overlapping themes: theatre developed for therapeutic purposes, and theatre developed for broader political engagement. What I present here is a short overview of what will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

Theatre forms developed for therapeutic purposes aim for healing and reconciliation. While these can have a communal focus, often these theatre forms focus on individuals or small groups and are used for personal healing and growth. Psychodrama, drama therapy and playback theatre are examples for this. Studies note the positive impact of such theatre forms, with a recent study on drama therapy observing theatre's potential in helping autistic children to overcome their internal obstacles in communication and interaction.[46] Playback theatre, used at individual and small group levels, is also known for its potential for reconciliation. Cohen argues that playback theatre is effective in working with people from conflicting ethnic groups as it can facilitate the formation of cohesive narratives and closer relationships.[47] Although these theatre forms with their therapeutic approach call for well-trained practitioners and a case by case approach to be effective, they indicate the potential of theatre to bring about healing and reconciliation.

The theatre forms developed for broader political engagement focus on empowerment and development. Theatre of the Oppressed and applied theatre are two such widely practiced theatre forms. Theatre of the Oppressed specifically aims for the empowerment of those who participate, while applied theatre focuses on engaging with a given social issue or issues. Philip Taylor explores the community application of applied theatre in his book *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community* and Chinyowa notes its potential for initiating dialogue in 'Emerging Paradigms for Applied Drama and Theatre Practice in African Contexts'.[48] Such theatre forms demonstrate great potential in engaging with issues that go beyond

---

[46] See "Drama Therapy Frees Imagination of Kids with Autism," *NewScientist,* April 15, 2014. Accessed July 20, 2014. http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22229653.600-drama-therapy-frees-imaginations-of-kids-with-autism.html#.VL9u1UeUf0c. The article is based on the findings of a joint study. See Richardson, L., Beadle-Brown, J., Wilkinson, D., Shaughnessy, N., Trimingham, M., Leigh, B., Whelton, R. & Himmerich, J. "Imagining Autism: Evaluation of a drama based intervention for children with autism - the views of teachers and parents" Abstract published in *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability* 27, no 4 (2014), 343-344 for more information.
[47] Cohen, "Creative Approaches to Reconciliation," 23.
[48] Kennedy Chinyowa, "Emerging Paradigms for Applied Drama and Theatre Practice in African Contexts," *Reearch in Drama Education* 14, no. 3 (2009).

the individual and personal, reaching out to the broader levels that peacebuilding calls for.

There is ample cause and room to develop the body of literature on theatre for peacebuilding, with a growing recognition of the role theatre can play in building peace. Practitioners from different conflict situations as well as funding organisations increasingly use theatre as a peacebuilding approach. This growing attention has resulted in the documentation of theatre projects from some parts of the world and the production of some academic literature on theatre and reconciliation.[49] However, in order for the area to develop and to offer a comprehensive understanding of the potential of theatre for peacebuilding, we need systematic scholarly inquiry into the topic.

Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict published in 2011 makes a noteworthy contribution. Organised as an anthology in two volumes, *Acting Together* presents performances taking place during and after conflict in different regions of the world. The anthology also discusses ceremonies and ritualistic performances aimed at healing. The authors develop an analogy to explain how art works: they argue that art, or theatre, works as a permeable membrane between the everyday life and creative spaces. The factors regulating the filtering process through this permeable membrane are the ethical and aesthetic sensibilities of the artists or activists animated by their moral imagination. *Acting Together* presents important starting point. For a deeper understanding of the way in which theatre works, we need comprehensive empirical studies that look at the conceptual underpinnings in using theatre for peacebuilding. *Acting Together*, as an anthology aiming to compile a practitioner's guide for using theatre in conflict zones, does not go into a detailed analysis of the groups systematically using theatre for peacebuilding in specific contexts. Understanding how and what elements in theatre contribute to peacebuilding is imperative to further develop and utilize the full potential of theatre for peacebuilding as an approach.

---

[49] Hughes, Thompson, and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*; Cohen, Varea, and Walker, *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 1: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence; Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 2: Building Just and Inclusive Communities*.

Empirical studies on theatre for peacebuilding can contribute to this task in a number of ways. Studying how local theatre groups come together and carry out their peacebuilding work can provide a deeper understanding of theatre's role as a peacebuilding method and strategies of group resilience over changing political conditions. As scholars reiterate, empirical studies capturing these nuances can help in further refining theoretical positions[50] and furthering our understanding of how exactly change is produced at the 'individual, relational, communal and inter-communal' levels.[51] Building such understandings can contribute to the successful implementation of theatre for peacebuilding initiatives. Different conflict contexts call for different peacebuilding strategies. Theatre's approach to peacebuilding is intimately bound with these differences. For the development of the field, it is imperative to sufficiently represent the diversity in the field and understand the nuances in the practice. Thus, White and Cohen note that it is 'critical' to expand this discussion to include 'participants from the Global south' along with the development of the research area.'[52]

Existing research, while making a significant contribution towards developing the research area, does not offer comparative empirical studies on local theatre for peacebuilding initiatives that specifically elicit the underpinning concepts on how theatre works for peacebuilding. As I discussed earlier, scholars have repeatedly called for increased documentation and academic research on local peacebuilding initiatives that use theatre as their primary approach. Among the identified areas for exploration are analysing how theatre retains its transformative capacity[53] across different contexts and the multiple ways in which it works in each context, and the 'best practices and /or best utilizations of artistic approaches to peacebuilding'[54] and the appropriate periods of interventions. A common challenge to the sustainability of theatre and art for peacebuilding projects is the lack of resources.[55] Given this background, studying long-standing local theatre for peacebuilding initiatives becomes salient. Insights from such studies can be replicated as models where it is

---

[50] Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*.
[51] White and Cohen, "Strengthening Work at the Nexus of Arts, Culture and Peacebuilding" 5.
[52] "Strengthening Work at the Nexus of Arts, Culture and Peacebuilding" 3-4.
[53] Michael Shank and Lisa Schirch, "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding," *Peace & Change* 33, no. 2 (2008).
[54] White and Cohen, "Strengthening Work at the Nexus of Arts, Culture and Peacebuilding" 11.
[55] See "Strengthening Work at the Nexus of Arts, Culture and Peacebuilding".

appropriate and can serve as a starting point for contexts with inadequate resources. I explored this gap in my thesis.

Research questions

I explore three key research questions in this thesis**:**

1. How has theatre been used for peacebuilding in conflict situations?
2. How does theatre open up possibilities of conversation between parties and narratives in conflict?
3. What potentials - or limitations - do different forms of theatre hold for peacebuilding?

In answering the first question in part, I explore the process and potential of theatre by reviewing existing literature on the topic. This literature review outlines the ground upon which my research stands and to which it aims to contribute. With the second and third research questions, I empirically explore the process of peacebuilding through theatre and the limitations and potentials of different theatre forms in peacebuilding. Here, I consider three key avenues - each corresponding to a case study - through which theatre contributes to peacebuilding.

Research methodology and data collection

I adopt a two-fold research method: an in-depth literature review followed by an empirical inquiry. Through the literature review, I critically analyse and engage with the key debates in peacebuilding, providing a foundation for the research and firmly situating it within the general peacebuilding discourse. The second stage of the literature review outlines the role of art and theatre within the discipline, identifying the relevant gaps and locating my empirical study within these.

The second phase of my research methodology is an empirical inquiry into theatre and peacebuilding. I focus on three cases from South Asia: Jana Karaliya theatre group from Sri Lanka, Jana Sanskriti theatre group from Bengal, India and Sarwanam theatre group from Nepal.

In selecting these cases, I adopted a multiple embedded cross-national case study approach. South Asia was selected for its diverse culture and the prevalence of protracted internal conflicts. The region's approach towards art is another pertinent factor: South Asia is seen as a part of the world where art forms 'an intrinsic part of the daily life for the vast majority of the population', leading it to be not so much an individual activity but a 'collective activity' to be 'shared by all members of the community'.[56] These factors ensured that South Asia presented a rich context for exploring the role of theatre for peacebuilding.

Four key factors influenced the selection of these specific case studies: their working contexts, theatre approach, the extent to which they draw from and work at the ground level and the active, established and widespread practice within the country. I will briefly discuss the factors pertinent to the selection of case studies here. A further discussion of the case studies will be presented in the next section.

Certain features created a common ground for the case studies: these were the extent to which the cases draw from and work at the ground level and their established, widespread practice as a local theatre group. Other features facilitated comparison: Firstly, conflict context and secondly, the preferred theatre approach of each group was different. Sri Lanka presented an ethnic conflict, brought to an end through a military defeat; Nepal a negotiated peace in response to the Maoist uprising against the monarchy; and Bengal, India a context of structural violence. These different conflict situations required the case studies to develop different ways of approaching peacebuilding.

The second criterion – preferred theatre approaches – again sets the case studies apart and facilitates comparison. The primary theatre approaches of the cases represent different theatre categories. Craig Zelizer [57] presents two broad themes for categorizing performances in conflict settings based on the way the performances are applied. The first category is where professionals perform to a community on a theme related to a conflict. Here, the focus is on shaping community consciousness by enabling an off-stage audience to interpret the play. The practice in this first category reflects a didactic knowledge imparting process. The Nepalese case study, primarily

---

[56] Mani, "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice," 550; "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice."
[57] Craig Zelizer, "The Role of Artistic Processes in Peace-Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina " *Peace and Conflict Studies* 10, no. 2 (2003): 65.

using an alternative theatre form based on proscenium theatre, falls into this category. The second category is participatory performance, produced collaboratively with the community in conflict itself. Here, consciousness-shaping takes place through the performers' interaction in addition to interpretation from the audience's perspective. The Indian case study, using Theatre of the Oppressed, takes this approach. Though this categorization provides an overall picture, there are many theatre forms that go beyond these delimitations. The third case study from Sri Lanka that uses applied theatre fall into this area beyond Zelizer's criteria. As a team, the Sri Lankan group travels and performs for extended periods in different locations of the country and fluidly shifts between the two categories, carving out paths of its own in the process.

Thus, the selection criterion for the case studies ensured that the research spans a sufficiently broad spectrum in the use of theatre for peacebuilding. Each case study presents a unique approach.

First Case Study: Jana Karaliya/ Makkal Kalari / Theatre of the People (JK)

Jana Karaliya (JK) in Sinahalese, or Makkal Kalari in Tamil, is a multi-ethnic, bilingual mobile theatre group from Sri Lanka. This composition is significant in this particular conflict context.

The key parties in the Sri Lankan conflict are the Tamil ethno-nationalist group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)[58] and the majority Sinhalese led Sri Lankan government. The main point of contention, as it emerged, is the demand for a Tamil homeland in the Tamil speaking north and east of the country. Ethnic tensions underline the entire conflict period and clearly emerged at different key stages. The armed phase of conflict started in 1983. It ended in 2009 with the government's militarily defeat of the LTTE, making Sri Lanka a case in point for victor's peace.

Two artists, Parakrama Niriella and H. A. Perera, cofounded the group in 2003 during an internationally mediated ceasefire. Since then, JK continued working and travelling together throughout the changing phases of conflict. The team is diverse in its ethnic, linguistic and religious identities, and comes from different districts. A multi-ethnic cast performing in Tamil and Sinhalese is novel in Sri Lanka given the

---

[58] The LTTE, later labelled as a terrorist group, declared itself as the sole representative of the Tamils.

limited exchange between these two languages. At present, JK is one of the oldest, most visible and committed theatre groups working for inter-ethnic harmony in the country. The group borrows from the theatre and music traditions of Sinhala and Tamil cultures, thereby initiating a cultural exchange between these two main bodies. This multi-ethnic collaboration models ethnic harmony and coexistence. Thus, at a conceptual level, JK initiates reconciliation between different theatre, music and performance traditions. At a practical level, the group brings together individuals from different ethnicities to perform and appreciate theatre.

The preferred theatre form of JK, applied theatre, is a key reason to select the group as a case study. An umbrella term encompassing a number of theatre forms, applied theatre engages with contemporary social issues, embodying social change through its cast, performance and performance space. Applied theatre is grounded on the contention that fiction and reality are interrelated and embedded in each other as narrative constructions. Thus, the assumption that narratives can be changed in fiction as well as reality is at the 'heart of practice in applied drama.'[59] The process through which this change happens differs from context to context, and to understand the potentials and limitations of this particular application call for an empirical study on JK.

Today, Sri Lanka is a case in point for an enforced peace with its many ensuing complexities. The State enjoys majority support and the rhetoric of militarisation and Sinhala Buddhist supremacy - both legacies of the military defeat - is strongly felt within the island. The post-war take on peacebuilding focuses on resettlement and development, what Goodhand calls is a framework of 'stabilisation and power-building'.[60] Local and international peacebuilding beyond these delimitations are treated with suspicion and have increasingly come under the scrutiny of the Ministry of Defence.[61] Activities that question or challenge the existing power regime are discouraged and routinely suppressed. The root causes that led to or grievances that result from nearly three decades of war are still very much present. Working to build

---

[59] Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 16-63.
[60] Jonathan Goodhand, "Stabilising a Victor's Peace? Humanitarian Action and Reconstruction in Eastern Sri Lanka," *Disasters* 34, no. s3 (2010): 351.
[61] Kristine Holund and Camilla Orjuela, "Hybrid Peace Governance and Illiberal Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka," *Global Governance* 18, no. 1 (2012).

peace between Sinhala and Tamil ethnicities within this context requires navigating complex political sensitivities. It calls for unique, resilient peacebuilding strategies.

Second Case Study: Jana Sanskriti (JS)

My second case study is the theatre group Jana Sanskriti (JS) founded by Sanjoy Ganguly. JS started in West Bengal and later spread to other states of India. It has a history of over two decades of using theatre as a method of social change. The group works in a context of structural violence. Instead of focusing on a specific conflict, JS draws from the structural narratives of violence affecting the relevant community. JS at present have 30 village level theatre groups, and these members come from and work within disadvantaged communities in remote areas. These groups perform regularly at the village level. The tension and conflict arising within their everyday life due to socioeconomic, caste, gender and religious discrimination form a part of these performances. Thus, the specific issues JS engages with in a given performance differ depending on the location and what is present during that period. JS, consequently, sees theatre as a tool of social empowerment. Instead of the limiting culture of monologue seen in most aspects of life, JS aims to establish a culture of dialogue that liberates and empowers the marginalised communities.[62] JS contributes to the research by emphasising the ability of peacebuilding to address structural violence.

I chose JS since they are a local theatre group using Theatre of the Oppressed as their preferred theatre form. Theatre of the Oppressed, developed by Augusto Boal, is also an umbrella term that includes a number of different theatre forms.[63] Each of these has social action at its core and initiates social change by giving a voice to the marginalised or the oppressed. Theatre of the Oppressed actively engages the audience as a part of the play, referring to them as spect-actors. The audience explores the reality of their lives - and the stories they tell themselves about situations– through these performances and strive to create new narratives that are emancipatory,

---

[62]Janasanskriti, "Janasanskriti Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed: About Us," Janasanskriti, Accessed April 20, 2011. http://www.janasanskriti.org/aboutus.html.
[63] Theatre of the oppressed has sometimes been categorised as applied theatre due to the core of social consciousness shared by both genres. I will consider them as separate genres due to their different methods and the wide scope of theatrical forms deriving from each.

transcending the old, discriminative stories. Theatre of the Oppressed presented interesting potentials for embodying dialogue and multiple voices.

JS's extensive experience in working with communities has enabled it to develop unique mechanisms to address community reconciliation. Together with the use of Theatre of the Oppressed this sets its contribution to the study apart from the other case studies.

Third Case Study: Sarwanam

Sarwanam was started in 1982 by Ashesh Malla, a playwright from a rural district in Nepal, as a social movement. Formed to protest against the oppressive Panchyat system in place, the theatre group continued as a voice for democracy, freedom and peace. I look at how Sarwanam builds peace in a context of political insurgency.

Nepalese conflict is a political insurgency led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)(CPN(M)) against the monarchy and ruling classes, in a struggle for a fairer system of governance. The violent turn of the conflict started in 1996 and went on until 2005. In 2006, the parties formally entered into a peace agreement after signing the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA). Local leaders initiated the Nepalese peace process and invited the UN into the process in 2004.[64] The presence of the UN Mission in Nepal - on a limited mandate - helped to legitimise the role of the Maoists in stabilising the aftermath of conflict.[65]

I chose Sarwanam as a case study due to its direct engagement with conflict issues through an alternative theatre form. Sarwanam has developed its own alternative theatre form in addition to using proscenium[66] and street theatre. This theatre form is a stylised adaptation of street theatre that emphasises symbolic gestures and uses minimal props. Both these factors enhance the accessibility of Sarwanam plays. Using minimal props makes theatre more affordable. Strong emphasis on symbolic gestures and mime can break through language barriers and as such, Sarwanam perceives its

---

[64] For a detailed discussion, see Teresa Whitfield, "Nepal's Masala Peacemaking" in *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace* eds. Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, Suman Pradhan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[65] Astri Suhrke, "Virtues of a Narrow Mission: The UN Peace Operation in Nepal," *Global Governance* 17, no. 1 (2011).
[66] Proscenium theatre is the conventional style of the stage that opens to the audience in the front and the sides.

alternative theatre to embody democracy and freedom. The group travels to perform in the regional districts of Nepal every year to reach a broader audience. According to the group records, there are over 50 affiliated theatre groups established in various communities practicing theatre for social justice.[67]

In 2007 violence reappeared from the South Eastern regions of Nepal bordering India, demanding recognition and equal rights for ethnically Indian Nepali groups. The seven-point agreement signed in November 2011 allocates more space for these marginalised groups through a state policy revision. The conflict background in which Sarwanam works has undergone different phases and yet is relatively stable. Sarwanam has been active in the struggle for democracy in the country since early 1980's and consequently, throughout the Maoist insurgency.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected my thesis data from three sources: documentary research, interviews and direct observation. I gathered and corroborated data using multiple data collection methods and sources. These sources include publications, interviewees, observations, scripts and audio-visual archives. Wherever possible, I collected data from the same participants spanning time and location variations spread through the data collection period.[68]

Here, I present the basic framework that guided the data collection. I slightly adjusted the framework to suit each context due to the different field conditions and constraints I encountered.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured in-depth and focus group interviews primarily between May - October 2012 with the respective theatre groups and other relevant participants from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India. The Sri Lankan case is an exception as here I also

---

[67] Sarwanam, "About Us,". http://sarwanam.org.np/about.
[68] Pranee Liamputtong, *Qualitative Research Methods, Fourth Edition* (South Melbourne, Vic: Oxford University Press, 2013) emphasizes the validity of this method for ensuring the accuracy and progression of data.

drew from previous data gathered in 2007 on a related research.[69] Initial contact with the other two theatre groups were made during the case study selection process in July 2011, through the general contact avenues made available to the public.

Interview participants were chosen from two categories: primary and complementary. The primary category was the theatre group members. Diversity sampling was used wherever possible to capture the heterogeneity that existed within the groups. Complementary interviews were carried out with relevant civil society and audience members who were outside the group but were interested in the activities, using snowballing and opportunistic sampling methods. These supported the primary interviews and provided interesting insights into the group activism. The interviews were conducted in English or Sinhala where possible and were translated into English at other times through the support of an interpreter.

Altogether 59 interviews were conducted across the three case studies. A total of 18, 17 and 24 interviews were respectively carried out for the Sri Lankan, Indian and Nepalese case studies. This includes semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews with the group members and audience of each case study.

For focus group interviews with the group members and audience, I constructed a common ground respectively upon the shared experience of being a part of the theatre production or the audience. Doing so enabled me to capture dynamics within the theatre groups.[70] Focus group interviews were the primary data collection method with the audience. Here, the focus groups facilitated the 'collective story' of the theatre experience to emerge rather than the 'cultural story' that was dominant in some of the selected individual audience interviews I conducted.[71] This methodology ensured the inclusion of potential new narratives resulting from using theatre for peacebuilding, demonstrating the role of the multivocal and dialogic in theatre.

---

[69] The research on Sri Lankan chapter draws from previous research I conducted with the group initially in 2007. I have met with the group at least once a year from then on, and therefore the chapter draws from insights and information gathered during this period as well as the data collected during fieldwork in 2012.

[70] See Bridget Byrne, "Qualitative Interviewing," in *Researching Society and Culture*, ed. Clive Seale (London: Sage, 2004).

[71] For a detailed discussion on the generation of 'cultural stories' and 'collective stories' in interviewing, see Laurel Richardson, *Writing Strategies: Researching Diverse Audiences*. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. 1990).

I obtained informed consent from the participants in writing and/or verbally before the interviews. In situations where verbal consent was obtained, the consent forms were verbally explained to the participants.

Throughout the thesis, I use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants except for the cases where a participant explicitly requested the use of his or her own name. Given that my cases consisted of activists working in the public domain as artists, most of the group members requested the use of their own names. In cases where such a participant revealed information that concerns others, I de-identified the data in order to protect the privacy of the others concerned. In the first instance of using a pseudonym I clarify the relevant position in a footnote. I have done my best to respect the wishes of the participants and to protect their privacy.

Direct Observation

Direct observation is particularly apt for my chosen research and was carried out during the fieldwork period in May-October 2013.[72] I observed the everyday activities of the theatre groups that included group processes, rehearsals, performances and interactions within and among research participants. This provided a third point of view from which to comprehend the how the multivocality and dialogic of theatre works within the groups and their productions. Direct observation is also acknowledged to be particularly suitable to explore the subjective meanings individuals attach to phenomena and the dynamics of specific social formations.[73] The cultural and social dynamics connected with theatre and peacebuilding made direct observation an appropriate data collection method for this research. It was useful in bridging the gap between in-depth understanding and assumptions or prejudices that can easily come up while carrying out fieldwork within a limited timeframe.[74] Given the conflict discourses within which theatre for peacebuilding initiatives operate and the subtlety of the process through which multivocality and the dialogic manifests, this considerably enhanced the research methodology.

Documentary research

---

[72] Once again, the Sri Lankan case is an exception here due to the previous research conducted in relation to Jana Karaliya.
[73] See Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research : Design and Method,* 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2009), 109.
[74] See Maggie Walter, ed. *Social Research Methods: An Australian Perspective* (South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2006) for a further discussion.

Documentary research for this thesis was a two-step process, starting at the initial stages of the research in April 2011. Firstly, I explored and analysed pertinent material for art, theatre and peacebuilding in general. This broader literature review provided a solid foundation for the empirical studies to stand on, influenced the case study selection and shaped semi-structured interview questions. It also addressed the first research question in outlining how theatre has been used for peacebuilding in conflict situations.

I carried out the second step of documentary research at the level of each case. This established a conflict background for each case study that situated it within its context and provided insights into the unique way in which each group worked. At the case study level, I reviewed pertinent material for the case studies such as organisational websites, pamphlets, and relevant documents such as third party narratives, annual reports, newspaper articles and play scripts addressing the second and third research questions. This research provided insights on the process and discursive practices through which multivocality and the dialogic of theatre work at the level of the group organisation and performance.

I analysed the data across three levels within each case study to identify emerging thematic patterns: the different dimensions of theatre as a multivocal and a dialogic form, discursive practices through which this form comes out in case studies and the process through which the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre builds peace. These three levels of analysis are used to address the three research questions. At a first level of analysis, these methods aimed to investigate different dimensions of multivocality and dialogic found in individual narratives, community/group narratives and historical narratives expressed through theatre. At the second level of analysis, I looked at the discursive practices through which these narratives emerged - the embedded politics and agency in these acts. At the third level of analysis, I explore the process through which the multivocal and dialogic nature in each case study contributes to peacebuilding. The case study findings I then discuss are thematically convergent.[75]

---

[75] While there were certain areas where the narratives collected through different data sources were not convergent, these did not include the aspects pertinent to the actual theatre practice of the group nor the group processes pertinent to peacebuilding. The observed dissonances were limited to the financial sphere and even then, these reflected only marginal diversions.

Thesis argument

The thesis argument is two-fold:

Conceptual argument: The multivocal and dialogical nature of theatre is particularly well suited to express local complexities and open up possibilities of communication between parties and narratives in conflict, thus creating an important precondition for sustainable peacebuilding.

Empirical Argument: Each case study demonstrates the aptness of theatre in a different way: Jana Karaliya in Sri Lanka creates a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together. Jana Sanskriti uses theatre to bring out prevalent but less heard narratives of structural violence in India. Sarwanam makes excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict in Nepal.

Multivocality and the dialogic are important elements in theatre, as pointed out by a number of scholars. These elements provided a potential guideline for formulating underlying theories of change. Mark Chou speaks of a form of multivocality that contains deep democratic potential in its 'ability to publicise multiple realities, actors and actions' in such a way to challenge the existing political order.[76] Dialogic, according to Paulo Friere, is at the base of self-empowerment and transformation. I build on these insights and suggest that theatre's capacity for peacebuilding is enhanced due to the multivocality and the dialogic inherent in its form.

Through this thesis, I establish that multivocality facilitates expression of different and/or contradictory points of view in peacebuilding. It brings out less heard voices, issues and groups into the public space of theatre; it brings contradictory histories and narratives of conflicting groups face to face. The expression enabled through multivocality is of key importance when there is inadequate space for representation and integration for marginalised groups within the mainstream social politics.[77] In community peacebuilding, this expression led to healing and reconciliation, becoming a crucial step towards nonviolent engagement with the 'other'.

---

[76] Mark Chou, *Greek Tragedy and Contemporary Democracy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 52; See also Donald J. Mastronarde, *The Art of Euripides: Dramatic Technique and Social Context* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[77] See Mark Chou, "Democracy and Tragedy in Ancient Athens and Today" (PhD diss, The University of Queensland, 2010) for a detailed discussion on how multivocality in tragedy contributes to democracy.

The dialogic of theatre takes this expression forward: Bakhtin presents the dialogic as a feature of social discourse that is particularly relevant to arts. It is recognised as a notion that is at the core, and facilitates the articulation of the processes embodied by theatre for social intervention.[78] The dialogic, as it is demonstrated through the case studies, takes what is expressed through the multivocality of theatre forward to a point of disquiet, learning, contemplation or empathy, from where sustainable social action emerge. Multivocality starts from the expression on the stage and together with the dialogic; it draws in the audience, making it a community activity. The voices that are expressed are not only the voices of the actors: it is a representation of the community, drawing the audience to express their voices, experiences and lifeworlds on and off stage. The ensuring dialogue is not limited to the stage. It takes place between and among all these different voices, continuing beyond the time and space of the performance. Communication within theatre goes beyond the vocal and is more powerful due to its emotional element. Drawing on the case studies, this thesis demonstrates that the multivocality and the dialogic of theatre facilitate peacebuilding to reach dimensions that are difficult to attain through the prevalent approaches. It supports the articulation of theories of change through arts and how theatre – in its specific forms – builds peace at different levels of society.

Contribution to knowledge

Contributions of this thesis are twofold:

Firstly, my research contributes to the academic discipline of peacebuilding. This research fills the gap for a much-needed in-depth empirical study on local theatre groups that work for peacebuilding. Despite the growing popularity of theatre as a peacebuilding approach among the practitioners, there has been little scholarly inquiry into the area. The studies that do exist tend to be conceptual. Accordingly, using theatre - or art in general - for peacebuilding still remains an emerging area. Through the empirical study, I document three longstanding and active theatre groups in South Asia working in different conflict contexts. In this, I elicit an underpinning concept through which theatre works for peacebuilding: I propose that the multi-voiced and

---

[78] Anthony Jackson, "The Dialogic and the Aesthetic: Some Reflections on Theatre as a Learning Medium," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39, no. 4 (2005): 110-11.

dialogic form of theatre is particularly suited to express local complexities and open up untapped possibilities of communication between former adversaries. All three case studies support this argument. Each case study demonstrates the unique way in which theatre, through its multivocal and dialogic form, initiated peacebuilding. This thesis contributes to the academic discipline of peacebuilding through an empirical study and a conceptualisation of how theatre works for peacebuilding.

Secondly, I contribute to the practical application of theatre for peacebuilding by offering a conceptualisation of how theatre works for peacebuilding. I identify the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre as being a key element in peacebuilding through theatre. Multivocal and dialogic form of theatre, in turn, offers a possible framework for the practitioners to consider in designing relevant initiatives. As the case studies demonstrate, multivocal and dialogic form of theatre is malleable and can be embraced throughout the theatre process as well as through the group practices. This thesis contributes to the practice of using theatre for peacebuilding by opening a new area that facilitates creative and novel ways of approaching peacebuilding through theatre.

Disclaimers

It is important to acknowledge the risks of idealising theatre. It is easy to perceive discussions on theatre or arts for peacebuilding as a romanticisation of the relevant art form. However, theatre or art by and of itself does not necessarily imply peacebuilding. It is simply a tool that can be used either way – for peace or for war.

Theatre can be and has been used for pro-war causes. Just like any other form of art, theatre too has a history of being used to serve political purposes. While political theatre is a somewhat mild category resulting from this particular use of theatre, the category of agitprop or propaganda theatre presents clearer examples. Take 'Holy Defense Theatre,' a category of propaganda theatre emerging during the Iran-Iraq war as state sponsored productions that glorified the Iranian stance in the war and its soldiers.[79] Another example comes from Sri Lanka: the Tamil theatre artist, K. Sidambaranadan used agitprop to mobilize people around the struggle for Tamil rights

---

[79] Marjan Moosavi, "Dramaturgy in Post-Revolution Iran: Problems and Prospects," in *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, ed. Magda Romanska (New York: Routledge, 2014).

in the late 1980's. As the artist himself acknowledges, at that time, they performed to rally people around the cause of the rebel fighters.[80] As a member who worked closely with this group in the early 2000's confides, their theatre festivals focused on 'healing the suppressed Tamil psyche and often were coerced to prepare and strengthen people's morale for war by the rebels.'[81] There are ample instances where theatre was used to promote violence. Theatre is simply a malleable tool at the hands of the practitioner and depending on how it is used, can be violent or peaceful. I clearly acknowledge this aspect of theatre. Having done that, I purposely set out to look at the role of theatre when it is intentionally used for positive outcomes.

My interest in this thesis pertains to exploring the relationship the theatre groups and the particular theatre forms they use, have with the local context. I do not look at the politics or the relationship between locally inspired and externally introduced forms of theatre. Doing so is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, while I do look at such theatre forms, I do not explore this particular relationship here. The groups I study are firmly rooted in their local contexts, being conceptualized, led and owned by people at the ground level.

Finally, I do not claim these cases to be representative of South Asia. Rather, my only claims regarding representation are limited to highlighting the diversity of approaches and practices that exist in the use of theatre for peacebuilding.

Chapter outline

I present my thesis through a total of five chapters that are organised into two parts: part 1 conceptualises theatre for peacebuilding through existing literature and part 2 presents the empirical analysis of the case studies.

Part 1: Conceptualising theatre for peacebuilding

Through Chapter 1, I argue that engaging with complexities in the conflict context and addressing the cultural impact of conflict is a prerequisite to sustainable peacebuilding. The chapter looks at peacebuilding and its critiques, exploring key and

---

[80] See Madhawa Palihapitiya, "The Created Space: Peacebuilding and Performance in Sri Lanka," in *Acting Together: Volume I*, ed. Cynthia E. Cohen, Roberto Gtierrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker (Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2011).
[81] Sivagopal Anandan (former Pongu Thamil leader), interview with author, Sri Lanka, June 2014 (pseudonym used)

relevant debates in peacebuilding literature. It provides an overview of the development of peacebuilding and the critical issues it faces at the moment.

Through chapter 2, I argue that theatre warrants further study as an important but neglected area in peacebuilding. The chapter explores theatre's potential and limitations for peacebuilding. I first present conceptual evidence that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding and secondly, look at the specific ways in which theatre can contribute to peacebuilding. I propose the multivocality and dialogic of theatre as key elements in theatre's potential as a peacebuilding approach and as such, warranting further study.

Part 2: Exploring theatre in local peacebuilding processes

Chapter 3 explores the role of Jana Karaliya as a theatre group working for peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. Here I argue that theatre creates a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together. The chapter first outlines the background of ethnic conflict and fragile stability in Sri Lanka and proceeds to discuss the ways in which these factors have shaped Jana Karaliya's activities. As a multi-ethnic, bilingual group borrowing from the Sinhalese and Tamil drama traditions, Jana Karaliya physically and metaphorically blurs the lines of conflict. This shared space created through theatre is where Jana Karaliya's peacebuilding takes place.

Chapter 4 explores the role of Jana Sanskriti as a theatre group working for peacebuilding at the community level in India. I argue that theatre brings out prevalent but less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse. West Bengal consistently ranks among the highest in violence rates in India and presents a context of highly embedded structural violence. Jana Sanskriti works within this context taking an embedded approach to address injustices the rural Bengal experiences at an everyday level.

Chapter 5 explores the role of Sarwanam as a theatre group working for peacebuilding in Nepal. Here I argue that Sarwanam uses theatre to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict. While the people's movements in Nepal emerged from the level of the ordinary citizen, the expected outcomes of the negotiated peace that filtered through to the lifeworlds of distant communities is at a marginal level. In this chapter too, I provide a conflict background first and then

proceed to discuss the ways in which Sarwanam uses the multivocality and the dialogic of theatre to highlight these issues.

Finally, in the conclusion, I bring together the findings from case studies and articulate implications for future research in using art for peacebuilding.

Part I: Conceptualising Theatre for Peacebuilding

Part I of this thesis consists of two chapters that outline pertinent literature on peacebuilding and theatre. In Chapter 1, I review the key debates in peacebuilding. Prevailing approaches to peacebuilding prioritise institution building, democratic procedures and liberal economic policies at the cost of sustainable solutions. Societybuilding, emerging as a response to these critiques, also has its pitfalls. Through this discussion, I establish that engaging with local complexities and addressing the cultural impact of conflict is a prerequisite to sustainable peacebuilding. It, therefore, focuses on the need for context specific and organic peacebuilding approaches. Chapter 2 presents theatre as a peacebuilding approach. Here, I argue that theatre has the capacity to address the identified gaps within the key debates in peacebuilding. I draw attention to the limited literature on theatre and peacebuilding and focus on the multivocality and the dialogic form of theatre as an area warranting further exploration. Together with Chapter 1 and 2, Part 1 establishes a foundation for the empirical study presented in the second part of the thesis.

Chapter 1: Peacebuilding and its Critiques

Introduction

The theory as well as the practice of peacebuilding evolved through several phases. Having come into mainstream practice after the cold war,[82] peacebuilding today is a key agenda for foreign aid, international organisations and non-governmental organisations. As such, it works in diverse settings, driven by changing political objectives. Hence, theoretical underpinnings of peacebuilding constantly evolve in response to a range of socio-political contexts.

In this chapter, I focus on two main trends in key debates to peacebuilding: peacebuilding as statebuilding and peacebuilding as societybuilding. These two broad camps arguably capture the extensive deliberations on peacebuilding in the recent period. While there is some overlap between these approaches and the resulting critiques, for the purpose of this chapter I discuss the key debates in peacebuilding under these two broad themes.

I draw attention to the critiques of each approach. The criticisms of peacebuilding as statebuilding have been longstanding, characterised by an exclusive focus on top-down political processes. Consequently, approaching peacebuilding as societybuilding has gained increasing attention. As the discussion will illustrate, this too is not without its drawbacks. However, we are still at the early stages of exploring and outlining a more sustainable approach to peacebuilding, which I will discuss further in this chapter.

This chapter is organised in three sections: the first section provides a brief summary of prevailing approaches to peacebuilding. I use the evolving conceptualisation of peacebuilding to introduce the two main approaches in key debates to peacebuilding: statebuilding and societybuilding. The second and third sections will respectively discuss critiques of and challenges to each approach. The third section will identify the parameters of an approach that can address these challenges.

---

[82] 'Peacebuilding' as a distinct activity started drawing mainstream attention after the cold war period. Oliver Richmond's four generational trajectory I discussed in the introduction of this thesis presented a retrospective reading of peacebuilding that goes further back. This reading, nevertheless, is significant as it highlighted the early developments that resulted in shaping peace and conflict resolution into what it is today.

The existing literature on peacebuilding

Peacebuilding has been defined and conceptualised in a number of ways by different authors but it is yet to gain a commonly agreed upon definition. The reason for this is often attributed to the large scope of actions involved in the process of peacebuilding and the differences of opinion regarding when, where and how it is practiced. Thus, the evolving definitions demonstrate the tension in the discipline.

As a starting point, let us take the definition provided by Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992. He defined peacebuilding as 'action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict.'[83] This definition is based on the assumption that strong structures are a prerequisite for peace and predictably, and places strengthening structures at the core of peacebuilding. The particular structures advocated here are liberal democratic, which is why a decade later Roland Paris conceptualises peacebuilding as 'the globalisation of a particular model of domestic governance - liberal market democracy – from the core to the periphery of the international system.'[84]

While still largely based on similar ideological principles, the UN's take on peacebuilding has also gradually expanded. The UN policy committee provided a relatively broader working definition in its May 2007 deliberations: 'Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, to strengthen national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development'.[85] Even though it still places significant emphasis on building and strengthening structures, this definition allows space for the myriad of other activities that fall within peacebuilding. The committee further recognises the steadily increasing call for peacebuilding to be more context-specific. It clearly specifies that 'peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritised, sequenced and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.'[86] Notter

---

[83] United Nations. "*An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations, June 1992) Accessed February 23, 2011. http://www.unrol.org/files/a_47_277.pdf
[84] Roland Paris, "International Peacebuilding and the *'Mission Civilisatrice'*," *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 4 (2002).
[85] McCandless, "Lessons from Liberia: Integrated Approaches to Peacebuilding in Transitional Settings," 1.
[86] Ibid.

and Diamond[87] define peacebuilding as 'creating the tangible and intangible conditions to enable a conflict-habituated system to become peace system'. They identify three levels of peacebuilding: political, structural and societal. Political peacebuilding includes the formal processes aiming for political agreements. Structural peacebuilding sits below this level, focusing on the establishment of physical as well as social structures, institutions and behaviour patterns. Finally, social peacebuilding is a grassroots process that engages with the relationship-building component. These repetitive attempts at conceptualising peacebuilding capture the emerging tension in the discipline: the tension between seeing structures as the focal point in peacebuilding and a call for shifting that attention towards local, organic peacebuilding approaches that are more contextual.

In the next sections of this chapter, I discuss peacebuilding under two broad themes: peacebuilding as statebuilding and peacebuilding as society building.

Peacebuilding as statebuilding

Peacebuilding as statebuilding is increasingly discussed within the discipline of peace and conflict studies. The concepts of statebuilding and peacebuilding do not wholly overlap.[88] Nevertheless, scholars argue that in practice, both 'international statebuilding and peacebuilding are pursued through the same relatively standard set of activities.'[89]

The statebuilding approach to peacebuilding takes a strong state as a prerequisite for peace. Consequently, it focuses on 'building strong state institutions capable of handling the societal conflicts.'[90] Campbell and Peterson argue that this focus results from the 'Western governments and international organisations' perceiving weak or failed states as the root of security issues.[91] The peace instituted through this approach, he argues, is located in a 'security discourse' that rests largely on avoiding 'state failure.'

---

[87] James Notter and Louise Diamond, Building Peace and Transforming Conflict: Multi-Track Diplomacy in Practice (Occassional Paper 7, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, Washington DC, 1996).
[88] See Susanna Campbell and Jenny H. Peterson, "Statebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, ed. Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Routledge, 2013) for a detailed discussion on the points where the concepts of statebuilding and peacebuilding converge into and diverge from each other's path.
[89] Ibid., 338.
[90] Andrieu, "Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm," 540.
[91] Campbell and Peterson, "Statebuilding," 336.

Thus, the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding works through security, democratic and socioeconomic aspects to build peace. Schellhaas and Seegers outline the tasks involved in each aspect:[92] disarming, demobilising and reintegrating combatants into society, military and police reforms, addressing refugee issues and de-mining are seen as central to security transition. Establishing a system of elections and the supporting legislative and judiciary bodies is the primary action for democratic transition, which is complemented by encouraging a strong civil society. Socioeconomic transition aspires for the promotion of a thriving market economy in the stable space resulting through the previous actions. These target actions take place in the political sphere.

The statebuilding approach assumes the system or social stability can be ensured through rationalising key aspects of social relations through a hierarchical state structure.[93] State-society relations are legitimised and enhanced through state institution and capacity building. Societal structures as well as relationships are assumed to be products of state institutions, not only at the formal level, but also at the informal level.[94] Wyeth and Sisk argue that '[p]ositive statebuilding processes involve reciprocal relations between a state that delivers services for its people and social and political groups who constructively engage with their state'.[95] While this is sound at a conceptual level, it needs to be acknowledged that the outcome of peacebuilding here is highly dependent on having a functional, reciprocal state-society relationship.

The statebuilding approach to peacebuilding is critiqued for failing to address and accommodate the culture and complexities of local contexts. I address these debates through three key areas: firstly, the exclusive focus on liberal democratic institutions as the primary solution for conflict. Secondly, disregarding context-specific socio-economic organisation and thirdly, the unequal power relations embedded statebuilding. These critiques are often raised in response to the practice of peacebuilding in general. Yet the tensions leading to these criticisms fall largely

---

[92] Constanze Schellhaas and Annette Seegers, "Peacebuilding: Imperialism's New Disguise?," *African Security Review* 18, no. 2 (2009).

[93] Carlos L. Yordán, "Towards Deliberative Peace: A Habermasian Critique of Contemporary Peace Operations," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 12, no. 1 (2009).

[94] David Chandler, "Race, Culture and Civil Society: Peacebuilding Discourse and the Understanding of Difference," *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (2010).

[95] Vanessa Wyeth and Timothy Sisk, "Rethinking Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries: Conceptual Clarify, Policy Guidance, and Practical Implications (draft)," New York: International Peace Institute and The Josef Korbel School of International Studies, 2009

within the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding, and therefore I bring these particular debates together in this section.

Exclusive focus on establishing liberal democratic institutions as a solution

The state institutions upon which the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding relies are based on liberal democratic values. The statebuilding approach to peacebuilding works on the premise that constructing and/or stabilising state institutions is the most direct route for managing and resolving conflicts. These state institutions are constituted by a combination of liberal and democratic values, leading contemporary peace operations to be generally referred to as liberal peacebuilding.[96] Mac Ginty locates the potential of this approach to be in the 'symbiosis between its components: highly specialised forms of liberalism and democracy that combine to produce a highly specialist form of peace.'[97] These conceptual frameworks highlight the individual as the target social unit and operate from the angle of a western human rights discourse. Liberalism, in turn, encourages an open economic policy. The connection between both of these components – democracy and liberalism – with that of peace is taken for granted on the assumption of the 'democratic peace' thesis: 'since liberal states do not go to war with each other, then the 'solution' to international aggression is to export liberal forms of statebuilding'.[98]

As I elaborate, the effectiveness of this formula for peacebuilding is being increasingly challenged. The basic framework of statebuilding is critiqued at three levels: peacebuilding through building/strengthening institutions, promoting democratic procedures and liberal economic policies.

Institution building

The exclusive focus on institution building in the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding can come at the cost of ignoring the root causes of conflict. Protracted conflicts are often divided along social elements such as ethnic or identity issues.

---

[96] See Roger Mac Ginty, *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Roland Paris, "Critiques of Liberal Peace," in *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* ed. Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam (London: Zed Books, 2011); Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver P. Richmond, *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding* (Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University Press, 2009); Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects."; Richmond and Franks, *Liberal Peace Transitions : Between Statebuilding and Peacebuilding* for a further discussion.
[97] Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace," 155.
[98] Ibid.

Montiel notes that transforming these root causes is more pertinent for the resolution of conflicts than the re-establishment of formal institutional and legal processes.[99] Designing appropriate political institutions aimed at 'conflict mitigation' thus remains '[o]ne of the most contentious debates in the peacebuilding literature'.[100] With regard to ethnically plural societies, Moore notes the debate to revolve around the two broad models of consociational (power sharing) and centripetal (integrative) institutions. Despite the finer points of the recommended models, the institutions built under statebuilding are framed within liberal democratic values.

The emphasis statebuilding places on re/establishing or stabilising state structures through institutions indicates a top-down perspective of peace. Thus, statebuilding necessitates 'expert intervention' from the outside working in tandem with the state level representatives. If state institutions are not truly representative of the community at the ground level – as it so often is the case in conflict situations – this can have serious consequences ranging from an inaccurate representation of communities to outright discrimination.

Some scholars call for prioritising institution building as a response to the challenges faced by the statebuilding approach. Newman observes that when societies do not 'enjoy stable institutions,' democracy is 'arguably adversarial or even conflictual.'[101] Supporters of the statebuilding approach, such as Roland Paris, have called for prioritising institution building before democratization and privatisation.[102] This period of stabilisation can be indefinite, and can pose a critical challenge to the local ownership of the peacebuilding process: thus, waiting for stable institutions to emerge hardly appears feasible.

Stable political order leading to peace does not necessarily emerge from legislative frameworks or institution building.[103] Accordingly, the strong emphasis placed upon institution building at the cost of ignoring the underlying social root causes of conflict

---

[99] Montiel, "Toward a Psychology of Structural Peace Building'.
[100] Adam Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns* (Ithaka: Cornell University Press, 2013), 18.
[101] Edward Newman, "The International Architecture of Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, ed. Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Routledge, 2013), 322.
[102] Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* and Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns*.
[103] Jeong, *Approaches to Peacebuilding*.

hints at the lack of sensitivity in the statebuilding approach towards the local conditions.

Democratisation

Democratisation has become a key component of statebuilding in contemporary peacebuilding approaches. The notion that political organisation has to be - in fact, can only be - legitimised through an electoral process is generally accepted within prevailing peacebuilding practices.[104]

However, this assumption has been problematised on the grounds that externally-led liberal democracy building is counterproductive.[105] Mac Ginty notes that 'emphasis on electoral politics risks the prioritisation of the quantity of democracy over the quality'.[106] Benjamin Reilly digs deeper in observing elections only result in further inflammation and politicizing of the conflict's root causes.[107] Michael Pugh argues that democratic procedures can aggravate socio-economic problems, instead of resolving them as expected.[108]

Thus, democratic procedures as they are hold little actual promise for the communities in post-conflict settings. In order to be useful, the electoral process has to take place on a foundation that believes in and respects the rights of the individuals. The history of a conflict makes this long-term ideal almost impossible to achieve within the limited time period assigned by international peace builders.

Another critique of democratic practices is a tendency to silence minority voices. By placing the voice of the majority over the minority, democratic procedures implemented through statebuilding erode plurality. Thus, statebuilding results in an initial suppression of existing heterogeneity in favour of creating a homogenous whole.[109] It leads critics to perceive the liberal peacebuilding approach more as a

---

[104] Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace."
[105] See Eli Stamnes, "Values, Context and Hybridity: How Can the Insights from the Liberal Peace Critique Literature Be Brought to Bear on the Practices of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture?," (NUPI working papper, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa, 2010).
[106] Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace," 156.
[107] Benjamin Reilly, "Democratic Validation " in *Contemporary Peacemaking*, ed. J Darby and R Mac Ginty (London: Palgrave, 2003), 177. Take Sri Lanka as an example where elections result in further inflammation and politicisation of the conflict's root causes.
[108] Michael Pugh, "The Political Economy of Peacebuilding: A Critical Theory Perspective," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 2 (2005).
[109] Franks and Richmond, "Coopting Liberal Peace-Building."; Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects."

'system of governance' than as a 'process of reconciliation'.[110] This mismatch between the so-called democratic governance and the needs and wants of the local community is indicated by the 'declining electoral participation in many post-conflict societies'.[111]

Thus, democratic procedures such as elections cannot be seen as an end point; it is just the beginning of a process that is much longer,[112] as a country hardly becomes 'fit *for* democracy', but 'fit *through* democracy'.[113] The statebuilding approach is widely criticised for prioritising democratic procedures as a sole indicator of a successful conflict transformation process.

Liberal Economic policies

Introducing liberal economic policies as a foundational strategy of statebuilding also draws a significant amount of critique. Peacebuilding as statebuilding relies on the introduction of liberal economic policies along with democratic procedures to ensure a stable societal and economic transition. Critics argue that this often has a markedly negative impact upon the communities at the ground level.[114] Hughes, Thompson and Balfour observe that the introduction of free market economies along with democratic reforms profoundly threaten ground level peace initiatives that can bring a sustainable culture of peace for local communities.[115] Fischer argues that this approach challenges established relationship networks and patterns, leading to a sense of alienation and loss of community.[116] It unsettles the local economic practices that might be more or less sustainable; it disrupts the community trading patterns; and it opens the local markets and the community to external competition in goods and services. Drawing from empirical studies, Moore argues that liberal values result in the intensification of division instead of bridging the divides as expected.[117] This state of disorder

---

[110] Oliver P. Richmond, "A Geneology of Peace and Conflict Theory," in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, ed. O. P. Richmond (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 23-25.

[111] Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 85.

[112] Reilly, "Democratic Validation" 183.

[113] Amartya Kumar Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (1999): 14.

[114] See Timothy Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns;* Schellhaas and Seegers, "Peacebuilding: Imperialism's New Disguise?."; Baranyi, *The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding Post -9/11*; Franks and Richmond, "Coopting Liberal Peace-Building." and Richmond, *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*.

[115] Hughes, Thompson, and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*.

[116] Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects."

[117] Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns*.

intensifies if democratic practices are unable to address grievances at the ground level.

Even though the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding unquestioningly accepts the co-existence of liberal values with democratic procedures, the relationship between these two phenomena are asymmetrical.[118] Liberal practices imply democratic institutions but democracy, in turn, limits liberal values. As briefly outlined in the previous section, it allows the will of the majority to outrank minority at different levels, eroding difference. Thus, rushing for free markets and democracy soon after a conflict - without the required long-term resources and agenda to ensure it is fully embraced - can indeed destabilise a fragile post-conflict situation.[119] Therefore introducing liberal democratic policies and establishing state institutions as recommended through the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding does not necessarily result in the expected self-regulating stable state, or consequently, in building peace.

Disregard of local socio-economic-political organisations

Many critics claim that the statebuilding approach fails to give due recognition to the local context. A key area where this becomes visible is its disregard for local socio-political and economic organizations.

The statebuilding approach to peacebuilding is criticised for its disregard and lack of accommodation towards the local forms of socio-political and economic organization. This is a legacy of the liberal framework upon which statebuilding is based. It places an assumed universal formula upon the conflict context, irrespective of the existing socio-political and economic organizations. The role of the local is to simply accept the presented transition. As Donais summarises, local ownership in the liberal peacebuilding narratives is expected to be nothing more than being 'expected to purchase, and subsequently own' what has been produced and marketed by the international actors.[120] In the guise of ownership, the local is told what its interests are

---

[118] Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects."
[119] See Paris, "Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism"; *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, Baranyi, *The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding Post -9/11*.
[120] Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building*, 32.

40

regardless of the context-related differences.[121] This assumed universality is hardly neutral. Drawing from several authors, Mac Ginty argues that this specific form of peacebuilding 'reflects the practical and ideological interests of the global north.'[122] The liberal rhetoric it promotes is seen as the 'ideology upon which life, culture, society, prosperity and politics are assumed to rest,'[123] rather than a unique production of a specific socio-economic-cultural and political context.

Another negative of the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding - located specifically within the liberal approach - is the limit it imposes on alternative forms of representation. The liberal framework encompasses social and economic spheres as well as the political through its components such as liberal democracy, human rights, a centralized secular state and entering into a global market economy. Within this ideological web, space for alternative modes of representation is severely limited.[124] Seen in opposition to the 'universally appropriate' values and norms of liberal peacebuilding, different ways of organizing society are deemed 'morally inferior'.[125] This view marginalizes and hinders the space for other forms of representation.

The 'inferiority' assigned to the local culture in opposition to the 'universality' of liberal values in the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding is also used to justify outside interventions. Chandler observes that culture became a 'vital framing' tool to justify interventions in 1990's, which led to the legitimization of interventions through the liberal peace rhetoric.[126] This indicates that cultural differences within the statebuilding framework are often seen not as a point to concede, but as part of the problem. By default the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding disregards context-specific socio-economic and political organizations in favour of a liberal framework. Consequently, it is widely critiqued as a delimiting framework, instead of being emancipatory or transformatory.

---

[121] See Stamnes, "Values, Context and Hybridity: How Can the Insights from the Liberal Peace Critique Literature Be Brought to Bear on the Practices of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture?."

[122] Roger Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace," *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (2010): 393.

[123] Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond, "Myth or Reality: Opposing Views on the Liberal Peace and Post-War Reconstruction," *Global Society* 21, no. 4 (2007): 493.

[124] Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace."

[125] Stamnes, "Values, Context and Hybridity: How Can the Insights from the Liberal Peace Critique Literature Be Brought to Bear on the Practices of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture?," 8.

[126] David Chandler, *International Statebuilding:The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance* (London: New York: Routledge, 2010), 175.

Despite repeated calls for flexibility, the feasibility of satisfactorily incorporating context-specific socio-political and economic organization methods within statebuilding remains dubious. As discussed, peacebuilding as statebuilding is increasingly critiqued for its disregard of local contexts. At the same time, scholars question the feasibility of attempting to effectively incorporate local approaches within the statebuilding approach as a component of the larger liberal framework. Just as the peacebuilding approaches developed in the North reflect its dominant worldview of democracy and liberalism, local peacebuilding approaches reflect the local ways of seeing and meaning-making. In order to utilize authentic local approaches to peace, it is imperative to 'contextualize these approaches in their conflict and post-conflict settings'.[127] Unfortunately, the attempts at paying heed to the local are often limited to a minor complementary role run within or parallel to an overarching liberal peacebuilding mission. Therefore, local peacebuilding initiatives within the liberal statebuilding framework result in an uncomfortable hybrid. Mac Ginty questions the authenticity of local and indigenous initiatives sponsored by liberal peace agents in terms of how much they have been amended to fit in with the norms and values of the organizations and governments in the global north.[128] The end result is an overall failure that is often conveniently associated with local peacebuilding approaches. Thus, a genuine attempt at incorporating local approaches calls for an overall strategy that embodies and reflects the context-specific socio-economic and political organization.

Unequal power relations

Another factor problematizing the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding is its embedded power inequalities. With increasing awareness of the significance of accommodating and including the local culture and practices in peacebuilding, scholars question the extent to which this is possible within liberal peacebuilding. Unequal power relations are sustained through the embedded power hierarchies in the statebuilding approach. The political and resource hierarchies associated with statebuilding make this apparent.

---

[127] Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*, 53.
[128] Roger Mac Ginty, "Gliding the Lily? International Support for Indigenous and Traditional Peacemaking," in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, ed. Oliver P Richmond (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

Statebuilding approach places the State at the top of its political hierarchy as the key stakeholder of the conflict. The resulting action plan is top-down. Post-conflict contexts often lack the institutional balances required to ensure that citizens receive fair representation from their state. More often than not, the state itself is part of the problem, playing a key role in curbing the voices of local groups and undermining the ethical responsibilities of a democratic state.[129] By making such states and their components an essential part of the strategy for peace, the statebuilding approach creates a problematic power hierarchy in conflict contexts.

The authority associated with liberal peace is another reason for the unequal power relations triggered by the statebuilding model. There is an 'asymmetrical power relation in favour of external actors.'[130] This power derives from the material resources and international standing of the proponents of liberal peacebuilding. Mac Ginty perceives the 'moral authority' of liberal peace to stem from 'the power of its promoters, the intellectual heritage' deployed to justify their peace interventions, 'and the co-option of major international organisations and international NGOs in the service of this vision of peace' as well as from the success it has had in delivering 'humanitarian and development assistance'.[131] Thus, the international peace builders wield a significant amount of overt and covert power in deciding some aspects of the peacebuilding process. The type of activities undertaken, target beneficiaries, implementation timeline and evaluation of programmes are a few examples.

It is hard to bridge this power difference between the local context and the international push for liberal peacebuilding since the former does not have access to the sources of power on which the international draw. Cultural authority is a main source of power accessible for the local context. However, as discussed earlier, this is often co-opted within the statebuilding framework. Thus, the statebuilding approach for peacebuilding maintains a 'hierarchy of compliance' running from the international to the local, with the national state in the middle.[132]

---

[129] Richmond, "A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism and the Everyday."

[130] Ole Jacob Sending, "The Effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power," in *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* ed. Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam (London: Zed Books, 2011), 61.

[131] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace," 399.

[132] Ibid.

The unequal power relations embedded within peacebuilding as statebuilding jeopardises the possibility of achieving self-sustaining peace in post-conflict contexts. The statebuilding approach to peacebuilding often works to constitute and maintain asymmetrical power relations in the local context, including existing systems of political hierarchy. It is seen as a process that reinforces the positions of existing power-holders while doing little for the emancipation of people at the ground level.[133] Several scholars raise concerns citing concrete examples of where this power hierarchy comes into play, in the process of implementing reforms by international officials through authoritarian means.[134] Peacebuilding, as Pugh notes, 'has come to mean revising the structures that led to conflict, and inevitably that means diminution of sovereignty.'[135] Standing with Chandler, he argues that there is no way of doing this without 'echoing' or 'replicating' the colonisation process.[136] Hence statebuilding makes its subjects comply with an 'anti-democratic' process bound to a state and institutions that 'do not represent the local' satisfactorily.[137] Inevitably, statebuilding undermines the local strengths and result in further weakening the state institutions it means to strengthen.[138] Consequently, the statebuilding approach to peacebuilding struggles to bring self-sustaining peace.

Inability to address local complexities and cultural impact of conflict

This discussion on peacebuilding as statebuilding emphasises a central point: that peace instituted through the statebuilding approach runs the risk of being fragile and is temporary at best. The reasons for this are arguably the attempts to impose a universal formula and the inability to address local complexities. The features of statebuilding I discussed in this section relate to this: The first - statebuilding's exclusive focus on establishing liberal democratic institutions as a solution – results in

---

[133] Tim Jacoby, "Hegemony, Modernisation and Post-War Reconstruction," *Global Society* 21, no. 4 (2007); James Mayall, "Security and Self-Determination," in *The Empire of Security and the Safety of the People*, ed. William Bain (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

[134] Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns*, 28. Also see William Bain, ed. *The Empire of Security and the Safety of the People*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006) and David Chandler, Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

[135] Michael Pugh, "The Problem Solving and Critical Paradigms," in *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, ed. Roger Mac Ginty (2013), 21.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Richmond, "A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism and the Everyday," 562.

[138] Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns*. Also see Timothy Donais, "Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes" *Peace & Change* 34, no.1 (2009); Michael Barnett and Christoph Zürcher, "The Peacebuilder's Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood," in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* ed. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (New York: Routledge, 2009)

imposing a universal formula. The second and the third – disregard towards context specific alternative socio-political organisation and embedded unequal power relations in societybuilding –contribute to the approach's inability to address local complexities.

The statebuilding approach focuses on superimposing a standard set of ethics, values and practices upon the conflict context irrespective of local realities.[139] Despite the assumed universality of the liberal rhetoric and its components such as liberal democracy, human rights, a centralized secular state and entering into a global market economy, it might not even be the best form of structuring a society divided by conflict. In its attempts at addressing the existing conflicts, it can intensify competition and cut off the limited support structures accessible to communities at the ground level. Sending argues that 'post-war democratisation is possible, but that it is extraordinarily rare' because most post-war societies 'lack the resources and capacities to implement and maintain the complex and costly political institutions required for democratic governance.'[140] Since liberal democracy instituted through statebuilding is hardly an organic form of governance, sustaining a healthy liberal democratic state on the ground becomes difficult.

The peace instituted through statebuilding is hardly self-sustaining, for it cannot satisfactorily address complexities in conflict context. Lasting grievances and cultural residues of conflict at the ground level are examples for such complexities. Cessation of violence – voluntary or enforced – does not necessarily mean transformation of the conflict. Transformation requires addressing the root causes of a conflict that often stems from unequal or discriminating power relations at an everyday level. The superficial peace brought through statebuilding can neither be satisfactory nor lasting. In fact, it is more likely to further inflict damage by reinforcing existing power relations through statebuilding. The resulting intensification of root causes of and factors that maintain the conflict can lead to an escalated level of violence. The cost of peacebuilding through statebuilding is immediately seen and felt within the informal everyday reality of the citizen. For many citizens in post-conflict situations, the everyday - despite on-going peacebuilding activities - remains 'dire and characterised by chronic poverty and underdevelopment, continuing violence and

---

[139] See Pugh, "The Problem Solving and Critical Paradigms."
[140] Sending, "The Effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power," 71.

deeply dysfunctional inter-group relations.' [141] The statebuilding approach to peacebuilding is unequipped to address complexities such as 'interpersonal or intercommunal violence.' [142] Critics point towards the focus on formal statebuilding to be the reason for this failure. Peacebuilding through statebuilding therefore runs the risk of jeopardizing the fragile peace in post-conflict situations.

Thus, at best, the statebuilding approach to peace and its liberal associations are 'equated with negative peace': a strategy that addresses the manifestation of conflict while avoiding the deeper changes imperative for the transformation of conflict. [143] As Campbell accurately notes, statebuilding efforts 'often fail to build either an effective state or sustainable peace'. [144] With this obvious failure, Richmond suggests that it is time peacebuilding looked beyond statebuilding - and liberalism – for approaches that can go deeper than a superficial, negative peace. [145] The call for improving prevalent approaches to peacebuilding also recommends reframing the ideological package and practices to be contextual in focus and with increased embeddedness and independence. [146]

Peacebuilding as societybuilding

I explore societybuilding as the other main approach to peacebuilding. It is coined in opposition to statebuilding and is increasingly discussed as an approach with the potential to address some of the gaps in statebuilding. To bring about self-sustaining peace legitimised within a conflict context, we need to 'go further than statebuilding and towards a conscious strategy of what we might call 'societybuilding''. [147] Yordan agrees with this approach, observing that societybuilding has been developed as an 'intellectual counterweight' to the prominent statebuilding focus in contemporary peacebuilding, with the capability of addressing its gaps. [148] Donais calls the societybuilding approach to peace 'communitarian in character,' stressing the 'importance of traditional and social context in determining the legitimacy and

---

[141] Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace," 146.
[142] See Campbell and Peterson, "Statebuilding," 339.
[143] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace," 394.
[144] Campbell and Peterson, "Statebuilding," 343.
[145] Richmond, "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace," 666.
[146] Anne Holohan cited in Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns*, 170.
[147] Andrieu, "Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm," 547.
[148] Yordán, "Towards Deliberative Peace: A Habermasian Critique of Contemporary Peace Operations," 60.

appropriateness of particular visions of political order, justice or ethics'.[149] Unlike statebuilding, which focuses on the political process and advocates universally apt and desirable liberal practices and institutions as the primary avenues for peace, societybuilding focuses on working with the community. It aims for a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. Brewer argues that a social peace process needs to work on the 'restoration of broken relationships, the development of a sense of community and shared responsibility for the future.'[150] Societybuilding in this light is seen as an imperative for a comprehensive peace operation that 'aims at the reconstruction of society and societal legitimacy on the ground'.[151] Thus, it is apparent that the discussion on peacebuilding as societybuilding is a significant point in the peacebuilding discourse.

I will explore the key debates on societybuilding, focusing on how these regard the local context and their capacity to address societal residues of conflict. As the discourse on societybuilding is still emerging, there are a number of areas warranting further exploration. The discussion on peacebuilding as statebuilding highlights the need to go beyond liberal democratic values and state centricity. It urges the discipline to ensure that the local context and meaning-making processes are acknowledged and respected. Thus, the societybuilding approach aims to address the need for a bottom-up method that does not rely on international-local power hierarchies to coerce, leading peacebuilding towards positive peace instead of negative peace. These are the paths that peacebuilding as a discipline and a practice is in need of at the moment. All these revolve around an important point: that of taking into account the specificities of the local context and the need to satisfactorily address socio-cultural residues of conflict.

I specifically look at three key debates on developing local representation and sustainability of peacebuilding here: the call for peacebuilding to focus on people and thus, arguably, on civil society; the call to make 'everyday politics' the focal point of peacebuilding rather than 'high politics' and finally, the need to draw from the hitherto marginalised socio-political landscape.

---

[149] Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building*, 5.
[150] John Brewer, "Sociology and Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, ed. Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Routledge, 2013), 162.
[151] Andrieu, "Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm," 540.

Civil society as the mode of representation

The societybuilding approach argues that the focus of peacebuilding has to shift from state politics to social politics: it proposes rebuilding post-conflict societies through working with people in the local context. The significance of peacebuilding here is seen in providing a framework that allows international engagement to be legitimised on the 'basis of the autonomy of the post-colonial subject'.[152]

The commonly proposed approach is that of working through local civil society. Civil society is seen as a space that represents the local and as such, bridges the community with the international. This is also the apparatus through which a cohesive political community – placed at the core of self-sustaining peace – can be mobilised. Civil society is generally perceived to be essential for legitimising the key values of prevailing peacebuilding approaches, such as democracy and human rights. Andrieu argues that civil society must become the 'foremost tool of formation' of a new articulation of peacebuilding.[153] Thus, in the societybuilding approach, scholars recommend shifting the locus of peacebuilding to civil society.

The role of civil society as the primary voice of the local political community is problematised at two points, especially within the current understanding of the term: its capacity and ethical grounds. It is questionable whether civil society has the capacity to represent the authentic lifeworlds of the local. Donais argues that external donors 'have generally underestimated the challenges of reconstructing civil societies' in post-conflict areas while 'overestimating the influence of civil society organisations as peace constituencies.'[154] Complicity within the local – international power hierarchies and elite participation restricts civil society's capacity to reach into the lifeworlds of people on ethical grounds. It is not uncommon to regard civil society as a 'feature of western democracy promotion strategies' that plays a key role in defining the nature of peace processes in the post-Cold War period.[155] In a similar

---

[152] David Chandler, "Race, Culture and Civil Society: Peacebuilding Discourse and the Understanding of Difference," ibid., no. 4: 386.
[153] Kora Andrieu, "Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm," ibid., no. 5: 549.
[154] Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building*, 11. See Oliver Richmond and Henry Carey, eds., *Subcontracting Peace: The Challenges of Ngo Peacebuilding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) for a further discussion.
[155] Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace," 156.

vein, Kappler and Richmond note that peacebuilding usually relies on a 'form of civil society that is relatively free of ethno-nationalism and generally oriented towards the norms and values of the peacebuilding and statebuilding project.'[156] Being free of 'ethno-nationalism' does not necessarily lead to impartiality. This civil society usually comes from the urban elite. Mac Ginty argues that in a society divided along class, ethnic and social lines, this 'artificially created and externally funded civil society' can be 'just as exclusive to wider participation as a government'. Thus, the dynamics that lead political elite in post-conflict situations to be compromised applies to this civil society as well. Liberal peacebuilding has become a source for creating and enriching this transnational group of elites.[157] Continuing to work through this group that is not really rooted in the local context is one key reason for the disjuncture between what is being undertaken as peacebuilding and the perception of the wider community.

Thus, even though the institutional and economic focus of statebuilding approach shifts to civil society in the societybuilding approach to peace, it is insufficient to transcend the ideology associated with statebuilding. Civil society has become a sphere that builds on the 'moral and cultural discourses of the empire'[158] rather than a space where political community is mobilised. Chandler places the centrality of civil society to international peacebuilding in its compliance with the external values and influences that further extend the prevalent peacebuilding discourse.[159] As he argues, civil society is not the autonomous sphere of decision-making it is articulated to be within 'rationalist framings of the liberal polity'. Its accountability and loyalty is more attuned to the funding agencies and the global west than the community experiencing the conflict.[160] Richmond claims that the 'local' as seen, appealed to and accepted within prevailing peacebuilding discourse of peacebuilding is largely a part of western

---

[156] Stefanie Kappler and Oliver Richmond, "Peacebuilding and Culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Resistance or Emancipation?," *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 3 (2011): 265.
[157] Oliver P. Richmond, "De-Romanticising the Local, De-Mystifying the International: Hybridity in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands," *Pacific Review* 24, no. 1 (2011): 119.
[158] Chandler, "Race, Culture and Civil Society: Peacebuilding Discourse and the Understanding of Difference," 385.
[159] "Race, Culture and Civil Society: Peacebuilding Discourse and the Understanding of Difference," 379.
[160] Roberto Belloni, "Civil Society in War-to-Democracy Transition," in *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*, ed. Anna Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 209; Martina Fischer, *Peacebuilding and Civil Society in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 17; Yordán, "Towards Deliberative Peace: A Habermasian Critique of Contemporary Peace Operations," 79.

civil society's imaginary,[161] rendering civil society to a 'western normative veneer' meant to supersede the existing community at the ground level.[162] Thus, instead of an authentic representation, the existing civil society offers a compromised viewpoint. Instead of being a bridge to the larger community, it works as an insular circle limited to the social elites. Assuming civil society as a universal force for good is problematic[163] and it is inadequate for providing an authentic representation of the local.

For the societybuilding approach to move beyond the pitfalls of the statebuilding approach, it has to look further than the civil society as an apparatus. For instance, a politically-aware citizen's organisation has to be able to engage with the deep divisions that exist in a given context: such organisational forms have to be capable of bringing the divisions together for a united cause. While we cannot dispense of civil society, we can ensure that it represents the general population going beyond the transnational elite groups. Tar provides a workable definition of civil society that can be taken as a starting point for going deeper: 'the participatory space between the formal apparatus of the state and informal settings of families and atomised individuals, whereby groups emerge to forge associational ties, articulate interests and participate in public affairs'.[164] This definition sufficiently opens up the top layer of civil society to look at the more grassroots community-based groups.

Theory of communication

Several authors propose using theories of communication as a foundation for articulating an appropriate civil society engagement for the societybuilding approach to peace. Andrieu proposes using Jurgen Habermas's communicative action as a strategy to promote intercommunal reconciliation.[165] Here, the use of communicative reason is seen as a platform that can enhance coexistence and participation in the public sphere, leading to the eventual constitution of a shared lifeworld that is more conducive to peace. Talentino observes that the primary challenge facing contemporary peacebuilding is not that of creating a government, but that of getting

---

[161] Richmond, "De-Romanticising the Local, De-Mystifying the International: Hybridity in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands," 117.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building*, 11.

[164] Usman A. Tar, *The Politics of Neoliberal Democracy in Africa: State and Civil Society in Nigeria*, vol. 22 (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009), 5.

[165] Andrieu, "Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm," 547-48.

people's support for it.[166] Working within the community lifeworld can bring about ground level legitimisation for the peace process that will otherwise be an alien imposition upon the community.

Indeed, dialogue at the ground level that arrives at a shared understanding between the parties is of primary importance for a self-sustaining peace in post-conflict situations. Achieving this is difficult due to the lack of intragroup dialogue and the collective insecurity about engaging with each other.[167] Yordan emphasises that in a context of 'mistrust, fear and low social capital, it is necessary… to deconstruct negative images of the other and to encourage new attitudes towards dialogue and intercommunal cooperation'.[168] In identity-based or ethnic conflicts, this necessity is further emphasised. At the early stages in such a context, intergroup reconciliation propels peace forward far more than structural changes can. This cross cultural communication is seen as the foundation for the 'third culture of relational empathy' that works to merge the identities and stereotypes created in opposition to each other.[169]

For effective communication leading to sustainable peacebuilding, we need to reach beyond the surface level of a community. While recognising the need to go beyond taking the urban elites as people's representatives, both Yordan and Andrieu still locate the focus of statebuilding on the civil society. While this may seem an appropriate action in comparison with the statebuilding approach, it is not sufficient. In order to reach into the community, communicative reason has to reach the people themselves and not just an upper echelon of society that will bend and distort the message to suit their needs. Cohesive political community is necessary: but we need to seek it at the margins of the existing civil society. Thus, continuing peacebuilding within the prevalent discourse in fact impedes bringing about the third culture of relational empathy that is required for sustainable conflict resolution.[170]

---

[166] Andrea K. Talentino, "Perceptions of Peacebuilding: The Dynamic of Imposer and Imposed Upon," *International Studies Perspectives* 8, no. 2 (2007): 167.
[167] Yordán, "Towards Deliberative Peace: A Habermasian Critique of Contemporary Peace Operations," 67.
[168] Andrieu, "Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm," 549.
[169] Benjamin Broom, "Managing Differences in Conflict Resolution: The Role of Relational Empathy," in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, ed. Dennis Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 111.
[170] See Broom, "Managing Differences in Conflict Resolution: The Role of Relational Empathy." and Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo Van der Merwe, *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application* (Manchester University Press, 1993) for more information on third culture and relational empathy.

Thus we need to look at different peacebuilding approaches that allow us to reach into and draw from the community consciousness. Habermas points out that the colonising tendencies of society, driven by strategic reason such as that of statebuilding, have eroded the integrative capabilities of the lifeworld in which we live. Therefore, to effect change through the lifeworld - the milieu of society in which we live – requires that we revive the vibrancy of the lifeworld. This is where communicative reason comes to the fore. Instead of merely focusing on civil society, societybuilding approach to peace has to take the community at large as its focus. Working with that widespread, vague mass of people has the potential to infuse vibrancy back into the lifeworld. For this, societybuilding needs peacebuilding approaches that can work at an everyday level while being firmly rooted within the context. It has to come from the lifeworld and carry out its work within the lifeworlds of individuals. It has to be able to reach people where they are and touch them at that point, instead of attempting to fit them into a framework that is already in place. Thus, a societybuilding approach to peace needs to focus on and be able to work with the lifeworlds of people in order to initiate self-sustaining peace.

Shifting the lens to 'everyday' politics

The debate on taking everyday politics as the focal point of peacebuilding is an important discussion pertinent to the societybuilding approach to peace. Proponents of the societybuilding approach to peace consider adopting a lens of everyday politics to be crucial. Donias argues that failure to focus on the questions of everyday is 'a particularly blind spot of the contemporary liberal peacebuilding project.'[171] While the decisions pertaining to peacebuilding might be made at the upper level of political processes, the actual work of peacebuilding is inevitably carried out among the ground level communities. These are the people who have to undergo a transformation of their political views and ideologies in order to coexist with their former enemies. The decisions made at the political level often fail at this practical application level if the communities are unwilling to go through with this transformation. Making everyday politics the focal point of peacebuilding intends to bring back this 'micro-level', putting the 'elite level bargaining between senior

---

[171] Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building*, 153.

politicians and international organisations' back into the perspective.'[172] Adopting such a lens can enable peacebuilding to effectively deal with context specific issues such as socio-cultural residues of conflict.

I identify three key contributions to peacebuilding in adopting an everyday lens: it ensures that peacebuilding emerges through a local meaning-making process; it avoids the tendency of peacebuilding to either romanticise or essentialise the local, and it recognises and works through the agency and power of the everyday. I will discuss each point in this section further to explore the role everyday politics has come to play in the contemporary debates on peacebuilding.

Adopting an everyday lens ensures that peacebuilding works within the lifeworlds of the local and emerge as a result of everyday politics rooted in local meaning making. The social transformation of conflict requires a transformation of individual lifeworlds. Lifeworld is constituted, expressed and reshaped through everyday encounters. In order to work within the lifeworld for peace, peacebuilding needs to take everyday politics as its focal point. International relations as a discipline has been critiqued for its exclusion of the everyday, and the agency and interests of the communities and individuals who are the particles from which states have formed. Thus, Spencer notes that everyday politics has emerged in the literature derived from anthropology, post-colonial studies and sociology.[173] Richmond defines the concept of 'everyday' as 'a space in which local individuals and communities live and develop political strategies in their local environment, towards the state and towards international models of order.'[174] It is often 'transversal and transnational, engaging with needs, rights, custom, individual, community, agency and mobilisation in political terms.'[175] This is different from the civil society found within prevalent peacebuilding discourse: the everyday level goes beyond civil society to represent a 'deeper local-local' that consists of actual people behind the organised layers.[176] This space therefore is truer to the ground level and provides access to the lifeworlds of people. Mitchell argues that here, there is space for the immediate expression of

---

[172] Mac Ginty, *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, 5.
[173] Jonathan Spencer, *Anthropology, Politics and the State: Democracy and Violence in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[174] "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace," in *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* ed. Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam (London: Zed Books, 2011), 228-29.
[175] "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace," 670.
[176] Ibid., 228-29.

plurality and otherness at the same time,[177] and is a source of collective creativity that facilitates the transcendences or change of existing conditions.[178] Thus it becomes a powerful analytical tool for peacebuilding. By taking everyday politics as the focal point instead of high politics at the state level, peacebuilding ensures that peace emerges through a local meaning-making process. It is an imperative for a self-sustaining peace.

Adopting a lens of everyday also facilitates reaching the local without being trapped in either essentialisation or romanticisation of the local. Both these are commonly seen in peacebuilding debates. Donais observes that 'normative and operational structure of the international system as it is relates to peacebuilding continues to privilege liberal, minimalist understandings of local ownership.'[179] Yet others call for embracing the 'pure', 'traditional' practices of the local. These approaches respectively essentialise and romanticises the local, preventing productive engagement. Thus, the local is a diverse hybrid that does not comply with narrow fixed definitions. Moving 'towards a fuller appreciation of the multifaceted nature of local agency in peacebuilding process, therefore, requires coming to terms with…the characteristics of *the locals.*'[180] Taking the everyday as the focus of peacebuilding acknowledges the diverse nature of the local and at the same time, sidesteps any implied prejudices and inaccuracies.

Yet another reason for adopting an everyday lens is the acknowledgement of subtle forms of agency and power at the local level. This is crucial for a solid foundation for peace. Being the actual ground upon which citizenship rights are exercised, politics at the everyday level avoids the narratives of power and authority that privilege the elite, institutional and state levels.[181] Richmond argues accordingly that individual actions in the everyday are 'unencumbered by hegemonic institutions' and 'too transient to even acquire labels'.[182] This transiency and flexibility are what holds the power and agency in the everyday: it is fast, exercises agency in the present moment and refuses to be pinned down to a single meaning. Not being institutionalised subverts the power

---

[177] Audra Mitchell, "Quality/Control: International Peace Interventions and 'the Everyday'," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 1627.

[178] See "Quality/Control: International Peace Interventions and 'the Everyday'," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 1627-28.

[179] Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building*, 11.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Richmond, "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace," 671.

[182] "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace," 677.

associated with institutions, as the everyday politics can 'shape, resist and choose institutions and strategies.'[183] Unlike a fixed mandate, it can derive from the context and adapt to fit situations where it would not otherwise be accepted. De Certeau argues that the everyday politics are resourceful, makeshift and can bide their time.[184] This resilience produces a capacity to struggle for a just social order that goes beyond the capabilities of international liberal peace. In the act of conscious choosing, agency is exercised. It is a gradual process that leads to conscious political mobilisation through subtle actions of resistance and reconstitution.[185] Such a peace brought through the solidarity and the sense of community resulting from a shared lifeworld in the everyday is stronger than that which is brought through an external initiative. This approach to peace highlights the agency and power of individuals and communities. We therefore need to rethink how and where we perceive power and agency in peacebuilding; and the respective exclusions and inclusions this entails within the peacebuilding process.[186] Peacebuilding therefore requires a shift in its focus towards the people and the community. Richmond perceives this focus to surpass that of state and institutions, providing 'guidance around the pitfalls and biases reflected in the liberal peace.'[187] Everyday peacebuilding needs to hold a significant place in the societybuilding approach to peace.

Searching the margins

Searching the margins of existing socio-political landscape for more sustainable approaches to peacebuilding is another idea generating discussion in key debates of peacebuilding. Agathangelou and Ling argue that to escape the 'narrow, fixed boundaries [of International Relations] and interests they [these boundaries] sustain', it is important to go beyond and broaden the existing 'routes to voicing and becoming'.[188] This opening up is especially relevant when it comes to peacebuilding, as the process of peacebuilding calls for forging anew the fractured relationships in a given community. In the four generational model of peacebuilding outlined in the Introduction of this thesis, Richmond locates the 'next big step' in peacebuilding at

---

[183] Ibid.
[184] De Certeau cited in ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] See "A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism and the Everyday," 577.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling, "The House of IR: From Family Power Politics to the Poisies of Worldism," *International Studies Review* 6, no. 4 (2004): 42.

the margins of the peacebuilding discourse and practice.[189] Aimed at addressing the shortcomings of contemporary peacebuilding approaches, this generation of peacebuilding suggests putting communities before institutional peace and focusing on the grassroots and the 'most marginalised members' of the society.' It suggests opening up to the so far overlooked local political, economic, social and cultural traditions and letting these direct the peacebuilding process instead of international agendas. In the search for a more effective form of peacebuilding, the focus of peacebuilding h pushed towards what has so far been at its margins.

The margins here can point in two directions: at a conceptual level, the intersection of different disciplines with peacebuilding provides a fertile ground for exploration. From an empirical perspective, the intersection of local and international spheres holds potential.

The intersection of different disciplines as a resource

The transdisciplinary resources at the boundaries of peacebuilding hold much potential for the societybuilding approach. There is a significant body of literature produced at the boundaries of International Relations beneath the surface of peacebuilding. The disciplines of Political Science and International Relations largely encompass peacebuilding at the moment. These boundaries are reflected in the state-centric international approach to peacebuilding. Yet, complexities of violent conflicts cannot be adequately understood solely through these boundaries. Therefore, as the statebuilding approach amply demonstrates, addressing conflicts within the limited uni-disciplinary approaches is not feasible.[190] Peace encompasses different aspects of life and society at different depths. The discipline of peace and conflict resolution also has to embody this plurality to move towards and produce an authentic reflection of peace. In order to achieve this, we need to transcend the existing disciplinary boundaries. Such a transdisciplinary approach, drawing from and freely moving between the boundaries of different disciplines, associates with the principles of 'empathy, creativity and integrated problem solving'[191] - features that are hard to see within the prevalent approaches to peacebuilding. Thus, the intersection of different

---

[189] Richmond, "A Geneology of Peace and Conflict Theory," 31.
[190] Richard Lappin, "Peacebuilding and the Promise of Transdisciplinarity," *International Journal on World Peace* 26, no. 3 (2009): 71.
[191] Ibid.

disciplines at the boundary of peacebuilding provides a rich source to draw from in constituting societybuilding approach to peace.

Different authors have pointed towards specific disciplines that can enrich peacebuilding: Spencer notes that due to the lack of attention given within the discipline of peace and conflict studies to everyday politics, literature on everyday politics has re-emerged at the boundaries of anthropology, post-colonial studies and sociology.[192] As fully-fledged disciplines focusing on societies, these hold much potential for insights. Richmond suggests the adoption of specific tools developed within these disciplines – namely discourse analysis and ethnography - as these facilitate access to everyday life. The politics of agency highlighted through these disciplines can provide different lenses to peacebuilding that has the capacity to address its existing weak points. Thus, exploring the intersection of different disciplines with that of peacebuilding holds much promise in shaping the societybuilding approach to peace.

Intersection of local and international as a resource

The practices that take place at the intersection of local and international in peacebuilding are increasingly being seen and recognised as a rich ground for articulating a sustainable approach to peacebuilding. Exploring the intersection of local and international can meaningfully contribute to a societybuilding framework. Articulation of a post-liberal peace acknowledges the potential in this activity. Richmond observes that post-liberal peacebuilding 'rescues and reunites' the liberal and the local, without aiming to 'depoliticise the local or remove politics from the international'.[193] The aim of post-liberal peace as Richmond defines it, is to 'highlight the evolving relations' between the local and international. This is apt, for given the pervasiveness of liberal practices and peacebuilding it is unlikely to expect an untouched local. Its material power and authority shapes not only peacebuilding frameworks at the international level, but also the language and the discipline along its preferred notion of peacebuilding.[194] Thus, Mac Ginty insists that all actors in peacebuilding are touched to a different extent by the principles of liberal peace.[195]

---

[192] Spencer, *Anthropology, Politics and the State: Democracy and Violence in South Asia*.
[193] Richmond, "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace," 689.
[194] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace," 396.
[195] Ibid.

These power differences between the local and international places them on an asymmetrical relationship. Hybridity emerges in this 'unequal relationship between unequal interlocutors'[196] making statebuilding contexts 'the scene of peculiar pressures that result in peculiar forms of hybridity.'[197] Exploring these particular forms of hybridity emerging in post-conflict situations allow us to recognise the agency and participation of the local from an angle that has been hardly explored in peacebuilding so far. It encompasses a range of context-specific responses to liberal peace that provides a starting place for articulating a more self-sustaining peace. Richmond argues that this hybridity is most visible at the margins of liberal peace that have remained 'blind spots of the liberal peace' so far.[198] We need to explore the margins of peacebuilding where the local meets liberal for hybrid forms of peace that result in self-sustaining local initiatives.

Exploring the hybrid spaces at the intersection of the local and international reveals the agency of the local in shaping and claiming the process of peacebuilding. This is also referred to as resistance or contestation of the liberal model. Seeing the agency takes away the narratives about the local being powerless in the face of external intervention. It perceives the communities at margins of peacebuilding as 'active agents in controlling their engagement with the outside world, giving local meaning to alien ideas, institutions and things.'[199] This reinterpretation and control indicate resistance. It entails a conscious choice and rejection of specific values and visions associated with the liberal peace package, cooperating with certain aspects of it while rejecting, ignoring or subverting other aspects.[200] Thus, it emerges from active agency stemming from the local population. These practices of subversion are at times seen as a negotiated hybridity between the local and the international. Donais argues that this negotiated hybridity is 'both the means and an end of successful peacebuilding.'[201] However, Mac Ginty observes that international actors might not be well placed to recognise these 'local signs of resistance of subversion'[202] for these actions often are

[196] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), 230.
[197] Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*, 74.
[198] Richmond, "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace," 689.
[199] Roger M. Keesing, *Custom and Confrontation: The Kwaio Struggle for Cultural Autonomy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2.
[200] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace," 403.
[201] Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building*, 37.
[202] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace," 403.

highly context-specific and culturally bound. Thus, it is imperative to study the hybrid spaces and the forms of resistance in them from perspectives within the local itself.

The level of hybridity too might differ depending on different factors. It might be less visible in contexts where there are strong liberal peace networks and frameworks in place than in contexts where there is more space for discussion and acceptance for local forms of peacebuilding and participation. Mac Ginty proposes that hybrid peace emerges through the interstices between four factors: 'ability of liberal peace agents to enforce acceptance of liberal peace, ability of liberal peace agents to incentivise local engagement with the liberal peace, ability of local actors to ignore, resist and subvert the liberal peace and the ability of local actors to present alternatives to the liberal peace'.[203] The capacity for local resistance or subversion again depends on certain factors: 'the extent to which local actors retain power during a liberal peace transition, the extent to which external actors are dependent on local actors…, the extent to which national, regional and local institutions are intact in the wake of a violent conflict, and the extent to which local actors…can marshal resources'.[204] The first and last factors are seen as crucial in determining the level of hybridity in a society.[205] The constant flux into which the conflict contexts are often thrown into also accelerates hybridity. Exploring the different levels at which hybridity occurs will facilitate insights into its way of working.

Adopting a hybrid lens has much to offer for articulating a self-sustaining peace that can effectively deal with complexities and socio-cultural residues of conflict. It can counter the power inequality in the peacebuilding discourse by helping 'deconstruct binaries underpinning liberal peacebuilding, such as liberal-non-liberal [or traditional], peace-war, developed-underdeveloped' as it locates the discussion within the body of a hybrid society that has 'experienced and adapted to outside intervention'.[206] This locating supports the identification of power relations and local agency at the ground level.[207] The 'unscripted conversations'[208] taking place between the local and international which Richmond sees as necessary for a future generation

---

[203] Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*, 9.

[204] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace," 402.

[205] See *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*, 85.

[206] Stamnes, "Values, Context and Hybridity: How Can the Insights from the Liberal Peace Critique Literature Be Brought to Bear on the Practices of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture?," 15.

[207] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace," 407.

[208] Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War : Governing the World of Peoples*, 234.

of peacebuilding takes place within this hybridity. Adopting a hybrid lens requires putting communities first rather than institutional peace and focusing on 'the grassroots' and 'the most marginalised members' of the society.[209] The concept of hybridisation allows us to see the blowback suffered by the liberal peace. Neither does liberal peace always set the agenda nor the local actors always comply. Instead, local actors are able to use the liberal peace and the resources attached to it for their own agendas that might deviate from that of the prevalent approaches. The resistance of local actors and the hybrid forms of peace emerge through these interactions. Exploring these in-between spaces that have not been at the centre of peacebuilding discourse is necessary for the articulation of an approach to peacebuilding that can effectively counter the gaps of prevalent approaches. The intersection of different disciplines at the boundaries of peacebuilding needs to be acknowledged as a resource, studied along with the intersection of local and international in the existing peacebuilding initiatives. These hybrid platforms facilitate organic forms of peacebuilding that emerge through local meaning making processes.

Conclusion

Peacebuilding and its critiques are gradually drawing more attention within the discipline of peace and conflict studies. The tension between statebuilding and societybuilding approaches to peace stand at the centre of these debates. Recently, there are increasing calls for a 'shift in the analytical and empirical focus' of peacebuilding that does not already privilege the 'power and behaviour of external actors'. This call asks the discipline to focus instead on the 'character of the relationship between external and local actors, and to explicitly account for the interaction between them.'[210] As a result, debates under the societybuilding approach are gaining prominence.

This chapter outlined selected key areas within societybuilding approach that warranted further exploration. While varying and spanning different dimensions, these areas stand upon a shared foundation: the recognition and emphasis accorded to authentic engagement with people and communities in conflict contexts. Simply prioritising the local voices does not achieve this. The societybuilding approach was

---

[209] Richmond, "A Geneology of Peace and Conflict Theory," 31.
[210] Sending, "The Effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power," 56.

problematized because of its high reliance on local elites. Instead, it is important to explore the sites where culture, community and individuals converge for alternative or complementary approaches to peacebuilding. It is shared cultural and societal perceptions and norms that determine a community's willingness for peace. The future approaches – the fourth generation peacebuilding presented by Richmond – rests accordingly on peacebuilding's ability to engage the communities in the process: in balancing out the layered asymmetrical power relations instigated through liberal peacebuilding. [211]

In order to achieve this, critics recommend looking at the margins of peacebuilding to identify elements that already work: the peacebuilding initiatives that successfully embody a negotiated hybridity and the disciplinary boundaries where alternative approaches to peacebuilding are located. Funk maybe correct in noting that it requires new thinking to 'truly privilege the local in international peacebuilding.'[212]

Consequently, it becomes apparent that the key debates in peacebuilding have arrived at a critical stage: the prevalent approaches to peacebuilding pushing for liberal democratic procedures through statebuilding have repeatedly failed, resulting in a call for either being replaced or reformulated. The societybuilding approach indicates potential but requires further exploration and development. It needs to draw from and emulate approaches and practices existing at the margins of peacebuilding, firmly situated within the local-international hybrid, and reflect societybuilding's fundamental feature of working within the community. For articulating the future directions of peacebuilding, we need to explore work that transgresses the prevailing boundaries of peacebuilding and the leadership and particularities of a new discipline will arise in the resulting transdisciplinary spaces.

---

[211] See Roberts, "Beyond the Metropolis? Popular Peace and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding," 2554.
[212] Nathan C. Funk, "Building on What's Already There: Valuing the Local in International Peacebuilding," *International Journal* 67, no. 2 (2012): 397.

Chapter 2: Theatre for Peacebuilding

Introduction

The previous chapter explored key debates in peacebuilding, identifying gaps in the prevalent approaches and where further study needs to be conducted. This discussion highlighted the need for peacebuilding approaches that adopt an everyday lens and are capable of addressing local complexities and cultural impacts of conflict.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore arts – specifically theatre - as a potential approach to address what remains unaddressed within prevalent approaches to peacebuilding. I do so by critically reviewing existing literature on theatre from a peacebuilding perspective.

I argue that theatre is an important but neglected approach to peacebuilding that warrants further study. I advance this argument in three sections: the first section brings together evidence that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding. It establishes that theatre is an often-overlooked area in peacebuilding despite its potential to initiate transformation.

The second section highlights the specific ways in which theatre can contribute to peacebuilding. Theatre addresses gaps and adds to the existing approaches in two ways: it broadens peacebuilding beyond the parameters of existing approaches, and has the potential to express local complexities and encourage context specific solutions. As the first chapter on key debates on peacebuilding concluded, these aspects come to the fore for their relevance in enhancing the sustainability of peacebuilding. Therein lies the contribution of theatre for peacebuilding.

Third, I propose a hypothesis on how theatre works for peacebuilding: I suggest that the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre is a key element in theatre's potential as a peacebuilding approach. While multivocality and the dialogic have been discussed in other contexts, the potential of these in theatre for peacebuilding is yet to be explored. Finally, I comment on the limitations of using theatre for peacebuilding. The salience of theatre as an approach drives the necessity for impartial, systematic academic studies into using theatre for peacebuilding and this, in turn, requires the identification of its limitations.

Evidence that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding

There are numerous art forms engaging with issues of war and peace that have become crucial elements in peacebuilding and anti-war movements: these include but are not limited to music, painting, fiction, performance, film and photography. Take Picasso's *Guernica* painted in response to the Spanish Civil War or John Lennon's *Give Peace a Chance*. These are constantly being referred to as points of inspiration, solidarity building, and in general, as a way of continuing with a shared vision when it comes to the practice of peacebuilding. Positioned as a 'site of struggle', these art forms also carry 'possibilities for healing and rebuilding'.[213] The contribution of different art forms and how they contribute can differ according to the context and cause. This thesis looks at how theatre as a particular art form contributes to peacebuilding.

I choose to examine theatre for it is constantly singled out for its political relevance among other forms of art by historical and contemporary thinkers alike. Plato identifies theatre and literature as the two major art forms that provide structure to the arts as a genre in general,[214] and especially theatre to hold significant potential in shaping politics.[215] Rancière perceives the stage to be a 'locus of public activity and the exhibition-space for 'fantasies' simultaneously. This space, he argues, has the capacity to disturb the separation of 'identities, activities and spaces'. Ross supports this point and emphasises theatre's exceptionality as a form of art also drawing from Derrida: Further emphasising this political potential of theatre, Derrida argues that theatre has the capacity to produce 'meaning-effects rather than, as the modern aesthetic tradition would have it, 'merely fictions'.'[216] The crucial point here is the possibility of an effect through theatre that goes beyond its entertainment and aesthetic value. Theatre does not necessarily generate positive outcomes and it is not the only, or the most powerful, way of scripting politics. Yet, its potential for political significance stands out among other forms of art. Theatre presents a conduit that is connected to politics and everyday life: it provides a space that is both *influenced by* and *influences* the existing politics, while remaining outside the boundaries of

---

[213] Agathangelou and Ling, *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds*, 109.
[214] Cited in Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* 13.
[215] Cited in Alison Ross, "Derrida's Writing-Theatre: From the Theatrical Allegory to Political Commitment," *Derrida Today* 5, no. 1 (2008): 89.
[216] Derrida cited in ibid.

complete subjectivity to the established hierarchies. Scholars especially note the capacity of theatre to shape politics in comparison to other forms of art.

Theatre, as a performing art, can draw from the symbolic and performative power invested in ceremony and rituals. When appropriately harnessed and presented, this performative power in rituals and symbolic can open up 'new political space, vocabularies and discourses' that challenge the dominant and established modes of power.[217] In discussing performance elements in parliamentary politics, Shirin Rai argues that alternative political spaces for and modes of reorganizing power possibly emerge when the audience discerns the embedded power relations in these performance elements.[218] Theatre, in turn, can utilize this capacity to replicate and at times, intentionally challenge existing politics. The Peruvian theatre group Yuyachkani's plays like *Rosa Cuchillo* and *Antigona* integrate ritualistic elements quite successfully to problematize the way the state treats indigenous communities and addresses a pressing need in these communities for grieving and healing.[219]

History of political scripture

Theatre's history of political scripture provides further evidence to the claim that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding. Theatre has a history of being used as a tool for shaping politics in different continents. The *Acting Together Anthology* documents a number of examples where theatre is used for reconciliation and conflict transformation spanning different parts of the world.[220] Particularly in the global South, art and theatre are seen as imbued with meaning, passion and transformation - a blend of traditional practices that evolve along the needs of the community to suit contemporary requirements.[221] For example, during colonialism in India and Sri Lanka, art and theatre were powerful modes of defining a sense of nation:[222] poetry of Rabindranath Tagore is widely acknowledged for the impact it had in providing a

---

[217] Shirin M. Rai, "Analysing Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament," *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 16, no. 3 (2010): 292.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Diana Taylor and Sarah J. Townsend, *Stages of Conflict: A Critical Anthology of Latin American Theater and Performance* (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Cohen, Varea, and Walker, *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 1: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence.*
[220] *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 1: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence*, 11.
[221] Mani, "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice," 550.
[222] Dia Da Costa, *Development Dramas: Reimagining Rural Political Action in Eastern India* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), 45.

vision, shape and drive to the political struggle. The well-known Indian critic Sadanand Menon comments on the role theatre played in mobilising 'thousands to join the freedom struggle' in the late 1800's.[223] Amidst heavy state censorship during 1987 insurgency in Sri Lanka, theatre was one of the few remaining modes of expressing public dissent.[224] This space kept the public conscience alive and provided much needed courage and hope at that time, while also serving as a platform to build people's resistance to the government.

Theatre for peacebuilding clearly bridges performance and politics. As such, it is on one hand a form of art and thus aims to entertain, while on the other hand it carries forth a clear political agenda of contributing to create a peaceful society. Indeed, Shirin Rai recommends adopting a lens of performance to analyse politics and political institutions, recognizing the salience of performance in scripting politics. She argues that a lens of performance allows us to 'read the power flows, circulations and disturbances that performance can generate' within political institutions. Such a framework acknowledges the nuances in the shaping and making of power politics not only at the highest levels of authority, but also at a broader public level.

The measures of control upon performances also suggest theatre's impact in the political sphere. Plato perceived theatre as the 'only dangerous form of art worth expelling from the polis' due to the extent to which its 'capacity to dissimulate has the potential to re-shape the polis and confuse the hierarchy of roles… distributed there'.[225] In *The censorship of British drama 1900-1968,* Steve Nicholson extensively engages with the policy relevant measures of censorship brought upon drama that engaged with topics such as the World Wars, international politics, religion and the monarchy.[226] Several attempts at legislative control on theatre in colonial India further indicate the theatre's significance in constituting politics: take the Dramatic Performances Control Bill of 1876 introducing censorship in India for the first time, for example. Through their very existence, these measures of control acknowledge theatre for its potential and active engagement in political scripture.

---

[223] Shalini Umachandran, "The Freedom Struggle Performers Staged," *The Times of India*, August 15, 2010
[224] Rajini Obeyesekere, *Sri Lankan Theatre at a Time of Terror* (New Delhi: Sage, 1999); Palihapitiya, "The Created Space: Peacebuilding and Performance in Sri Lanka."
[225] Cited in Ross, "Derrida's Writing-Theatre: From the Theatrical Allegory to Political Commitment," 89.
[226] Steve Nicholson, *The Censorship of British Drama, 1900-1968* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2003).

Hence scholarly and historical evidence testifies that theatre has the potential to effectively engage with and transform the political. Theatre's long history of being used as a tool to unite communities for collective action and cohesion[227] enhances its appropriateness as a peacebuilding approach. This is what is required in building peace within the inevitably political, divisive cultural narratives that develop in protracted conflict situations.

Theatre forms

To support the claim that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding, I briefly discuss theatre forms intentionally developed and used for personal or social engagement along two general directions: theatre forms stemming from a therapeutic approach, aiming for healing or reconciliation, and theatre forms adopting a broader social lens and are more overtly political in nature. These categories overlap and are more akin to a spectrum with clearer consolidations towards either end. This is not intended as a comprehensive overview of theatre forms relevant for peacebuilding. My intention here is only to establish that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding by looking at existing evidence on using theatre for healing or reconciliation and empowerment and development.

Healing and reconciliation

Rituals and theatre forms for healing becomes useful in reconciliation. The focus of such theatre can be on the individual or the community depending on the chosen theatre form. There are a number of such theatre forms and I will discuss psychodrama and its later development of drama therapy here. Both these theatre forms are intentionally developed for therapeutic purposes[228] and focus on individual healing and transcending personal conflicts. Introduced by Jacob Levy Moreno in the late 1940's, psychodrama requires individuals to dramatize their past from different perspectives and respond spontaneously in order to facilitate personal growth or healing through the act of re-enactment.[229] Drama therapy broadens psychodrama in its scope and practice, while keeping the primary aim of transformation or healing

---

[227] Zakes Mda, *When People Play People: Development Communication through Theatre* (London: Zed Books, 1993).

[228] See Sue and Ase Minde Jennings, *Art Therapy and Dramatherapy: Masks of the Soul* (London: Jessica Kingsley publishers 1993).

[229] Jacod Levy Moreno, "The Therapeutic Theatre," in *Psychodrama, First Volume* (New York: Beacon House, 1946).

66

through therapeutic use of theatre at a small group or personal level intact.[230] A recent 10-week pilot study with 22 autistic children between the ages of 7-12 argues that drama therapy develops the 'communication, interaction and imagination skills' in the participants, helping them overcome their internal obstacles.[231]

While both drama therapy and psychodrama are useful for reconciliation at a personal level and are indeed being used for psychosocial counselling in some post conflict situations, incorporating this as a peacebuilding approach is somewhat far-fetched. The overlap between the individual focus and the therapeutic approach calls for a well-trained practitioner and requires a significant investment of time and energy on a case-by-case basis. The practical challenges, though, do not undermine the healing and reconciliation potential of theatre in general: it simply calls for different theatre forms that incorporate these potentials yet take a broader approach.

Scholars have noted the aptness of some therapeutic theatre forms for conflict transformation at community level. Take playback theatre, developed by Jonathan Fox in 1975. Used at a group or community level, playback theatre emphasises symbolic representation and incorporates elements of storytelling, songs, rituals and dances. The playback theatre team is made up of a conductor, actors and a musician and is held in a workshop style that is often limited to the participants. After a facilitated initial phase, the conductor invites the participants to share a personal experience, often involving a challenging situation or conflicting emotions. Once the story is shared the actors improvise and enact the story back to the teller and the group. This method opens up the story to a process of dialogue and facilitates healing through listening, validating the personal narrative within the communal forum and empathising with the narrator through performance. Rowe discusses the healing and transformation facilitated through playback theatre in relation to social intervention[232] and Carlin and Park-Fuller comment on the social efficacy of playback theatre in

---

[230] See Robert Landy, Drama Therapy : Concepts, Theories and Practices, (Springfield: Charles C Thomas, 1994) for a further discussion.

[231] See "Drama Therapy Frees Imagination of Kids with Autism." The article is based on a joint study. See Richardson, L., Beadle-Brown, J., Wilkinson, D., Shaughnessy, N., Trimingham, M., Leigh, B., Whelton, R. & Himmerich, J. "Imagining Autism: Evaluation of a drama based intervention for children with autism - the views of teachers and parents" Abstract published in *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability* 27, no 4(2014), 343-344 for more information.

[232] Nick Rowe, *Playing the Other: Dramatizing Personal Narratives in Playback Theatre* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007).

performing disaster narratives with regard to 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and the Haiti earthquake.[233]

Playback theatre can contribute to reconciliation and conflict transformation. Cohen argues that playback theatre is effective in working with people from conflicting ethnic groups as it can facilitate cohesive narratives and help form closer relationships.[234] The process of remembering/re-telling of individual narratives opens up the stories to new insights and interpretations. This can, in turn, result in the transformation of personal memories of anger, hatred and victimhood into a shared community exchange, facilitating personal/small group reconciliation. Cochran perceives this expression and the resulting personal reconciliation with events as a necessary step for conflicting parties to start seeing the humanity of each other.[235] Hence playback theatre has the potential to initiate reconciliation through healing and rearticulating conflict memories. Given that it is at its most effective among a closed group who respect each other and agree to abide by the ethics of the theatre from, playback theatre often engages with small groups.

Playback theatre, like all other forms of theatre, is not necessarily positive. The outcome of the practice heavily depends on the skills and awareness of the team, and the structure and design of the activity. Rea Dennis questions the playback theatre form and the space it allows for power hierarchies to emerge in relation to a study within an Australian refugee context. The design of the playback theatre form automatically assumes that a democratic citizenship exists at the context. The requirement for the personal story telling in that particular context, the author argues, plays into the existing hierarchies and runs the risks of colluding with the existing negative stereotypes.[236] Other authors also problematize the personal story telling requirement of playback theatre.[237] While telling a personal story can bring out the therapeutic elements of theatre, unlike it is often in drama therapy or psychodrama, the practitioners of playback theatre are not trained psychotherapists. Given that these are often conceptualised as isolated events or workshops, the question remains

---

[233] Phyllis Scott Carlin and Linda M. Park-Fuller, "Disaster Narrative Emergent/Cies: Performing Loss, Identity and Resistance," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2012).

[234] Cohen, "Creative Approaches to Reconciliation": 23.

[235] Clarke E. Cochran, "Joseph and the Politics of Memory," *The Review of Politics* 64, no. 3 (2002).

[236] Rea Dennis, "Inclusive Democracy: A Consideration of Playback Theatre with Refugee and Asylum Seekers in Australia," *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 12, no. 3 (2007).

[237] Steve Nash and Nick Rowe, "Safety, Danger and Playback Theatre," *Dramatherapy* 22, no. 3 (2000).

whether playback theatre is equipped to adequately deal with the deeper issues it elicits from the participants.

Empowerment and development

There are two noteworthy theatre forms with a broader lens that are intended to be political in nature: Theatre of the Oppressed and applied theatre. I choose these two theatre forms because these are arguably the best known and most influential theatre forms used for social change at present. The notion of empowerment in Theatre of the Oppressed and applied theatre is in agreement with the understanding of empowerment Jane Parpat, Shirin Rai and Kathleen Staudt present in *Rethinking Empowerment*: it cultivates *power within* the individual and encourages *power with,* that is moving to collective action that can in turn, initiate change.[238] Thus, unlike drama therapy or psychodrama, both these theatre forms integrate the personal, group and communal levels in their work. Discussing these particular theatre forms also establishes a preliminary background for the Part 2 of this thesis, where I discuss these in detail in relation to the case studies. These theatre forms overlap and are loosely gathered within the broader categorisation of applied theatre. However, each theatre form has distinctive characteristics and is used on its own right by practitioners. Each is also an umbrella term drawing together a number of related theatre forms. I will discuss the specificities under each theatre category in turn. Together, these theatre forms provide pertinent evidence that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding.

Theatre of the Oppressed

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is also referred to as theatre for empowerment. Developed by Augusto Boal, this marks a key development in theatre. A number of theatre forms such as legislative theatre, invisible theatre and forum theatre fall within the umbrella term Theatre of the Oppressed. Each of these theatre forms has personal empowerment directed at social action at its core and voices the perspectives of the marginalised or oppressed.[239] The theatre format promotes dialogue and discussion both within the individual and among the audience through the very structure of the

---

[238] Jane L. Parpart, Shirin M. Rai, and Kathleen A. Staudt, eds., *Rethinking Empowerment : Gender and Development in a Global/Local World*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 4.
[239] See Augusto Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (London: Routledge, 2006).

play. TO, thus, challenges oppression by using theatre to build power within and power with, respectively with the individuals and communities from marginalised or silenced positions. Theatre works here as a platform that bridges the personal with the political. Personal empowerment leading to social change emerges through this bridging. While this transformation and the space to speak up are crucial aspects for conflict transformation, TO is largely used and discussed within a framework of development and empowerment.

Forum Theatre (FT) is the primary theatre form within the TO repertoire. In FT, a play resembling a real life situation of oppression or injustice is performed on stage. A facilitator called Joker comes on stage at the end of the play, asks for a re-enactment, and invites the audience to intervene, replace a character and strive to rewrite the story at any point to make the narratives fairer. From then on, it is impromptu. The Joker facilitates the process and discussions. The audience are called spect-actors, as they are both the audience and the actors.

The intention of TO is to provide a space not only for 'discussion and reflection' but also for 'rehearsal for real action toward change.'[240] In all its theatre forms, TO blurs the barrier between spectator and actor by introducing the 'spect-actor'. In the action of coming on-stage to rewrite the play, the spect-actor is already acting out resistance to the exclusionary narratives. The facilitated space for dialogue and disagreement on-stage for all those who are present, nurtures critical thinking and creativity.[241] This specific approach towards the spectators - drawing them into the play with an active role of reconstituting the story - is a unique characteristic of the varied theatre forms developed under TO.

The concept of the spect-actor is intimately connected to the process of change effected through FT, and TO: by enacting interventions in the play to change its narrative, TO encourages intervening in similar real life situations the community experiences at a daily level. Such actions bridge the personal and political by

[240] Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton, *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice* (Bristol: Intellect, 2009), 70.
[241] Da Costa, *Development Dramas: Reimagining Rural Political Action in Eastern India*, 63.

combining both the 'therapeutic and pedagogical-political imperative,' making TO one of the most influential theatre forms of the post-war period.[242]

Several studies confirm the salience of TO and FT. Nick Hammond reports one such study or research program conducted to explore the effectiveness of FT in 'eliciting and advocating the views of children', with the participation of 26 students and 3 teachers.[243] Participants indicate significant improvements in 'empowerment' and 'social justice and equality' by the end of the research. For example, the data reported that as a result of bringing together the adults (power-holders) and children (powerless) in the FT space, the children feel more confident to share their opinions.

A primary challenge facing TO, especially with its popularity among theatre practitioners, is the implementation of the FT model across different cultural and socio-political contexts. The relevant issues, their manifestation and the ways in which these can be addressed differ at each context. FT needs to take each aspect into account and adapt accordingly. For example, a neighbour intercepting and warning an alcoholic husband is probably not an apt example of an intervention for France. Yet, this is a viable and an effective intervention for rural Bengal. If this adaptation process is weak, the FT initiative fails to have an impact. Take the forum theatre event organised by the Beyond Borders theatre group in 2006 in Sri Lanka, on bullying. Bullying was not a theme that average Sri Lankan student in the audience related to, though this might be a highly relevant theme when working with the American high schools. Consequently, the forum play failed to elicit audience interventions or generate discussion. To optimally utilise the FT form, the play has to resonate with the authentic issues the community struggles with. Thus, unless carefully adapted thematically and structurally, the unconventional format and overt references to power hierarchies can render the FT redundant.

Though it is yet to be examined from a peacebuilding perspective, FT and TO hold much potential for conflict transformation. Given the plurality and facilitated dialogue embedded in its structure, TO can accommodate diverse voices within its form, initiating dialogue between and across their varied positions. It opens up the theatre

---

[242] Christopher B. Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 185.
[243] Nick Hammond, "Introducing Forum Theatre to Elicit and Advocate Children's Views," *Educational Psychology in Practice* 29, no. 1 (2012): 2.

space to infinite possibilities rooted in the local context, flexible and responsive to different locations. Given its focus on empowerment and development, TO is especially apt for addressing conflict situations based on structural discrimination such as cast, class or economic exploitation.

Applied Theatre - an umbrella term for theatre discussing social issues

Applied theatre is an umbrella term introduced in early 2000's. It gathers a number of theatre forms developed with an underlying social consciousness. Theatre of the Oppressed inspired and played a noteworthy role here.[244] Developments of theatre inspired by Boal's influence are separate from the TO repertoire - such as theatre in/for education, community theatre, Drama for Conflict Transformation and prison theatre – and are categorised under the title of applied theatre.[245]

Applied theatre can be broadly defined as theatre for a specific purpose that actively engages with the audience. Ackroyd perceives applied theatre as a continuum: she identifies the 'intention to generate change' and the 'participation of the audience' as two key distinguishing aspects of an applied theatre project.[246] It is 'always theatre for a specific purpose' and the interests of the practitioners and scholars are found in the 'power of theatrical concepts and techniques to achieve these purposes'.[247] Thus, unlike TO, applied theatre can maintain a close association with the mainstream theatre studies while enjoying a high degree of autonomy and flexibility at the same time.[248] Whereas theatre of the oppressed has a clear empowerment focus in its conception and functions within a prearranged structural framework, applied theatre focuses on exploring issues connected to the community, self or the society, demonstrating a flexibility that extends to structure, form, content and context. These factors make applied theatre a significant development in using theatre for social change.

The performance spaces of applied theatre often take it away from mainstream theatre. Similar to some forms under theatre of the oppressed, applied theatre often

---

[244] See Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre.*, Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies.*

[245] See Prendergast and Saxton, *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice*, 6 for a detailed discussion.

[246] Judith Ackroyd, "Applied Theatre: Problems and Possibilities," *Applied Theatre Researcher* 1, no. 1 (2000). http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/81796/Ackroyd.pdf.

[247] Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, 181-82.

[248] *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, 182.

takes place in 'non-traditional settings and/or with marginalised communities.'[249] Going beyond the hierarchy of the stage in this manner is also a factor that enables participant's voices to be heard and included. This too adds to applied theatre's potential in peacebuilding.

Applied theatre aims to ground itself in the lived experiences of people. It takes the perspective that fiction and reality (or the imagination and the real) are both narrative constructions and as such, are always interrelated and embedded in each other: thus Nicholson argues that understanding 'narratives can be changed' – both in fiction and in reality – is found at the 'heart of practice in applied drama.'[250] This emphasised plurality and dialogic nature of applied theatre is highly conducive to peacebuilding: it offers the possibility of bringing different and contradictory voices together through a shared everyday reality. Hence scholars term it as a 'discursive practice… motivated by the desire to make a difference to the lives of others'[251]; a space 'where new possibilities for mankind can be imagined'[252] or where theatre can 'be harnessed … to build stronger communities.'[253] Further, such practices are seen to be capable of embracing emotions, 'empathic dialogue and mutual exchange.'[254] These observations on applied theatre show the potential depth of theatre's engagement. Gallagher and Service argue that applied theatre has proved 'particularly effective in initiating dialogue and transforming social relations.'[255] As such, applied theatre adopts a broader social lens and has significant potential for peacebuilding.

There have been concerns regarding the development of applied theatre discourse. Despite its widespread use, the term is justifiably contested for leaving out certain branches of socially engaged theatre.[256] Ackroyd notes that there is an increasing tendency to idealise applied theatre; a refusal to acknowledge that as a powerful

---

[249] James Thompson and A Jackson, "Applied Theatre / Drama : An E-Debate in 2004: Viewpoints. ," *RIDE-Research in Drama and Education* 11, no. 1 (2006): 92.

[250] Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre.*

[251] *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, 16.

[252] Phillip Taylor, *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community* (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 2003), xxx.

[253] *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community* (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 2003), xxi.

[254] Chinyowa, "Emerging Paradigms for Applied Drama and Theatre Practice in African Contexts," 330.

[255] Kathleen Gallagher and Ivan Service, "Applied Theatre at the Heart of Educational Reform: An Impact and Sustain Ability Analysis," *Research in Drama Education-The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 15, no. 2 (2010): 251.

[256] See Judith Ackroyd, "Applied Theatre: An Exclusionary Discourse?," *Applied theatre researcher* 8(2007). Accesed May 8, 2011. http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/52889/01-ackroyd-final.pdf.

medium, applied theatre can serve 'dubious as well as humanitarian ends.'[257] Drawing from a number of authors, she further challenges the emerging 'exclusionary' trends: What can be termed as applied theatre has existed among many cultures and traditions before the introduction of the term, and as such it has many varied roots and cannot be restricted to a few specific theatre forms. Another concern arises with Nicholson's analogy of applied theatre as a gift: the concept of a gift becomes problematic since the gifting here is seen as a one-way process. There is a clear giver and a beneficiary. The theatre practice here is couched in implied power hierarchies and the discourse of charity. This perception jeopardises the participatory approach of applied theatre, making it somewhat distinct from the take of the theatre of the oppressed.

Given its broader spectrum, applied theatre is increasingly used to refer to theatre activities for conflict transformation. Centres for Applied Theatre Research established at the Griffith University in Australia and the University of Manchester in England are indicative of the increasing attention on using theatre for conflict transformation. With these numerous theatre forms originating from different disciplines and contexts, it is evident that theatre forms for conflict transformation are many and varied, having developed gradually bridging several disciplines in its process.[258]

Accordingly, there is ample evidence of theatre's potential in contributing to peacebuilding. Theatre has an established history of political scripture and a number of theatre forms are developed for various aspects of individual and systemic transformation. The efficacy of these forms suggests theatre's potential to contribute to peacebuilding. Despite this established history, theatre still remains at the fringes of peacebuilding discourse. This discussion makes it evident that theatre as an important but often overlooked area in peacebuilding that warrants further study at the conceptual as well as empirical levels.

---

[257] Ackroyd, "Applied Theatre: An Exclusionary Discourse?",6.
[258] See Dale Bagshaw and Margaret Lepp, "Ethical Considerations in Drama and Conflict Resolution Research in Swedish and Australian Schools," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (2005); Jonathan Fox, "Drumming and Playback Theatre: Partners for Peace." A working paper of *Recasting Reconciliation through Culture and the Arts*, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA (2005).

How does theatre contribute to the prevalent peacebuilding discourse?

As the second step of arguing that theatre warrants further study as an important but neglected area in peacebuilding, I explore the specific ways in which theatre can potentially contribute to prevalent peacebuilding approaches. I identify and discuss two predominant and overlapping themes under which theatre contributes to peacebuilding: firstly, theatre has the potential to broaden peacebuilding beyond the parameters of existing approaches. Secondly, theatre can offer a context-specific approach rooted within and driven by the local community that is particularly suited to express local complexities. As discussed in the previous chapter, these are key in articulating sustainable peacebuilding. Theatre has the capacity to approach peacebuilding through these significant but little discussed avenues absent within prevalent approaches.

Broaden peacebuilding beyond the parameters of existing approaches

Theatre has the potential to contribute to peacebuilding through broadening peacebuilding beyond the parameters of existing approaches. I discuss two aspects through which this happens: by broadening the conventional boundaries of regular discourse, and by providing an approach that can effectively tap into and transform the emotional legacies of conflict.

Broaden boundaries of regular communication

Art in general and specifically theatre has the potential to broaden the conventional boundaries of regular discourse – or in other words, the day-today ways in which we articulate ourselves. It is important to go beyond boundaries of regular discourse for sustainable peace in intractable conflicts. Scholars note that the 'discourse of each community's regular conversation' is often insinuated with conflict dynamics and embedded with the stereotypes that fuel the conflict and perpetuate dehumanisation.[259] The phrases, idioms, jokes and gestures all contribute to the creation and perpetuation of dichotomies. Cohen observes that participants in co-existence activities at times sense this, and as a result, restrict themselves to a rigid,

---

[259] Cynthia Cohen, "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence," in *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity after Violent Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Martha Minow and Antonia Chaves (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 270.

polite conversational level that prevents a deeper connection.[260] Theatre has the potential to address this by broadening the boundaries of regular conversation.

I draw attention to two key features here: theatre's potential to enable a broader expression through embodying different forms of art, and the potential of peacebuilding offered through the imagination of theatre. These features of theatre are interrelated and together open up multiple avenues of expression conducive to authentic peacebuilding that is difficult to achieve within the conventional peacebuilding approaches.

Embodies different forms of art, thus enabling a broader expression

Theatre embodies a number of art forms, encompassing a broad spectrum of communication that surpasses the capabilities of regular, rational discourse upon which peacebuilding relies on. When used for peacebuilding, this plurality and fluidity enhances the accessibility of theatre and succeeds in reaching different individuals at multiple levels of reception. Bleiker observes that specific art forms such as literature and music have been noted as particularly suited to capture the emotional dimensions of terrorism.[261] Theatre provides a space where not only these but also a number of other conventional art forms such as dance, poetry, painting and varied fusions of these forms can be put forth simultaneously. Due to this fluidity and plurality inherent in its form, theatre as a peacebuilding initiative has the capacity to utilise these multiple art forms and command the varied expressions facilitated through each individual form. Thus, theatre enables peacebuilding to reach beyond the parameters of verbal communication.

The multiple avenues of reach are particularly apt given the essential public nature of theatre. A theatre audience who shares the same activity at a given point in time is often a random crowd that come from different backgrounds and levels, bringing different expectations and narratives with them. The different avenues combined as a single production on-stage has the potential to address such an audience consisting of varying individuals. The flexibility and plurality this offers is a significant asset in peacebuilding, especially when taking into account the need for peacebuilding to

[260] "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence," in *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity after Violent Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Martha Minow and Antonia Chaves (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 2-3.
[261] Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, 60.

reach across a broad range of individuals holding varying perspectives about the conflict.

The diversity in expression and communication within theatre is an important factor with much potential for peacebuilding. Shank observes that the 'arts have the capacity to communicate in an elicitive, culturally ambidextrous, and nonverbal way.'[262] Mani argues that unlike the detached, reduced form of representation offered through news and policy reports, representing the impact of the conflict through arts 'humanises both victims and perpetrators after the dehumanisation of war'.[263] Arts essentially take place through accessible human narratives of expression in one form or other, and that, she claims, has a cathartic effect. With its space for non-verbal expression, theatre has the potential to express what might be challenging to put into words. Indeed, Cohen points out that for most, '[n]ondiscursive modes of expression' might be the only available way to make meaning out of the violations they have experienced.[264] Theatre, in such cases, has the potential to bring out narratives that often remain silenced within the dominant and the regular discourse of conflict contexts. Encompassing both verbal and non-verbal modes of expression, theatre facilitates articulating experience within its sphere to be less subjective to the authoritarian discourse and more multivocal and pluralistic. Theatre, thus, offers much potential for sustainable peacebuilding.

The imagination of theatre

The imagination through theatre contributes to peacebuilding by enabling creativity and distancing that in turn, can transcend the boundaries of real and imagined. In the distancing that occurs between the real and the imagined through theatre, an opportunity is created to take part in conflict narratives outside the risks and restrictions of real life. This imagined space is safer for expression than the outside, which is threatening and can be retributive towards what is expressed. Also the notion of playing a role has the capacity to suspend preconceptions, which becomes an effective mechanism in addressing sensitive issues seen in a conflict situation. It offers a space where 'group experiences can be enacted and safely shared and

---

[262] Shank and Schirch, "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding," 237.
[263] Mani, "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice," 551-52.
[264] Cohen, "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence," 2.

expressed.'[265] Theatre's imagination allows individuals to take on roles that might often be denied for them in the real, facilitating the expansion of perceptive and expressive possibilities.[266] The insights and empathy this offers is often beyond the day-to-day communication and is imperative for sustainable peacebuilding.

By transcending the boundaries of regular discourse, theatre can frame contentious issues in acceptable ways. The space offered by the imagination of theatre can provide different ways of framing conflict issues that might not be possible within the prevalent peacebuilding methods.[267] It can take us beyond the observable in real life to tell different stories. Nicholson perceives applied theatre to be capable of redressing the balance in situations by telling 'alternative stories or stories from different perspectives' using the space of theatre's imagination.[268] It can either sidesteps or overcomes the inconsistencies in the existing conflict discourses, while presenting new ways of looking at things: These new perspectives can invite people to respond and engage in a relationship with each other.[269] Thus, Long and Brecke identify novelty or creativity as key to initiate conflict transformation, acknowledging that conflict transformation attempts are more likely to succeed when they break out of the established conflict patterns.[270] Art in general and specifically the imagination of theatre presents an opportunity for breaking out of the established patterns. Thus, the transformative rearticulation theatre offers within its imagination is crucial for a sustainable peacebuilding process. Drawing from field experience, Cohen notes that many participants at co-existence programmes find it hard to conceptualise a 'time when we all got along.'[271] Creative rearticulation is crucial to present a vision of cohesion and harmony for sustainable peacebuilding. Theatre embodies the creativity and flexibility to facilitate such inclusive rearticulation in the place of existing divisive narratives.

---

[265] Vivien Marcow Speiser and Phillip Speiser, "An Arts Approach to Working with Conflict," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 47, no. 3 (2007), 362.

[266] Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*.

[267] See Shank and Schirch, "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding," 237.

[268] Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, 63.

[269] Cohen, "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence," 3.

[270] William J. Long and Peter Brecke, *War and Reconciliation: Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution* (MA: MIT Press, 2003).

[271] Cohen, "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence," 3.

Take origin myths for example: Sara Cobb argues that a reinterpretation of the origin myths[272] of conflicting groups need to lose their totalitarian grip so that the narratives of authoritarian discourse constructed and backed up by emotion and culture can create an inclusive and understanding society. Nicholson also observes that 'fictionalised narratives found in myth and legends are integral to narratives of selfhood and community'.[273] Hence reinterpreting historical narratives is imperative to construct different personal and communal identities. The creativity and flexibility within the imagination of theatre renders these origin myths malleable, opening them up for new information, new themes and new roles. It is seen as the one forum within which these 'narratives can (and must be) embodied and re-represented,' thus enabling aspects of history and communal narratives to be 'collectively explored, deconstructed and remade'; by rewriting these, we rewrite ourselves.[274] Such reinterpretation is a crucial aspect of peacebuilding because communities collect data that confirm the myths of respective groups. As long as they are coherent, they strengthen the divisive narratives resisting peacebuilding. Hence the creativity and flexibility within theatre is pivotal to facilitate the transformation of narratives within an authoritative discourse. It leads to the construction of newer, inclusive identities and shared historical narratives between groups. The imagination of theatre, therefore, is an aspect through which theatre has the potential to significantly contribute to peacebuilding.

Tap into and transform the emotional legacies of war

Yet another potential of theatre that transcends the boundaries of prevalent peacebuilding is its ability to engage with emotion. The emotions of fear and anger particularly prevail after conflict, contributing on one hand to the identity and community formation, and on the other hand to the perpetuation of conflict.[275] Grief and despair also are strong residual emotions seen within conflict contexts that need to be addressed for post-conflict transformation. Providing an inclusive space where

---

[272] 'They justify violence in the present and in the future as they preserve and embellish the story of the origin of the violence, which is never a function of the acts of the story teller, but always a result of the acts of the 'other'. Origin myths externalise the responsibility for violence at the same time that they call for violence as a response to victimisation.

[273] Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, 66.

[274] David Williams, 'Remembering The Others That Are Us- Transculturalism and myth in the theatre of Peter Brook' in *Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. Patrice Pavis (London: Routledge: 67- 78: 1996), 68

[275] Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, "Reconciliation," in *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, ed. R.M. Ginty (New York: Routledge, 2013), 82.

all concerned parties including victims and perpetrators can come together and witness each other's emotional pain is crucial to reach emotional understanding.[276] While the prevailing approaches to peacebuilding have repeatedly been critiqued for their failure to do so,[277] theatre for peacebuilding has the potential to fill this gap: it provides a space to express and engage with prevailing emotions, triggering the generation of emotions that could lead to positive conflict transformation.

The need for peacebuilding to broaden its scope from the rational and analytical approaches to incorporate the emotional and psychological aspects is increasingly noted by scholars. Roland Bleiker sees emotions playing an important social and political role, particularly in the process of constituting identity and community attachments.[278] Emotions are a 'socio-political force' in this;[279] a form of 'insight and judgement' that can be harnessed for transformation once it is acknowledged as such.[280] When it comes to mediating ethnic conflicts, Kaufman asserts that it is not the interests at stake that provides most challenging but the 'emotion-laden symbolic politics' that emerge in the discussions. Martha Nussbaum also argues in *Political Emotion* that cultivating public emotion seen as emotions 'directed at the nation and its goals', can greatly contribute in 'getting people to think larger thoughts and recommit themselves to a larger common good.'[281] Focusing on justice alone while neglecting emotions, as is the case with prevailing peacebuilding approaches, is simply not enough. Thus, addressing the emotional and symbolic psychological aspects of a conflict is crucial for its transformation.[282]

Theatre as a form of art engages with emotions: an emotionally driven pattern drawing from the psychology of local communities is more suited to transform the heated emotions of conflict into empathy and connection.[283] Access to emotions is a key contribution art based approaches offer to peacebuilding. The 'emotive nature' of art and especially theatre given its immediate, embodied presentation, encourages

---

[276] Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, "Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics " *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 1 (2008).

[277] See Hutchison and Bleiker, "Reconciliation." for a further discussion.

[278] Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, 62.

[279] Hutchison and Bleiker, "Reconciliation," 82.

[280] Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, 62.

[281] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013), 3.

[282] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap: Reconciliation Initiatives and Conflict Resolution in Ethnic Wars," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 2 (2006): 202.

[283] See Cohen, "Creative Approaches to Reconciliation," 2, and Long and Brecke, *War and Reconciliation: Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*, 28.

people to feel the grief of war at a personal level, incurring a resulting desire to put an end to the misery.[284] Woodhouse observes the salience of resources offered by the creative energy within the cultural dimensions in a peace process.[285] Ross notes that a 'more productive approach' to peacebuilding would acknowledge a group's perception of threats to their identity that would 'seek to diminish these' through working within a group's narrative to make them more cooperative, forge new links or rearrange the old in ways that are culturally acceptable.[286] These reflections suggest that when used as an integral component of a broader conflict resolution process, theatre for peacebuilding drawing on the emotions of a community have much potential in initiating effective peacebuilding.

Expression of emotions through theatre humanizes the conflict dynamics. Bringing conflict dynamics to the personal level facilitates speaking directly to the emotions of the participants, be they victims or perpetrators of violence. Personalisation in this manner transforms the 'overwhelming faceless numbers' represented in conflict statistics to 'individual humans deserving empathy.'[287] Based on empirical research, Gallagher and Service argue that performance evokes feeling, and that the responses of participants in this go beyond the rational cognition:[288] seeing things from the perspective of another invites the audience to feel empathy and deeper reflection.

The personal expression and constitution of emotion that takes place within theatre can be taken towards a broader collective consciousness. Anderson and Nygaard point to theatre as the only locale that permitted the expression of emotion, preparing for and leading towards a radical change in national politics in a number of countries spanning different time periods.[289] Post-conflict transformation is indeed a radical socio-political change from the conditions of war. Theatre as a peacebuilding approach has the potential to constitute notions of inclusive and cohesive social

---

[284] Carol Rank, "Promoting Peace through the Arts" (paper presented at the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), (Leuven, Belgium, July 2008), 1.

[285] Tom Woodhouse, "Peacekeeping, Peace Culture and Conflict Resolution," *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 4 (2010): 497.

[286] Marc Howard Ross, "Psychocultural Interpretations and Dramas: Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict," *Political Psychology* 22, no. 1 (2001): 174.

[287] Mani, "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice," 551-52.

[288] Gallagher and Service, "Applied Theatre at the Heart of Educational Reform: An Impact and Sustain Ability Analysis."

[289] Anette Storli Andersen and Jon Nygaard, "Narod Sobie - Theatre as the Nation in Itself : Three Case Studies of Theatre and National Emotions," *Nordic Theatre Studies* 21(2009).

relations and personal and communal identities by working through the destructive emotions in place in search of healing.[290]

The resulting emotional transformation through art can provide a deterrent to return to the conflict. It has the capacity to transform human intentions for war: one person at a time while growing in momentum to encompass communities, societies and nations. The change brought through emotions goes beyond the regular discourse, thus seeping inside to evoke a deeper response, a conviction that lasts.

Failure to address the emotional and psychological dynamics of a conflict often results in further complicating the conflict resolution process and also enhances the likelihood of falling back into violence.[291] Hutchison and Bleiker contend that the prevailing approaches to peacebuilding are insufficiently 'attuned to deal with the emotional dangers that accompany communities of fear and anger'. They convincingly argue that lasting sustainable peace is unlikely to be achieved unless these emotional residues present 'underneath and beyond the institutional dimensions of peacebuilding' are satisfactorily dealt with.[292] While it still remains at the margins of the existing social-political-economic landscape, tapping into the resources offered within the cultural, emotional and psychological spheres is increasingly being identified to be vital for sustainable peacebuilding.[293]

Accordingly, theatre for peacebuilding has the potential to broaden peacebuilding beyond the parameters of existing approaches. It broadens the disciplinary boundaries of peacebuilding and opens up alternative channels of communication. The different forms of expression and emotions facilitated through theatre have the potential to reach people where conventional peacebuilding approaches cannot. The changes enacted within theatre's imagination have the potential to be integrated into the real life. Such integration can have a significant impact upon the subsequent action of people and communities.[294] Drawing from experiments that use both qualitative and quantitative data, Hawkes suggests that performances motivated by social change

---

[290] See Hutchison and Bleiker, "Reconciliation," 87.
[291] Robert L. Rothstein, *After the Peace : Resistance and Reconciliation* (Boulder, Colorado: L. Rienner Publishers, 1999), 17.
[292] Hutchison and Bleiker, "Reconciliation," 85.
[293] See Hughes, Thompson, and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*, 142.
[294] See Baz Kershaw, "Performance, Community, Culture," in *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*, ed. L. Goodman and J. De Gay (London: Routledge, 2000).

effectively changes the attitudes and perceptions of audiences.[295] They can open up 'new forms of social identification'[296] that are more conducive to peacebuilding. Hence, the potential of theatre as a peacebuilding method stands alone and warrants further investigation.

Offer a context specific approach

Theatre is not always context specific or local. But when it is, it holds significant potential as a peacebuilding approach. This is the second overarching theme under which I discuss theatre's potential in building peace. The first chapter outlined the need for local, context specific approaches to peacebuilding. The process of peacebuilding through theatre addresses this gap in a number of ways.

I discuss theatre's potential along two interrelated themes: theatre takes peacebuilding beyond the layer of civil society to engage with the life and culture of the context. This, in turn, opens up the possibility of transforming residual conflict memories and narratives through theatre.

Engage with the life and culture of the community

Unlike the prevalent peacebuilding approaches where a pre-constructed, elite-driven civil society automatically becomes the focus, art based approaches like theatre for peacebuilding have the capacity to reach further and draw from the local, everyday experiences of people. Art exists in almost all communities even at the most difficult of times, in one form or another. It is intimately bound with the life and culture of the community and thus, goes beyond the civil society to work within the lifeworlds of individuals. Mani argues that 'art often remains an intrinsic part of daily life for the vast majority of the population' in the Global South, with the 'exception of some urbanised westernised elite.'[297] She further notes that art holds meaning beyond aesthetic pleasure. As a 'fundamental component of culture,' art inevitably becomes a 'primary vehicle of cultural expression and transmission.'[298] Thus, theatre as a form of art can deeply embed itself in the local from which it emerges. When effective, theatre initiatives for peacebuilding are essentially linked to and relates to those very

---

[295] Dena L Hawes, "Crucial Narratives: Performance Art and Peace Building " *International Journal of Peace Studies* 12, no. 2 (2007).
[296] Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, 129.
[297] Mani, "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice," 550.
[298] "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice," 549.

conditions that produced it. It invariably has to have this communal engagement and has to reach beyond the civil society to the local everyday lives in order to be accepted and sustain as a theatre production. Since the agency to accept or reject a theatre project rests with the public, a production that fails to speak to the life and culture of the community fails. When effectively implemented, theatre for peacebuilding can penetrate the layer of civil society to provide an authentic engagement with the life and culture of the local community.

As a collaborative community activity that brings people together within a shared spatio-temporal span, theatre has the potential to heal conflict memories and repair the broken relationships. The invariably public nature of theatre sets it apart from most art forms, giving theatre an added advantage in being used for peacebuilding. Theatre includes both the actors on stage and the audience, allowing politics to emerge in the relationship between the two.[299] Jackson argues that the 'heart of the "aesthetic" process' in theatre is found not in the 'action on stage' but in the '*realization created by the audience*.'[300] Audience engagement is therefore a crucial part of the theatre process, considerably broadening its reach for peacebuilding. The physical process through which theatre initiatives bring people to work together is also salient. Cohen sees it as 'one of the most powerful mediums for creating live contact between individuals from opposing sides of a conflict.'[301] Theatre can add to prevailing peacebuilding approaches by encouraging collective behaviours such as gathering, working and acting together, repairing conflict memories and relationships in the process.

The participatory nature of theatre is of special relevance here: the actors and audience in theatre for peacebuilding approaches are often interrelated in some way. They could belong to conflicting groups or a third party, or to the same community as an audience. Irrespective of these differences, the audience and actors often come from the larger socio-political context as individuals relating to the conflict and its transformation process from their unique standpoints. Shared, plural environment of the performance facilitates an 'interrelated, relations approach in addressing

---

[299] See Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* 17.
[300] Jackson, "The Dialogic and the Aesthetic: Some Reflections on Theatre as a Learning Medium," 109.
[301] Cohen, Varea, and Walker, *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 1: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence*, 42.

conflict.'[302] Theatre also allows re-enactments of the larger political scene within its space facilitated by the presence of recognisable features, accents and local knowledge of the actors. The flexibility of the medium 'challenges the multicultural, multicontext audience to transform conflict collectively and constructively'.[303] Participation in theatre, accordingly, has the potential to initiate shifts in identity that result in more pluralistic and inclusive behaviour patterns conducive to peacebuilding.[304]

The communal nature of theatre combined with the flexibility and resilience of the form contributes to peacebuilding as an approach applicable throughout the different phases of conflict. Theatre works within the everyday and is easily integrated into the everyday life and culture of the context. It initiates the process of peacebuilding by challenging the way we think and represent the political conditions at an everyday level, and has the potential to 'engender reflection that could open up political and ethical insight.'[305] As such, peacebuilding through theatre can start at any point of the conflict cycle: Shank notes that it can start with the conflict management stage – which again can spans most of the conflict cycle including conflict escalation phase– and continue throughout the conflict prevention stage in the end.[306] The flexibility and resilience of theatre illustrates how it as an important but neglected area in peacebuilding, warranting further study.

Transform conflict memories and narratives

Theatre's capacity to transform conflict memories and narratives enhances its potential as a context specific approach. Transforming conflict narratives and memories is the first step in grasping local complexities of conflict. In facilitating personal and collective memories to take place live on the stage, theatre creates a place for the memories to 'converge, condense, conflict and define relationships between past, present and future', thus enabling personal and collective

---

[302] Shank and Schirch, "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding," 235.
[303] Shank 2005 cited in ibid.
[304] See Hughes, Thompson, and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*, 138.
[305] Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts: an introduction to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 1997): 41 cited in Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 8
[306] Shank and Schirch, "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding," 228-32.

reconciliation. [307] Theatre for peacebuilding transforms conflict memories and narratives at personal, collective and cultural spheres.

Theatre can transform personal narratives of conflict through utilising the public space of theatre. Literature on the healing and therapeutic application of theatre discusses in detail the symbolic potential of transformation in the process of performing on the public sphere of the stage. The stage offers a space where the individual silenced narratives and suppressed perspectives can be voiced and made a part of the social discourse; an opportunity to 'restore through re-enactment' the fragmented meaning and lives in post-conflict contexts. [308] Theatre provides an opportunity to reconstitute reality to present a reconciliatory and cohesive vision within its imagination in a shared communal forum. When effective, individuals and communities can create and reflect upon a collective pro-peace experience that is ultimately organic and locally owned. Scholars have commented on the potential that such shared envisioning holds for transforming narratives and identities at both a community and personal level.[309] Mani sees it as particularly relevant for the global south, given the emphasis art holds as a community activity that is shared by all.[310] Thus, theatre as a context specific approach can access the personal narratives of conflict residing within individuals, effect healing within these and initiate the rearticulation of cohesive narratives.

Theatre has the potential to rearticulate collective memories of conflict. Ross defines collective memory to be about the 'emotionally salient events and persons in the past that have particular relevance to how a group understands itself and the challenges it faces in the present and future'. [311] He identifies narratives, ritual expressions, enactments and symbolic landscapes to be important conceptual tools in mobilising collective memories in contexts with 'strong memories of previous intense hostility and trauma.'[312] The direct engagement of participants and their emotions that these aspects require can significantly affect the creation and reinforcement of both

---

[307] Jacqueline E. Bixer, "Re-Membering the Past: Memory-Theatre and Tlatelolco" *Latin American Research Review* 37. no. 2 (2002)

[308] Cohen, Varea, and Walker, *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 2: Building Just and Inclusive Communities*, x.

[309] Victor Turner and Diana Taylor cited in *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 2: Building Just and Inclusive Communities*, 174.

[310] Mani, "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice," 550.

[311] Marc Howard Ross, "The Politics of Memory and Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, ed. Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Routledge, 2013), 92.

[312] Ibid. 96.

individual and group memory. Theatre has the capacity to encompass and expand into all four of these aspects, thus enhancing its potential in addressing collective memory in a conflict context. Drawing from the work of Madis Koiv and Merie Karusoo, Kruuspere argues that Estonian memory theatre tapping into the emotions of anger and laughter in performing events from the past from the Soviet and Nazi occupation, is capable of initiating an alternative process of remembrance.[313] Thus, theatre has the potential to express and rearticulate collective memories, contributing to a peacebuilding process through creating a shared future.

Similarly, theatre can play a central role in rearticulating cultural memory. History is a form of cultural memory, for the dominant discourses functioning within culture heavily affect the narrative of history.[314] Thus the cycle of conflict is reproduced through history: the enemy is remembered as a receptacle for all our negative characteristics.[315] They are portrayed as wholly other, culturally despicable and inferior. The conflict dynamics being played out through the culture of each group actively silence the shared characteristics on one hand while highlighting the differences on the other. Theatre can draw from counter-memories that exist in the context and tell the stories that are suppressed, censored or altered by the dominant narratives and authorities. It can creatively intervene in the selective process of cultural memorisation by bringing people together and effecting connections between and among the conflict sides. Bridging narratives in this manner results in a personal and communal rearticulation of cultural memory. Once these memories are articulated and fully integrated into the communal narratives, they are carried on as part of the everyday processes of cultural expression and transmission. Thus, using theatre results in making peacebuilding a locally driven, context-specific process that does not require external monitoring or interventions to ensure its continuation. It is the ideal local discourse founder that can generate local consensus and make peacebuilding a more authentic, locally led process. Theatre, therefore, can potentially address a pressing need in prevalent approaches to peacebuilding.

---

[313] Piret Kruuspere, "Estonian Memory Theatre of the 1990s: Emotional Scale from Fear to Laughter," *Nordic Theatre Studies* 21 (2009).

[314] Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 2, no. 41 (2002)

[315] Cohen, "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence": 2.

Rearticulation of memory and narratives through theatre can bridge the past with present and future in a positive manner. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to use theatre to remember the past in ways that will support the society to overcome present challenges.[316] Theatre can facilitate a renewal or a re-figuration of the past as a 'contingent 'in-between' space that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present.'[317] What is brought out of this in-between space and what is sent back there ultimately has to be regulated by 'political and moral principles of justice, human dignity, reconciliation and common good in order for it to be conducive to peacebuilding.'[318] The conscious act of remembering / forgetting occurring in this rearticulation becomes an 'instrument of dialogue and inclusion':[319] theatre for peacebuilding, thus, can reorient the collective memories of conflict towards reconciliation, contributing positively to the peacebuilding process.

Theatre for peacebuilding, accordingly, is an important area in peacebuilding though it is still relegated to the fringes. Theatre can significantly add to the prevalent approaches as a context specific approach that can express local complexities and open up communication between parties and narratives in conflict. It can broaden peacebuilding beyond the parameters of existing approaches, articulating new and alternative pathways through which reconciliation can take place.

How does theatre work for peacebuilding?

Having provided evidence that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding and identified where exactly and how it contributes to address the gaps in prevalent approaches, I set out to understand *how* theatre works for peacebuilding. In discussing theatre as a peacebuilding approach, I highlighted the *potential* of theatre. Unless properly utilised, this potential itself does not contribute to peace, and indeed, can do the reverse in some cases. To understand how to effectively *use* theatre for peacebuilding, we first need to explore *how* theatre works: the avenues through which theatre opens up possibilities of conversation between parties and narratives in conflict and initiate peacebuilding.

---

[316] Cochran, "Joseph and the Politics of Memory"
[317] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (New York: Routledge, 1994): 7
[318] Cochran, "Joseph and the Politics of Memory": 443
[319] Roland Bleiker, "Forget IR Theory," *Alternatives* 22, no. 1 (1997): 39.

Scholars have taken different approaches to theorise how theatre works for peacebuilding: the *Acting Together* anthology argues that theatre works as a permeable membrane that sits between the real and the imagined. According to this approach, what takes place in the real world filters into theatre, shaping what takes place there: what takes place in the creative realms of theatre, in turn, filters into the everyday world shaping our thought and behaviours patterns. Thus theatre is likened to a permeable membrane that regulates this filtering process between the imagined and the real.

Apart from this, commentators also identify noteworthy contributions of theatre in relation to aspects such as healing and reconciliation. Cohen identifies three general direction of change effected through arts that is particularly relevant: [320] a) silenced words and suppressed actions are expressed; b) capacities that were impaired or underdeveloped are nourished and restored; and c) previously straightforward imperatives – such as those toward justice, memory, identity, and resistance – become animated by the disciplines of the moral imagination, generally resulting in more complex and nuanced understandings and manifestations. Being broadly encompassing, these shed some light on the process of peacebuilding through theatre. The focus here comes from point of view of the end result. It does not identify features within theatre that are central for theatre's potential for peacebuilding.

What are the key elements in theatre or the theatrical form that is ideally suited to bring out these aspects conducive to peacebuilding? What is it that is seen in theatre that makes it applicable across varied conflicts and forms an underlying link across all the different theatre forms? Understanding these elements ingrained in the theatre form gives us the points we need to focus on, in using theatre as a peacebuilding approach. Thus, exploring the elements of theatre that are fundamental to its peacebuilding approach addresses a strategic gap in establishing theatre as an important but often overlooked area in peacebuilding.

I propose that the multivocal and dialogic nature of theatre warrants further study from this peacebuilding perspective. Plurality and dialogue built into and effected through theatre – in other words, the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre -

---

[320] Cohen, Varea, and Walker, *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 2: Building Just and Inclusive Communities*, 172.

enhances theatre's adaptability and is developed in a myriad of ways in theatre approaches for peacebuilding. As I will discuss in the next section, while the notions of multivocality and dialogic have been separately discussed in performance studies and conflict resolution as central elements pertinent to the study and practice of each discipline, potential of the overlap of these found within theatre's multivocal and dialogic form for peacebuilding is yet to be empirically explored.

Multivocality: Including diverse voices

Multivocality features high in conflict resolution and performance studies. Agathangelou and Ling argue that all of us are 'products of multiple worlds'. [321] We exist in the midst of '*entwined* legacies of worldviews, traditions, practices, institutions and norms that have interwoven people's societies and civilisations'. These inherently shape our political meaning making.[322] For such a world, we need lenses that can capture this multiplicity. Agathangelou and Ling, in turn, challenge the mainstream social science research methods for being incapable of capturing this plurality. [323] The need to acknowledge the multiple ways of relating this inevitably brings about is especially relevant in peacebuilding. Bringing conflicting parties together requires the bringing together of multiple worlds that have their own ways of seeing, being and relating to. This is what peacebuilding at the local level calls for and as many scholars observe, eliciting this particular quality is key for building sustainable peace.

Art in general is uniquely suited to express multiple voices. Both Agathangelou and Ling agree that art forms such as fiction and poetry allow tensions within the linear, central narratives to emerge. [324] Art, thus, is a medium that can embrace and bring together multiple, contradictory voices within its space.

Scholars specially highlight the multivocality of theatre. Edith Hall notes that the fictional representatives of the marginal characters that are often silenced in the public

---

[321] Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling, "Fiction as method/method as fiction: Stories and storytelling in the social sciences." (International Affairs Working Paper 2005-5, Graduate Porgram in International Affairs, The New School, New York, November 2005). http://milanoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Ama_Ling2005-05.pdf: 2

[322] Boyu Chen, Ching-Chane Hwang, and L.H.M. Ling, "Lust/Caution in IR: Democratising World Politics with Culture as a Method," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (2009): 744.

[323] Agathangelou and Ling, "Fiction as method/method as fiction: Stories and storytelling in the social sciences": 2

[324] Ibid.

political discourse appear and address the public through tragic theatre.[325] Also referring to Greek Tragedy, Mark Chou speaks of a form of multivocality that has a deep democratic potential in its 'ability to publicise multiple realities, actors and actions' in such a way to challenge the existing political order.[326] Here multivocality includes the 'manifold of narratives, individuals and issues', often giving voice to 'those who had none'.[327]

While the term has been widely discussed in relation to tragedy, multivocality is not limited to this specific dramatic form. Theatre in general can actively work to incorporate different voices, and voices that are less heard within the mainstream politics. The multiple avenues of expression facilitated within theatre are key in enabling this multivocality. Analysis of multivocality in tragedy revolves around the representations on-stage. With the development of theatre forms such as Theatre of the Oppressed, the scope of multivocality becomes further inclusive and plural through incorporating the audience into the theatre process. The spectrum of voices that are expressed go beyond that of the actors to incorporate voices from the community, their experiences and lifeworlds. The impact of such expression is also not limited to the stage. Once elicited on-stage, these multiple voices go beyond the theatre space and materialise in other spheres of everyday life.

Multivocality holds an important place within peacebuilding. War discourse often actively works to reduce multivocality in a number of ways. Conflict results in a weakening of democratic processes and this in turn witnesses a suppression of plurality. Quite often public information sources and media are co-opted during war times to promote the norms and values of the ruling elite,[328] honing and promoting homogenous, monovocal narratives on one hand and curbing dissent on the other. Thus, dualistic interpretations characterise conflict and post-conflict situations. The plurality existing at the ground level is no longer visible and is often silenced or ignored to facilitate the war narratives. Thus, encouraging multivocality is crucial to move beyond such exclusionary war or conflict discourse and to open up the local context for the spectrum of voices existing within it. Reconciliation and peacebuilding

---

[325] Edith. Hall, *"The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy,"* in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy,* ed. P. E. Easterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 93.
[326] Chou, *Greek Tragedy and Contemporary Democracy*, 52.
[327] Mark Chou and Roland Bleiker, "The Symbiosis of Democracy and Tragedy: Lost Lessons from Ancient Greece," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (2009): 672.
[328] Teun A. Van Dijk, "Discourse and Manipulation," *Discourse and Society* 17, no. 3 (2006).

becomes possible once the multiple narratives of conflict are brought fourth and opened up for discussion.

Theatre as an important but neglected area in peacebuilding warrants further exploration. Peacebuilding needs to identify approaches that facilitate multivocality. Such approaches can satisfactory represent local complexities and through bringing marginalised narratives into the mainstream social politics, support peacebuilding to find sustainable solutions to the complicated issues at stake. The multivocality of theatre has the potential to facilitate the expression of different and contradictory points of view in a manner that is safe and acceptable. Expression of diverse voices is important for arriving at sustainable solutions during conflict, and for healing and reconciliation in a post conflict situation. Given the little space alternative narratives of conflict would have within mainstream politics, platforms like theatre that are difficult to regulate can become especially powerful modes for peacebuilding during the changing phases of conflict. The multivocal form of theatre is a key feature warranting further inquiry on how it contributes to peacebuilding.

Dialogue to the dialogic: a constant process of interaction

Existing literature demonstrates that theatre has significant potential to create a space for dialogue. Participatory and community theatre for conflict resolution emphasise verbal dialogue between the parties. Commentators argue that such interactive dialogue taking place among and between the participants is crucial for transformation.

Theatre can reach beyond dialogue, to the dialogic. Bakhtin defines dialogic (or dialogism) as engaging in a constant process of dialogue with the text, which, in turn, makes meaning out of the present as well as the past. Making meaning, here, is a process of open-ended negotiation that is constantly in flux. This notion is extensively discussed in relation to literature.[329] Theatre with its multiple forms of communication and the fluidity embedded in the theatre form itself, presents a potent vehicle for such a dialogic discourse. Thus the dialogue that takes place among the participants, as it is often the focus of theatre for conflict transformation practitioners, makes up only for a part of theatre's dialogic potential. The dialogic form of theatre can utilise the entirety

---

[329] See Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays*. ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

of the performance and can emerge in creative methods. The dialogism of theatre, in this approach, reaches beyond the stage and the performance. It takes place between and among the multitude of voices expressed during theatre and continues beyond the time and space of the performance. Theatre can possibly offer a rich lens to work through in exploring how arts script peace and the particular issues at stake in this process.

The dialogic form of theatre, when intentionally used for peacebuilding, has the possibility of bringing together transformation and meaning making. Both Freire and Bakhtin argue that human nature is dialogic and that we exist in a state of dialogue with each other. It is seen as a crucial element in our meaning-making processes. While Bakhtin argues that the dialogic is a feature of social discourse that is particularly applicable to arts, for Friere it is at the foundation of empowerment and transformation. Theatre, intentionally performed to address an issue, brings together these two aspects of the dialogic: meaning making and transformation. However, this potential of theatre needs to be empirically explored in order to fully understand and utilise as a peacebuilding approach.

Dialogic engagement holds a central position in conflict resolution. Monologues and exclusionary propaganda rhetoric prevalent within war discourse deter a dialogic process. Thus, reinstitution of the dialogic paves way for opening up to an exchange between multiple narratives that exist at a local level. Thus, scholars identify dialogic to be a key element in understanding and resolving conflict. Seamus Power proposes a dialogic framework for interpreting inter-group processes.[330] Bernhard and Balvanek discuss the significance of dialogic relations in governance initiatives for conflict resolution.[331] They emphasise the importance of positive dialogical relations between varying actors involved in the conflict resolution process. Dialogue is therefore justly regarded as a central element in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Accordingly, literature indicates that the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre has the possibility to enhance theatre's capacity for peacebuilding. The expression of multiple voices and the consequent dialogue among and between these can result in forming new connections and offering alternative pathways through a stalemate of

---

[330] Seamus A. Power, "Towards a Dialogical Model of Conflict Resolution," *Psychology & Society* 4, no. 1 (2011).
[331] Anna Bernhard and Janel B. Balvanek, "The Importance of Dialogical Relations and Local Agency in Governance Initiatives for Conflict Resolution " in *CORE Policy Brief* (Oslo: PRIO, 2013).

conflict. An approach that embodies both multivocality and the dialogic has the potential to facilitate transformation of conflict parties and narratives to be inclusive and empathetic. According to Jeong, 'possibilities of transformative relationships' will be the ultimate parameter of testing contemporary peacebuilding'.[332] Therefore multivocal and the dialogic form of theatre, in relation to peacebuilding, hold great potential.

While the role of the dialogic and multivocality has been extensively discussed and their significance recognised within conflict resolution and art separately, the nexus of theatre's dialogic and multivocal form and peacebuilding is yet to be explored. It is a key area that needs to be studied in order to comprehend how theatre works for peacebuilding. Thus, theatre warrants further study as an important but neglected area in peacebuilding.

Limitations

I draw attention to two concerns in using arts and theatre for peacebuilding:

Theatre and art are simply tools. I limited my discussion here to theatre, for when it is specifically used for peacebuilding. But this is not the case at all times. Like any other art form or a tool, theatre too can be used to promote any ideology, including war. There is ample evidence from different corners of the world: once such example is Sri Lanka. In order to rally public support for the last phases of war, the government extensively used art and culture. State media stations produced and promoted songs and soap operas that promoted nationalistic rhetoric, portrayed soldiers as heroes and valorised the war. The government specifically sponsored a chain of cinematic productions on victorious Sinhalese kings who fought to protect or unify the island. Leni Riefenstahl used her films to support the Nazi ideology. James Thompson in *Performance In Place of War* documents a number of instances when performance was used to promote war in different places. As such, aesthetics are neither 'good nor bad,' but are malleable, adding a 'different dimension to our understanding of the political.'[333] Thus theatre and art in general is simply a medium that can be used to

---

[332] Jeong, *Approaches to Peacebuilding*, 7.
[333] Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, 11.

promote any ideology. Theatre by itself is not positive or conducive to peace. It becomes so as a result of intentional production or interpretation.

Yet, adopted as a lens, theatre can provide deeper insights into politics and access to the community. Theatre can reach into recesses of community consciousness and everyday life that is difficult for other, mainstream peacebuilding approaches to reach. Agathangelou and Ling highlight the relevance of aesthetics as a method that can enact the multiplicities of the world, enabling a fairer representation of existing political issues.[334] As argued earlier in this chapter, when specifically used for the purpose of peacebuilding, theatre holds much potential.

The second pertinent concern is the possible appropriation of theatre or art produced *for* peacebuilding by contradictory discourses. Theatre for peacebuilding projects can be co-opted in their interpretation even after their production. Art forms, once they are produced, can no longer be contained within a single narrative. Art's political significance heavily relies on how it is understood or interpreted by the audience. The audience interpretation - intentional or unintentional - can vary from the intentions of the production team. Such reinterpretation can replace or distort the original reading of the play. Take *Pongu Thamil*, a cultural festival held in the LTTE controlled area initiated during the cease-fire period as an alternative nonviolent form of expression for the moderate Tamils. The LTTE appropriated *Pongu Thamil* for its own political propaganda and used the events as thinly veiled recruitment platforms.[335] Theatre productions and art forms can therefore be used to serve conflicting ideologies either by appropriation or by removing them from the contexts from which they originate. The fluidity and plurality of art – and specifically theatre – is both its strength as well as weakness. Simply put, it is a malleable tool, neither good nor bad.

Conclusion

Theatre as an art form is a medium that potentially broadens the reach and breadth of contemporary peacebuilding. The gaps in the prevalent approaches to peacebuilding are gradually yet insistently becoming apparent. Post-conflict situations that heavily and exclusively relied on the prescribed methods of institution building, abstract

---

[334] Agathangelou and Ling, *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds*, 99.
[335] Sivagopal Anandan (former Pongu Thamil leader), interview by the author, Sri Lanka, June 2014

rights and democratic procedures face constant challenges as a result of failing to resonate with the ground level. As Chapter 1 concluded, peacebuilding needs to develop strategies that can bridge the gap between political decision-making and the everyday lifeworlds of people living in conflict contexts. It is here that studying theatre as an important but neglected approach to peacebuilding takes relevance.

In this chapter, I explored the nexus of theatre and peacebuilding, looking at the ways in which theatre can contribute to peacebuilding. Firstly I provided evidence that theatre can contribute to peacebuilding, drawing from theatre's history of political scripture and the repertoire of theatre forms with potential for social change. Secondly I explored how theatre could help to address the existing gaps in prevalent peacebuilding, examining the ways in which theatre broadens the parameters of conventional approaches and offers a context specific approach. Theatre's ability to tap into and engage with emotions is central here. As the third stage of advancing my argument that theatre warrants further study as a peacebuilding approach, I looked at how theatre works for peacebuilding. While scholars have grappled with this question, we are yet to identify elements of theatre that are fundamental to its peacebuilding approach. I proposed multivocality and dialogism as overlapping elements in theatre and peacebuilding that holds much promise in articulating how theatre works for peacebuilding.

I conclude that theatre is an important but neglected area that warrants further study. Theatre as an aesthetic form offers a 'more nuanced understanding of the political' at a period when 'political dilemmas require new and innovative responses.'[336] It does not offer instant definitive solutions to a conflict: instead, literature indicates that it can open up the 'single-voiced and single-minded' approaches, stories, narratives and politics that often are at the root of conflicts to 'multiple voices and the possibility of multiple truths.'[337] In the process of engaging with these multiple narratives, theatre for peacebuilding can draw from and reconstitute the lifeworlds of people, taking peacebuilding deeper into the heart of communities. Theatre can therefore allow peacebuilding to engage with the ground level and consequently, with public opinion. However, theatre itself is not sufficient in taking this process forward: neither does it provide an overarching framework to replace the existing approaches to

---

[336] Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, 82.
[337] Ibid., 188.

peacebuilding. Theatre for peacebuilding simply offers a complementary process to initiate or support a peace process; it provides an alternative way of looking at conflict that can be adapted and integrated as an approach to positively enhance the depth and sustainability of the peacebuilding process. Theatre is therefore an important but often overlooked resource in peacebuilding, warranting further exploration. This is the focus of the next part of the thesis.

Part 2: Exploring theatre in local peacebuilding processes

The first part of this thesis reviewed key debates in peacebuilding and situated theatre as an important but neglected area in peacebuilding. In doing so, I established theatre's potential to address the local complexities and everyday dynamics of conflict, elements that often remain unaddressed within the prevailing approaches. Finally, I demonstrated that the dialogic and multivocal nature of theatre as warrants further empirical study.

Part two of the thesis proceeds to an empirical exploration. I explore three resilient local theatre groups operating in Sri Lanka, India and Nepal. Theatre, as a malleable art form, is shaped by the distinctive working contexts and theatre approaches of each group. Despite obvious differences, I demonstrate that the multivocality and dialogism of theatre connects the case studies, emerging as a core element in peacebuilding through theatre.

I advance my empirical argument through chapters three, four and five: Chapter 3 illustrates how Jana Karaliya in Sri Lanka creates a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together. Chapter 4 establishes that Jana Sanskriti uses theatre to bring out prevalent but less heard narratives of structural violence in Bengal, India. Finally, Chapter 5 demonstrates how Sarwanam makes excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict in Nepal.

In relation to each case study, the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre comes to the fore as an element facilitating an authentic engagement with the local: an engagement that facilitates the expression of local complexities and opens up possibilities of communication between parties and narratives in conflict in distinctive ways.

Chapter 3: Jana Karaliya[338]

Introduction

In this first case study chapter, I look at Jana Karaliya (JK) works in the background of Sri Lankan conflict, often referred to as 'the longest and bloodiest conflict in South Asia'.[339] Being an ethnic separatist conflict between the minority Tamils and majority Sinhalese-led government, the Sri Lankan conflict presents challenging dynamics for peacebuilding. The key parties in conflict are the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). JK started in 2002 during a ceasefire between the parties and continued its peacebuilding activities throughout the resumption of conflict, a fully-fledged war followed by a military defeat of LTTE and the ensuing post-war period. Consequently, the protracted violence and the unique dynamics of the ethnic conflict shape the approach of JK in using theatre for peacebuilding in Sri Lanka.

I argue that the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre in JK creates a space where parties and narratives in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict can come together. The group uses theatre's multivocal and dialogic form in unique ways to facilitate a safe, shared, resilient turf amidst the prevalent ethnic tensions.

The chapter is organised in four main sections: the first and second sections provide background information on the Sri Lankan conflict and the theatre group. The conflict background elicits challenges for peacebuilding at ground level that JK proceeds to address. I firmly situate the theatre group within its particular working context by illustrating JK's approach to peacebuilding in the Sri Lankan conflict.

The third section explores how theatre opens up possibilities of conversation between parties and narratives in conflict by exploring the theatre practice of JK. I draw attention to three key spheres here: personal, emotional and societal. The multivocal and dialogic form of theatre opens up and brings together the attitudes and narratives in conflicts in these three key spheres to initiate peacebuilding among and between these.

---

[338] The group is called Jana Karaliya, Makkal Kalari and Theatre of the People respectively in Sinhalese, Tamil and English. I use Jana Karaliya here as it is the primarily used version by the group.

[339] Rahul Bhonsle, "Sri Lanka: South Asia's Forgotten War?," (2006). Accessed May 4, 2012. http://www.ipcs.org/article/maldives/sri-lanka-south-asias-forgotten-war-2119.html; Mona Fixdal, *Just Peace: How Wars Should End* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 66.

Finally, in the fourth section, I discuss the challenges and the limitations the organisation face in relation to its particular theatre style and practice. The challenges in safely navigating aesthetics and politics in fragile volatile conflict contexts arise as a key theme here.

Conflict background[340]

Sri Lanka is an island nation with a diverse ethno-religious population going back over 2500 years. A former colony of the Dutch, Portuguese, and finally, the British empires, Sri Lanka received independence in 1948 through a largely political process and today remains a democracy with an Executive President as the head of the State.

According to the 2012 Census report, the current population stands at a 20.2 million.[341] The major ethnicities in the country are Sinhalese, Tamils and Moors, respectively accounting for a 74.9%, 15.4% and 9.2% of the total population. There is a small Bhurger community too, located mainly in Colombo and the Eastern Province. The three major languages spoken in the country are Sinhala, Tamil and English. While the first two languages are often exclusively associated with the respective ethnicities, the Moor population in the country use both. English is recognised as a link language. Religious demarcations are also primarily seen along ethnic lines, with 70% of the population – almost all Sinhalese - being Buddhist, a 12.6% Hindus who are almost all Tamils and a 9.7% Muslims who are mostly Moors. Catholics and Christians are largely from the Sinhala, Tamil and Burgher ethnicities and make up a total of 7.4% of the total population. Literacy rates in Sri Lanka are high compared with the other nations in the region, standing at a 92.6% for males and a 90% for females.

The ethnic conflict is not the first or the only conflict Sri Lanka faced after independence. The two suppressed insurgencies from the Southern youth in 1971 and 1988-1989 are noteworthy for their scale and duration of violence.

---

[340] This overview is a reduced version that does not encompass the complexities seen on the ground. It is solely meant for the outsider to gain a general understanding of the context for the purposes of relating to the way in which JK uses theatre as a peacebuilding method and as such, is not comprehensive by any means.
[341] Department of Census and Statistics - Sri Lanka, "Sri Lanka Census of Population and Housing, 2011," (Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics - Sri Lanka, 2012). Accessed July 24, 2013. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/

Outline of the conflict

The key conflict is between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), respectively seen to represent the interests of Sinhalese and Tamils. Ethnic grievances leading to the violent turn of the conflict and the undeniable ethno-politicisation of central parties continue to frame the Sri Lankan conflict as an ethnic conflict. As in most protracted conflicts, the roots of the conflict in Sri Lanka are disputed. Some focus on the colonial legacy while others place more emphasis on the political dynamics since independence from Britain in 1948.[342] Others again trace the conflict back through centuries to the periodic invasions of the island kingdom from the Indian subcontinent, especially from Tamil speaking entities in Southern India.

Civilian riots in 1983 marked a violent turn in the conflict. There were several violent outbursts leading up to this event such as the 1958 ethnic riots attacking the Tamil minority, and the 1981 burning of the Jaffna library. However, the most visible - and horrifying - set of attacks and retaliation took place in 1983 with the killing of 13 soldiers deployed in Jaffna on the 23rd of July. This attack triggered an anti-Tamil pogrom in the capital and a few other cities led by organised mobs. The government at the time failed to provide protection and indeed were justly accused of aiding the mobs. These incidents resulted in consolidating the key parties of the conflict as they are seen today, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the armed forces of the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL). There are other groupings as well, such as militant Muslim groups in the Eastern province of the country, but the key conflict is between the government and the LTTE.

The original points of contention in the conflict emerged with the 'implementation of anti-Tamil legislation' soon after independence[343] and continued to revolve around access to government decision making pertaining to resource distribution, development and power devolution. The policies focused on clamping down on the privileges the minorities enjoyed during the colonial period. The Sinhala Only act of

---

[342] See Fixdal, *Just Peace: How Wars Should End*, 66; Neloufer de Mel, Kumudini Samuel, and Champika K. Soysa, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations," in *Handbook of Ethnic Conflict: International Perspectives*, ed. Dan Landis and Rosita D. Albert (New York: Springer, 2012); Neil DeVotta, "Ethnolinguistic Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka," in *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia,* ed. Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (MA: MIT Press, 2003).

[343] Sarah Holt, *Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka*, Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka (2011), 5.

1956 made Sinhala the official language of Sri Lanka, effectively curtailing the non-Sinhala speakers – largely the Tamil minority – from accessing state facilities,[344] and rendered those who were already within the administrative structure incapable of functioning. This is the first of a series of actions Sinhala political leaders made to reclaim opportunities and power that was unequally distributed during the colonial period in a bid to secure the majority's vote. Continued ethnocentric politics of the successive Sri Lankan governments - particularly the constitutional amendments in the 1970s as Fixdal[345] notes - were instrumental in institutionalizing the Sinhalese ethnic dominance, and further alienating the Tamil community.

Policies aimed at redressing the situation failed due to a lack of political goodwill. The 13th amendment to the constitution introduced 1978 is a case in point: it recognized Tamil as an official language and instituted provincial councils for increased power devolution. These measures failed at implementation because of an absence of political goodwill, and partly due to the existing political system of the country. The Westminster model of democracy left behind from the colonial period favoured a centralized, majoritarian political system[346] instead of a participatory system capable of incorporating the nuances of minorities. Thus, the heterogeneity in the country resulted in a 'culture of ethnic outbidding', where the majority wielded power in its favour.[347] The limitations of the existing political system and the apparent lack of political goodwill from the Sinhalese political leaders contributed to the LTTE's consolidation over the years. The group demanded a separate state – a Tamil homeland – in the North and East, provinces with a strong Tamil speaking denomination. Consequently the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict is also seen as an ethnic separatist conflict.

---

[344] Due to widespread protests from the Tamil-speaking minority, a Special Provisions act in 1958 amended this to permit Tamil to be used in the North and East for administrative purposes and as a medium of instruction in schools, universities as well as in public examinations. Also, see *Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka*, Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka (2011), 5-6; de Mel, Samuel, and Soysa, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations."; R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, "Roots of the Conflict and the Peace Process," in *Buddhism, Con- Flict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka* ed. M. Deegalle (New York: Routledge, 2006) for a detailed discussion on the correlation between the language policy and conflict.
[345] Fixdal, *Just Peace: How Wars Should End*, 68.
[346] Sumantra Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 12.
[347] Fixdal, *Just Peace: How Wars Should End*, 67.

Peace process and the final phase of war

The peace process failed due to the absence of a ground level movement for peace and a sincere commitment to peace by the conflict parties. In 2000, the government and the LTTE invited Norway to facilitate a peace process. The parties sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and soon after in 2002, a Ceasefire Agreement (CFA). Relief was only temporary as multiple varieties of spoiler violence surfaced within a short period.[348] A new government formed with the support of nationalistic parties renewed intense military operations in 2005. In response, LTTE carried out a series of suicide bombings and targeted assassinations. Both the parties used the cease-fire to strengthen their firepower and establish strongholds. By 2006 the situation deteriorated to the point that the conflict was in the open again. Following a last attempt at resuming talks in 2007, GoSL officially withdrew from the ceasefire agreement in January 2008.[349] The peace process, as Hoyt aptly notes, was 'a policy approach adopted by external agents committed to the peace process, with priority given to economic recovery'.[350] The entire peace process relied on economic recovery as its primary and possibly the sole motivation. In pushing the liberal agendas and expectations forward 'seeking an immediate improvement on democracy and human rights', the international community failed to take into account the preparedness and sincerity of either the government or the LTTE.[351] Thus, the Sri Lankan peace process overlooked ground level preparation within either community. As a result, 6 years after signing the CFA war resumed in full scale.

With that, the Sri Lankan government aimed for a military solution to the conflict with renewed military zeal, increasing recruitment and fostering an unprecedented military budget. A sweeping cultural campaign for war accompanying these changes succeeded in garnering public support as never before. Consequently, the LTTE was militarily defeated on May 19, 2009. State troops found its leader Velupillei Prabhakaran dead in the attack and the government firmly re-established its authority

---

[348] See Alan Bullion, "The Peace Process in Sri Lanka," in *Conflict and Peace in South Asia*, ed. Manas Chatterji and B.M. Jain (Bingley, Uk: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2008), 164; de Mel, Samuel, and Soysa, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations," 99-100.

[349] See "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations."; George Frerks and Bart Klem, eds. *Dealing with Diversity: Sri Lankan Discourses on Peace and Conflict* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2005); Fixdal, *Just Peace: How Wars Should End*; Holt, *Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka* for a detailed discussion.

[350] Neil DeVotta, "Sri Lanka: From Turmoil to Dynasty," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 2 (2011).

[351] Oliver P. Richmond and Ioannis Tellidis, "The Complex Relationship between Peacebuilding and Terrorism Approaches: Towards Post-Terrorism and a Post-Liberal Peace?," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 1 (2011): 126.

over the former LTTE controlled areas. A victor's peace emerging from the elimination of its adversary reigns in Sri Lanka at the moment.[352]

In order to facilitate the post-conflict transition of Sri Lanka, the government promised a political solution and appointed a Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission to investigate into the alleged war crimes. Rehabilitation camps were established for the surrendered LTTE soldiers.

Challenges for sustainable peacebuilding at community level

Legacies of the ethnopolitical conflict shape the social topography of Sri Lanka, posing challenges for sustainable peacebuilding at a community level. Key here are the human impact of the conflict, the continuing ambiguity associated with peace activism, and limited interaction between different ethnicities.

Human impact of the conflict

The conflict had a significant human impact that is yet to be satisfactorily addressed. An accurate calculation of the civilian deaths during the conflict is not available due to the absence of impartial observers on the ground during the last phase of the conflict. The report of the Secretary General's Panel of Experts appointed for Sri Lanka quotes from credible sources that the death toll could be around 40,000[353] during the last few months of the conflict but assumes that the actual number could be as high as 75,000.[354] The loss of lives before the last phase of the conflict is estimated to be between 64, 000 and 75,000, while the number of those who have migrated due to the conflict is over a million.[355] Human Rights Watch reports that nearly 300,000 civilians are confined in detention centres[356] while 350,000 were displaced during the final days. Thus, the human cost of the conflict alone made a significant impact upon the Sri Lankan community, both the Tamils and Sinhalese.

---

[352] For a further discussion, please see "The Complex Relationship between Peacebuilding and Terrorism Approaches: Towards Post-Terrorism and a Post-Liberal Peace?," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 1 (2011); Holt, *Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka.*
[353] Marzuki Darusman, Steven Ratner, and Yasmin Sooka, "Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka " (The United Nations, March 31, 2011), 41.
[354] "Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka " (The United Nations, March 31, 2011), 40.
[355] Holt, *Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka.*
[356] Human Rights Watch., "World Report 2012: Sri Lanka," (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Accessed June 2, 2013. http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/world-report-2012-sri-lanka

Human rights violations from the government's side as well as from the LTTE are other factors that add to the human impact of the conflict. The UN investigative panel identifies that 'killing civilians through widespread shelling', 'shelling of hospitals and humanitarian objects', 'denial of humanitarian assistance' and human rights violations inflicted upon LTTE suspects and IDPs to be some of the key categories of the government's violations.[357] The final phase of the war saw a large number of civilians trapped between the government's advancing forces and the LTTE's final stand. The government is accused of knowingly shelling all the hospitals in Vanni, the United Nations hub and own-designated no fire zones where civilians were encouraged to gather for safety.[358] Also, the government actively prevented supplying food, water and medicine to those who were trapped in-between and unable to escape.[359] There are plausible accusations of those who surrendered to the army being executed[360] and those who were arrested – even on the suspicion of being LTTE supporters or simply to be questioned- being detained indefinitely, raped, tortured and disappeared; [361] and state forces using paramilitary groups for these tasks where necessary.[362] Indeed, Sri Lanka is consistently ranked as having one of the highest numbers of disappearances in the world over the years, according to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.[363] Disappearances, arbitrary arrest

---

[357] Darusman, Ratner, and Sooka, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka,* iii.

[358] Ibid., 23-35.

[359] Amnesty International., *Amnesty International Report* 2012*: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London, United Kingdom: Amnesty International, 2012), 3.

[360] Two credible allegations against the government are the White Flag incident where Pulidevan and Nadesan – two prominent leaders of LTTE – were invited to surrender carrying white flags and subsequently executed, and the case of Balachandran, the 12 year old son of the LTTE leader Prabhakaran who was executed at close range. See "Sri Lanka: Reconciliation at a Crossroads: Continuing Impunity, Arbitrary Detentions, Torture and Enforced Disappearances," (Amnesty International, October - November 2012), 4. http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/asset/ASA37/008/2012/en/5747cec0-7e77-486f-98599623ee127b20/asa370082012en.pdf.; Darusman, Ratner, and Sooka, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka,* 43 and Frances Harrison, "Witnesses Support Claim That Sri Lanka Army Shot Prisoners," *The Independent*, February 24, 2013.

[361] Fixdal, *Just Peace: How Wars Should End*, 82; Darusman, Ratner, and Sooka, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka,* 46-48.

[362] DeVotta, "Sri Lanka: From Turmoil to Dynasty," 133; and see Darusman, Ratner, and Sooka, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka,* 55.

[363] See Human Rights Watch., *Recurring Nightmare : State Responsibility for "Disappearances" and Abductions in Sri Lanka,* (Human Rights Watch, March 6, 2008) Accessed May 3, 2011. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/srilanka0308web.pdf; Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, "Civil and Political Rights, including the questions of: Disappearances and Summary Executions: Question of Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances," Commission on Human Rights, United Nations, January 18, 2002. http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/6623289D5FA5F96B85256D49004EFB07

and detention, assassinations and reports of similar activities come not only from the Tamil community, but also from the Sinhalese and Muslims.[364]

LTTE's actions were hardly any better: banned as a terrorist organisation in over 30 countries, they were frequently charged with extortion of money,[365]abduction and execution of civilians for dissent/ punishment and forced child recruitment among many other allegations. During the final stage of war LTTE used civilians as hostages and shot those who attempted escape. Going further, they used these hostages as a strategic human buffer in the face of GoSL's attack.[366]Fixdal observes that LTTE's rule during the cease-fire also failed to benefit the Tamil civilians.[367] These actions considerably impaired LTTE's image among the Tamils community itself. Thus, while the conflict might have started with strong 'identitarian motives', factors such as '[i]ntragroup rivalry, forced taxation, prestige, wealth, electoral advantage and anticipated Statehood' became the motivating factors that prolonged and shaped the conflict.[368]

Though the State as well as international agents initiated procedures for addressing war related grievances, the impact of these are dubious. The government appointed the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in 2010 in a response to local and international concerns on the atrocities committed during the last phase of conflict. The LLRC held sessions at national and district level with little actual impact upon the population. The international community continue to challenge it as a deeply flawed, inadequate accountability mechanism that is 'neither independent nor impartial in composition',[369] and as a result, unable to meet international standards as an accountability process.[370] Consequently, the UN Human Rights Commission passed three resolutions in 2012, 2013 and 2014, gradually increasing in their intensity in the face of Sri Lankan government's noncompliance. Considerable resistance from the current regime diluted the potential impact these could have had

---

[364] Amnesty International., *Sri Lanka: Reconciliation at a Crossroads: Continuing Impunity, Arbitrary Detentions, Torture and Enforced Disappearances,* 4; DeVotta, "Sri Lanka: From Turmoil to Dynasty," 133.

[365] "Sri Lanka: From Turmoil to Dynasty," 132.

[366] Darusman, Ratner, and Sooka, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka,* iii-iv, 64-66.

[367] Fixdal, *Just Peace: How Wars Should End*, 82.

[368] de Mel, Samuel, and Soysa, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations," 100.

[369] Amnesty International., *Sri Lanka: Reconciliation at a Crossroads: Continuing Impunity, Arbitrary Detentions, Torture and Enforced Disappearances*, 5.

[370] Human Rights Watch., *World Report 2012: Sri Lanka*.; Darusman, Ratner, and Sooka, "Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka," 117-18.

within the country. The final resolution in 2014 authorised an international war crimes probe from 2002 to the end of war in 2009.

The resulting impunity for the human rights abuses during and after the conflict is a serious obstacle to reconciliation at the ground level. Authorities often ignore abuses and are slack in investigations. Amnesty International questions their credibility and impartiality even when these are conducted, since there is hardly any 'effort to prosecute alleged violators.'[371] The few cases that do get to the courts are invariably dismissed. Amnesty International points out that this deplorable state of impunity is primarily due to the lack of political will of the authorities and draws attention to the government's consistent refusal to 'allow an international in human rights monitoring and accountability efforts'.[372] Therefore even at nearly half a decade after the end of war, a genuine effort at formal reconciliation - an initial step of the larger peacebuilding process - is yet to take place in Sri Lanka.

'Peace activism' and dissent made ambiguous

Yet another challenge for sustainable peacebuilding is the ambiguity with which peace activism and dissent is regarded within the country. Due to the strong nationalist discourses and patriotic rhetoric prevalent within both Sinhala and Tamil communities, 'peace activism' as well as any form of dissent has come to occupy a delicate position that is often regarded as treacherous. The liberal values pushed through the peace process strongly painted it as a 'western', 'capitalist' enterprise, alienating the process from the nationalist, Sinhalese-led South. During the resumption of the war, the state took ample advantage of this situation by grouping all civil resistance against the war into this 'western', 'capitalist' unpatriotic category and thereby effectively clamping down on all forms of local dissent with near impunity. Consequently, the NGOs have come to be commonly referred to and perceived as 'anti-governmental'[373] and 'anti-Sri Lankan traitors'[374] through state media,[375] isolating these from the mainstream discourse. All forms of dissent among civil society such as journalism and political activism underwent this labelling. Tactics for

---

[371] Amnesty International, *Sri Lanka: Reconciliation at a Crossroads: Continuing Impunity, Arbitrary Detentions, Torture and Enforced Disappearances.*
[372] Ibid., 4.
[373] S. Thillainathan, "Rehabilitation of Ex-LTTE Cadres, Not Highlighted in Geneva," *Sunday Observer,* March 17, 2013.
[374] DeVotta, "Sri Lanka: From Turmoil to Dynasty," 133.
[375] Human Rights Watch., *World Report 2012: Sri Lanka.*

civilian repression in the interest of the state or/and politicians' actions often takes the form of smear campaigns, intimidation, attack, abduction, persecution and killings[376] Despite sustained local and international agitation, as argued above, we are yet to see a 'credible investigation of these claims' or an 'effort to prosecute alleged violators'.[377]

This makes genuinely working for peace a dangerous activity in Sri Lanka: speaking out or deviating from the state's version or perspective has become a risky endeavour. Peacebuilding in the Sri Lankan post-conflict conditions needs to be sufficiently creative and unorthodox to escape state scrutiny while still being effective.

Lack of interaction between ethnicities

One of the key challenges for sustainable peacebuilding is to overcome ethnic polarisation. The violent conflict is only one factor in this division. Two other significant factors that take the ethnic polarisation beyond the actual history of violent conflict are the geographical separation and the divide and rule policy of the British. Linguistic and religious differences also create a divide, exceedingly limiting the spaces where the conflict parties can come together. Altogether these allow mistrust and stereotypes to prevail within a highly militarised nationalistic context.

From history, Sinhalese and Tamils generally had separate geographical concentrations that limited interethnic interaction at an everyday level. Tamils are predominant in the North and East of the country while the South was predominantly Sinhalese.[378] Language policies of the independent Sri Lanka[379] and ethnic cleansing carried out by LTTE[380] furthered this divide. Deteriorating security conditions due to conflict obstructed overland connection between the North and the South. First with the closure of the A9 highway connecting the North with Central Province in 1984,

---

[376] See Amnesty International., *Sri Lanka: Reconciliation at a Crossroads: Continuing Impunity, Arbitrary Detentions, Torture and Enforced Disappearances*; Darusman, Ratner, and Sooka, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka* for a further discussion of these conditions. The assassination of Lasantha Wickramathunga (Editor-Sunday Leader), the disappearance of Pradeep Ekneligoda (Political writer and cartoonist), the attack and fleeing of Upali Tennakoon (Editor - Rivira) and the persecution of Frederica Jansz (Editor - Sunday Leader) are a few specific examples of curtailing dissent.

[377] Amnesty International, *Sri Lanka: Reconciliation at a Crossroads: Continuing Impunity, Arbitrary Detentions, Torture and Enforced Disappearances*, 4.

[378] Colombo as the commercial capital was heterogeneous and displayed the full hybrid nature of the country.

[379] See de Mel, Samuel, and Soysa, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations," 95 for a discussion on how language policies resulted in strengthening ethnic concentration and a large number of semi-educated youth feeling restricted to the North and East.

[380] LTTE forcibly evicted all non-Tamils from the North and East. In the 48 hours allocated for eviction in the North, a 72000 Muslims were made into IDPs in 1990.

and secondly with the termination of the Jaffna – Colombo railway line in 1990. Thus, commuting between the two areas was almost impossible for the majority of last 30 years.

The end of violent conflict brought changes in this situation. Travelling between the North and South resumed with the reopening of the A9 in 2009. The increased interaction between ethnicities this enables is a positive turn.[381] It is hard to say the same for the post-conflict reconstruction and resettlement plans launched thereafter. These take the form of renaming Tamil villages and roads with Sinhala names, transplanting 'soldiers, their families, and other settlers' to former LTTE areas and erecting Buddhist statues and temples as symbols of the Sinhala Buddhist supremacy. Combined with the absence of a proper overarching peacebuilding process at the ground level, such actions invariably breed resentment[382] and further alienation. Thus, the postwar accessibility between the North and the South, despite increased interethnic integration, is fraught with tensions.

Language is another key factor that hinders conflict parties and narratives from coming together and as such, is a key element to be addressed for sustainable peacebuilding. While Tamil was also recognized as an official language in 1978, there is little evidence that this is fully implemented.[383] Minority language speakers are marginalised within the public sphere, which indicates a lack of consideration and respect from the policy makers. Breakdown in communications, alienation and the construction of stereotypes between Sinhalese and Tamils are long-term consequences of this language separation.

The resulting mistrust and fear from lack of interaction creates the space for ethnic stereotypes to emerge and continue in the Sri Lankan context. Given the absence of a common ground where the parties and narratives in conflict can come together, each ethnicity often operates from very different frames of reference: it is difficult to reach a holistic agreement about exactly what the conflict is about, when it started or who it involves. As a result, external events carry multiple and preferred interpretations and

---

[381] However, the Army with their roadside shops, security posts, boat services and general presence is primarily catering to the large numbers of Sinhalese tourists visiting Jaffna. Thus, whether the opening of the A9 has brought about real multiethnic interaction and business opportunities to Jaffna is questionable.
[382] de Mel, Samuel, and Soysa, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations," 98.
[383] Tamil is incorporated into the primary and secondary education system at the moment but this is not a compulsory subject that carries weight in the exams. Thus, the attitude towards learning the language is casual.

these in turn reconstitute the internal frameworks and perceptions of each group, which then again shapes subsequent behaviour.

Later developments also contributed to the emergence of a religious tension within Sri Lankan conflict dynamics. Sinhala Buddhist groups are becoming alarmingly pervasive in recent years, requesting a united ethno-religious identity associated with the entire island.[384] This adds a religious element to the ethnopolitical divisions within the country.

Intense militarization in the post-war context of Sri Lanka poses a significant challenge to sustain peacebuilding at the community level. The post-war regime integrated the military into key governmental positions and agencies: consider the fusion of civic and military spheres in forming *The Ministry of Defence and Urban Development*. With compulsory military training for the university entrants and the Administrative Service recruits, it further encroaches the civilian spheres. Violence permeates the society at all emphasised. Consequently, there are frequent majority attacks on minorities.[385] Accountable governance, thus, is halted for military ends.[386]

There are limited spaces where parties and narratives in conflict can safely interact during and after the conflict. Factors such as physical separation and linguistic and cultural differences hinder cooperation while unresolved human rights abuses, intimidation of voices for peace and intense militarization discourage communities from moving forward. These are among the key challenges for sustainable peacebuilding in Sri Lanka.

It is evident that the post-war regime – if it is to move towards peacebuilding - is greatly in need of pluralistic and inclusive spaces where the parties and narratives in conflict can be brought together. The commentators speak of so-called intractable conflicts: situations where antagonisms have persisted for so long that they have created a vicious cycle of violence.[387] This aptly captures the post-conflict situation of Sri Lanka. Apart from political reforms and structural violence resulting from

---

[384] Groups such as *Bodu Bala Sena* and *Sihala Ravaya* emerging at the wake of the armed conflict fuel Sinhala Buddhist extremism in the country. These groups lobbied for banning halal and with seeming state compliance, openly provide leadership to anti-Muslim and to a smaller extent, anti-Christian campaigns.
[385] Holt, *Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka*, 74-75. In June 2014, anti-Muslim riots in Aluthgama resulted in four deaths and the displacement of nearly 10000 people.
[386]de Mel, Samuel, and Soysa, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations," 101.
[387] See Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (London: Picador, 2005).

'populist forms of governance', peacebuilding in Sri Lanka indeed needs a 'huge effort to increase cohesion between the ethnic communities.'[388] In fact, the latter has to be the first step of sustainable peacebuilding in order to ensure that the political and structural reforms are accepted by the masses. For this, there is a need for creative peace initiatives that are flexible and resilient. These have to be capable of providing a space where not only the Sinhalese and Tamils but also the unique narratives of each group can come together within a united platform to create a shared narrative.

Jana Karaliya

JK operates in the context of Sri Lanka's deeply entrenched conflict as a mobile, multi-ethnic and multi-religious theatre group. Its name in local vernacular stands for 'Theatre of the People'. As per its name, JK has succeeded in attracting the support of both the conflict parties in Sri Lanka, a feat achieved by only a very few peacebuilding organizations. Parakrama Niriella and H. A. Perera founded the theatre group in 2002 and they have been active since 2003. A seven-person management team is there for support as needed and regular reporting purposes, while the JK artist team share the responsibility for everyday management and group activities. Most of the participants join JK with prior experience in performing arts and receive more training within the group. Members have their living costs covered and also receive a monthly allowance. JK receives occasional financial support from external bodies and also generates income from public performances. The group's external sponsors include various non-governmental organisations as well as governmental bodies,[389] depending on specific programmes. Over the years, JK has developed strategies, networks and resources that make the group remarkably resilient.

The physical set-up of the JK theatre is designed to facilitate a multitude of voices that broaden our individual boundaries. The performance takes place in what is called a "new arena theatre." The stage is located in the middle of a tent. Seating for the audience consists of simple ascending platforms that surround the performance space. In order to reach the seating, the audience has to pass through or around the theatre space. The entry into theatrical space thus takes place through a vivid physical

---

[388] Holt, *Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka*, 76.
[389] In 2012 -2013 JK undertook a programme on behalf of Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration to conduct a series of workshops to promote interethnic understanding and social integration.

experience that clearly separates the theatrical realm from the conflict bound personal reality that exists outside the tent. The setup of the stage creates a marked enclosure, a separate space where actors and the audience form a shared community that blurs their respective ethno-political boundaries and roles.

The group formation facilitates a space where the parties and narratives in conflict can be brought together in multiple ways. Inclusion of ethnic diversity and collaboration is mandatory in all the work they undertake. The dialogic and multivocality embedded in the group structure, focus and preferred theatre form of JK works to create a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together.

Theatre approach

The theatre approach of JK demonstrates how dialogic and multivocality brings together parties and narratives in the Sri Lankan conflict. I discuss this under four aspects: the group structure and focus, the process of theatre production, the preferred theatre type of the group, and the script.

The objective of peacebuilding is built into the structure and focus of JK. The group aims to take high quality theatre productions to distant areas of the country and to promote peacebuilding among different ethnicities. Such a focus also emerges through the group structure. JK's structure is highly multivocal. It has up to 25 members from different ethno-religious and regional backgrounds at any given time. A majority of members are from Sinhala speaking communities but there is also a significant number of Tamil speaking members. Given this structure - a multi-ethnic team, living, working and touring together - the objective of peacebuilding comes through as a powerful message. When performing, the group stays in one location for about three months, but the time could be shorter or longer depending on the situation. They live and travel together except for brief periods when the members return home. In touring, JK performs in a mobile theatre tent that can house 500 people at a time and carries two mini theatres that can provide shade for up to 300 children. Apart from performing within the tent, JK goes into rural schools and conducts education and social change oriented theatre trainings and workshops with the students and teachers. Members of the theatre group carry out activities involved in setting up the theatre, production and performance as well as workshops. Hence

112

mutual understanding, tolerance and trust within and among themselves and the communities where they travel become essential for the group's overall survival. The focus on peacebuilding and reaching out to the less-travelled areas of the country with this message are features built into the very structure of the group. As such, the structure of JK embodies multivocality and dialogue. It provides a space where the two ethnicities and their cultures merge within and beyond the group boundaries.

JK productions also reflect its space for multiple voices and dialogue. These include plays based on original scripts, reproductions and adaptations, some of which are translations of world literature. Parakrama Niriella - a founder - wrote most of the initial scripts. With time, the group members are increasingly taking a proactive role in the writing, translation and direction of plays. At present, JK repertoire carries several award winning plays produced by its team members at present, almost all being co-directions of the Tamil and Sinhalese members.

The preferred theatre type of the group too facilitates multiple voices and dialogue. JK uses applied theatre. Applied theatre is an umbrella term that incorporates a broad spectrum of dramatic genres performed for social change. The intentional use of drama for social change is the definitive factor here. This flexibility allows JK to draw from and experiment with a broad spectrum of theatre ranging from traditional theatre forms to the classical and street theatre and at times, forum theatre.[390] Thus, the group is not limited to a given theatre framework and has the freedom to shape its own theatre practice.

The final aspect I discuss under theatre approach is the script. JK scripts emphasise multivocality: they work to bring out the less heard and marginalised voices. The group engages with issues of social justice and discrimination, and consequently problematizes the existing system. The plays invite the audience to think that notions of 'good' and 'bad' have their rationale in the interests of the dominant social group and are at best, only one narrative of the many that exist. Hence, the plays invite viewers to be critical about their own attitudes and thinking patterns. On purpose, they do not engage with the Sri Lankan conflict directly through their scripts. Doing so, they believe, would alienate the audience and further entrench divisive ethnic

---

[390] Though the group experiments with forum theatre, it is not a primary method of engagement. Therefore my focus here will specifically be on their foundational applied theatre performances.

narratives by reiteration. Scripts about justice and unity that are equally relevant at a different socio political level address the conflict indirectly. They draw from Sinhala and Tamil theatre and cultural traditions and perform the plays in both the languages. Adding to this is the politically very significant fact that the plays are organised and performed by a multi-ethnic cast who work, travel and live together. JK through its theatre approach creates a shared ideological platform at an everyday level that encourages people to come together, transcending their divisive ethno-political boundaries.

Creating space for parties and narratives in conflict

In this section, I discuss how peacebuilding happens through JK's theatre practice. Inoka, a team member observes that the transformation is something 'so subtle' that she cannot express it in words: she says that it happens through the drama, the touring, in the mobile theatre and in the interaction with the community through the drama.[391] Drawing on interviews with participants as well as on analyses of performances and documentary evidence, I closely look at this process and suggest that the multivocality and dialogic of JK changes attitudes at three levels to create a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together. These three levels are the personal, emotional and societal. This is to say that the dialogic and multivocality of JK's theatre form 1) provides a forum through which individuals can come to terms with their personal experiences of conflict and become more attuned to understanding and appreciating the former enemies; 2) facilitates ways in which individuals and groups can come to terms with the deep emotional wounds inflicted by conflict; and 3) makes the surrounding societal discourses more attuned to accommodating parties that were once in conflict and create more inclusive and pluralist historical narratives. These three methods, spanning the personal, emotional and societal spheres, facilitate bringing the parties and narratives in conflict together through the space of theatre.

---

[391] Inoka Lankapura, Interveiw with author, Puttalama, August 28, 2012

Transforming personal experiences of conflict

The first step towards creating a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together is the transformation of individual experiences of conflict. This is a feature that almost all JK members identified as essential for their participation: the hope that transforming their own personal experiences with conflict can eventually create a more inclusive and harmonious societal order. Transforming personal experience with conflict is particularly crucial in Sri Lanka, where communication between the groups in conflict has broken down and there is little authentic cross-ethnic interaction. Additionally, each of the two major conflict parties has constituted their identity around efforts to demonize the other. Within each ethnic group, the stereotyped other is perceived as undesirable and a threat: Tamils associate the Sinhalese with an oppressive state and a brutal military apparatus. The Sinhalese, by contrast, see the Tamils as a disruptive and dangerous terrorist group.[392]

These antagonistic attitudes become insinuated into the day-to-day ways in which people articulate their views, sense of self and interactions with others. The resulting stereotypes continuously fuel conflict and dehumanize the perceived enemy.[393] Stereotypes are found in all realms of Sri Lankan society. Even highly educated people often propagate the myth of ancient hatreds, alleging some sort of irremovable natural differences that inevitably breed conflict. Consider a statement by a former Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna: 'I have met with Tamil students and teachers. But I am not in favour of any close association or forming ties with Tamils…I think the differences we see among the races are natural. I think that forming ties with people of another culture is something dishonourable.'[394] This is a widely shared belief even during the post-war period: Samarasinghe argues, particularly noting the comment from a Sinhala Buddhist mother in Colombo: "I know that the Tamil medium teachers are training the Tamil kids to become 'Kotiyas' [Tigers]."[395] Thus, opening up these stereotypes and

---

[392] These stereotypes are used as a point of analysis here. We need to recognise that the range of attitudes and behaviours of Sri Lankans cannot be reduced to these extreme positions regardless of the context.

[393] See Cohen, "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence," 267-79.

[394] Saman Kariyakarawana, "Attitude and Responsibilities of the Southern Academics," in *Dealing with Diversity: Sri Lankan Discourses on Peace and Conflict*, ed. George Frerks and Bart Klem (The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2004), 102-03.

[395] Vidyamali Samarasinghe, ""A Theme Revisited"? The Impact of the Ethnic Conflict on Women and Politics in Sri Lanka," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 33, no. 4 (2012): 354.

humanising each other is a key step towards the first step towards sustainable ground level peacebuilding.

To break down stereotypes and deep-seated antagonism, as JK has tried to do in performances across Sri Lanka for several years now, is a long and arduous task. In fact, the very premise of JK is highly controversial: a multi-ethnic cast performing in a country devastated by ethnic conflict. Consider the reaction of Sokkalingam Krishanthan, a Tamil theatre group member from Trincomalee, a city particularly affected by ethnic violence. He stresses how he was initially afraid of the multi-ethnic cast of JK: "I was seated on a chair in that corner over there and I looked at those around me with great suspicion and mistrust. I was actually quite convinced that one of the guys [Sinhalese] was a member of the CID [Criminal Investigation Division]".[396] The artists often arrive at the team as representatives of their respective ethnic group, bearing all its fears, hatred and perceptions.

Almost all the group members comment that engaging in theatre gradually changed their sentiments. "[T]hrough the exercises of drama, singing, music and other activities we were able to forge a strong bond. We were able to overcome many of our preconceived ideas about each other and work together towards a common goal."[397] And here a similar example from Sumudu Mallawarachchi, another Sinhalese JK member: 'Before I joined JK I used to judge people by looking at them but after I joined, I've learned to respect them, their culture and their ideas".[398] Thus, the theatre group creates a space where individuals from different ethnic groups in the country come together, enabling each one to get to know the other ethnicity. Through this process facilitating dialogue with and among the cast that brings out different viewpoints, their personal experience and narratives on conflict undergo a transformation.

The same kind of initial suspicion – and often hostility – occurred in the communities where JK performed. Consider the case of Padaviya, a predominantly Sinhalese village situated between the fault-lines of ethnic conflict. As a result of its location

---

[396] Marissa Fernando, "Flict Super Stars," 2006, 1. Accessed February 12, 2011. www.janakaraliya.org/Archaives/Real%20Super%20Stars.doc.
[397] Ibid., 2.
[398] Janakaraliya, "Janakaraliya - Interview conducted by CH&JH," interview by Charlotte Hennessay and Jenny Hughes, September 2005, Accessed March 2, 2011. http://www.janakaraliya.org/Archaives/PDF/Janakaraliya%20Interve-02.pdf.

and violent history, the village had a population with strong anti-Tamil sentiments. Not surprisingly, the multi-ethnic theatre group was not well received initially. But after a few performances and theatre workshops, the situation gradually became less tense. Children who first reacted to the performance with hostility came to adore Kopika, a Tamil member of the cast. They took to following her wherever she went. Such a change of attitude – and the resulting ability to form relationships where before there was only hostility – is possible after personal conflict experiences are transformed into narratives that are less vengeful and more accepting of others. JK achieves this through facilitating interaction between ethnicities at a personal level, in a space that is usually not associated with the conflict.

Niriella and the JK members note that while this initial suspicion is the norm for all their first visits, second visits to the same location invariably prove to be very different. It is often a warm welcome stemming from the first encounter. In the second visit to Jaffna, they were inundated with invitations for house visits. In the second visit to Anuradhapura, they had to extend their stay and cram in extra performances to cater to the crowd. In the second visit to Galle, people protested so much about the group's leaving that the team was forced to dismantle the mobile theatre at night and leave early in the morning to avoid the pleas. Thus JK facilitates and nurtures bringing out multiple voices and dialogue through its theatre space. They provide a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together in each community they visit, initiating transformation.

Elements in transforming individual experiences with conflict

I identify three key elements in this personal transformation process: expression, challenging stereotypes and initiating dialogue. These exemplify the ways in which multivocality and dialogic become integral for transforming personal experiences of conflict. In discussing these steps, I show how multivocality and the dialogic emerge through the process, creating a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together at a personal level.

Encourage expression

Expressing experiences with conflict – whether they are first hand or learned through others in the community is frequently regarded as a key step in transformation.[399] JK embraces this multivocal element by presenting a public forum where people can voice their feelings. Doing so allows individuals who experienced conflict a chance to come to terms with past events and perhaps even heal some of the related trauma. In an ideal scenario, sharing testimonies of conflict also gives members of the audience – and perhaps members of the hostile parts of the community - the chance to see how the conflict was experienced from the other side.

Theatre's multivocality that comes from encouraging different forms of communication – including non-verbal ones – is central in this. The inability to speak each other's language substantially hinders communication between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka. Such difficulty is surpassed in theatre space, since here, the expression is an embodied experience that surpasses the limits of rational discourse. It can take different forms such as music, dance and other activities. Not even the different members of JK could talk to each other initially. Their inability to communicate linguistically promoted other, non-verbal forms of communication. Such interactions may actually suit the Sri Lankan context well since language is one of the divisive issues that heighten the ethnic divisions. Thus, JK integrates multivocality and the resulting potential of dialogic into its theatre process.

Challenge stereotypes

The second component in the personal transformation process is challenging stereotypes. It is intimately related to how theatre creates a distance between a fictional performance and the often-brutal reality experienced by the performer or spectator in the real world. The multivocal and dialogic form of theatre is integral to the process of distancing to that of challenging stereotypes. Through its space for multiple voices, theatre provides the opportunity to take part in conflict narratives outside the risks of real life. The performance is a safe space, so to speak – a space that enables individuals enmeshed in conflict to express themselves in a manner they

---

[399] See also Jenny Hutt and Bev Hosking, "Playback Theatre: A Creative Resource for Reconciliation" (Working paper of *Recasting Reconciliation through Culture and the Arts*, Peacebuilding and the Arts, International Centre for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, 2005) https://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/peacebuildingarts/pdfs/HuttHoskingPlayback.pdf.

could not do otherwise. In Sri Lanka, the spheres outside art are far more hostile and would not necessarily tolerate the type of ideology represented through JK. Thus, the distance created between the performance space and real life is crucial in transforming stereotypes through theatre. It allows space – inside and outside us – for characters to break out of their stereotypes, opening possibilities for the third step in the individual transformation process: initiating an internal dialogue between the existing and the ideal.

The distancing that occurs in theatre facilitates multivocality: The notion of playing a fictional role, rather than living real life, challenges preconceived perceptions and makes room for multiple voices and views to be heard. Doing so is essential if one is to address key issues that account for the cycles of violence: hatred, deep-seated antagonisms, even unwillingness to hear the archenemy. JK creates the space not only for the group but also for the audience to take on roles that might often be denied to them in real life, thus providing the chance to explore new ways of knowing the conflict and expressing its grievances.[400] Leela Selvarajan, a member of JK, notes that many people come to the stage to speak at the end of the performance: they come there to voice their opinions, to share how they felt with others and often they display vulnerability and an openness that is rarely seen in life outside.[401] Thus, through its theatre practice, JK facilitates multivocality within the individuals in the audience and the team alike.

JK's absence of specific ethno-religious or linguistic affiliation is another factor that facilitates moving away from stereotypes. When participating in the performances of JK the actors do not represent particular ethnic, religious or political groups. They are there as actors. They perform as members of humanity at large. Theatre thus provides individuals with access to – and even ways of acting out – roles that they otherwise would never be able to experience. Consider a youth who attended a performance of JK in Kebithigollewa, another border village that suffered many massacres due to the conflict. He stressed that "this was one of the most unforgettable moments in my life. I never thought that I would ever speak so freely with a young Tamil woman."[402]

---

[400] See Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*. and Jennings, *Art Therapy and Dramatherapy: Masks of the Soul*.
[401] Leela Selvarajan, interview with author and Harshadeva Amarathunga, Thambuttegama, February 22, 2008.
[402] Sumith Ganangoda, interview with author and Harshadeva Amarathunga, Thmabuttegama, February 22, 2008

Thus, JK has created a space where the different ethnicities can come together to initiate shared narratives that are more pluralistic and inclusive.

Enhancing theatre's capacity for multivocality and the dialogic, JK offers participants a chance to slip in and out of different roles, perhaps even to try on the personae of the enemy. Doing so inevitably challenges the stereotypical perceptions that fuel the conflict in Sri Lanka – the idea, for instance, that Tamils are a certain type of people or that Sinhalese behave in a given way.[403] These attitudes often change after performances. Numerous members stress this point in their interviews. Take Manjula Ramasinghe, a JK member from the strongly Sinhala community in Hambanthota. He believed that all the Tamils are terrorists and credited the theatre in helping him overcome the fear of interacting with them. Having engaged through the medium of theatre with other Tamil youths, he is now convinced that he has a lot of things in common with them despite the ethnic, cultural and religious differences that differentiate them. These barriers, he stresses, exist mostly in our minds and were established through hostile ways of constructing notions of identity and community.[404] This is but one example where JK was imperative in generating inclusive and pluralistic individual narratives on the ethnicities in conflict, where there was previously only alienation and antagonism.

JK enhances the multivocality and dialogic of its theatre form through challenging common language stereotypes. The group's plays are bilingual, with separate Tamil and Sinhala versions of the same play. Each performance features a multi-ethnic cast. When the Tamil actors speak with a Sinhala accent, and vice versa, the performance challenges the stereotypes each group believe in, rendering this very stereotype no longer valid to explain their experiences. Hence JK creates a space where separation between the two languages blurs, and standard ethnic monolingulaism is renounced: challenging the language stereotypes create shared, inclusive narratives that address a primary grievance related to the conflict.

A striking example for the potential impact of these role-play reversals can be seen in the way JK was received by both the Sri Lankan Government Army and the LTTE. This is an example highly stressed by Parakrama Niriella, a co-founder of JK. When

---

[403] For a detailed discussion see Fernando, "Flict Super Stars," 2.
[404] Manjula Ranasinghe, interview with author and Harshadeva Amarathunga, Thambuttegama, February 22, 2008

performing in Anuradhapura in a ground close to the Army Hospital, the injured soldiers got so close to the group that they came regularly for performances and often provided food and snacks for the entire group. Similarly, the LTTE took responsibility for organising JK performances in Muthur when JK performed in the Eastern Province of the country, which was then under the LTTE control. They promised to ensure the safety of the entire group and the LTTE Eastern Commander, inviting the group for tea, voiced that "this is how we want to live in this country".[405] Thus, the group has effectively created a space where each ethnicity – even the militants - can stand together.

In an ideal scenario, then, role-plays and role reversals help people to reach some sort of common humanity in formerly opposed individuals. Embodying multivocality through theatre leads to a disintegration of stereotypes that each side has about the other and creates the space for inclusive personal narratives and communal relations.

Initiate dialogue

The third element in how theatre transforms personal narratives is through initiating dialogue. Doing so improves communication and understanding between groups. Performing and touring together is a process that requires communication between performers as well as between performers and the audience. JK promotes dialogue by structural and psychological means. Unlike a proscenium stage, seating the audience in ascending platforms circling the stage as they do in JK allows the audience to face each other, facilitating interaction and connection. Manjula, a member of the cast, believes that this is a key feature that encourages community dialogue.[406] The smiles and tears brought on by the performance become part of the dialogue among the audience members. These can convey subtle messages that are hard to be satisfactorily captured with words. For a politically charged society like Sri Lanka, this is an important element. Kalidas, Leela and other commentators do in fact stress that theatre – and the arts in general – are the key instrument through which dialogue can be reintroduced into communities that no longer talk to each other.[407] Therefore

---

[405] Niriella, interview.
[406] Ranasinghe, interview.
[407] Focus group interview with actors, interview with author and Amarathunga, Thambuttegama, February 22, 2008

JK actively generates spaces where individuals and personal narratives of conflict are brought together engage in dialogue.

Encouraging expression, challenging stereotypes and initiating dialogue all forms key elements of JK's approach to transform individual experiences with conflict. Addressing the emotional impacts of the conflict is also a necessary task in transforming personal experiences of conflict.

Addressing emotional impact of conflict

The second theme through which I explore JK's process of creating a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together is its potential in creating more inclusive and less violence-prone emotional narratives. Doing so requires engaging with the types of collective emotions that fuel the conflict cycle.

The multivocal and dialogic form of theatre is particularly suited to the task. It calls for an embodied expression going beyond the boundaries of regular communication. Thus, engaging with emotions as JK does in its work indicates the embodiment of theatre's multivocal and dialogic form in their theatre practice.

Emotions are central in determining how we feel and behave as members of a collective and as individuals. They are even more central when dealing with the aftermath of conflict – a time when fear and hatred dominate the political landscape. A number of studies have demonstrated that the human mind is more likely to remember incidents with strong emotional associations, for all emotional memories receive preferential processing in registering, storing and retrieval in comparison to cognitive memories.[408] This privileged position in memory enables emotions to identify specific issues and establish priorities in the general reasoning mechanisms of the mind: hence emotions play a key role in devising strategies to achieve their preferred choices.[409] Through the process of influencing our remembering and decision-making, emotions become critical in deciding where we place ourselves and with whom we form alliances.

---

[408] Long and Brecke, *War and Reconciliation: Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*. Also, see James L. McGaugh, *Memory and Emotion : The Making of Lasting Memories* (New York : Columbia University Press, 2003); Elizabeth A. Phelps and Tali Sharot, "How (and Why) Emotion Enhances the Subjective Sense of Recollection," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 17, no. 2 (2008).

[409] Long and Brecke, *War and Reconciliation: Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*.

In post-conflict societies, feelings of anger and revenge are often so strong that they generate, contribute to and perpetuate highly dangerous cycles of violence. Ethnic contexts are particularly noted for being emotion-laden, rendering a shared future further obtuse.[410] Consider the stereotypical perceptions that each of the conflict groups in Sri Lanka has of the other. These stereotypes, which continually fuel conflict, are mostly based on anger and fear. They have been formed through the memory of violence and death.

Any peacebuilding effort needs to deal with the role of collective emotions in order to be successful in the long-term. Engaging with collective emotions requires the incorporation of the multivocal and dialogic. The challenge in engaging with emotions is two-fold: firstly it consists of recognizing how fear and anger create ever more conflict. Secondly it requires finding a way through which a sense of community can be created around feelings that do not incite hatred: these can be empathy or compassion for the former enemies or a mutual sense of grief, or, indeed, hope for a shared future. Establishing such an emotional transformation of community attachments and interactions is connected with a dialogic process and is of course, a long-term and difficult task. This is why it has to start at the local level and gradually work its way through society.

Local theatre groups, such as JK, are ideally placed to initiate and spread such processes of emotional transformation. The capacity to engage with emotions is, indeed, one of the key features of theatre as a peacebuilding method. The role of emotion within theatre can be explored under two main categories.

The first emotional feature of JK's work is its ability to provide actors and the audience the opportunity to re-live emotions. Re-living emotions allows them to come to terms with their grief and anger, thus taking an important step towards coming together. Consider the strong visual impact of theatre in creating shared images, which many commentators associate with the potential of replacing old (conflict prone) memories with new, different ones.[411] Kalidas[412] astutely picked up on this aspect of theatre in saying that "people see theatre like pictures. If we do a workshop

---

[410] Ross, "Psychocultural Interpretations and Dramas: Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict," 162.
[411] Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies"; Marc Howard Ross, "Psychocultural Interpretation Theory and Peacemaking in Ethnic Conflict," *Political Psychology* 16, no. 3 (1995): 526-31.
[412] Focus group interview with actors, interview.

for theatre, it will end with the day. But because theatre creates pictures it is different. We are remembered". He further explains his point with an example: "we stayed in Anuradhapura for about three months, and the people there tell us that when they see the ground, it is always JK they remember. This stays inside people's minds because it is pictures. That is what theatre is." Anuradhapura is an area that is deeply woven into the divisive conflict narratives. It is a centre of several Sinhala-Buddhist kingdoms and has witnessed severe LTTE attacks. It also has a strong military presence. Thus, the story holds much significance. The ability of theatre to bring out the emotional perspectives is key in this transformation. JK succeeds in creating a space where parties and narratives in conflict come together to form a shared emotional narrative through experiencing and reliving emotion as a community.

The second aspect has to do with how theatre can contribute to the establishment of more inclusive emotional attachments to communities. Facilitating inclusive emotions illustrates the dialogic process that results from re-living emotion as discussed earlier. In the process of re-living emotion, JK might help to attenuate often divisive emotions, such as anger, fear and hatred. These emotions often become key rallying points after conflict. Grief and loss, by contrast, are often silenced and so are attempts to show empathy to the opposing side. Selective suppression of emotions actively limits multivocality and dialogue. To continue with the previous example of Anuradhapura, a land that held a strong anti-Tamil and militarised Sinhalese identity, now also holds parallel memories of a harmonious multiethnic theatre group. Consequently more inclusive emotions have gradually entered the spaces so far held by anger and fear. The resulting shift in the community enables the expression of emotions like grief, loss and empathy that contribute to reconciliation. JK, accordingly, creates a space where emotional narratives of parties in conflict can come together.

JK brings together communities and enables them to deal with these issues at their own pace, in their own ways. Given that the group stays in one location for a period of three months performing as often as requested, the community engagement is prolonged. In doing so, it potentially creates new and less divisive emotional narratives among communities through a multivocal and a dialogic process. At the end of each performance, the cast introduces themselves, saying their name and hometown, using the language they are most comfortable with. This routine often

becomes an emotional moment for the audience. As a group member observes: "when we talk to them some of them start to cry, there's always a reason behind why they cry and most of the time it's because they feel silly about the grudge they've been holding against the Tamil people".[413]

As I discussed in this section, theatre can make space for transforming emotions so that anger, fear and hatred are no longer dominant, but make room for sadness and grief that in turn, become a source of commonness and a space where both the communities can come together. Long and Brecke emphasise that reconciliation might come about when certain emotions, such as hatred and anger, are superseded by different ways of engaging with past traumatic events.[414] Focusing on loss and grief, for instance, is much more likely to bring about a shared sense of community. Consider how a member of JK observes that "[i]f we've made a change within the people then I feel that this is what we've achieved."[415] Hence theatre in JK actively engages with emotion, thus facilitating a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together creating inclusive emotional narratives in the place of divisive narratives of hatred and fear through utilising the multivocal and dialogic form provided therein.

Creating inclusive and pluralistic societal narratives

Finally, I explore JK's potential for creating a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together at the societal level. The ways in which JK initiates inclusive and pluralistic societal narratives is closely related to dialogic process and multivocality encouraged through the group. Here I argue that the personal and emotional transformations discussed earlier are part of a larger peacebuilding process that involves transformation of societal attitudes among parties to the conflict. Questions of identity, historical memory and cultural belonging are essential to the process of overcoming conflict. As previously discussed, in the Sri Lankan context, each party to the conflict rehearses a different understanding of the past and upholds a different notion of what it means to be a member of society. Often these forms of

---

[413] Ranasinghe, interview.
[414] Long and Brecke, *War and Reconciliation: Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*, 28.
[415] Focus group interview with actors, interview.

identity are highly politicized and involve constituting the other party to the conflict as alien and/or inferior.

I discuss three ways in which JK creates a space where multiple societal narratives are brought together to be more inclusive and pluralistic in this milieu: the group through its structure and productions, draws from and merges the different drama traditions of the Sinhalese and Tamils, giving rise to new societal narratives; it triggers pluralistic societal narratives among the audience members by representing a possible ideal microcosm of ethnic collaboration; finally, it presents an alternative ideological platform where the parties and narratives in conflict can come together as allies.

Merging Sinhalese and Tamil drama traditions

JK draws from and merges the Tamil and Sinhalese drama traditions and in turn, cultures. This process initiates a dialogue between the respective groups and thereby gives rise to inclusive and pluralistic narratives. While there are some similarities between artistic and cultural traditions in the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, there are notable differences. For JK's director Parakrama Niriella, the very space of theatre is a forum where different cultural and aesthetic traditions can come together and produce a new and more positive attitude.[416] JK draws from both the traditions in producing its plays. *Charandas* is a good example. The Sinhala production of *Charandas* uses drums and other music instruments along with costumes and steps used in Tamil theatre styles while the Tamil production does vice versa. Niriella cites the adaptations of *Meti Karattaya* (Sinhala) and *Mruchchakateeham* (Tamil) from the JK drama *Mrichchakateeka* as an exemplary case where the plurality in the Sri Lankan society is brought together to promote cooperation and inclusiveness.[417] He notes this to be a different turn in Sri Lankan theatre since this transition of cultural aspects to both ethnicities at the same time has not happened before. In the process of effecting this transition, JK bridges the relationships between Tamil and Sinhala artists, initiating a process of dialogue between them. JK also encourages the transfer of traditional stories from one culture to the other: translation of *Enthayum Thayum* by the renowned Tamil dramatist Kulanthei Shanmugalingam into a JK Sinhala

---

[416] Parakrama Niriella, interview with author, August 28, 2012
[417] Ibid

126

production and the production of *Nalapana Jathakaya* from Buddhist mythology by a Tamil youth group are examples.

JK also plays a critical role in claiming a place for Tamil theatre at a national level, thereby highlighting the potential and diversity it offers. Such visibility is important for creating inclusive and pluralistic societal narratives. While theatre is a highly valued form of art in both the communities, we see Tamil theatre only in small pockets, limited to specific areas. It is difficult to fully appreciate or utilise the wealth of resource available within Tamil theatre and the artists engaging in it. JK Tamil language productions are robust and high quality, wining several national drama festival awards and representing Sri Lanka in international drama festivals. The group contributes to enriching Tamil theatre through producing young talents as well. Take Loganathan, who honed his language and translation skills through JK and has produced work that drew much local and international appreciation.[418] Similarly, JK has produced accomplished actors, production managers, lighting and sound directors. The vice versa is true for JK as well. As Leela personally testifies, it takes Sinhala plays to communities where Sinhala theatre has not reached before: being a Tamil from a peripheral area, she saw a Sinhala play for the first time after she joined JK.[419] Enhancing visibility and empowerment of both the theatre forms contributes to pluralistic and inclusive societal narratives.

The personal development that takes place in this process also results in creating inclusive and pluralistic social narratives. It opens up new paths for communities where there were none, bringing in the voice of communities hitherto neglected. Take the example of Kalidas,[420] who comes from an estate Tamil community in the upcountry. The impact of JK has been immense upon him and his community. Recipient of the Best Actor Award in the State Drama Festival in 2006, he perceives the momentum of JK and his role in it as a turning point for his entire community. It enables him to open new avenue for his community to belong to the larger society and make themselves heard. This is the case for Ajanthan as well:[421] as the lighting director for the team and also the winner of a Best Actor- Tamil - Award at the State

---

[418] Loganathan's translation of *Metikaraththaya – Mruchchakateeham* in Tamil - drew plenty of attention and appreciation at its screenings both locally and internationally.
[419] Focus group interview with actors, interview.
[420] Ibid
[421] Ajanthan Shanthakumar, interview with author, Puttalama, August 29, 2012.

Drama Festival, he sees himself as a path-breaker for his school, community and the Tamil cultural sphere in general. There are many other similar stories. These stories mark the beginning of different, new cultural narratives for people who were marginalised and traditionally limited to a set of given designations that all too often created tension and friction. JK therefore draws from and merges the drama traditions in the island, giving voice to where there was none or very little, initiating a process of dialogue between the cultures and creating inclusive and pluralistic societal narratives in the process.

A microcosm of ethnic cohesion

Another way in which JK triggers pluralistic societal narratives is by emulating a model microcosm that exemplifies ethnic cohesion of an ideal Sri Lanka. The primary way in which JK engages with the conflict is through its group theatre process. The team is bilingual, reconciling the language issue that is a primary grievance of the larger conflict. The different ethnicities work together in the group, living and travelling as a family for the better part of a year. The process of producing the drama and the actual production itself is a demonstration of ethnic cooperation. The group, with time, becomes an exemplary ideal of reconciliation and cohabitation existing within the widespread conflict narratives outside. The alternative contemporary narrative JK represents in the larger conflict context, challenges the predominant stereotypes by its very existence and smooth functioning.

Through its travels, the group presents a unique microcosm of ethnic cooperation that has the potential to initiate inclusive and pluralistic social narratives within the communities they encounter. JK's practice of living and working for an extended period within a given community supports this process. It facilitates the time and social engagement required for the gradual formation of new cultural narratives in the place of existing ones. Manjula[422] explains that after about a month of performances, the villagers start coming every evening to the theatre, not only to see the same performances over and over, but also to be in an environment that allows them to interact with each other. This involves meeting and engaging with various people they would otherwise not interact with, including people form opposing ethnic groups. An audience member observes that 'engaging in creative activities together like this can

---

[422] Ranasinghe, interview

be more effective than simply producing or watching a drama'.[423] This goes hand in hand with JK's belief that the process is stronger than any message conveyed through a drama. The persons actively engaged in such processes deeply understand the values of inclusiveness and the strength in unity. The group focuses on the process through which it works. Within the larger social context, JK functions as a model microcosm that travel, live and learn together: a group that promotes multivocality and initiate dialogic processes of interethnic relationships. This harmonious multi-ethnic gathering epitomizes an ideal existence between Sinhalese and Tamils - as a potential manifestation of the end result of conflict transformation and reconciliation.

Present an alternative ideological platform

The final way in which JK encourages pluralistic and inclusive societal narratives is through presenting an alternative ideological platform where the parties and narratives in conflict can come together as allies to express themselves and forge relationships. The group does not discuss peace, or explicitly use peace as a theme in its dramas.[424] Instead, JK focuses on the issues shared by both the ethnicities as a strategy for finding common ground.

As a shared ideological platform for all ethnicities, JK's dramas often bring up a critique against the ruling elite classes and portray the oppression of working classes. Several group dramas are evidence of these critiques, such as *Charandas*, *Andara Mal* and *Sekkuwa.* Parakrama Niriella explains that the group has also actively supported and 'constantly joined hands with progressive labour movements through creative activities.'[425] Take the collaboration between JK and the Ceylon Workers' Red Flag Union in February 2011 in promoting awareness on the rights of labour communities in Hatton. Here, the organisation conducted street drama, and produced and performed four dramas on the issues estate sector women face. Afterwards, the group also facilitated forum discussions on behalf of the Red-Flag Women's Movement. The political standpoints of the labour movements resonate within JK plays,

---

[423] Nishanthan Krishna, interview with author, Colombo, November 02, 2010.
[424] Arosha Ranaweera, interview with author, Puttalama, August 20, 2012; Palitha Abelal, interview with Harshadeva Amarathunga, Puttalama, August 29, 2012
[425] Parakrama Niriella, 'Janakaraliya" Mobile Theatre -Sri Lanka,' interview by Ajay Joshi, Lanka-e-News, May 22, 2013. http://www.lankaenews.com/English/news.php?id=13689

presenting a neutral, alternative yet politically significant platform for the conflicting parties to rally together despite their differences.

Hence the theatre practice of JK creates a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together at personal, emotional and societal levels to form inclusive and pluralistic narratives in the place of existing divisive and antagonistic narratives. Roland Bleiker notes that the most effective way of challenging the prevalent stories is by telling new stories instead of the old – it is this that comes through in the theatre process of JK.[426] The group tells and embodies new stories of ethnic collaboration by its very existence and in the connections they make with the communities they travel through.

The multivocality in theatre and integrated into the very structure of the group operates in different ways to bring out the different voices in the country, acknowledging these, facilitating healing and telling new stories of ethnic collaboration. The dialogic works through the space of theatre to initiate conversations that are more accommodating of the Other, within and between the different ethnic groups and conflict narratives: it facilitates generating stories of ethnic collaboration. The conscious act of remembering/forgetting that necessarily occurs in rearticulation becomes an 'instrument of dialogue and inclusion'[427] that reorients divisive narratives to be more accommodative and incorporative of the perceived enemy. JK prepares the ground for a larger reconciliation process to take place in Sri Lanka by creating the space where shared relationships emerge between the Sinhalese and Tamils. This is crucial for sustainable peacebuilding where peace does not mean 'only the absence of war, but also the presence of conditions that makes war unnecessary'.[428]

Challenges

A key limitation with JK's peacebuilding is its self-imposed restrictions on thematic engagement through scripts. At times, this runs the risk of misrepresenting the group

---

[426] Bleiker, "Forget IR Theory."
[427] "Forget IR Theory," 39.
[428] Uyangoda (2002, May, p. 1) cited in de Mel, Samuel, and Soysa, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations," 106.

as being intentionally and/or unintentionally complicit with the state ideology, despite the alternative ideological platform just discussed.

JK's self-imposed restrictions on thematic engagement with the conflict extend to two aspects: firstly, the group intentionally refrains from performing or submitting scripts that run the risk of being banned by the Public Performance Board (PPB) of Sri Lanka. It is mandatory for any public performance to obtain PPB's approval for its script in advance. The group policy to abide by the rules appears sensible from certain perspectives. It is indeed unlikely that any scripts dissenting with the prevailing nationalistic view of the government will be approved through this state apparatus. However, theatre is more than the script: there is clearly room to permeate the barrier of censorship while remaining within the mandatory framework. When there are high censorship regulations in place, pushing through even the tiny loopholes takes on enormous significance.

Nevertheless, JK's intentional withholding of utilizing the full potential of theatre curtails the group's reach in building peace to a certain extent. JK's passive acceptance in this issue can imply a voluntary subjection to the state views. It can be further interpreted as a silent endorsement or an agreement. Parakrama Niriella acknowledges this in saying that the group intentionally does not produce drama that the Public Performance Board is 'compelled to ban'. He justifies this approach on the grounds of group interests: 'If we continue to do dramas subjected to regular bans we won't be able to carry out our mission.' Thus, while the group's choice in performing only the plays that are approved by the Public Performance Board is open to challenge, a vision of surviving as a peacebuilding and theatre group in the long-term drives this decision rather than an actual desire to comply.

JK's second restriction on thematic engagement is its hesitancy to directly engage with conflict issues.[429] Until recently, the group purposely did not discuss the conflict through its plays. The decision to focus on social justice issues provides an alternative ideological platform that accommodates the ethnicities. However, this can leave JK's plays open to interpretations that are not always conducive to peacebuilding. Movements for social justice also operate within nationalistic stances. These groups

---

[429] Since 2010 JK has gradually opening up their plays to discuss issues of language exclusivity between the Tamil and Sinhala communities.

can appropriate JK plays to serve their own ends. One such example is the staging of *Charandas* in 2007 at Pannala. *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (Peoples Liberation Front), a leftist political party that supported the war from a Sinhala-nationalist standpoint organised the event in support of a cause that is rather partisan in the conflict and hence problematic from a peacebuilding point of view. This incident generated an internal discussion that made the group more vigilant in choosing their external performances. The conscious decision to avoid thematic discussion on conflict therefore leaves JK plays open for external appropriation. The dominant conflict discourse can use them to fulfil its political agendas.

One can even go so far as to argue that it is this thematic neutrality that facilitates JK's acceptance among the conflict groups; that it is this neutrality that mitigates political repression and community resistance through its non-confrontational manner. Here, the community acceptance JK enjoys can be won at the risk of ignoring or glossing over core issues behind the conflict. Instead of proactively facilitating a shared understanding, it could allow the bridge between the two ethnicities to be conceptualised in their own respective terms. Such a relationship may be fragile and easily unsettled as a result of external influences.

In the absence of direct thematic engagement with conflict, the question arises whether being portrayed as a microcosm of ethnic harmony makes JK inadvertently serve the requirements of the prevalent system. Looking at JK as a harmonious microcosm of interethnic cooperation makes the group an exception to the ordinary. The uniqueness of the group itself sets apart from the ground level society as well as the realities and practical difficulties that go along with it. In this case, acceptance among the hardliners is easy to come: being a microcosm unto themselves, JK is a separate entity with no visible political associations. The resulting neutrality, bread in isolation, causes a possible distancing between the theatre group and its performance from the ground level, where conflict narratives exist and are applicable. While it is clear that JK holds much potential for peacebuilding, the idealisation and potential separation of being seen as an ideal microcosm and the thematic neutrality can impair the group's political significance to some extent.

Nevertheless, given the nature of the group's work and the significance of its multi-ethnic bilingual existence, it is inconceivable that JK can indeed survive if not for

these particular approaches in the script and the structure. Niriella justifies the non-engagement with conflict narratives on the grounds that it helps avoid alienation of audience and ensure the group's safety. At times, the thematic non-engagement has become the only means to ensure a measure of safety for the group. In each new location they travel to, JK is often reported to the police as a 'suspicious group': the community as well as the local authorities look at them with hostility and subject them to informal – and at times formal – questioning. During the conflict period, members had to undergo rigorous security checks at the checkpoints they passed in travelling. Tamil members had to report to the police stations in certain areas and at times were detained for questioning. The founders, making use of their established reputation in the country, had to personally intervene in order to ensure the team's safety. Maintaining the very presence of JK itself is a challenging task due to the external pressures, not to mention the internal challenges that arise within a multi-ethnic group.

In abiding by the state rules, JK draws from and plays on the mainstream tendency to see theatre as a seemingly inconsequential medium to intervene in political affairs. Rai argues that performative acts in political ceremonies and rituals render the audience susceptible in two ways: 'either by suggesting that what is performed is what politics is or by suggesting that the performance is of no consequence and therefore neither is the politics that it represents.'[430] JK, in scripting politics, works along similar lines: with its scripts focusing on issues other than the conflict, JK thwarts possible objections from its audience. The group consciously cultivate the trait of presenting itself as seemingly inconsequential in terms of mainstream conflict issues in the interests of the group's acceptance, survival and continuation.

The very strength of its local and extended engagement also demonstrates the limits of the contribution that JK and other theatre groups can make to processes of peacebuilding. Healing the wounds of conflict takes time – often generations. It has to happen at the local level and it inevitably involves compromises and setbacks. JK shies away from directly engaging with contentious issues since doing so could lead to political repression. It could alienate the audience and thus defeat the very idea of promoting peacebuilding processes.

---

[430] Rai, "Analysing Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament," 294.

As a result of its chosen approach, JK has become resilient throughout the changing phases of the conflict. With the different dynamics of the post-conflict situation, the group is gradually moving into discussing themes that are more relevant. Its recent plays discuss post-conflict resettlement issues and the language difficulties that the Tamil community faces. Also, the solidarity that is generated through living, working and travelling together, and in some ways through becoming a microcosm of ethnic harmony, enables the group to stand together on a daily basis against the entrenched ethnic divisions they encounter at each location. Therefore, presenting an alternative unifying ideological platform of social change through the group themes and the self-imposed restrictions of the group are a slow but very necessary, steady strategies for building peace in the particular conflict dynamics at play in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

JK, as a multi-ethnic organisation working in Sri Lanka, has been politically active in a highly fragile context with changing phases of conflict. The peacebuilding approach of the group is inevitably shaped by this context. The group addresses a significant issue at the heart of the Sri Lankan conflict that continues to characterise the post-conflict scenario of Sri Lanka: the entrenched alienation of the Sinhala and Tamil ethnicities from each other, in part driven by exclusive narratives. As numerous accounts of the Sri Lankan conflict testify, the protracted conflict led to increasing ethnic separation and alienation along with intense militarisation of the island, culminating in peace activism itself being regarded as ambiguous and unpatriotic within the mainstream conflict narratives. JK, suitably adapted to survive in this divisive and repressive context existing even at this late post-conflict period, creates a space where these parties and narratives in conflict can safely come together. It is here that I located JK's significance as a local theatre group using theatre for peacebuilding.

This chapter explored three themes under which JK utilised the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre to create a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together: changing conflict attitudes at the personal, emotional and societal levels. Transforming the personal narratives of conflict happens through expressing the experience of conflict, transcending stereotypes and initiation of dialogue between

the different ethnicities at an individual level. JK engaged with the emotional residues of the conflict by using theatre as a space for remembering and reliving the feelings triggered by conflict, leading to the initiation of more inclusive emotional narratives among communities. The group uses theatre's dialogic and multivocal form, thirdly, to initiate pluralistic and inclusive societal narratives through bridging the theatre traditions of the conflict parties, by presenting a model microcosm of ethnic harmony and by presenting an alternative ideological platform where the ethnic adversaries can become allies.

I identified the group's self-censorship as a limitation. JK actively seeks state approval for the scripts and refrains from thematically engaging with conflict issues. This creates a possibility of the group being co-opted into the system as an ideal but nationalist model of ethnic harmony. However, this limitation is also key in ensuring the group's safety and continuation. Self-censorship facilitates the group's extended, in-depth engagement in the fragile and repressive context of Sri Lanka where many others have failed to continue as impartial local peacebuilding organisations. These elements, initially seen as limiting, indeed form part of the group's resilience strategy.

It becomes apparent, therefore, that JK utilises the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre to create a space where parties and narratives can come together within the particular situation of Sri Lankan conflict: this flexibility through theatre helps the group navigate a fine line between aiming for legitimisation and vocalising political objectives associated with peacebuilding. Recognizing these limits, and acknowledging that transformation takes time, does not negate the power of theatre to create spaces that contribute in important ways to peacebuilding processes. Indeed, JK's role assumes further relevance given its subtle yet sustained activism that evolves in response to changing political conditions. Such artistic engagements are crucial for two reasons: they create the necessary local preconditions for peace, and they persistently generate hope and insights that political leaders can use to promote reconciliation at the national level. This unique way of approaching theatre for peacebuilding sets JK apart from the case studies I will discuss in the next two chapters.

Chapter 4: Jana Sanskriti

Introduction

With the previous case study, I explored how theatre brings together parties and narratives in the Sri Lankan ethno-political conflict. Here I examine how a grassroots activist group from India addresses structural violence in West Bengal through theatre.

I argue that Jana Sanskriti (JS) uses the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre to bring out important but less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse. The theatre group carries out political activism through a number of avenues aiming for the transformation of structural violence primarily in West Bengal. However, I do not attempt to present a conclusive picture of the group's activities through this chapter: I only aim to engage with selective elements of JS that are relevant from a perspective of peacebuilding through theatre.

There are four main sections in the chapter: Through the first section, I describe the conflict background of the case study. This outlines the narratives of structural violence in West Bengal and discusses peacebuilding as a means of addressing structural violence. The second section introduces and locates JS as a theatre group working within this context. In this discussion, I draw attention to the ways in which JS embraces multiple voices and a dialogic process within the group structure. Thus, the first and the second sections briefly answer the first research question on how theatre is used for peacebuilding in conflict situations by outlining Jana Sanskriti's particular theatre approach to address structural violence in West Bengal.

Through the third and fourth sections of the chapter, I closely look at JS's theatre practice in order to answer the second and third research questions, respectively on how theatre opens up possibilities of conversation between parties and narratives in conflict and the potentials and limitations of forum theatre, as it is used by JS. Here, I identify and outline two steps in the process of peacebuilding through JS: performing resistance and initiating transformation. The third section of the chapter examines how performing resistance to embedded narratives of structural violence emerge as peacebuilding through JS's work. I establish here that the resistance put forward in

the process of JS's theatre practice creates a tension, wherein transformation takes root. Multivocality emerges as a central theme in this process of performing resistance.

In the fourth section of the chapter, I explore how JS's use of theatre visibly transforms narratives of structural violence within two key spheres: political and socio-cultural. I draw from the broader array of JS work to focus on peacebuilding in these two aspects. I highlight the potentials and limitations of the particular theatre form of JK in relation to the key points of analysis, thereby answering the third research question.

The chapter concludes with a final section on challenges faced by the group. I outline two key challenges: one, navigating a balance between aesthetics and politics in performance; and two, navigating a balance between nurturing a group identity and an individual artist/activist identity.

Conflict background

I establish the conflict background for JS with an overview of structural violence in West Bengal and why we need to consider structural violence as a peacebuilding issue.

Structural violence and West Bengal

JS's most active and longest standing groups are all concentrated in West Bengal. Its work emerged within the state itself as a response to the structural disparities in the community. Among all Indian states, West Bengal is the 13th in size and the 7th in population density,[431] and more than two thirds of its total population fall under the rural category.[432] The overall male-female percentage is roughly divided along equal lines.

I highlight two key aspects of structural violence in West Bengal: violence in the political and socio-cultural spheres. Among the many issues JS addresses, I focus on

---

[431] Ministry of Home Affairs. Government of India, "Provisional Population Totals Paper 1 of 2011 (India & States/Uts)," Accessed June 24, 2013. http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/census2011_PPT_paper1.html: Government of India, 2012.
[432] "Ibid.

these two as these are the issues that prominently emerge through its work.[433] I take each aspect in turn and outline the prevalent issues falling within each section.

Structural violence embedded in politics inevitably shapes lives in rural West Bengal. A key issues here is the elitist and inefficient structures of representation in the political sphere. Election violence is rampant. There are entire villages where the community continue to perceive being political hatchet men – or goondaism – as their inherited profession.[434] The high frequency of reported incidents of election violence in the 2012 poll and the state statistics on West Bengal[435] testify to this. These statistics indicate the level of violence ingrained in the state's political structures.

Structural violence in socio-cultural narratives is the other key aspect I discuss here. Religion and gender based violence are examples. These often manifest at a family and community level and are further embedded into the everyday life. West Bengal has a relatively low record of religious violence in comparison to other Indian states like Gujarat. In 2009 and 2010, there were two riots between Hindus and Muslims that resulted in the deployment of the army as a controlling measure.[436] Conversely, West Bengal's gender-based violence rates high. It consecutively leads all 28 states in India in crime against women statistics in 2011 and 2012.[437] As the state statistics indicate, the reported number of cases in increased from 29,133 and 30,942 during this period.[438] Broken down into population statistics, West Bengal constituting 7.5% of the Indian population account for nearly 12.7% of the total reported crimes against women in the country. There is a pervasive cultural acceptance for gender-based violence and discrimination at a daily level, such as beating and abusing women. Practices such as the dowry system are still prevalent, though its impact has somewhat lessened over the years. The rape statistics for the state are at 2,363, which again, accounts for a 9.7% of the total number of registered cases across India in

---

[433] Economic sphere is another key area JS addresses. This is often seen as an outcome of the already established hierarchies in the socio-cultural or political spheres and as such, the group approaches unequal economic or resource distribution from the perspective of the sociocultural and political spheres.

[434] Satya Ranjan Pal, 12 October 2012; Sanjoy Ganguly, "Personal Interview," (18 October 2012).

[435] See "Hold West Bengal Rural Polls in Three Phases," *The Hindu,* January 13, 2013.

[436] "Peace Eludes Troubled Deganga," *The Times of India,* September 09, 2010; "Army Deployed after Calcutta Riot," *BBC*, November 21, 2007.

[437] National Crime Records Bureau - Ministry of Home Affairs., "Crime in India - 2011 Statistics," (New Delhi: National Crime Records Bureau, 2012), Accessed May 24, 2013. http://ncrb.nic.in/CD-CII2011/Home.asp; "Crime in India - 2012 Statistics," (New Delhi: National Crime Records Bureau, 2013). Accessed March 18, 2014. http://ncrb.nic.in/CD-CII2012/Statistics2012.pdf

[438] According to the 2013 report, however, West Bengal went down to the third highest state in the number of crime against women. At 29,826, there was a slight decrease of the number of crimes too. "Crime in India - 2013 Statistics," (New Delhi National Crime Records Bureau, 2014), http://ncrb.gov.in/CD-CII2013/home.asp

2011,[439] making West Bengal the bearer of second highest number of rapes as a state. As a number of studies argue, literacy rates are also a key indicator of structural violence. There is a significant disparity between the rural and urban literacy rates, with the former at 66.08% compared to 81.70% for the latter.[440]

These statistics indicate that structures of violence in West Bengal are at a high level. The narratives of structural violence support and feed each other, thereby creating a tight web that supports the embedded violence in political and socio-cultural structures. As I proceed to argue in the next section, this is a cyclic process that reproduces further violence unless it is addressed. JS's peacebuilding aims to challenge this cycle.

Peacebuilding as addressing structural violence

Addressing structural violence is part of peacebuilding. When social structures are violent, these impact unfairly upon a given category or categories of people living in that community.[441] The resulting inequality and discrimination breed violence and create a tension that often manifests as interpersonal, intergroup or intercommunal conflict. To address this, it is important to replace the existing hierarchical structures with fairer, more equally empowered systems.

Peacebuilding incorporates a range of activities within its umbrella that take an immediate focus on ending direct violence to a long-term focus on addressing root causes of violence, including structural injustices.[442] The locus of peacebuilding from a perspective of structural violence is often the everyday: the everyday manifestations of injustice, discrimination, abuse and exclusion.[443]

Peacebuilding through addressing structural violence tackles building peace within intangible, embedded narratives of structural violence. Structural violence refers to the 'disabilities, disparities and even deaths that result when systems, institutions, or policies meet some people's needs and rights at the expense of others' and it becomes

---

[439] Kasturi Basu, "Violence on Women in W Bengal," *Liberation - Central Organ of CPI (ML)* 2012, October.

[440] Government of India, "Provisional Population Totals Paper 2 of 2011 (India & States/Uts)," 48. Accessed June 24, 2013. http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/census2011_paper2.html.

[441] See Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969) and *Peace and Social Structure* (Copenhagen: Ejlers, 1978) for a further discussion.

[442] See "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990); Lisa Schirch, "Strategic Peacebuilding - State of the Field," *Peace Prints: South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 1, no. 1 (2008).

[443] See Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research."

a matter of peacebuilding when these structures 'foster disparity and satisfy the needs of people from one ethnic, religious, class, age, language, or gender group at the expense of others', propagating violence.[444]

Such structural violence reproduces itself, ultimately culminating in physical conflict unless there is an intervention. Lisa Schirch highlights this cycle in observing that violent public structures infect the entire culture.[445] Studies prove a strong correlation between economic disparity in a community and the prevalence of everyday violence.[446] Economic disparity is both an indication of structural injustices and a main contributory factor for other root causes of structural violence. It often serves as a fundamental factor for latent conflict, manifested as structural violence that leads to violent conflict at one point if it is allowed to continue unaddressed. Further, 'structural violence is statistically inked to higher levels of secondary violence, which includes civil wars, terrorism, crime, domestic violence, substance abuse and suicide'.[447] Conflict often has its roots in systemic issues such as 'skewed land distribution, environmental degradation, and unequal political representation.'[448]

Addressing and transforming narratives of structural violence is seen as a prerequisite to a culture of peace. Peacebuilding in this broader form seeks to 'prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest.'[449] This holistic approach is what Lederach perceives as peacebuilding when he terms it as a process of moving a given population from a condition of extreme vulnerability and dependency to one of self-sufficiency and wellbeing.[450] Bringing the prevalent but less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse, therefore, is an essential component of establishing sustainable peace.

---

[444] Schirch, "Strategic Peacebuilding - State of the Field," 7.

[445] Ibid.

[446] See Hanne Fjelde and Gudrun Østby, "Economic Inequality and Inter-Group Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990-2008" (Paper prepared for the conference on Inequality, Grievances and Civil War, Zurich, November 2011); Christopher Cramer, "Does Inequality Cause Conflict?," *Journal of International Development* 15, no. 4 (2003); Dia Da Costa, Introduction to *Where We Stand: Five Plays from the repertoire of Jana Sanskriti*, ed. Sanjoy Ganguly (Kolkata: CAMP, 2009); Carles Boix, "Economic Roots of Civil Wars and Revolutions in the Contemporary World," *World Politics* 60, no. 3 (2008)

[447] J. Gilligan, *Preventing Violence* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 39.

[448] Henning Haugerudbraaten, "Peacebuilding: Six Dimensions and Two Concepts," *African Security Review* 7, no. 6 (1998): 18.

[449] Lisa Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding: A Vision and Framework for Peace and Justice* (Good Books, 2004).

[450] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997).

Jana Sanskriti

The conflict background for JS sets it apart from the previous case study of Sri Lanka. The conflict background for the group is that of everyday violence triggered by structural injustice and discrimination. This shapes the nature and approach of the theatre group: JS is very much a communal movement rooted in the everyday, adopting an everyday lens to approach politics at a larger level.

Background

Jana Sanskriti started in 1985 as an independent organisation using political theatre. JS works internationally and locally with a number of satellite groups spread throughout India. Its primary work base, though, is rural West Bengal, which is also the group's origin. Group membership largely consists of male and female agricultural workers. The organisational structure of JS reflects its political goal, with two interrelated teams established in each village – one for performances and another for related political action. People can become members of one or both depending on their interest. A core team consisting of 11 members take key decisions pertaining to the organisation. Each core team member represents a sub group at regional level, which in turn represents the ground level village members.

The main focus of JS is empowering the oppressed through 'scripting power on and off stage'.[451] The issues they address are often issues of social and political justice. The group starts its political work within theatre and carries it on through the political mobilisers. The political mobilisers actively rally the community on issues that impact at a general level. JS's work closely engages with rewriting the established power hierarchies at an everyday level. The work focuses on the so-called 'oppressed' communities based in rural districts, largely coming from the working classes. The group's work for peacebuilding is connected with its focus on empowering the powerless. Peacebuilding is 'as much 'about unmasking the powerful and equalizing unequal relationships'[452] as it is about addressing the outwardly violent conflicts. Instead of preserving harmony and political order, the emphasis here is on justice and

---

[451] 'Scripting power on and off stage' is a commonly applied term for the work of JS among its members and publications by and on the organisation.
[452] Kevin P. Clements, "Peace Building and Conflict Transformation." http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ:10398/Peace_building_a.pdf

fairness. The emphasis on justice and fairness strongly relates to JS's take on peacebuilding.

The group uses theatre as a medium due to its aptness in promoting a culture of dialogue. Oppression in its community, JS argues, is made possible by the pervasive 'culture of monologue'. A culture of monologue promotes the interests of an elite few, and curtails dialogue and discussion in general. Dialogue between and among different factions of society is an essential faculty of and a crucial first step towards equality and justice in a democracy. JS works to establish this culture of dialogue where the marginalized factions of the society speak for themselves and stand up for their rights.

Theatre approach

JS identifies itself as a political theatre group. Michael Kirby defines political theatre as theatre that is '*concerned* with the state or *takes sides* in politics.'[453] JS worked as political propaganda theatre at its initial stages but along with its development, refrained from affiliating with a specific political party. The group, at present, strongly positions itself on a political standpoint and engages with local governance through its theatre practice.

JS uses theatre of the oppressed in general and specifically forum theatre as its medium. This choice is due to the possibilities of dialogue embedded in this particular theatre form. Theatre of the Oppressed is an umbrella term including a number of different theatre forms, developed by Augusto Boal.[454] Each of these has social action at its core and initiates social change by creating a space that encourages the marginalised or the oppressed to speak.

Forum theatre is the primary form of theatre JS uses in its work, which is also the defining theatre form within the Theatre of the Oppressed school. In forum theatre, the drama actively engages the audience as a part of the play, referring to them as spect-actors. The audience explores the reality of their lives - and the stories they tell themselves about it– through the performance and strive to create new narratives that

---

[453] Michael Kirby, "On Political Theatre," *The Drama Review: TDR* 19, no. 2 (1975): 129.

[454] Theatre of the oppressed has sometimes been categorised as applied theatre due to the core of social consciousness shared by both the genres. I will consider them as separate genres due to the wide scope of theatrical forms deriving from each and the specific focus of Theatre of the Oppressed.

are emancipatory; stories that transcend the old discriminative versions. Forum theatre encourages the dialogic of theatre, furthering theatre's existing potentials.

JS adapts Boal's theatre – developed initially in South America and later in Europe – to its particular working context. Local conditions and aesthetics drive these adaptations. Thus these adaptations in turn enhance theatre's potential for incorporating multiple voices and initiating dialogue. JS's adaptations in group processes and performances make this evident. A forum theatre performance and discussion is usually a one-off event. JS makes a fundamental change in this practice by holding repeat performances at every village until the discussion comes to a point where its political mobilisers can take it forward. This is a structural adaption in JS's use of forum theatre. Another adaptation is incorporating elements from traditional theatre forms. Unlike the classic format of forum theatre, JS's plays start with a song and also have song and dance incorporated into its body. These are elements where the group borrows heavily from the traditional drama forms in West Bengal such and *Gadjan*. The ensuing multivocality brings JS's forum theatre close to the local community. The enhanced aesthetic appeal of the resulting adaptation generates local interest while facilitating acceptance for the unfamiliar elements of forum theatre within West Bengal. JS therefore embodies multivocality and dialogic in its theatre process.

A further adaptation that embodies the dialogic and multivocality of theatre is JS's process of scripting a play. JS's plays focus on communal issues. These could either apply to all of its members or only to a specific group. The core team gets together to script a play when they focus on a broader issue such as gender discrimination or domestic violence or election violence. The voices of village teams directly come into the scripting process since the core team members are in turn, representatives of the village teams. The core team, including the team members and the director, jointly decide upon the script and the particular action sequence that brings out narratives of structural violence through a process of dialogue. The dialogue process constrains positional hierarchy within the organisation. The embedded multivocality and dialogic of the process facilitates voicing specific narratives of structural violence that might not come out in a more power-over setting. Together, the core group members wield a considerable amount of power in the group. This is remarkable as the

members come from diverse educational and social backgrounds that spread across an extensive range.

Multivocality and the dialogic embedded in the scripting process continues until it reaches the village level audiences. Once a script is finalised, the core group members take it to the village level and coach the village teams on the performance. Even here, the script is flexible to a certain extent: the context might require adaptations of words, characters or plot twists that differ from the original script by the core group. The village teams are free to make these necessary changes as long as the central message of the drama is left intact. Thus, JS's performances are flexible to evolve with the context, making them more appropriate and reflective of the places where they are being performed. Also, the play has the freedom to evolve with the performances throughout the years, to better adapt to the changing situations in the locale. This permitted flexibility within the group processes transcends the centralised power structures seen in the wider community. JS's group processes recognise the need for context-based approaches, and have actually transformed the power hierarchies that come into play in the scripting process of the play. JS, as a theatre organisation working over a long period based in rural Bengal, offers insights for using theatre in peacebuilding through its group practices and theatre approach.

JS's unique theatre approach raises certain concerns as well: key here is an issue related to performative labour. Rai convincingly argues that the aesthetic refinement of a performance – be it in theatre or in a different political space – calls for an increased effort from some members, as 'performing in public spaces comes more easily to some than others.'[455] Unlike it is with a professional theatre group, performance is not a livelihood for most of the JS actors. Engaging in political theatre, for them, is an activity that has to be squeezed into everyday responsibilities and tasks. This 'squeeze' is especially visible with the women's theatre group members. The rehearsals, meetings and group discussions all result in the lengthening of their workday. The group is well aware of this fact and strives to facilitate the process as much as possible. Nevertheless, JS's theatre approach can ask for a quite high performative labour input from some members.

---

[455] Shirin M. Rai, "Political Performance: A Framework for Analysing Democratic Politics," *Political Studies* (2014): 7.

Performing Resistance

Peacebuilding as resistance to embedded structural violence

I discuss peacebuilding as it applies to JS's work at two levels: peacebuilding as resistance and peacebuilding as transformation. JS uses theatre to bring out less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse through these two overarching steps. These steps are often complementary. When manifesting as resistance, JS's peacebuilding through theatre emerges as resistance to the embedded narratives of structural violence. Through embodying multivocality JS theatre creates a space for expressing less heard narratives of violence and bring them into the communal discourse. The performed resistance, in turn, creates the tension from which peacebuilding as transformation proceeds. Thus, JS's theatre brings out and creates tension in existing violent and exclusive structures, aiming for their transformation at a community level.

In this section, I examine JS's process of using theatre to perform resistance towards embedded narratives of structural violence in West Bengal that in turn results in the creation of a tension from where transformation can happen. As I elaborate, performing resistance at JS is a twofold process. On one hand, it is carried out onstage as an expression of the multivocal form of theatre. On the other hand, it is carried out off stage, through the group practices and community level political activism.

I will specifically look at how JS elicits narratives of gender discrimination - a prevalent but insidious element of structural violence embedded in JS's context - and the ways in which the group engages with existing patriarchal practices to resist and create a tension within patriarchal structures.

Performing and encouraging onstage resistance

JS's onstage resistance is a combination of provoking resistance through the performances and encouraging resistance from the audience. Key tools in this are the scripting and performance of the play and the onsite forum discussion. Both target and actively encourage multivocality.

The script makes the narratives of structural violence explicit, while grounding it in the real experiences of people from the community. In order to achieve this, JS adopts

a joint scripting process together with the core group members who come from the communities living the everyday realities of the communities with/for whom they perform. The script is grounded in the everyday expression of people. The narrative of gendered violence usually comes from where they are powerfully felt: at the intersections of different narratives of structural violence. By performing this script back to the community in the format of a rapidly tightening web of structural violence on stage, it undermines the veneer of social acceptance a little, each time.

Take the play *The Brick Factory* for example:

The Brick Factory is from the regular repertoire of JS that touches upon many facets of interconnected structural violence. It is written in 1997 and has been widely performed since then. The protagonist of the story is Phulmoni, a woman worker at a brick factory. The women are paid lower wages than men and the contractor exploits both the men's and women's labour by refusing to pay overtime. The workers unite in a feeble attempt to ask for fair wages. The contractor strategically uses the patriarchal rhetoric of 'keeping women under male control' to undermine workers' unity, thereby effectively curtailing any joint action among men and women. Phulmoni in the next scene is pressured into granting sexual favours to secure her job and to protect her husband from being taken to the police. Though her husband is aware of the situation he is helpless to intervene. In the final scene Phulmoni is judged by an all-men village *Panchayat*[456] that finds her guilty of 'polluting the culture' by going in search of work to the city and having a sexual relationship with the contractor. Her husband is also punished for his compliance.

In this play, the layered oppression Phulmoni has to undergo disturbs the audience and evokes responses. Also the type of the issue – women working in the city and having to undergo sexual exploitation - provokes spectator responses. Urban migration is a common occurrence and as such, is a pertinent issue of interest to the community in general.

The forum discussion is another site where provocation takes place: the Joker's role takes that on, inviting and encouraging the audience to express resistance. The actor playing the role of the oppressor too provokes the spect-actor to go deeper with

---

[456] *Panchayat* is the official administrative division in the village, similar to a village council.

his/her responses. This engagement potentially results in a dialogue that presents an authentic challenge, a possible turning point for the drama to unfold in a different path. The script enhances the relevance to the audience and together with the forum it engages and provokes spectactors to perform resistance.

In performing resistance to the established structural narratives on gender discrimination, the forum discussion embodies multivocality and dialogic. Consider a forum discussion of *The Brick Factory* that took place in Shyamnagar. Here, the multivocality and the dialogic bring out complexities, voices and questions through the forum discussion. The Joker actively encouraged expression from and facilitated dialogue among the audience, utilising the flexibility and space of theatre to accommodate different voices. The spect-actor interventions touched upon different dimensions and complexities of asking for and providing labour equality for women. While one spectator voiced that 'girls are also a part of life, so they are equal', another claimed they 'provide equal labour'. In response to a comment that women cannot work as much as men, a woman asked 'why not provide appropriate work for women? You give everyone the same work.' The multivocal and the dialogic form of forum theatre here, backed up by JS's encouragement of expressing resistance, created a space safe for these different voices in the community to emerge and engage in a dialogue. A 10-year-old boy demonstrates the potential of this space in a warmly received intervention: 'both work equally, why are they low? Everyone's hunger is the same.' These probing questions during the forum discussion arise from the tension created in performing resistance to the everyday narratives of structural violence.

JS's work in performing resistance and the forum discussion enhances the audience's analytical skills in engaging with narratives of structural violence. The community in Shyamnagar sees beyond the immediate situation to discover the underlying narratives of structural violence. Pradeep, a core group member playing the Joker's role in this performance, points out that JS goes from the 'particular to the general', that it connects from the 'incident to the system.'[457] They encourage the audience or the spect-actors to make the connection between isolated incidents of oppression as performed in *The Brick Factory* and the larger web of structural violence – such as gender discrimination and economic exploitation – that fosters such actions. The

---

[457] Pradeep Haldar, 2012, October 5.

147

Joker plays a central role here in leading the discussion from particular to the general. The interventions I observed in 2012 indicate that the spectators chose a strategic approach towards the interventions. Dia Mohan discusses the tendency of the spect-actors to provide conventional or magical solutions to Phulmoni's plight in an article published in 2004. [458] As she illustrates here, these solutions do not take into account the complexity or the systemic nature of the issues at stake. Examples of these are for Phulmoni to leave the factory or refuse the advances of the contractor leading to be sacked. The spect-actor interventions I witnessed for *The Brick Factory* have progressed beyond this initial point. Instead of focusing on the last scene where the oppression is at its most evident, the 2012 interventions focused on challenging the system of patriarchy at its early stages. Spect-actors accurately identified and intervened from the beginning when the contractor started using patriarchal rhetoric to undermine workers' unity. Thus, the audience respond to the structures, instead of getting caught up in the particular incident. The spectators are capable of identifying the violence of patriarchal structures emerging in the drama at its earlier phases. This skill indicates enhanced capability of the community developed over the years in locating the root of the issue and performing resistance to the underlying violent structures.

JS has cultivated keen analytical skills among its audience. The spect-actors are adept in intervening before the narratives of structural violence become stronger, and respectively, harder to tackle. In building peace within structural violence, locating and starting from the weak links of the narratives makes the intervention relatively easier. The difference between interventions made for *The Brick Factory* that Mohan commented on in 2004 and the interventions I observed in 2012 indicate the shift in the spect-actors from the personal to a systemic approach. In 2012, the audience is adept at identifying and picking out the patriarchal thread of structural violence at its initial phases of introduction, where it is yet to be reinforced by the traditional and political authorities of *Panchayat*. The authority figure who attempts to divide the workers by drawing on patriarchal rhetoric is relatively easier to engage with. He is an individual, not an institution. His apparent exploitation of the workers relates to the personal grievances of both the men and the women, thus making him a weak link in

---

[458] Dia Mohan, "Reimagining Community: Scripting Power and Changing the Subject through Jana Sanskriti's Political Theatre in Rural North India," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 2, no. 33 (2004).

the interconnected web of structural violence. In the 2012 interventions, it is here that the community first intervenes. The multiple voices coming from the audience, replacing one spectator after another, drawing from counter narratives to patriarchy, keeps the play from moving towards its climax.

JS's onstage performance of spect-actor resistance thus revolves on themes of fairness and equality. The dialogue of *The Brick Factory* focused on the expressions of equal and fair workplace treatment for women. In the dialogic of the forum discussion, the spectators clearly connect Phulmoni's predicament with the underlying violent patriarchal structures. Asserting the depth to which this connection is made would require further research. Yet it is clear that here, JS's performances and forum discussions onstage achieve the connection from 'particular to the general' in relation to patriarchy.

Encouraging offstage resistance

JS brings out structural narratives by promoting and encouraging performing resistance offstage, visible in group practices and community level political activism. The resistance to and dialogue on the oppressive patriarchal structures extends to off-stage activism within group members' lifeworlds. The group's standpoint on the practice of dowry demonstrates this. Male members of JS refuse taking a dowry when getting married. This act takes place at the boundary of private and public spaces, stronger for its symbolic significance in an increasingly market driven society. To refuse the dowry, often the groom has to stand up against his family network that holds a considerable amount of power within his lifeworld. Almost every household in JS's working areas have extended families, often with more than three married siblings sharing the parent's house and lands. Refusing the dowry automatically becomes a public declaration of non-compliance with multiple established structures of power. At times, the pressure can be overwhelming. Mohan refers to a JS member who chose to elope with his bride when his family insisted on a dowry.[459] Another off stage resistance to the patriarchal norms at the group level is the formation of women's theatre groups. Seeing women active in the public space provides role models for other women in the community and encourages broadening gendered

---

[459] "Reimagining Community: Scripting Power and Changing the Subject through Jana Sanskriti's Political Theatre in Rural North India," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 2, no. 33 (2004): 200.

boundaries. These actions 'breach the normative order of domination'[460] and as such, are acts of performing off-stage resistance to violent patriarchal structures at different levels, through the group practices and norms. JS's offstage activism draws public attention to the prevalent but less heard structural violence that operates at a daily level.

Performing resistance off stage through JS's political team brings narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse. JS's political mobilisers encourage and rally the community to take a stand on key issues. Take the issue of alcoholism, assumed to be at the root of extensive domestic violence in the area: in late 2011 and 2012, JS mobilised the community to protest against illegal alcohol production in the area.

JS welcomes performing resistance offstage, even when it is directed at its own work. An interesting example elaborates this: *The Brick Factory* came into being as a result of an act of resistance from the audience to another drama, *Sarama*. In *Sarama*, the unmarried female protagonist is raped. Defying convention and social norms, she chooses to press charges against the rapists and to raise the baby. An NGO supports her and the story ends positively. While this received appreciation from the average crowd, a woman in Birbhum supported by other females in her community challenged the ending for its credibility. Rape from authority figures is a daily reality for female workers in the brick factory where her family worked for as long as she knew. Protest was hardly a choice since the entire family's livelihood depended on the exploiter himself. There were no NGOs to support them. This woman's vocal resistance to what she saw as an unrealistic story brought out the prevalent but the less heard narratives of structural violence many undergo on a daily basis, into the communal discourse. The act of resistance expressed by the community resulted in the production of *The Brick Factory*. JS performs and encourages resistance to the embedded structural narratives onstage as well as off stage.

These seemingly small acts in fact construe the infrapolitics of peacebuilding as it is seen in JS. The performed resistance makes up the 'daily confrontations, evasive

---

[460] J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 203.

actions and stifled thoughts'.[461] Through performing resistance on and off stage utilising the dialogic and multivocality of theatre, JS is 'always pressing, testing, probing the boundaries of the permissible.'[462] It is a constant process of performing resistance in the public and private spheres, trying to bring out the insidious politics of social and political structures into the public space of theatre and communal discourse. Scott argues that resistance expressed in public is irrevocable: Once the act of public defiance is done, '[i]f it is not beaten back, it will fundamentally alter those relations. Even if it is beaten back and driven underground, something irrevocable has nonetheless occurred. It is now public knowledge that relations of subordination, however immovable in practice, are not entirely legitimate. In a curious way something that everyone knows at some level has only a shadowy existence until that moment when it steps boldly onto the stage.'[463] Consistently performing resistance unsettles the existing violent structures and creates tension among them. This process of 'resistance aimed at liberation' from structural violence or structures of conflict as critical agency gives rise to local, embedded processes of peacebuilding. It is a process that enables the 'subjects to produce peace' instead of 'producing subjects'.[464] The resistance JS perform on and off stage addressing narratives of structural violence is indeed the foundation of the peace they build at the community level. The tension created herein, prepares the ground where transformation takes place.

Triggering Transformation

Peacebuilding as transforming narratives of structural violence

In this section, I explore the ways in which JS initiates positive transformation in the narratives of structural violence in rural Bengal. This is the second level at which I discuss JS's peacebuilding. The tension created from performing resistance to the embedded narratives of structural violence brings up these narratives into the communal discourse. This tension is a starting point for JS. To complete its peacebuilding process, JS seeks to take the performed resistance and the resulting

---

[461] Raymond D'Angelo and Raymond Nicholas D'Angelo, *The American Civil Rights Movement: Readings & Interpretations* (New York: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2001), 586.
[462] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, 200.
[463] *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, 215-16.
[464] Oliver P. Richmond, "A Pedagogy of Peacebuilding: Infrapolitics, Resistance, and Liberation1," *International Political Sociology* 6, no. 2 (2012): 115.

tension forward to positively transform these very narratives of structural violence in rural Bengal.

Specifically, I look at the ways in which JS's use of theatre transforms narratives of structural violence in the political and socio-cultural spheres at a community level. These spheres overlap. The pertinent issues here often arise as a result of a network of structural narratives spanning all these spheres. The process of transformation JS aims for too, is multi-pronged. Here, I look at how JS works in two specific spheres: political and sociocultural. I borrow from and locate the analysis primarily within JS's scripts, dramaturgy and interviews for this. Following that, I look at how JS initiates transformation through onstage interventions and how this in turn, leads to off stage transformations.

Transforming narratives in the political sphere:

In the political sphere, I explore how JS brings out the elitist and inefficient structures of political representation of people into the communal discourse in order to initiate their transformation. Through its work, the group questions the authenticity and sincerity of political structures in representing citizens is questioned at two levels: at the village and state level political representation and at trade union's worker representation. I engage with JS's plays first and then draw from interviews and observations to document how the performed transformation transforms into real life actions.

Gayer Panchali – The Song of the Village - brings out the injustice of political structures at village level representation into the communal discourse. The very structures established to ensure democracy and fair representation at the village level obstruct these principles due to embedded elitism and corruption. JS works at the functioning of IRDP through *Gayer Panchali*.[465] Though the programme was introduced for the benefit of the lowest rung of agricultural workers, it fails at the implementation level. Mohan observes that the loan distribution articulates 'feudal relations between villagers and money-lenders, subject to the paternalistic expectations of politicians and the demands of political party loyalty'.[466] The play depicts how, at the *Panchayat* level, the funds are being used for the benefit of

---

[465] This is a nationwide programme initiated in 1980 for poverty alleviation.
[466] Da Costa, Introduction, 12-13.

Panchayat leaders themselves who are middle and large level farmers. The dialogue among the *Panchayat* leaders makes this evident: 'Those of us in the organisation are primarily middle and big peasants. The government has said that the IRDP loans should go to poor agricultural workers. So in that case, we are ignored as if we are the scum that floats of the tidal wave.'[467] This corruption is not a one-off act: it is part of a wider practice of corruption that has encompassed the entire political system. The *Panchayat* Head justifies taking the loans in saying: '[i]f we distribute all the loan money to the poor farmers based on the beneficiary list then our organisation will die'[468] and he counters the rare voice within the *Panchayat* for the fair distribution of the loan with '[i]n the end, I had to raise fifty thousand rupees to get this position as *Panchayat* head. Are you suggesting that I will not recuperate that sum? How idiotic?.'[469] The play continues to discuss further incidents of corruption at the *Panchayat* level that prevents the population from receiving fair political representation at community level. Despite being a democracy, what exists at the village level is more akin to a feudal practice, with the feudal lords being the political elite. Politicians forget the spouted principles and proffered promises during the election time with impunity. JS brings this issue back into the communal discourse through the script: 'all these principles and commitments don't make politics. We give promises knowing we will not abide by them.'[470] The audience as voters are aware of this. But they are helpless in standing up against the political leaders due to the structural power invested in these corrupt politicians through the state. Finally, when the voters carrying sticks corner the local politician and question him, he threatens the community in turn: 'Do you know that we are leaders? We have the police and administration in our hands… I will not give any more. I will make it impossible for you.'[471] The actor infuses the dialogue with symbolic action by grabbing the sticks from people's hands and pointing these back at the people. Thus, JS makes it apparent to the audience that democracy and the structures that are supposed to protect them are being used for the benefit of political elites. The politician breaks into a song, drawing a parallel between the power of the stick and democracy:

---

[467] Ganguly, *Where We Stand,* 31.
[468] Ibid.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid.
[471] Ganguly, *Where We Stand*, 36.

'In my hand, I have democracy's stick…

..bathed in blood

While it sings a religious tune

With great faith'. [472]

The dramaturgy of each scene too constructs a vivid imagery of oppression. This is especially evident in the third scene where the *Panchayat* leaders sit down in discussion about the IRDP loan distribution. The seats here are the commoners, using their bodies to form seats for the politicians. The image of oppression presented in the scene is vivid: it connotes that the *Panchayat* leaders have come to the power and stand in power by oppressing the very people they are supposed to represent. Thus, the feudal imagery of leaders sitting upon the backs of human beings emphasise the absence of democratic principles.

JS emphasises that despite the popular rhetoric, there is very little change in people's everyday lives. The so-called democratically elected politicians are representative only in the name: in reality, the elitist structures of political bodies articulate a feudal relationship. The character of a grandpa, traditionally a voice of wisdom and authority, expresses this sentiment in the same scene: 'They are feudal lords, feudal lords, feudal lords! In our grandfather's generation, these feudal lords would run the neighbourhood and now the vote-seekers have taken their place'. [473] The Song of the Village, one of the first dramas of JS capture the violence in the structures of political representation at the community level. Not only do the local political body is corrupt in the use of funds allocated for the general public, but it also controls the administration body and the police. With the incorporation of these bodies into the corrupted elitist boat, the people are left with hardly any accessible venues of structural support at the village level. JS, through its work, brings these silenced narratives of JS into the communal discourse.

The group links the corruption and injustice at the village level political organisation to the elitist corrupted practices at state level politics. The play Where We Stand clearly brings out the inherent violence of the political structures at the higher

---

[472] Ibid.
[473] Ganguly, *Where We Stand,* 33.

echelons. The scenes in the play, like most other JS plays, are disconnected: the only connection binding them together is the different aspects of oppression people face. The elitist political structures depicted here focus on protecting the interests of the politicians at the cost of social harmony. The third scene presents how politics manipulate, and at times ignite, the Hindu and Muslim religious tensions and cast affiliations for securing votes.[474] Here, a telephone conversation takes place between leaders of different political factions such as Hindu and Muslim fundamentalist parties and Dalit voters. The conversation revolves around the destruction of a Mosque. The concern of the politicians here is not the impact of religious fundamentalism or violence upon the community but the impact of this incident on securing minority votes in the upcoming election: as the play says, '[h]ow to get the minority vote into our bank, how to mollify the minority to vote for us'.[475] The focus on securing minority votes feeds into the narratives of enmity between religions instead of promoting tolerance and coexistence. Leaders representing Hindu and Muslim parties collaborate at the top level for securing power, while communities at ground level are encouraged to fight with each other. The telephone conversation ends with: 'Then let's work together…I will scratch your back, and you will scratch mine.'[476] JS plays reveal the existing political sphere to be structured in a way that maintains communal division and hatred – be it ethnic, religious, cast or party affiliations- to ensure the preservation of the political elite.

By bring these ignored and silenced narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse, JS encourages people to face the situation: to unite and initiate transformation of the politically oriented divisions and the narratives of structural violence that goes with the separation.

A key element in this transformation is empathy. Shanthi, a supporter of JS from its early days, relates a story on how some party hooligans who sought to intimidate and kill the founder Sanjoy Ganguly later turned into supporters of the organisation. The work of JS in Medinipur district in 1980's questioned the reasons behind political violence between parties at ground level when the party heads collaborate at state level. Party hooligans from the same area were sent to intimidate JS to stop its work.

---

[474] Ganguly, *Where We Stand*, 138-40.
[475] Ganguly, *Where We Stand*, 139.
[476] Ganguly, *Where We Stand*, 140.

The group responded by continually inviting the hooligans to attend the performances. The hooligans, according to Shanthi, ended up becoming friends with Sanjoy Ganguly and displaying a turn of heart, offered to kill those who sent them in the first place. This offer reflects simply an act of giving up one system of violence and adopting another. Satya, another founding member, recalls the long process of discussions they had with such a person: 'we were telling him repeatedly that you have no rice in your family, and the person you are going to beat also doesn't have any rice in their family. And he eventually listened.'[477] This is where empathy takes place and anger ceases to become the defining factor of a relationship. It leads to a positive transformation of the narratives of violence within the political structures. The former party hooligan is no longer a willing follower or a captive of those violent structures. His refusal to take part in the structural violence that is perpetuated through him is a direct result of JS activism. The transformation is triggered from the empathy that is developed with the person on the 'other side', the person who is also a victim of the same violent structures.

The elitist and corrupt political structures co-opt political representation of the civilians in other arenas like trade unions and police. JS brings this out into communal discourse, facilitating its transformation. Another play in the JS repertoire – *Where We Stand,* portrays trade union leaders' corruption: protecting their interests at the cost of betraying work obligations and ethics. The first scene in *Where We Stand* discusses the death or the assassination of Bikas, a jute mill worker. Someone shoots Bikas from the factory owner's car and later on, leaves his body at the railway in a futile attempt to fake an accident. The factory workers mourn Bikas, seeing him as someone who sacrificed his life for worker's rights. Tarit the trade union leader who is also a member of the parliament appears at the scene. His protests against the murder last only until the factory owner offers him a bribe. The play captures the nuances of offering and accepting bribes, and the facile justifications for the corruption - that this is 'the party of the poor' and 'this is how [they] are able to run the party'.[478] Tarit manipulates the communist rhetoric to pacify the outraged workers and to convince them to return to work. Presenting this sequence on the stage is powerful since it directly challenges the corrupted system in West Bengal, a

---

[477] Pal, interview.
[478] Ganguly, *Where We Stand*, 131.

156

stronghold of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It opens up the disjunction between the public and private faces of trade union representatives to the communal discourse. The administration and police again are co-opted into these violent structures of the political system, thereby further expanding the cohort of elites benefiting through the structural violence in the political system.

The play calls for the transformation of structural violence in the political sphere: it asks the spect-actors for 'a little bit of conscience' for 'our nation's politicians' who suffer from a 'dearth of conscience' and have 'become animals'.[479] *Where We Stand* urges for transformation from the side of the politicians as well as from the side of the people: the latter makes the dialogic of the drama more powerful, as it strongly encourages individuals to rethink their own roles in this system. For the elitism in political structures including the politicians, police, ministers and business, the actors claim that 'for this you are responsible. I am responsible. We are all responsible'.[480] JS holds everyone including themselves responsible for giving birth to the corrupted, violent structures, for nurturing them and for permitting the exploitation to continue. JS goes beyond performing a story to planting the seeds of transformation within people, encouraging them to discuss their responses to this call in the forum space for dialogue.

The communal discourse around the narratives of structural violence in the existing politics results in the mobilisation of neutral communal forces to represent community interests at village level. The off-stage activist team of JS carries out this work by having representatives in *Panchayat* meetings and organising lobbying for a fairer distribution of funds among the community under government programmes. Through creating a system of representation devoid of political party affiliations, the exclusions and violence of the existing political structures are mitigated to a certain extent. While this is outside the state political structure, it marks the starting point of an organised movement that expresses its frustration and mistrust of the existing political structures.

Transforming narratives in the socio-cultural sphere

---

[479] Ganguly, *Where We Stand*, 133-34.
[480] Ganguly, *Where We Stand*, 134.

Another sphere in which JS's peacebuilding becomes apparent is the socio-cultural sphere. Here, I look at how socio-cultural narratives are being transformed through on and off stage activism. Firstly I consider how onstage spect-actor interventions initiate transformation within individuals and create ripples in the communal discourse that extends the impact of intervention. Secondly, I explore how onstage performance extends to offstage activism that in turn leads into transformation in the socio-cultural sphere.

I take gender in general, and domestic violence in specific, as a lens to explore JS's performance related transformation of socio-cultural narratives. Even though JS engages with a number of socio cultural narratives, focusing on a single issue facilitates looking at the different ways in which JS initiates transformation in this particular narrative. According to 2011 crime statistics of India, 43.4% of all reported crimes against women are a result of cruelty by husband and relatives.[481] Domestic violence is therefore a key narrative of structural violence in the socio cultural sphere, in need of transformation.

Transformation through onstage spect-actor interventions

Onstage spectator responses to the inherent violence in gender narratives brought up through JS's performances indicate the transformation that has taken place within the socio-cultural sphere. The patterns of responding to patriarchal systems are changing. This transformation is evident in how certain performances were received by the audiences in 2012. Spect-actor responses have transformed over the years, probably as a result of the continued engagement and encouragement of JS. The disparity between the spect-actor interventions to *The Brick Factory* as Dia Mohan noted it in 2004 and the interventions I observed in 2012 arise due to this transformation. The interventions I observed were hardly conservative or magical. The spectactors demonstrated a perceptive take on the extended network of patriarchy and intervened at the initial stages of its manifestation in the play. They touched upon key points of contention to initiate a dialogue instead of simply providing a solution for the character in the story. Thus, a progressive transformation in the spect-actor responses over the years in engaging with violent socio-cultural narratives is evident.

---

[481] National Crime Records Bureau - Ministry of Home Affairs., "Crime in India - 2011 Statistics," 399.

The spect-actor interventions for *A Story of One Girl* - a play about a young wife who's married off as a child without a full dowry, later falling sick and subjected to abuse by her alcoholic husband - indicate a transformation in the narratives of passive acceptance of domestic violence. The spect-actor responses come from different points of view, such as the wife's parents, the husband's parents, a neighbour, the wife and the extended families. Thus, the spectators identify a range of intervention points at different points in the story. The play is at its early stages of performance, being a recent production. Nevertheless, the interventions point towards standing up to the violence and injustice, instead of the culturally conditioned and sanctioned responses of submission and tolerance. Thus, spect-actor interventions indicate a transformation in the narratives of passive submission to the violent structures within the socio-cultural sphere. Chittaranjan marks a clear link between this on-site performance of resistance and the reduction of domestic violence in the community. He notes that it is difficult for women to speak out since they are trained to remain silent, but that things are changing: 'now they protest. In the intervention part of the drama they come out and protest. And when they go home in their family they protest. This is why the domestic violence is reduced.'[482] Thus, the community perceives the spect-actor interventions transforming patriarchal narratives on-stage to have an impact on their private lives.

Onstage interaction leading to offstage transformation

The process of triggering transformation within violent structures in the socio-cultural sphere extends beyond spect-actor intervention: as indicated earlier, community and group members acknowledge that onstage transformations of violent patriarchal narratives are consciously carried off-stage and has resulted in contributing to larger general changes in pertinent communal narratives. Personal narratives that come from both JS and community members testify: several women I interviewed mentioned instances of marriages without dowry for themselves, their sisters or cousins and traced the link back to the impact of the performances and forum discussions.[483] Malathi's[484] personal story of negotiation is a case in point: "we managed to get my

---

[482] Chittaranjan Pramanik, Interview with author, Digambarapur, October 6, 2012
[483] Malathi Basu, Interview with author, Sundarban, October 7, 2012 (pseudonym used); Rohini Sen, Interview with author, Sundarban, October 7, 2012 (pseudonym used); Banduna Mehra, interview with author, Digambarapur, October 7, 2012.
[484] Basu, interview

own sister married without a dowry. I have taken part in Jana Sanskriti work and forums and when the groom asked for a dowry, I told them about this play we have seen in the village, *Shonar Meye*. And I shared some of the things we discussed at the forum about [the practice of] dowry. Afterwards the groom agreed to marry my sister without a dowry.' Forum discussions work as a point that initiates transformation and as a resource for people to draw from in negotiating dowry requests in real life. These can effectively dissuade the groom from demanding a dowry. This is one example of a concrete change made in the lifeworld of the community that is traced back to the forum discussions and participation. In similar ways, onstage performance can effectively extend into offstage transformation of discriminatory patriarchal structures.

Off-stage negotiating and transformation of domestic violence is a delicate process. Often it requires the personal intervention of a group member. The issues usually come up during the performance, but not necessarily in it. In his interview, Chittaranjan, a core team member recalls an incident where the performers pointed out a person in the audience who regularly beats his wife.[485] Kavita, another core team member from the same area tells me of an incident when a woman spoke to her during a forum and said that her husband beats her after consuming alcohol.[486] An audience member notes an attempt by a chronic alcoholic to justify the husband's violent behaviour in an intervention. The approach of the team is the same in these instances: they visit the family at an appropriate time and speak with the abuser, and elders if required. Though this is not sufficient to cease the abuse completely, it considerably reduces it. Almost all the team members I spoke with recall many similar incidents. Thus, personal intervention stemming from the responsibility of activism is common among the field members of JS, and form a crucial part of bringing out less heard narratives of gender violence into the communal discourse.

The impact of this responsibility and the commitment to embodying the transformation is evident among many a group member. Once again, take a prominent core team member who married a woman from the same village, a woman who was abused and whose husband had left her. Dia Mohan also refers to a similar case.[487]

---

[485] Pramanik, interview
[486] Kavita Bera, interview with author, Digambarapur, October 7, 2012.
[487] Mohan, "Reimagining Community: Scripting Power and Changing the Subject through Jana Sanskriti's Political Theatre in Rural North India," 200.

These are radical moves in the rural Bengali village context where there is little possibility of a second marriage for a woman and widows and deserted women are especially shunned and marginalised. In response to my observation that this could not have been easy, Chittaranjan asks 'what is the meaning of it if we do not live according to the values we talk about?' Thus, the personal action is not solely personal: it is seen as an embodiment of the values they stand up for, through JS's work. There is a clear connection and awareness between the group work and personal action. JS embodies the values of democracy and equality through its group practices and these are in turn reflected in the actions of the individual members. Especially in a close-knit community, such concrete actions pioneer social transformation. The transformation triggered through these practices is highly effective, as it leads from example. It creates model stories of transformation that bring in the underlying narratives of structural violence into focus and constantly challenge them within the communal discourse.

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis is to explore the role of theatre for peacebuilding. My main argument in this chapter is that JS uses theatre to bring out important but less heard narratives of structural violence into communal discourse. Multivocal and dialogic form of theatre emerges as a key element in this process. The act of performing resistance encourages, empowers and actively brings out the marginalised and less heard voices on issues of structural violence. A dialogue facilitated among and between these voices on and off stage initiates transformation in the communal discourse.

Performing resistance and initiating transformation are only two overarching steps in the process of bringing out less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse through JS's theatre. The process of peacebuilding it leads to is rather complex and multi layered.

The theatre space itself symbolises a transgression into the public space, drawing a parallel with the process of bringing out narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse. Sticks - *lathi's* - frame JS's performance space on the ground and these sticks are also used as a symbol of power, often oppression, in the forum

play. Inviting the spectator onstage is an invitation to shake oneself free from the barrier of oppression and enter into the sphere of power. Crossing the line of sticks to enter the theatre space becomes an act of transformation for the audience members. He or she claims the public space to express themselves, turning the action into a symbolic act of being momentarily free from the structures that keep the voice of the rural Bengali's away from the public space, the structures that prevent them from claiming the public space.

JS emphasises the narratives of structural violence by bringing together everyday performativity alongside staged performances, effectively disrupting the ideological boundary between reality and fiction. The action of entering the theatre space becomes a vehicle for questioning 'other ideological divisions' that maintain 'structures and norms such as state and society, gender and class'.[488] Transformation of reality and fiction takes place with the on and off stage mobilisation of JS. It blurs the ideological division between reality and fiction. Thus, the moment of stepping on stage and rehearsing an alternative power relation and norms initiate transformation of the reality of spect-actor's lives. The tension created in disrupting the ideological boundary between fiction and reality is what creates the space for contemplation and action that transforms the violent structures. Dia Da Costa notes that JS provides a rare case where staged performativity is brought 'in relation to everyday performativity in the making and unmaking of power relations',[489] which the theories of performativity that deals separately with these concepts is yet to do. Bringing together the everyday performativity and staged performativity is an element of theatre that comes out in both JS and JK, the groups for whom theatre is a part of the lifestyle.

The composition of JS plays lends to the philosophy that drives it: 'scenes begin and end with striking group images of oppression', scenes interposed with 'evocative folk-based singing,' and 'sequences are divided by energetic dance patterns': this 'framing and sectioning…breaks the emotional and narrative tension, invites a different and critical perspective'.[490] The space provided here through music and dance is quintessential: it is what holds the emotion in place and keeps it grounded in

---

[488] Da Costa, Introduction, 11.
[489] Ibid., 12.
[490] Ralph Yarrow, "People Playing People in India" in *Where We Stand: Five Plays from the repertoire of Jana Sanskriti* ed. Sanjoy Ganguly, (Kolkata: CAMP, 2009), 7.

the narrative. These aesthetic elements allow time for individuals to process what they see onstage and come to terms with it. Yarrow too notes that the interspersed drama and song at critical points of the drama allow different perspectives to emerge.[491] It creates the space for and facilitates the resistance provoked by JS dramas to emerge as transformation.

JS's link with emotion is what facilitates transformation of narratives of structural violence through its theatre practice: however, in order for positive transformation, the driving emotion has to be a result of a dialogic process. An immediate, reactive response to oppression or resistance is insufficient. The immediate tension in the embedded narratives of structural violence helps JS take the expression of resistance towards a point of disquiet. The transformation resulting from expressing resistance can be either positive or negative, but emotion needs to come into play to facilitate this step either way. The campaign against illegal alcohol production JS carried out in 2011 and 2012 illustrates this factor. The group moved into mobilisation too early: they held a series of performances on alcohol addiction and domestic violence, building resistance for the linked practices within the community. However, JS's political team moved into mobilisation before the emotional transformation could take place, as it was evident from spect-actor responses at the time. The community rallied by anger instead of empathy, destroyed illegal alcohol production points in the area as a result of a public protest. Here, performing resistance led to action without actually going through a dialogic process that transformed the released emotions. Rage and similar emotions fuelled these actions. The pent up collective pain, when tapped into, broke free in the form of anger; a familiar way of responding that perpetuate structural violence. Instead of being non-violent, this transformation resulted in violent action propelled by a larger community consciousness. While the expression was sufficient in gaining community attention for the particular type of structural violence perpetuated through alcoholism, the dialogue was insufficient in actually bringing the community towards a point of disquiet, to a point of deeper contemplation. Engaging in a dialogue on the violence at the community level is important for positive transformation. Otherwise, the process of performing resistance simply leads to reaction instead of transformation, which replicates the familiar narratives of structural violence.

---

[491] Ibid.

Through this chapter, I argued that JS works for peacebuilding at the community level through bringing prevalent but less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse. I identified two steps in its process: Performing resistance and initiating transformation. In performing resistance, the group embodies multivocality, and actively brings in less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse through its dramas. At the second step, JS primarily relies on dialogue as a tool for initiating transformation. The dialogic faculty embodied in forum theatre comes to the fore here. The organisation uses the forum discussions to initiate verbal, performed and symbolic transformation on-stage. The local community offers ample everyday examples of this transformation being carried off-stage. However, the action off-stage is not always positive: it can be reactive instead of transformative and as such, can be violent.

I conclude that the turning point in positive transformation through JS's theatre practice is in continuing with the dialogue till it generates empathy. Empathy comes to the fore as what sets apart the successful examples of transformation with JS, both onstage and offstage. This process is not easy; it commands a considerable amount of time, resources and skills. Merely being convinced of the worthiness of the idea or the need to transform narratives of structural violence is insufficient. It requires a deeper understanding of the relations between the oppressive structures and oppressed that generates empathy within the community consciousness. It is this empathy that pushes the problem beyond a certain person or a group to the abstract social structures at the root of the problem. The individuals who perpetrate violence are a part of that system. In order to transform conflict dynamics, the focus needs to be at the systemic level and not the isolated incident. JS, through the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre, focuses on bringing out less heard narratives of structural violence into the communal discourse.

Chapter 5: Sarwanam

Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to explore the role of theatre in peacebuilding in relation to three case studies from South Asia. My main argument is that the dialogic and multivocal form of theatre is particularly suited to allow societies to come to terms with the conflict complexities and to open up possibilities for conversation between parties and narratives in conflict. This chapter explores how Sarwanam, a theatre group based in Kathmandu, Nepal uses the dialogic and multivocal form of theatre to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict.

In the other two case study chapters of this thesis, I looked at how theatre brings parties and narratives in conflict together in Sri Lanka and how theatre is used to address structural violence in West Bengal. This chapter shares some similarities with these two case studies but adds a complementary and a different aspect of using theatre for peacebuilding.

Here, I argue that Sarwanam uses theatre to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict. The chapter is organised in three main sections. The first section provides background information on the Nepalese conflict and the theatre group, situating Sarwanam within its working context.

The second section of the chapter explores how theatre opens up possibilities of conversation between parties and narratives in conflict by closely looking at the theatre practice of Sarwanam. It outlines the ways in which Sarwanam uses theatre to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict.

The third section of the chapter takes this further by closely looking at two key dramas that characterise the organisation - *Sakuni Pasa Haru* (Sakuni's Tricks) and *Ithihasko Banki Pishta* (Remaining Pages of History) - and analysing the different ways in which these dramas use theatre to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on Nepalese conflict.

Finally I explore the challenges faced by the organisation in relation to its particular theatre style and practices. The challenges in navigating aesthetics and politics and the

personal as well as artistic identities within the group arise as two key themes in the concluding discussion.

Conflict background

The conflict background for Sarwanam presents a somewhat unique context for South Asia. Unlike the other two cases studies, Sarwanam's work takes place within the environment of an internationally negotiated peace agreement following the Maoist insurgency and people's uprisings against the state power. The resulting conflict discourse, therefore, revolves around the key parties of the negotiation process. This setting of a relatively stable negotiated peace necessarily shapes the approach of Sarwanam in using theatre for peacebuilding in Nepal.

In the following section, I will provide a brief introduction into the Nepalese conflict. This description is only intended to be a general picture of the situation that will assist in contextualising the activities of the theatre group. By no means does it purport to be a comprehensive description of the Nepalese conflict.

Nepal

Nepal has a current population of 26.49 million and falls into the category of least developed countries in the world. The gap between male and female literacy rates respectively standing at 75.1% and 57.4%,[492] exemplify the strong patriarchal culture in the country. Nepal has one of the highest rates of child labour as well as gender-based violence and domestic violence against women.[493] The stratification in the country is also reflected in other factors such as caste and economic disparity. The average income in Kathmandu is estimated to be 'five times higher than' the average 'income in the mid-western districts', referred to as the Maoist heartland'.[494] Apart from the apparent political reasons, these social and structural issues also significantly

---

[492] Central Bureau of Statistics - Government of Nepal. "Nepal in Figures 2013." (Kathmandu, Nepal: Central Bureau of Statistics. 2013). http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2014/Nepal%20in%20figure/Nepal%20In%20Figures%202013_English.pdf
[493] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Nepal in the Year 2012: A Glance* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013), 62. Accessed January 2, 2014. http://www.fesnepal.org/reports/2012/annual_reports/annual_report_2012.htm
[494] Michael Hutt, ed. *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2004), 17.

contributed to the Nepalese conflict leading scholars to comment that the conflict was the 'cumulative effect of more than 345 years of exploitation'.[495]

Conflict outline

I will briefly outline the series of political events that resulted in the Nepalese conflict. A monarchy that secured its freedom through an agreement with the British Raj, Nepal is free from the colonial history most other countries in South Asia share. A multi-party democracy was introduced in the country for the first time by the ruling monarch in 1959 but was shortly curtailed in 1960. A repressive non-party system of councils called *Panchayat* allowed the king to exercise sole power during this period. After widespread civil disobedience campaigns also known as People's Movement I in 1990, the King restored democracy.[496] However, this democratic system - launched within narrow party politics and elite power struggles - failed to deliver the benefits of democracy to the people. Many outside the urban high caste elite circles remained feeling excluded despite the newly established democratic system.[497] Uppreti perceives the Maoist insurgency led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN(M)) that broke out in February 1996 as a violent expression of people's frustration stemming from the disappointed hopes on fair democratic governance.[498] The Maoist insurgency intensified in its scale and scope during the next ten years and the King dissolved the parliament and postponed elections indefinitely. Frequent changes in the government and a short-lived ceasefire in 2003 all contributed to a growing sense of political instability. Declaring emergency law and deploying the Royal Nepal Army to suppress the rebels drew further international attention to the Nepalese conflict. In 2005, the governing political parties came together in a Seven Party Alliance and reached an agreement with CPN(M) on a programme to restore democracy in the country. This united leadership succeeded in rallying the public momentum once again for a protest for democracy in which 'people in massive strength came out on the street and challenged the royal regime.'[499] This mass protest, known as People's Movement II, resulted in reinstating democracy once again. The

---

[495] Bishnu Raj Upreti, *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future* (New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2009), 23.

[496] Amnesty International, *Nepal : A Spiralling Human Rights Crisis*, (Amnesty International, April 4, 2002), 10. Accessed July 7, 2012. http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA31/016/2002/en/b8c8c0e5-d88f-11dd-ad8c-f3d4445c118e/asa310162002en.pdf.

[497] Ibid., 11.

[498] Upreti, *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*, 23.

[499] Ibid., 50.

ten-year insurgency formally ended in November 2006 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) between the government and the CPN(M). Subsequently, as per the demand of the CPN(M), the monarchy was abolished in 2007.

The peace process

I will discuss two significant elements of the Peace Process that shaped the post-conflict context of Nepal: United Nations presence in the country as a monitoring body and the Constituent Assembly (CA) that was elected to draft a new constitution for the country.

Among the various UN missions in Nepal the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) played an important role in the conflict. OHCHR was established in May 2005 to protect 'human rights in the context of armed conflict and threats to democratic rights.'[500] During the peace process, OHCHR monitored the human rights situation together with UNMIN. UNMIN is a special political mission with a limited mandate, established in January 2007 through a Security Council Resolution at the request of the Seven Party Alliance and the CPN(M). It aimed to create a 'free and fair atmosphere for the election of the Constituent Assembly and the entire peace process.'[501] UNMIN left on the 15th January 2011 failing to see its mission to an end.[502]

The Constituent Assembly of Nepal is entrusted with the responsibility of restructuring 'the nation according to the aspirations of the People's Movement – II'.[503] Specifically, it is responsible for drafting and delivering a new constitution for Nepal. The interim constitution provisioned for the CA in 2007 and it was elected to office in 2008. It consists of 601 members appointed to office through different democratic processes. In its first meeting, the CA declared Nepal a republic, thereby effectively putting an end to the monarchy. From then on, progress towards drafting a

---

[500] United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), "Mandate," Accesssed March 14, 2012. http://un.org.np/unmin-archive/?d=about&p=mandate.

[501] Ibid.

[502] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Political, Economic and Social Development in Nepal in the Year 2011* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012). Accessed May 2, 2013. http://www.fesnepal.org/reports/2011/annual%20report/annual_report2011.htm

[503] Constituent Assembly of Nepal., "Constituent Assembly," Constituent Assembly of Nepal. Accessed June 7, 2012. http://www.can.gov.np/en.

constitution for the country through a consensus process became an uphill journey. Different political factions had conflicting interests and the CA self-extended its term four times.[504] The Supreme Court dissolved the CA after the 27th of May 2012 and ruled that elections for appointing a new CA would be held later in the year. Following elections in 2013, a second CA took oath on 21 January 2014, but it is yet to draft a workable constitution. Despite the promise of the peace agreement and the effective reintegration or absorption of Maoist fighters respectively into the community or the state armed forces, laying a solid foundation for political stability through a constitution is yet to be achieved.

Perspectives from margins

The primary discourse on conflict is often centralised around both the conflict timeline and the major conflicting parties. Sustainable peacebuilding necessarily takes a more proactive approach towards engaging with the communities that are affected by the conflict, irrespective of their political affinities. People feel the conflict and the ensuing political process differently than their leaders, who are at the centre of the conflict and the peace process. In this section I will explore the impact of Nepalese conflict from a citizens' perspective.

Unpredictability and the tension that comes with it are significant factors that characterise life in a conflict zone. The daily routines of farming, cooking, sleeping and child-rearing continued in rural Nepal, where the most violent confrontations between the Maoists and the Army took place. These apparently calm, familiar routines that dominated the lives of most, and could have been affected any time by 'unexpected terror and violence.'[505] Nepal had the highest number of newly reported enforced disappearances in the years between 2002-2005 [506] and as such, the unpredictability and the tension in everyday lives during the conflict has been very real and tangible for those at the ground level.

People were caught between two regimes, placed in a position where they often had no alternative but to be subjected to violence by both the army and the Maoists. They

---

[504] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Political, Economic and Social Development in Nepal in the Year 2011*.

[505] Judith Pettigrew, "Living between the Maoists and the Army in Rural Nepal," in *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, ed. Michael Hutt (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2004), 262.

[506] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Nepal Conflict Report 2012* (Geneva: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, October 2012), 46-47.

were being forced to provide food and shelter as well as donations to the Maoists on the one hand, and were left vulnerable to state retaliation and abuse of power on the other. By 2000, the Maoists relied increasingly on staying within close proximity to the village to meet their needs.[507] A woman relates how she was forced to cooperate despite the risks: 'I told them… "if you stay here and the army arrives then all my family will be killed"… I begged them not to stay and they left after they had eaten.'[508] A relatively well-off Kathmandu resident observes that being asked for 'donations' is an experience he had to go through several times during the conflict and that he had to pay whatever amount the Maoist representatives demand without raising any questions.[509] Those who paid ran the risk of facing the wrath of the state security forces and legal actions against them. Those who resist the pressure were often directly or indirectly punished in some manner.[510] An ever-present tension pervaded people's everyday lives, as one interviewee pointed out: 'We didn't know what time we are going to be trapped…That time we were afraid of the government and Maoists equally'.[511] Apart from these isolated incidents, the Maoists forcefully confiscated the property deeds of major landowners intending to 'redistribute them among villagers.'[512] These actions placed the civilians vulnerable to the state power. Amnesty International reports that the local administration provided the security forces with lists of people who were accused of giving food or shelter to the Maoists or attending Maoist meetings:[513] and this led to frequent 'house-to-house searches' at 'night and in large numbers' where arrests were made without sufficient evidence.[514] Civilians were therefore forcibly drawn into the tug of war between the parties.

Violence and abuses by both the sides were widespread, with frequent incidences of civilian death. The number of 'extrajudicial killings and disappearances by Security Forces' rose dramatically since 2001, after declaring emergency law and mobilising the Royal Army to crush the insurgency.[515] The reported conflict-related killings

---

[507] Judith Pettigrew discusses these changing conditions in Pettigrew, "Living between the Maoists and the Army in Rural Nepal."

[508] "Living between the Maoists and the Army in Rural Nepal," 267.

[509] The citizens had no way of verifying whether the claimants were Maoists or not: thus, as a repercussion, they were susceptible to impersonators who were interested in posing as Maoists for financial gains.

[510] Amnesty International, *Nepal : A Spiralling Human Rights Crisis,* 7.

[511] Pratham Baral, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 10, 2012 (pseudonym used)

[512] Amnesty International, *Nepal : A Spiralling Human Rights Crisis*, 7.

[513] Ibid.

[514] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Nepal Conflict Report 2012,* 46.

[515] Ibid*.,* 46-47.

come from 'all but two of Nepal's 75 districts'[516] and both the army and the Maoists are listed as perpetrators.[517] Apart from these reported incidents, there are many that went unreported: the theatre group members have a number of stories where they either experienced or heard about deaths of civilians that went unreported and often accepted with a helpless resignation.[518]

Forced recruitments and infrastructure destruction by the Maoists also intensified the pressure on people. Women and children were especially vulnerable to forced recruitment.[519] There is documented evidence of parents being ordered to send their children to Maoist cultural groups, or outright abductions of women and children for political indoctrination and militia membership.[520] Infrastructure, such as schools and government offices, located in the regional districts of Nepal were closed or banned by the Maoists[521] and there were almost no state intervention to reopen these.

Rape was also a frequently used weapon in the conflict, reportedly primarily by the Security Forces. The Institute of Human Rights Communication in Nepal (IHRICON) noted that hardly any action was taken whenever the authorities were informed of rapes or acts of sexual violence committed by the Security Forces.[522] The strong gender stereotypes and the hierarchy in the Nepalese society resulted in 'normalising' and 'legitimizing' violence against women[523] and in reducing the reported number of rapes. Being raped multiple times was seen as yet another reality of life in certain villages in remote areas: a woman notes that there were hardly any women in her village who have not been raped at least once.[524]

---

[516] Ibid., 15.

[517] This attack was followed by the retaliatory killing of 11individuals by around 300 Maoists, including a 14-year-old boy on 15 April 2005. At the same incident, 11 houses were burned and at least 1,000 people fled to India. Also see Pettigrew, "Living between the Maoists and the Army in Rural Nepal."

[518] One such story Meena told me is about a young boy they met in a national tour. The group was looking for a place to sleep at night and a boy from the village took them to the nearby school where they could spend the night. Meena and the others heard gunshots in the middle of the night. In the morning, they discovered that entire family of the young boy had been shot the previous night because one of the siblings was accused of supporting the Maoists.

[519] There is also evidence of children being used by the Royal Nepalese Army as informants or spies: United Nations, *Nepal's Hidden Tragedy: Children Caught in the Conflict* (United Nations, 2006). Accessed July 7, 2013

[520] Mandira Sharma and Prasain Dinesh, "Gender Dimensions of the People's War: Some Reflections on the Experiences of Rural Women," in *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion* ed. Michael Hutt (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2004), 163; Ibid.

[521] Amnesty International, *Nepal : A Spiralling Human Rights Crisis*, 7.

[522] Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON), *Sexual Violence in the "People's War": The Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Girl in Nepal"* (Kathmandu, IHRICON, 2006), 31

[523] Retika Rajabhandari and Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC), *Violence against Women in Nepal: A Complex and Invisible Reality* (Kathmandu, Nepal: WOREC, 2006), 4; Women Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC), *ANWESI: A Year Book on Violence Against Women 2008* (Kathmandu, Nepal: WOREC, 2008), 12

[524] *Nepal Conflict Report 2012*, 11.

Thus, Nepali citizens in the remote areas of the country where the conflict was felt the most were caught up in the tug of war between the Maoists and the Security Forces. As Hutt aptly puts, '[i]t really was a case of two regimes, in which villagers had to choose between support, acquiescence, opposition or flight'.[525] Irrespective of what they chose, the strain of the conflict upon the people is still felt within the community.

Challenges for sustainable peacebuilding at a community level

Though the armed conflict abated with the signing of the CPA, there are still several issues that hinder peacebuilding in the community.

The impact of the conflict is still felt among the community in many ways, such as the unresolved issues of disappearances, displacement and restorative justice for crimes committed. These are major challenges, crucial for sustainable peacebuilding, that need to be addressed. ICRC records indicate that by the end of 2011, there were 1406 active cases for disappeared people.[526] Individuals as well as families resorted to fleeing as their last resort and some were forcibly evicted by CPN(M), who seized their lands.[527] These have yet to be returned to the people,[528] despite provisions to that effect in the CPA.

Procedure on restorative justice on the crimes committed during the conflict is another area at issue. The domestic justice system is strongly accused by the local as well as the international human rights defenders of being partial. In a joint report in April 2013, seven organisations state that there is 'virtually no prospect of success' for those who are seeking justice through the domestic justice system for crimes committed by State agents.[529] A recent report from Human Rights Watch points out as well that not even a single person has been held accountable for human rights violations during the conflict.[530] In fact, many of those accused of human rights

---

[525] Hutt, *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, 19.

[526] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Nepal Annual Report* (ICRC, 2011), 230 - 31. Accessed June 7, 2013. https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/annual-report/current/icrc-annual-report-nepal.pdf

[527] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Nepal Conflict Report 2012*, 15.

[528] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Nepal in the Year 2012: A Glance*

[529] TRIAL (Swiss Association against Impunity), CVSJ (Conflict Victim's Society for Justice), PPR (Forum for the Protection of People's Rights) Nepal, HimRights (Human Rights Monitors), NEFAD (Network of Families of Disappeared and Missing), THRD Alliance (Terai Human Rights Defenders Alliance) and OTV-Nepal (VIctim's Orphan Society of Nepal), "Nepal: Written Information for the Adoption of the List of Issues by the Human Rights Committee with Regard to Nepal's Second Periodic Report (Ccpr/C/Npl/2)" April 2013, 10. Accessed July 15, 2013. http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/ngos/TRIAL_Nepal_HRC108.pdf

[530] Human Rights Watch., *Nepal: Country Summary* (Human Rights Watch, January 2012). Accessed 18 March 2012. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/nepal_2012.pdf

violations directly or indirectly continue to receive protection from those who are in power.[531] The political parties in the government even attempted to bring about a proposition to allow immunity for human rights abusers linked with the conflict but had to backtrack due to public opposition.[532] Restorative justice is a key element in the war-to-peace transition process of a conflict. Nepal needs a 'resolution though transitional justice' and an effective 'human rights based code of conduct'[533] in order to provide justice to the people and to satisfy the expectations of its citizens.

Political instability poses another obstacle to sustainable peacebuilding at the ground level. The inability of the CA to deliver a constitution indicates a fragile balance of power while the ethnic disintegration of the communities creates further tension and division among the people. Despite the democratic system, voices of the people remain almost unheard. The political parties including CPN(M) that were in the CA are accused of serving their own interests at the cost of the public interest, and of abusing 'social harmony and tolerance' to 'strengthen their power base.'[534] With the dissolution of the CA an elected legislative body is no longer present in Nepal. This political uncertainty resulted in widespread strikes and demonstrations all over Nepal, including Kathmandu in mid-2012. At the district level the fragility is further intensified due to the absence of elections for a decade and the recent signs of ethnic identity politics.[535] Ethnic organisations as well as armed groups are reportedly abusing communities in the Terai and Eastern hill regions without fear of prosecution.[536]

The rulers coming into power after signing the CPA also failed to address the structural root causes of Maoist insurgency. Therefore the reasons such as poverty and discrimination that drove people to take up arms remain the same, or at times, have worsened. Human Rights Watch finds that the government has made 'little progress' in achieving social, cultural and economic rights during the post-conflict period.[537] Given that the Nepalese conflict is also seen as a political conflict with social and political transformation at its heart,[538] addressing these aspects becomes even more

---

[531] Ibid.
[532] Amnesty International., *Amnesty International Report 2012 : The State of the World's Human Rights*, 250.
[533] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung., *Nepal in the Year 2012: A Glance.*
[534] Ibid.
[535] Ibid.
[536] Human Rights Watch., "Nepal: Country Summary."
[537] Ibid.
[538] Upreti, *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*, 32.

important. The grievances of people remain the same until the root causes are addressed. Uppreti perceives this failure to be the result of intentional activities serving the self-interest of powerful elites.[539]

During the conflict and the peace process, the Nepalese citizen's voice was generally heard in certain circumstances like mass demonstrations. The space for citizen's participation was limited in terms of political decision making during the conflict, and continues to be so after the signing of the CPA. The peace process is critiqued as 'non-transparent, elite-centric and … exclusionary in nature.'[540] The implementation of the Local Peace Committees is also seen to be highly politicized.[541] The citizen's voice is largely excluded from the public discourse on conflict. Insight on Conflict observes that the present challenge for the Nepali peace process is to 'adequately address grievances in an inclusive manner, without replicating the power structures of previous eras.'[542] For this, we need non-violent strategies to bring out the citizens voice; strategies that can make the so far excluded citizen's voice a central element of the public discourse. It is here that Sarwanam's theatre has significance as a peacebuilding approach.

Sarwanam

Background information

Sarwanam started in 1982 as a theatre group. The founder, Ashesh Malla, sees it as the initiation of a social movement since the group from its inception performed to bring out the voice of the people and to protest against the exclusion and oppression Nepal's citizens. Sarwanam is based in Kathmandu though Ashesh Malla as well as many of the longest-standing members of the group comes from districts outside the capital. Membership is usually established through an informal process and calls for continued participation in the activities of the group over several years. Sarwanam has its own performance centre in the capital that contains a theatre, a café, a gallery, a library, an office and a workshop space. The group owns the building, and the financial resources for its construction are generally seen as the savings of the team in

---

[539] Ibid., 23.
[540] Ibid., 427.
[541] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Nepal in the Year 2012: A Glance.*
[542] Insight on Conflict. *Nepal Conflict Profile.* Peace Direct. Last updated July 2013. http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/nepal/conflict-profile/

the paid theatre projects they undertake for NGOs and INGOs. The organisational structure of the group reflects two main bodies: the artists' team and the management team. Each team has sixteen and seven members respectively and these sometimes overlap. Daily functioning of the centre is seen as a responsibility of the entire group.

Theatre approach

The dialogic and the multivocality of the theatre group primarily comes out in the theatre from and performances of Sarwanam. The group has developed its own alternative theatre style in order to make theatre more accessible for the people. Specifically, Sarwanam performances use minimal props in an effort to make theatre more affordable to produce and convenient to perform. Two directors of other theatre companies commented on the simplicity of the costumes and props, commending Ashesh Malla on this, seeing it as a way to overcome a central challenge the theatre practitioners face in South Asia.[543] The Sarwanam plays are seen as low budget productions that are 'not low budget' in the performance.

Ashesh Malla is seen as key in introducing this particular theatre form in Nepal, which has a strong resemblance to street theatre. Influence of street theatre is evident even in the proscenium plays of the group. Strong emphasis on symbolic gestures and mime can break through language barriers and as such, Sarwanam perceives their alternative theatre to embody democracy and freedom.[544] The symbolism opens up the plays for multiple interpretations, thereby enhancing its dialogic potential and multivocality. The group tours regional districts of Nepal at least once every year with a short performance – the members identify these national tours as an effort to bring themselves close to the audience and to carry on their activism among larger audiences.

The thematic engagement of Sarwanam plays is another key element where the multivocality and the dialogic of its theatre are evinced. Ashesh Malla, who also directs them, writes all the plays of the group.[545] As established earlier, the political

---

[543] Bijaya Bishport, Interview with author, Kathmandu, June 12, 2012 and Yubaraj Ghimre, Interview with author, Kathmandu, June 18, 2012

[544] Nepal consists of a large number of ethnic identities and tribes that identifies with their own languages and dialects. Thus, using minimal language facilitates the audience to identify with the characters.

[545] There have been two exceptions to this practice so far: a 2010 street theatre tour sponsored by Amnesty International where the script was by Krishna Pradhan (more information on this can be found at

parties and the government are both accused of excluding people from the elite-centric peace process[546] and the public decision-making. Including excluded citizen's perspectives in the public discourse becomes a necessity for sustainable peacebuilding. Passive acceptance or avoidance of the atrocities committed is widely seen as a coping mechanism of the local population.[547] Thus, engaging with these issues from a citizen's perspective and making the citizen's voice part of the public discourse on conflict becomes an imperative for the reconciliation of the conflict and to achieve sustainable peacebuilding. Sarwanam dramas directly engage with political issues such as the absence of democracy and the aftermath of conflict in Nepal from a citizen's perspective. A long-term member observes that they have always tried to produce dramas around the feelings and problems of the people from remote areas of Nepal.[548] Accordingly, in using the multivocality and the dialogic of theatre to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse, Sarwanam addresses a distinct gap in Nepalese peacebuilding.

Group Practices

I argue that Sarwanam uses theatre to make excluded citizens' perspectives part of the public discourse on Nepalese conflict. Sarwanam's contributions in this can be discussed under two main sections: through group practices and performances.

Group practices include the way in which the group is shaped. Sarwanam incorporates certain elements in its group practices that enhance its accessibility to people from different groups, and encourages dialogue among them.

Open to all

The group membership is open to all: this encourages the participation of individuals irrespective of their cast, ethnicity, class, religion or age. At present, the group has members from the higher Brahmin casts as well as those from lower casts. The members come from different districts in Nepal and belong to different sub-ethnic communities and are from the two primary religions in Nepal: Hinduism and

---

http://www.amnestynepal.org/content/news/48/CARAVAN-ON-RIGHTS-OF-THE-MIGRANT-WORKERS.html). Secondly, Ashesh Malla's daughter co-directed a performance in 2011.
[546] Upreti, *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*, 427.
[547] Ibid., 428.
[548] Om Mani Sharma, Interview with author, Kathmandu, June 8. 2012.

Buddhism. Members' ages vary from 73 to 17. The economic levels as well as employment indicators of the group are diverse. However, for over 80% of the members in the artists group, there is a strong pattern of families with economic hardships where income is largely derived from cultivating their own lands. This pattern is not reflected among the management team: the management team is from Kathmandu and are well established and economically stable. A pertinent factor here could be that management team members are relatively older than the artists' group members, and are all except one,[549] employed outside the theatre group. Nevertheless, the fact that the artist group is open to those who are from the regions with little financial capability indicates that there is little discrimination on the socio-economic factors within the group. Gender is another strong discriminatory element in Nepalese society. Group practices inevitably reflect this to a certain extent but there are often instances when these boundaries are unsettled. For example, the preparation of lunch and cleaning, work typically regarded as women's, is carried out according to a roster and therefore is done by both the males and females in the artists group. However, tasks such as controlling the lighting or the sounds system of the theatre still very much remain in the male domain.

A hierarchy that remains within the group but is not openly discussed is the place of the director's family in the group. The director's family is engaged in the management and artist teams. Though the son's name appears in the work roster along other artists' team members, he is hardly there for his daily duties. The team chooses to overlooks this. This variation and the privileged treatment are seen in several other domains as well.[550] The outsiders also note this privileging. Sarwanam's identity is accused of being centred on the director and the group members and others are seen to be 'push[ing] up Mr. Malla.'[551] Thus, the openness of group membership does not indicate equal treatment within: there are subtle hierarchies in the group dynamics that determine the place of each individual within the group and the space within which they are allowed to vary from the standard expectations in performing their roles.

---

[549] The only member of the management team who works only at Sarwanam is Nirmala (pseudonym used). She is married to a well-off businessman in Kathmandu and as such, has little financial difficulties.

[550] I noted this in several spaces. In meetings, rehearsals and performances, there was more tolerance for tardiness, space for interventions, acknowledgement for objections and ideas. Mistakes were often overlooked. There was more authority to handle organizational equipment and more encouragement to take part in direction, production and technical elements of the group activities.

[551] Bishport, interview

Group commitment

The commitment of the team is another factor that supports Sarwanam's role in making excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse. As a whole the artists are ethically motivated and perceive this as their primary responsibility, even sometimes with the effect of enduring practical risks and economic hardships.

Ashesh Malla and the team outline numerous situations where they had to face the wrath of both the Maoists and the Police during performances. The Maoist groups directly and indirectly threatened and attacked the group when they carried plays on human rights and democracy to the villages prior to and immediately after signing the CPA, but Sarwanam members managed to escape without serious harm. The state security forces questioned and harassed the team during performances in Kathmandu and sometimes in the regions. Still, surprisingly, some members related instances when both the Police and Maoists provided protection for their travel during intense conflict periods.[552]

In several interviews with the artists, it became apparent that performing at Sarwanam is dissociated with its financial element even when the performances are undertaken as part of a funded project. Ramesh, married with a five-year-old son, says that he had to work somewhere as 'they' [the organisation] do not have enough money to pay a salary. Group members are forced to earn their livelihood elsewhere while being expected to attend regular rehearsals or perform duties at the organisation. Ramesh acknowledges that he is 'working very hard in the morning shift in the office and come here [Sarwanam] in the evening'[553] in order to juggle both the responsibilities. Another factor that contributes to this situation is the perception of theatre as an industry. Theatre is not seen as an economically productive activity as an artist observes: 'here in Nepal there is an economic crisis and we have to look for any other job'.[554] It is interesting to note that while theatre in this case is not seen to be capable of generating sufficient income for an artist to maintain his/her family, it indeed succeeded in fundraising for the Sarwanam building.[555] However, with the

---

[552] Ram Shrestha, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 14, 2012; Shyam Khadka, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 14, 2012; Shiva Adhikari, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 13, 2012.
[553] Ramesh, interview
[554] Ramesh, interview
[555] The end of my research period coincided with the beginning of Sarwanam's journey towards sustainability. The artists for the first time after the construction of the hall, received payment for a drama tour carried out for an INGO in May 2012. This led one artist to exclaim 'oh, we received so much money this time, so much!'

construction of the Sarwanam building, a path with the potential of leading to economic sustainability opens up for the fulltime artists team members. Many in the artist team now have hopes for a bright future in which there will be a steady income.[556] This is yet to materialise and if this actually does, it will be a significant milestone for the group as well as for theatre practices in South Asia.

Sarwanam's perception on being a part of the team is more akin to performing a 'higher duty' than earning a livelihood, thereby further dissociating it with its financial element while intensifying the group commitment. During the forum discussion and in the personal interviews, team members often compared the group to a 'place of spiritual worship' (*mandir*) and the director Ashesh Malla to a father, citing his care and unwavering support offered within the organisation as well as with any other issues arising in their personal lives.[557] The organisation and the work they undertake there are frequently regarded as personal commitments or ethical responsibilities. Shiva's view on being ethically responsible as an actor captures this: 'I cannot drink as I work against it [alcoholism] through drama, I have to answer to the audience so I cannot do any wrong.' This ethical responsibility is generated through organisational conditioning. In referring to former members who left the organisation as a result of a disagreement about financial issues, the artists as well as the management team evokes the rhetoric of 'good' and 'bad' people. Those who remain at Sarwanam are seen as 'good people' as it is a place where only the 'good' can remain.[558] The hamartia of the 'bad people' who left the organisation is their desire for 'money and power', and 'ambition'.[559] The resignations are seen as a desertion, a 'betrayal of the family.' Thus, the ethical commitment of the artists emerges from a highly polarised and a charged group culture.

While there is acceptance for the group to voice dissent on the different elements of performance, there is little space to raise questions about the financial decisions of management. This underplaying of the financial element simultaneously brings out the other benefits the group has within Sarwanam: the sense of family is a primary motivation. Apart from this, several actors cite self-satisfaction of being in theatre and

---

[556] Ram Shrestha, interview; Tika Bhakta, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 17. 2012; Sabithri Malla Kakshapati, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 17, 2012; Shyam Khadka, interview.
[557] Ramesh Khadka, interview; Meena Khadka, interview; Vinmaya Prajapati, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 13, 2012; Bhakta, interview
[558] Ramesh Khadka, interview; Kakshapati, interview; Sharma, interview
[559] Ramesh Khadka, interview; Kakshapati, interview; Sharma, interview

specifically theatre that engages with issues of people from rural Nepal, and the resulting recognition as benefits.[560] Building up a reputation is particularly seen to compensate for the financial hardships they undergo: 'We have poor economic conditions but we can expect a future. We believe that though we do not have money we have fame.'[561] The sense of ethical responsibility that pervades Sarwanam contributes to keep the team together, to continue their efforts at making excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse even amidst practical difficulties.

These dynamics are similar to what L. H. M. Ling perceives between the Chinese state and society. Ling highlights the similarities that exist between filial devotion and state obedience, and argues that this is yet another way of naturalising the moral authority of society's superiors.[562] Sarwanam indicates a similar pattern. The team members regard the director with a combination of filial and spiritual devotion. The moral authority he has within the group is naturalised and derives from the larger discourses of duty and obligation that exists within the Nepalese society. Ling observes that private property, if it is possible to accrue, could offer an escape from structures of parental governance.[563] This is a challenge for Sarwanam since the members are expected to prioritise the organisation's work unless there is an even higher moral obligation in place. A number of Sarwanam members find the theatre group their sole source of income. The combination of naturalised moral authority, exclusive economic reliance and the absence of transparency on financial issues within Sarwanam can create space for exploitation or abuse of the members trust.

Enhanced accessibility of theatre

Another factor pertinent to group practices that makes the theatre space multivocal is Sarwanam's enhanced accessibility to the audience and artists. The construction of its own theatre hall addresses a crucial point that affects proscenium theatre: the financial capabilities that are needed to hire a performance space. This financial requirement restricts proscenium theatre and can pose a major threat to the production of a play.

---

[560] Ramesh Khadka, interview; Bhakta, interview, Nhucche Shrestha, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 17, 2012

[561] Ramesh Khadka, interview; Shyam Khadka, interview

[562] Lily H. M. Ling, "Rationalizations for State Violence in Chinese Politics: The Hegemony of Parental Governance," *Journal of Peace Research* 31, no. 4 (1994): 397.

[563] Ibid.

However, through building own theatre hall, Sarwanam has ensured having a space to perform in the capital only at its maintenance costs. Thus, the group has considerably enhanced its accessibly to a proscenium theatre space with the construction of the Sarwanam building. The theatre hall, the gallery and the workshop hall are also rented out to other organisations at a daily fee or based on an alternative arrangement that is agreeable to both the parties.[564] Doing so enhances the accessibility of theatre for other directors and groups as well. The income generated through the complex is expected to create sufficient salaries for the Sarwanam artists and thereby solve the issue of insufficient financial compensation that has by necessity prevented some artists from engaging fulltime at Sarwanam.

Process of coming up with a drama

The multivocality and the capacity for dialogue within the group is evident in the process of deciding a theme for the next drama and during the rehearsals. The drama to perform is decided as a result of a group discussion taking into consideration the current political situation of the country and the best approach to make citizen's voices heard in this context. Despite the 'guru' culture prevalent within the group, the group members voice their hesitancies on the director's choices and at times, get them overturned through a subtle process of dialogue. The group, unhappy with the drama *Ek Rath* for which they were rehearsing in June 2012, instead suggested choosing something that did not engage with the revolution so explicitly. After an extended discussion where a number of members voiced their concerns, the director/play writer agreed to dismiss *Ek Rath* and perform *Remaining Pages of History* as their second drama at the Sarwanam theatre. With this, the multivocality and the dialogic embedded in the group practices became evident.

Practices of performance

Practices of performance are the other main way in which Sarwanam's contribution in making excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict can be conceptualised. I will discuss three aspects of Sarwanam's theatre productions that are relevant: the chosen theatre form, taking theatre beyond the capital and the key

---

[564] Yubaraj Ghimre performed his drama at Sarwanam theatre for free, upon the agreement that the first 3 days of ticket earnings go to Sarwanam instead of renting the theatre on a daily charge.

themes of Sarwanam dramas. These aspects are important in discussing the ways in which multivocality and the dialogic emerge through Sarwanam dramas.

Theatre forms: street and proscenium

Sarwanam practices street and proscenium theatre and in both these theatre types, use what they call 'an alternative theatre form'. This theatre form is designed to make theatre more accessible in terms of communication and required resources. Sarwanam's alternative theatre style uses a minimal number of props and requires very little stage management and costumes. These reduce the costs of producing a drama and enhance the aptness to perform in remote locations with minimal facilities. Consequently the plays increase their accessibility for the average person. Putting up a play with little resources enhances the multivocality of theatre. Further, Sarwanam plays often emphasise mime and have exaggerated symbolic body movements. These elements reduce the cost of production and enhance the effectiveness of the medium. Strong emphasis on symbolic gestures and mime can break through language barriers and as such, Sarwanam perceives alternative theatre to embody democracy and freedom. Breaking down traditional theatre practice to move forward with a less ornate, less flowery theatre at the beginning of 1980's was seen as a significant development. [565] The minimalistic approach is often appreciated as a factor appropriate for the Nepali context.[566] Further, the enhanced symbolic movements and the use of less verbal dialogue support in taking the expression of theatre and the dialogue that takes place between the drama and audience to a different level than the verbal and the mere performative. Audience members positively identify this as a factor that is characteristic of Sarwanam Theatre.[567] It opens up paths for a stronger emotional narrative and powerful communication. However, while this theatre form is appropriate for the street theatre and is largely successful, questions have been raised on its appropriateness for the proscenium theatre.[568]

---

[565] Yubaraj, interview.
[566] Audience Forum interview; Bishport, interview; Ghimre, interview
[567] Audience Forum interview; Bishport, interview; Ghimre, interview
[568] Anjay Dahal, (interview with author, Kathmandu, June 15, 2012 [pseudonym used]) and Yubaraj Ghimre criticize *Sakuni's Tricks* as 'overacting' and 'being full of similar gestures'.

National tours

The national drama tours are the primary way in which Sarwanam engages with and makes its theatre accessible to those who live outside the capital. Here the group uses street theatre, where a makeshift stage is marked with chalk dust on a small clearing near a bazar.

Undertaking national tours deepen the group's capacity for dialogue and enable them to listen to the people living in the regional districts and vice versa. The group has a deeper understanding of the conflict dynamics and the suffering of the people because of the national tours. Nhucche observes that he understood the real meaning of a Maoist as a result of a national tour in which they encountered villagers who are familiar with Maoist fighters.[569] Almost all the group members have at least one story where they had a glimpse into the daily fear that permeated the lives of the rural Nepali communities. The dramas facilitate dialogue by inference and by actual engagement of the artists. Many recall instances where certain scenes in the performances reflected actual incidents that were taking place at that moment, such as being surrounded by police or the Maoists when a similar scene was unfolding in the drama during a village performance. Difficult circumstances the communities have to tolerate in silence become part of the public discourse along with their portrayal in the drama in front of the actual perpetrators of violence.

Further to this, the actors initiate dialogue among the audience before or/and after the drama during the national tours. Shiva relates an incident where they engaged in a dialogue with the Maoists before the performance in order to explain the purpose of the drama.[570] Such communication is important since it presents a third voice, a voice devoid of political affiliations or motivation that raises people's concerns. After the street theatre performances, artists take time to talk with the audience about what they saw and to take the audience's point of view and get feedback, again facilitating in bringing different voices out and enhancing the dialogic capacity of theatre. It leads to deeper conversations on the dramatic themes.

Further, on the national tour as well as on the proscenium dramas, the group makes slight adaptations in the dress and language in order to provide a fair representation of

---

[569] Nhucche Srestha, interview
[570] Adhikari, interview

different ethnic groups, and to easily fit within a given community. For example, while an actor might wear a shalwar kameez that is the typical men's wear in the hill country, he might change into a sarong when the team performs in Terai, the region adjoining India. Doing so enhances the group's accessibility for the local communities and facilitates Sarwanam's acceptance.

Themes call for democracy

The final and the most important point in Sarwanam's theatre that contributes to making excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict is the themes of its plays. In general, Sarwanam plays revolve around issues pertaining to human rights and democracy. The performance takes a neutral point of view that is affiliated neither with the Maoists nor with the government. Often, the plays initiate dialogue on the people's suffering as a result of the conflict. The most common strategy of coping with the conflict is noted to be 'avoidance or passive acceptance of the prevalence of either party.'[571] Through its performances portraying the people's situation on stage, Sarwanam aims to break this silence. The portrayal thus speaks to the audience, on one hand presenting what goes on and initiating a dialogue from that point onwards, and on the other hand, relating to those who have experienced the situation by enabling identification with the characters. While the allegations in the dramas are quite powerful, Sarwanam often refrains from making direct accusations: 'We did not directly criticise them [Maoists] but we changed the costumes, names, things like that…We do not directly say 'this is you we criticise'. The final identification is left to the audience even though the characters are laden with ample symbolic insinuations: 'People can realise this is for me if they see, but we do not point to them.' The group can thus present a neutral front while making its statement. The seeming indirectness provides protection from the parties of the conflict as acknowledging the portrayal as their own would have been an acknowledgement of the violence they perpetuate. Ramesh recalls that this very indirectness saved them during a national tour: 'We thought that they would arrest us at that time because we were talking about the conflict and referred indirectly to the Maoists too…Even though the Maoists got angry, they couldn't do anything about it because they couldn't admit it is about them.' Sarwanam dramas therefore strive to make the

---

[571] Upreti, *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*, 428.

excluded citizens' perspectives a part of the public discourse by enhancing the multivocal and dialogic nature of theatre.

Thematic engagement with conflict

Thematic engagement is a central way in which Sarwanam engages in peacebuilding. The group often uses stories or legends from the Nepali culture or stories with symbolic significance to bring up excluded citizen's perspectives to the fore in public discourse. Addressing disruptive and divisive turns in Nepali politics is seen as a group duty to the society or the country.[572] Here, the dialogic and the multivocality of theatre is embedded in the thematic composition of the plays. In order to further explore the different ways in which Sarwanam strives to make excluded citizens' perspectives a part of the public discourse, I will take two dramas that capture different aspects of Sarwanam's approach for peacebuilding and discuss them in the following section. With the first drama, *Sakuni's Tricks*, Sarwanam uses theatre to address the rationale by reinterpreting a Sanskrit epic according to the present context; it is primarily for the proscenium theatre, has a printed script and is relatively longer than the usual Sarwanam drama. With the second drama, *Remaining Pages*, Sarwanam uses theatre to speak to emotion. *Remaining Pages* is produced for both proscenium and street theatre. It has only a few dialogues and does not have a formal script. Most of the drama is performed through mime and therefore presents an appropriate example of the symbolic theatre form of Sarwanam.

Sakuni's Tricks: *using theatre to address the rationale*

I discuss Sarwanam's utilisation of *Sakuni's Tricks* to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse through thematic engagement with the conflict in three main sections: the first section provides a brief introduction to the play followed by a general outline of its plot and its relevance to the context in order to ground the ensuing discussion. The second section discusses *Sakuni's Tricks*'s dialogic seen in the ways in which it draws from the history to relate to the present. The third section discusses the play's multivocality seen in its potential for different interpretations, and the ways in which these interpretations present insights on the

---

[572] Sharma, interview

people's voice. The last section touches upon the challenges the group faces in relation to *Sakuni's Tricks*.

Sakuni Pasa Haru (*Sakuni's Tricks*) is a proscenium play of Sarwanam. Reinterpreting Mahabharata, the longer of the two Sanskrit epic poems[573], it utilises the theatre's imaginary to create a space that enables shifting between the epic and modern. Mahabharata narrates the story of Kurukshetra War, a war between the Kaurava and Pandava princes. With its close association to Hinduism, Mahabharata holds a fundamental place in shaping the Nepali culture, perceptions and beliefs.[574] Woven around a scene from the original canon, *Sakuni's Tricks* is presented in highly poetic language and addresses the rationale of the audience. The play explores the post and pre conflict power struggle in Nepal in order to frame the exclusion of people's voice in the higher tiers of Nepali politics. It invites the audience to scrutinise local politics from a third point of view. When *Sakuni's Tricks* was performed in Sarwanam Theatre in April 2012, the play attracted theatregoers and theatre practitioners alike with its script and the potential of application to the present Nepali context. The background music of the play is provided with only a few instruments that succeeded in emphasising the significance of the scenes. It is seen as music that 'goes with the mood'; powerful and [capable of] generate[ing] emotions.'[575] The language of the play is highly literary and has more verbal communication than other Sarwanam plays. Nevertheless, it embodies the characteristic Sarwanam theatre style of exaggerated mime and a minimalistic production.

General outline of the plot

Sakuni's Tricks depicts a scene between the Kauravas and Pandavas. The play starts from a scene in the original story where the three princes – Yudhistira, Arjun and Duryodana together with their uncle Sakuni engage in a game of dice. Duryodana and Sakuni are the Kauravas while Yudhishtira and Arjun are Pandava brothers. Halfway through the game, the play deviates from the original story and Yudhistira,

---

[573] The other is Ramayana.
[574] Its significance is compared to the Bible or the Quran: W.J. Johnson, *The Sauptikaparvan of the Mahābhārata: The Massacre at Night* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), ix.
[575] Baral, interview

traditionally representing the good and the ethical white side proposes having an election to determine the ruling party instead of going to a war as warring is obsolete. Duryodana announces an election after being cajoled into it by his uncle Sakuni. Sakuni is a keen strategist who is interested in maximising his power. The Pandavas, knowing this, lure Sakuni to their side with offers of Ministerial positions and financial remunerations. People's protests and cries are heard on killings, poverty, drought and similar issues in the background while the Pandavas, together with Sakuni, count the commissions they gain from the international projects and donations launched in the country. In due course the Pandavas win the election and the people's cries repeat. These are pointedly ignored in favour of the celebrations and personal gains. Two things hold the narrative together: one is the narrator who comes onstage to introduce or analyse certain scenes and the other is Dritarashtra, the blind Kaurava king. The scenes unveil in answer to Dritarashtra's questions. After the victory of the election, Dritarashtra enters the stage appearing outraged at the actions and demands that the play be stopped; he takes off his costume and refuses to take part in the drama any longer where tactics of Yudhistir or Dhuryodana or Sakuni come into play. He claims to be a teacher, a common person and refuses to be Dritarashtra any longer and stands facing the surprised actors on the stage with his back to the audience.

Correlating political history

The political parties in Nepal are widely held to be responsible for the initiation and escalation of conflict due to their failure in reforming the governing system and reducing poverty. They are accused of contributing to the escalation of conflict with their struggle for power within and between parties.[576] Floor crossing, corruption and bribery to form a government are seen as the norm, leading to the escalation of people's frustration and the conflict. A factor that seriously impaired the progress during the ceasefire is the lack of honesty in implementing agreements signed within and between parties.[577] The result, according to Upreti, was a peace process that is 'non-transparent, elite centric and consequently, exclusionary in nature.'[578] The political parties were more interested in reaping the benefits of development funding

---

[576] Upreti, *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*, 29.
[577] *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*, 427.
[578] Ibid.

the country garnered than a genuine effort for post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. An audience member's opinion resonates this frustration: 'it [*Sakuni's Tricks*] was a reflection of our society. Our present leaders are for people, of people, speak for people, are democrats or Marxists; and their ultimate goal is to hold the power and just lead. This is what was shown in the play; it was the real portrayal of our present scenario.'[579] Using allegory, *Sakuni's Tricks* explores the current political situation in Nepal and at the end, raises the frustrated citizens' voice.

Dialogic of Sakuni's Tricks: drawing from the history to relate to the present

Sakuni's Tricks draws from the history to relate to the present, thereby exemplifying the ways in which reinterpreting an epic to reflect upon present issues can enhance its impact. It forms a bridge between the past and present, engaging with the past in order to initiate dialogue on the present.

The familiarity with the epic and the depth to which it is ingrained within us function to enhance a reinterpretation of the story in several ways. It is an act of engaging with something that is already known to the audience and as such, it speaks to a part of the individual that already exists. With *Sakuni's Tricks*, it speaks to Mahabharata, which has been compared to the bible in its significance in the Indian continent.[580] Relating to this known part of ourselves is easier than introducing something that is unfamiliar. One way this contributes is through making the play more memorable. Familiarity with the Mahabharata ensures that *Sakuni's Tricks* stays with the audience. Further, the familiar narrative of the epic triggers our thought patterns and there is more curiosity and interest in the audience for the play's narrative. The familiarity could also mean that there is a certain extra degree of willingness to accept the story, a certain openness that might not be there for a play that is on the current political situation alone. By presenting a reinterpretation of Mahabharata, Sarwanam takes the play closer to the people.

Another central way in which using Mahabharata serves to enhance the dialogic impact of *Sakuni's Tricks* is through the contrast in characterisation. The

---

[579] Priya Chhetri, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 19, 2012 (pseudonym used)
[580] Johnson, *The Sauptikaparvan of the Mahābhārata: The Massacre at Night*, ix.

188

reinterpretation invites the audience to witness characters from the epic re-casted in political dynamics that bear a close symbolic resemblance to the Nepal political context after the conflict. While *Sakuni's Tricks* is based on the general framework of Mahabharata, it takes the story beyond the epic. Instead of the dichotomous characterisation seen in the epic with a stark separation between good and evil with clear white and black characters, the reinterpretation introduces grey characters. The characters of the epic no longer remain pure; they are conflicted by desire for power and material gains. With the presentation of unexpected character developments, *Sakuni's Tricks* invites the audience to engage in a dialogue between the already known characters of the epic and the newly introduced modern interpretations of these characters.

The reinterpretation flows along different lines than the original, in a continual process of being related back and forth between the two readings. The juxtaposition effectively changes the existing story in our minds. Mahabharata, a fundamental epic of the Indian subcontinent, is intertwined with the construction of identities. The ripples evoked from it in the reinterpretation, form new links and relate to the present day in hitherto unexpected ways that have far reaching consequences. When these changes are the result of seeing the story in a different way, of seeing the present situation in another way, it carries far more weight than an original script does. The association with the epic already takes us into a deeper level of relating to the story. Instead of constructing something anew, *Sakuni's Tricks* with its reinterpretation of Mahabharata, invites the audience to rewrite the already existing foundation of the epic. The resulting understanding and realisation is thereby made more powerful and deeper, as well as inclusionary.

Multivocality of Sakuni's Tricks: Different interpretations

Drawing from the analogy of Mahabharata is particularly apt for the Nepali context. As discussed above, one reason is the religious and mythological background and the impact that connection has on the audience. Another is the multiplicity of interpretations it holds for the audience. The ensuing multivocality opens the play up for diverse, overlapping and at times contradictory, perspectives.

189

An interpretation by Bijaya Bishport places Sakuni, the floor-crosser in the election, as a third power outside the country that expects to benefit from an internal conflict in Nepal. India and America are seen as the Sakuni's in this instance.

Priya offers a more plausible and a pertinent interpretation by seeing the Pandava's as the Maoists. Just like the Pandava princes in the Mahabharata had to leave the palace and spend 12 years in the jungle devoid of all the familiar comforts, Priya points out that the Maoists leaders also had to leave their homes and live in the jungle for several years. She perceives the Pandava princes of Yudhistira and Arjuna as an analogy for the Maoists. Similar to the Pandava princes representing all that is good and ethical for the people in the country, the Maoists at one time held out hope of an ethical state for the Nepalese: 'The people had hope and aspirations that when those Maoist leaders do come to power, they will do something new for the country, people would get jobs, good education. There will be no corruptions and so on.'[581] However, unlike the Pandavas in the epic and very much like the Pandavas in *Sakuni's Tricks*, when the Maoists came to power they continued the practice of exploitation and suppression evident in existing politics. Priya asserts that while 'the Pandavas who went to the forest and came back to their country did good for their country in the past, … these people [Maoists] who left their homes and so on [and] went to forest, [and] again come back, they didn't [do] anything. They were like others. They were like Kauravas.'[582] Manoj - another audience member - supports this view, saying that the Maoists forgot their ideological beliefs once they entered mainstream politics in the post-war period.[583] His interpretation goes beyond the mere allegation to the post-conflict power struggle that leaves the citizens' perspectives unheard. It actively makes a correlation between the key parties of the conflict and the heroes of the drama, firmly establishing the contradictions with the original epical characters. Possibility for multiple interpretations enhances the appropriateness of the drama and its resulting impact upon the audience.

Another factor that highlights the multivocality brought through *Sakuni's Tricks* is located in the way the characters are interpreted. Priya notes that 'there is no difference between Kauravas and Pandavas. The gods have been mixed. There is no

---

[581] Chhetri, interview
[582] Ibid.
[583] Manoj Shankar, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 19, 2012 (pseudonym used)

white and black difference. Now the Pandava's too have become like the Kaurava's.'[584] Here, Priya highlights the importance of adapting to a new value system, to a new thinking pattern, as the old yardsticks are no longer meaningful within the modern period. The drama urges democratic Nepal to acknowledge the changes that have been brought about, and to act accordingly. It reminds the fallibility of rulers, as the old one-dimensional characters are obsolete: instead there are complex characters that defy categorisation. Characters that are flexible and fallible. It is here that checks and balances in a governing system become important, and a democratic constitution and a regulated election procedure becomes imperative. Building people's trust on a new constitution and a fair political system is a pre-requisite to a stable peace in Nepal.[585] These exist in order to ensure that the rulers serve citizens' interests. With the absence of such security as it is in a Nepal devoid of a constitution, it is easy to exclude the citizens' grievances.

The call for change is supported by a general interpretation of *Sakuni's Tricks*'s plot. Through introducing Mahabharata, Sarwanam brings in the voice of the traditional, the religious. At the same time, by reinterpreting the story, Sarwanam contradicts the conventional reading and calls for a reinterpretation of the traditional that is appropriate for the modern circumstances. War is no longer an appropriate strategy for the modern context, thought it was the determinant factor of power between the Kauravas and Pandavas. Election - and democracy - has their place. The monarchy is obsolete, and accordingly, the power rests with the people. Exposing the weak points of party politics on-stage invites the people to question the rulers. The traditional subordination to the rulers is no longer appropriate as the current leaders do not serve the public interest, even if they indeed start off with honest intentions. The play subtly nudges the public to take a more active role in the country's post-conflict proceedings in order to ensure that the public interest is served. With its references to the Sanskrit epics that draw an ironic parallel with the present day politics, *Sakuni's Tricks* presents a rational insight into the post-conflict situation. It emphasises the necessity to move on and take charge of the people's power by the people, instead of entrusting it to the politicians and parties that are mostly corrupt and severs only their own interests.

---

[584] Chhetri, interview
[585] Upreti, *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*, 187.

The conclusion of the play also has several potential interpretations relevant to the discussion. By prefacing Om Mani Sharma's refusal to take part in the drama as Dritarashtra with 'I am happy being a common person. I don't want to be Dritarashtra', the play brings the viewer back to the fatalistic, numbed position of refusing to take any action because of the pent up frustration. Instead of actively motivating the public to take any action, it merely reflects the frustration of the people, the disappointment they have suffered as a result of being constantly betrayed by the political parties who one after another have proclaimed to represent the interest of the people to no avail. The climax of the drama is built up to voice the people's pent up frustration that is by and large ignored and goes unheard by the political elite of the post-conflict era. This dramatic presentation of the frustrated public voice has a significance that extends beyond the mere expression: it calls for a renewed disquiet that lies heavily upon the present. In certain instances, it indicates that the right leaders are not yet in power,[586] or that the country is looking for a good leader.[587] Yet again, it is interpreted as citizens being aware of the corruption within politics and refusing to play along any more.[588] Standing up against the politicians as a common citizen is seen as an assertion of the people's rights including the right to speech and people's power. The two people's movements for democracy, while being sphere-headed by the political parties, drew in massive public support turning it into a real people's demonstration. The resulting disquiet of Om Mani Sharma's declaration hints at this dormant potential of the Nepali public.

Sakuni's Tricks's potential for multiple interpretations also works to protect the theatre group from any resultant threats that might arise due to its political significance. The group has ample experience of being at the receiving end of threats and harassment meted out by political hooligans before and during conflict. Protecting itself from risks is an important factor. Shyam notes that with *Sakuni's Tricks*, '[n]o one can blame us [the group]' even though 'they feel that they are scolded. Even when someone raises a question, we say [that] we are talking about Mahabharata.'[589] Here, the criticism of Nepali politics is presented in the guise of guise of a reinterpretation. The message it conveys is symbolic and ultimately rests

---

[586] Krishna Pradhan, interviw with author, Kathmandu, June 10, 2012
[587] Bhakta, interview
[588] Baral, interview.
[589] Shyam Khadka, interview

with the viewer's interpretation. Characters, costumes and the language of the play all retain their reference to Mahabharata. The political significance comes only from the content of the story. Despite the strong criticism it raises against the politicians, *Sakuni's Tricks* has sufficient subterfuge to protect the group members from political threats.

Challenges in relation to the play

Sakuni's Tricks has received strong critiques on certain aspects of the play too. An overarching generalisation levelled by several audience members is that due to the very frustration people experience as a result of the political power struggle in the country, the people have become disinterested in anything to do with politics.[590] Based on this, one person questions the assumption that *Sakuni's Tricks* makes people think about the present situation. The play is critiqued for certain parts of its acting. While Ram playing Dhuryodana has received critical acclaim, several other actors can be challenged on their ability to deliver a convincing act, including Vinmaya who plays the narrator. The narrator's delivery of lines can improve in its evocation. While being powerful and descriptive most of the time, her presentation style has little variation according to the scene to be presented. The movements and gestures of the actors also appear repetitive at times. The 'composition of movement blocking' is the same throughout all the disagreements that take place in the drama.[591] The language of the script, while being praised for its highly literary narrative, makes itself vulnerable to critique by being beyond the reach of everyday usage. Team members noted the difficulties they had with rehearsing; the audience members noted the difficulties they had with understanding certain conversations in the play; the scriptwriter, Ashesh Malla, noted the beauty of the script made it difficult for the average person to grasp the full meaning. The use of highly literary language here is justifiable on the grounds that such language is required for a reinterpretation of Mahabharata. However, it is important to ensure that the language does not become a barrier to communication. These challenges – while presenting factors that need to be revisited in terms of a reproduction of the play – do not unduly undermine the political significance of *Sakuni's Tricks*. It is regarded as a play 'beyond time';

---

[590] Dahal, interview; Bishport, interview
[591] Bishport, interview

something that will continue to have significance irrespective of the temporal conditions or political contexts in Nepal.[592]

Remaining Pages:[593] *Using theatre to speak to emotion*

I now move on to explore Sarwanam's thematic engagement with the conflict through the play *Remaining Pages*. The way in which Sarwanam utilizes *Remaining Pages* to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict can be discussed under three main sections: the first section provides a brief introduction to the play outlining the plot. The second section discusses the ways in which the dialogic of theatre has been utilized in the play through the body and emotions. The third section explores the multivocality and how the citizen's voice has been brought forward through the drama. Finally I outline the challenges observed in relation to this drama.

Introducing Remaining Pages

Remaining Pages outlines the citizens' suffering during the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, with a particular focus on women. A team member sees it as a drama that reveals the 'black scars of the society' resulting from the conflict.[594] The data presented earlier in the chapter on the citizen's everyday lives during the conflict from reports of international human rights monitoring missions resonate rather closely with the harsh narrative, adding to its plausibility. It can be performed either as a proscenium or a street play and was performed for the first time at Sarwanam theatre from 4th July till the 21st of July 2012. Here, Sarwanam uses theatre to create a symbolic space capable of addressing the emotions of the audience. The story uses minimal dialogue and the narrative consists largely of symbolic mime. The little language that is used in the play is everyday conversational diction. This, together with the emphasis given to the symbolic and mime, enhances the accessibility of the drama to people from different educational and language backgrounds.

The plot of *Remaining Pages* revolves around a family living in the rural Nepal during the Maoist insurgency. The characters remain nameless. The family has a

---

[592] Chhetri, interview
[593] When the play was initially performed in the late 1990's, it was named *Ithihasko Banki Prishta* - Remaining Pages of History. With the 2012 performance, the group shortened the title.
[594] Bhakta, interview

father, a young daughter, a son and his wife. An old couple in the village serves the task of establishing the story's context in the beginning, as the story does not have a narrator. Two Maoists coming from the forest see the son chopping firewood near the house and intimidate him. The wife also comes out and together they plead to be left alone, when the army appears. The son and the wife run inside the house while the Maoists exit the stage. The army, after a futile chase of the Maoists, stumbles upon the house again. They take the son away for questioning, beating and pushing away the father and the wife who protest. The following day the old woman and the man from the village point towards the dead body of the son, and the body is taken for burial in a procession. The women in the village force the wife to go through rituals of widowhood and wear widowhood symbols, such as breaking her bangles and wrapping her in a white saree instead of the bright red clothing she wore so far. After the end of the funeral, the father decides to leave the village with the daughter and the daughter-in-law. On the way, the daughter falls sick and passes away. Further along, the father also dies after being caught up in a cross fire between the Army and the Maoists. The daughter-in-law, now isolated, buries him as best as she can. She continues her journey alone and is set upon by three men who rape her. Afterwards, she commits suicide by hanging herself. The play ends with her body under a dim red light while a dancer dressed in black and wearing long hair loose, comes on stage and performs a dance.[595]

Dialogic: through the body and emotion

Through *Remaining Pages*, Sarwanam thematically engages with the conflict and uses the dialogic of theatre to make excluded citizen's perspective a part of the public discourse on conflict. The body and emotion form the vessel that brings forth the dialogic.

The highly stylized symbolic representation of *Remaining Pages* primarily uses the body movements and facial expressions for communication, instead of dialogue. The choice limit verbal communication locates the dialogic of theatre firmly within the symbolic. The dialogue in *Remaining Pages* is limited to laying the narrative's

---

[595] This is a Kali Tandava dance, a dance for the goddess Kali that expresses women's anger and brings about destruction.

foundation. Therefore, after the first few scenes, the drama almost entirely relies upon symbolic mime as its mode of communication. As a result, the scenes are imbued with intensified tension and become powerfully evocative and moving. Ashesh Malla argues that even if the voice is left out, drama still has the use of body movement and facial expression: if the actor or actress is capable of delivering a balanced presentation of body and emotion onstage, that will ensure establishing a relationship with the viewer.[596] The absence of extensive props, costumes and lighting further contributes to bring the body to the fore as the primary conveyor. The body becomes the vehicle for the dialogic, automatically relating to the audience at a level that is difficult to achieve when communicating through language.

In *Remaining Pages*, supported with its symbolic presentation revolving around the body, emotion serves a dialogic function with the audience by establishing a connection that resonates with what is being performed onstage. The narrative itself is apt for this: it invites the audience to resonate with the vivid emotional display of the symbolic mime, harnessing empathy with the victims of conflict. The reviews call that *Remaining Pages* 'recreate the angst and confusion that prevailed in the country during that period' and goes on to 'give audiences a sense of the grief and sorrows that have become part of the lives of all those affected by the 10-year conflict.'[597] Furthermore, the play captures the emotional intensity of the period. It expresses the feelings of pain and loss throughout the drama, inciting anger at the injustices committed. These are the encompassing feelings of the period. Performed onstage, these emotions trigger responding emotions from the audience. An audience member notes that the play has the potential to draw the audience into it, blurring the 'line between real and unreal': for her, this resonance with the play has a cathartic affect that is irrevocably connected with the emotions it generate.[598] The social and political significance of emotions[599] takes place here in this dialogic resonance.

The social and political significance of emotions in constituting an imagined community is evident in the final scene of *Remaining Pages*. The final dance takes place in a dim light, with the hanging body of the protagonist under a spotlight as the

---

[596] Ashesh Malla, interview with author, Kathmandu, June 23, 2012
[597] Manisha Neupane, "Scars of War," *The Kathmandu Post*, July 10, 2012.
[598] Chhetri, interview
[599] Social and political significance in constituting identity and community attachments is seen as a key way in which emotions are recognized in International Relations: Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*.

background. A single actress with long loose hair, dressed entirely in black, performs a Kali Tandav dance, representing the building outrage and anger of women who suffer the most from as a result of conflict. According to Hindu Mythology, Kali Tandav is a dance form from the repertoire of Lord Shiva's Tandav dance, which is at the 'source of the cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution.'[600] The Kali Tandav is danced to evoke the power of Durga, the goddess of revenge, primarily associated with female anger and destruction. Thus, the dance becomes a deification of righteous anger that arises from the women who suffered from the conflict in particular, and from the citizens whose suffering during the conflict has been overlooked at best and betrayed at worst by the political elite, in general. Also, it can be interpreted as an expression that encompasses the audience's responses to the drama: an onstage enactment of the feelings of anger and violence. The dance engages in relating to and representing the communal feelings evoked during the performance. The last scene, therefore, is a continual process of dialogue between the stage and the audience, between the individual and the society. While the dance is powerful and does express the violence of the pent up anger and frustration, the scene is quite short. Arguably this aspect of revenge is seen to be conducive for peacebuilding, as it provides consolation and empowerment for the women who have suffered from the conflict in different ways.[601]

Multivocality in Remaining Pages

Here I look at how multiple voices are facilitated through *Remaining Pages*, effectively making the excluded citizen's voices heard within the public discourse.

The scene composition of *Remaining Pages* conveys its multivocality. Multivocality is performed on-stage with the simultaneous happenings going on under three spotlights towards the end of the first scene. Most of the characters in the story appear onstage at this point when the connections are yet to be established. A rather small stage is shared by three very different groups, each highlighted by a separate spotlight. The setting leaves no doubt that these three scenes take place in separate places at the same time. The groups burst into activity when it is their turn, and remain either frozen or dimly illuminated when it is the turn for another group to act.

---

[600] Lipika Das, "Shakespeare in Odisha : A Study of Selected Odia Translations," *Odisha Review* May 2012, 51.
[601] Bhakta, interview

The activities of the groups are rather a contrast to each other – one being a conversation between an old man and a woman in the village: Another being a domestic scenario in a village with a father, a young daughter and a daughter-in-law; and the final being a scene of a group of young men singing and dancing. The interconnections between the groups become apparent only later on. The old man and the woman turn out to be residents of the same village where the domestic scene takes place. Young men from the other group reappear in the course of the play as Maoists, army and hooligans. These diverse characters bring out the different facets of the society that exist within the same conditions yet respond to and feel the ramifications of the conflict differently. It presents the different viewpoints and voices on conflict.

Another factor facilitating the inclusion of different voices is the anonymity of characters. The namelessness enhances the story's generic format: stripping the characterization to the bare necessities in a way facilitates relating at the level of emotion. It takes the interpretation beyond a particular person or a family to stand-up in general for the villagers who suffered from being caught in-between the fighting parties. This generic nature leaves sufficient flexibility for the audience to relate to the characters, whether they are from the rural or the urban. It is seen as 'drama close to the heart.'[602] The symbolic presentation style also leaves the narrative open to different interpretations, thus ensuring ample room for multivocality. Hence the story is left open for the representation of multiple voices.

This expression of the different dimensions of people's voice in turn encourages the audience to explore whether the civilians' sacrifices have been sufficiently acknowledged. Even though the politicians at either side of the conflict work together at the decision making level today, some of the major problems of the country still remain unanswered. For example, due to the absence of a proper reconciliation process, the violence perpetuated during the conflict period by both the Army and the Maoists remains unaddressed. *Remaining Pages* questions whether the people's suffering has been of any avail in this case. With the recent dissolution of the constituent assembly, this question lurks quite close to the surface of public conscience. Sarwanam points out the costs of conflict upon the communities and brings up the people's voice. These actions signify the political elite's responsibility

---

[602] Nirmala Harun, interview with author, Chitvan, May 04, 2012

to acknowledge and respect the citizens' perspectives. The group draws attention to the core issues for which people fought, the issues for which people suffered. Sarwanam taps into this repository of common experiences during conflict and represents it as the people's voice, expecting to impact upon the current politicisation and corresponding corruption to a certain level through that.

Challenges

The play has challenges as well. While the symbolic presentation together with minimal dialogue contributes to the emotional address of the play, the audience members and external artists question the excessive and at times inaccurate, use of mime.[603] Arguably, mime is used excessively in certain instances such as in depicting conversations between family members. However, there are many instances where the mime is put to excellent use to convey external factors that verbal dialogue would sound artificial in doing. An example is when the Army chases the Maoists. The scene effectively conveys stretching over time and distance with only a few minutes of activity. Another example would be the scene where the protagonist is raped: here, three men in black pants come on stage, crowd the isolated woman, and one drags her *dhupatta* (a long scarf similar to a shawl) and mimes licking it from one end to the other in exaggerated action while the woman writhes on the floor at the opposite end of the stage. The other two men imitate the same action with their hands. The scene ends with the three men dragging themselves away from the stage in a process, bent in double, arms hanging down and being obviously devoid of all energy. The evocativeness of this would be extremely difficult to capture except with the mime. Another critic argues that the absence of dialogue in some ways slow down the pace of the drama, depriving 'the audience from connecting with its sentiments.'[604] Once again this is arguable, as the narrative appears to flow smoothly and through the entirety of the drama. The only place where the pace seemed to slow down is during the first part of the family's journey, after they left the village. However, this is due to a weakness in the script and the direction rather than an absence of dialogue. Finally, *Remaining Pages* also faces the generic critique raised on almost all the Sarwanam

---

[603] Dahal, interview; Bishport, interview
[604] Neupane, "Scars of War."

performances: that of the actors failing to do justice to the characters.[605] It is apparent the group needs to improve its acting skills in order to meet the audience expectations and the general theatre standards of the present.

Overall challenges for the theatre group

Sarwanam has a history of over 25 years of working for democracy in Nepal and is an established organisation in the country. The group already has certain strategies in place to mitigate external challenges that limit its work. What I discuss here are only a few recurring points that negatively affect the groups' productions and ideology.

While Sarwanam's theatre invariably presents plays that address a political situation, there are occasions when it requires aesthetic fineness. Lack of refinement becomes a challenge only because the group presents itself as a professional theatre group. The specific aspects that are in need of improvement include acting, direction and the script (for its instructions). Sarwanam plays are widely appreciated and even recommended for its script and narrative. However, as it was noted in the previous discussion on the two plays, there are frequent critiques raised when it comes to the performance level. These critiques are raised about the unprofessional acting as well as about direction. The acting is termed often as 'monotonous' and 'repetitive'[606] and an audience member terms the miming as 'mistaken action'. Given that Sarwanam promotes its own theatre style based on heightened body movements and facial expressions, it is particularly important to make maximum use of the bodily expression as actors. The group needs to explore a wider range of bodily expression instead of being limited to a few, often-used gestures and patterns. Weak points in characterisation are also evident in some dramas: this is tied in with gaps in the play's direction. Another factor that needs to improve is the script: given the prominence of mime and symbolic in Sarwanam plays, the scripts need to be more detailed. At the moment the scripts contain dialogues, and display either a total absence of or a bare minimum of instruction when it comes to mime and symbolic performance. For example, *Remaining Pages* only has a partial script for the sections with dialogue in it. The rest is developed during rehearsals together with the director and the artists. While this is liberating in some aspects, it also imposes serious limitations upon the

---

[605] Ibid.; Ghimre, interview
[606] From several newspaper reviews, discussions with audience members and also, an observation of Ashesh Malla himself.

final performance. It is not surprising, therefore, that mime and symbolism, while being effectively communicative, fail to reach the expected audience standards of 'realistic' in its delivery.[607]

The group is entering a new phase of its growth and as a result, improvements in the aesthetic quality of the plays can be expected. Finishing construction of the Sarwanam building provides them with a regular rehearsal location and the income the building generates offers hope of receiving a sufficient income through group activity. These are external facilitators for delivering a high quality performance. However, external factors alone would not be sufficient. Most of the artists' team at Sarwanam has been with the group for over 6 years. It appears that the actors need further skill training that goes beyond what is available within the group. Working in collaboration with other directors[608] and groups could be a way of overcoming this challenge.

The team's didactic approach towards the work they do can also become an issue. It reflects the assumed power hierarchies of being a part of the theatre group: this attitude can be counterproductive to the overall group objectives. The actors often regard their work as 'teaching' and 'lessons' and 'advice': the people from the rural Nepal are referred to as 'uneducated' 'simple people' who are 'grateful' to the knowledge they bring and 'accept' it without raising any questions. Such attitude indicates a didactic tendency among the performers. It is important to address this conception as otherwise it runs a risk of undermining the principles the group stands up for, such as democracy and respecting the wisdom of the citizens.

Conclusion

Sarwanam has been politically active as a theatre group during most of the recent political transition periods in Nepal. The peacebuilding approach it takes reaches into the social fabric, addressing an irrepressible issue that has been, and is at the heart of different conflict dynamics: the exclusion of people's voice from the public discourse. As the reports from international human rights organisations as well as personal stories from Nepal point out, the Maoist insurgency took place on the topography of everyday civilian lives. However, the peace process largely took place within the

---

[607] Dahal, interview; Ghimre, interview; Chhetri, interview
[608] Sarwanam has so far worked exclusively with Ashesh Malla, and there is only one instance where the group worked for a public production with another playwright/director.

upper echelons of the political elite. Sarwanam, through its theatre, strives to make excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict. It is here that I located Sarwanam's significance as an organisation using theatre for peacebuilding.

This chapter argued that Sarwanam contributes to peacebuilding in Nepal through using the multivocality and dialogic of theatre to make excluded citizens' voices part of the public discourse on conflict. I explored the ways in which Sarwanam uses theatre to bring out excluded citizens perspectives under two broad themes: the group practices and the practices of performance. The group practices were found to be inclusionary and ethically committed: the practices of performances were also inclusionary and dialogic in its structure and implementation. The thematic engagement of the plays with the conflict situation was at a high level. Each of the two plays explored present a unique approach to the conflict situation, while bringing out excluded citizens perspectives using complex dramatic techniques and forms. *Sakuni's Tricks* addresses the rationale, inviting the audience to intellectually engage with the issues by reinterpreting the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata. *Remaining Pages* addresses emotions of the audience, presenting a narrative of the conflict's impact upon local people. The first focuses on a political analysis to establish the absence of people's voice at the governance level, while the latter focuses on a ground level story to bring out the neglected suffering of people.

Therefore it becomes apparent that Sarwanam creatively utilises the imagined space of theatre and the dialogic and multivocal form of theatre to serve its purposes. Through the freedom it grants to the artist, Sarwanam emphasises political situations where the citizen's voice is absent or unheard, highlights certain incidents to ensure that the people's voice is heard, and makes correlations that are intended to make the audience contemplate and take action. It uses the aesthetic 'ability to step back, reflect and see political conflict and dilemmas in new ways'[609] and proclaims the excluded citizen's perspectives as a part of the public discourse on conflict with renewed vigour. Such combined passion and commitment for art and politics sets Sarwanam apart from other theatre groups and characterises its contribution to using theatre for peacebuilding.

---

[609] Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, 2.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore the role of theatre as an art form in conflict transformation in South Asia. It has done so first with a literature review that established the significance of art and theatre in addressing the gaps within contemporary peacebuilding discourse, and second, with an empirical study that focused on three cases from Sri Lanka, India and Nepal. I have demonstrated that theatre as a form of art working at an everyday level within communities can make a significant contribution to building peace.

Throughout this thesis, I argued that the multivocal and dialogic nature of theatre is particularly suited to express local complexities and open up possibilities for communication between parties and narratives in conflict. The empirical analysis elicited the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre as the underpinning quality that facilitated conflict transformation across the three case studies. Multivocality facilitates the expression of varied, contradictory voices that often go unheard within the prevalent mainstream discourse within a given conflict. Strategies embodied within the group processes, theatrical form and the imagination of theatre can bring out these voices at different stages of the theatre production. The dialogic form of theatre enables the expression elicited through multivocality to initiate a conversation between parties and narratives in conflict within and beyond the theatre space. Peacebuilding and conflict transformation emerges therein. Consequently, theatre and arts as an approach, contributes to peacebuilding by offering a different, resilient approach that can encompass the many complexities in a conflict context.

The overall argument of the thesis was built in two parts: Part 1 established theatre as a fringe area that has much potential within a societybuilding approach to peace, and as such, warranting further study. I showed in chapter one that the key debates in peacebuilding have arrived at an impasse between the overall statebuilding and societybuilding approaches to peacebuilding. Emerging literature on a hybrid approach to peacebuilding draws attention to the need for the discipline to incorporate peacebuilding strategies that can work at an everyday level within local communities. Chapter two demonstrated that theatre as an approach to peacebuilding locates itself and takes its significance precisely at this point. Despite its widespread use in conflict

situations and its potential in peacebuilding, theatre has received relatively little academic attention. I pointed out that to better understand the role of theatre for peacebuilding, there is a need for empirical studies on relevant longstanding theatre groups.

Part 2, accordingly, presented the empirical argument and evidence in relation to South Asia.

Chapter three on Jana Karaliya from Sri Lanka concluded that theatre created a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together. It demonstrated that Jana Karaliya's approach is derived from and embedded within the various dynamics of the ethnic division and political tension of the Sri Lankan conflict and post-conflict situation. This approach is closely tied with presenting Jana Karaliya as a coexisting multiethnic, bilingual, mobile microcosm that lives and travels together, and the resulting personal engagement with the communities. Its work is aimed at the transformation of personal, societal and emotional narratives of conflict. Jana Karaliya consciously refrains from engaging with the conflict themes through the scripts to ensure its survival and instead, presents an alternative platform that cuts through ethnic separation. The overall set-up of the group and the performance practice utilise theatre's multivocality and the dialogic at different levels, experimenting with existing boundaries of theatre for peacebuilding. Jana Karaliya uses performance itself as well as the process of producing and staging the performance to create a space where parties and narratives in conflict can come together.

Chapter four, on Jana Sanskriti, showed how theatre is used to bring out prevalent but less heard narratives of structural violence in West Bengal. I highlighted two steps in Jana Sanskriti's peacebuilding approach: perform resistance to and trigger transformation within the narratives of structural violence at the community level. Through an approach embedded in the communities where it works, Jana Sanskriti primarily uses forum theatre to highlight the networks of structural violence surrounding the lives of its members. Violent narratives in the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres are prominent in this. Forum theatre is highly conducive for embracing the multivocal and dialogic nature of theatre. The group successfully adapted Boal's theatre to suit the particularities of the Indian context, thereby further

enhancing forum theatre's capacity for transformation. This contextualised theatre model draws from traditional theatre forms such as *Gajan* and has integrated specific performances and structural aspects of these local forms into the primary forum theatre model.

Chapter five on Sarwanam showed that theatre makes excluded citizen's perspectives a part of the public discourse on conflict in Nepal. The mass protests leading to the abolition of monarchy and the institution of democracy emerged as a citizen's movement while the actual fighting was between the state and the rebels. The peace process was carried out at a higher political level and its dividends hardly reached the people who were caught between the two sides, forced to bear the brunt of a conflict that is not necessarily their own. Through this chapter, I proposed that Sarwanam developed a symbolic theatre form and used this to bring out the citizen's voice omitted from the public discourse on peacebuilding. The group took a multivocal and dialogic approach to theatre and addressed both the rationale and emotion of the audience through its plays.

My analysis across the cases points to the importance of finding a balance between multivocality and dialogic in utilising theatre for peacebuilding. Balance is key for initiating a shift in the polarised narratives that prevail during conflict. Theatre for peacebuilding initiatives can run the risk of focusing on one to the exclusion of other. Such an exclusionary focus on one element is again detrimental or prevents theatre from reaching its full potential in peacebuilding. When theatre is highly multivocal but less dialogic like Jana Karaliya, theatre is not being utilised for its full potential. When theatre is highly dialogic but fails to be sufficiently multivocal like it was in Jana Sanskriti's anti-alcohol protest that turned violent, the discussion would not necessarily reach the depths it could, and the results could be neutral or detrimental to peacebuilding. The point of balance is highly context specific and differs for each theatre group and for each theatre initiative.

The empirical analysis also points to the possibility of seeing theatre for peacebuilding as resistance in a given situation. Practitioners use theatre to perform resistance to divisive or dominant narratives at the early stages of peacebuilding. The multivocal and dialogic form of theatre can empower the silenced voices in conflict contexts to speak out and perform resistance to violence and injustice: this resistance,

in turn, due to the absence of physical violence and the separation from the outer world allowed through the permeable membrane of theatre's imaginary, facilitates a dialogue within and between narratives and parties in conflict. The dialogue, as a starting point for transforming relationships, is an act of performing resistance to the existing conflict-prone narratives.

All three cases demonstrated some elements of challenging the existing hierarchy or prevalent conflict narratives in a context to develop a momentum for peace: Jana Karaliya articulates narratives of ethnic unity and coexistence in the context of Sri Lanka. Instead of being the norm, the multiethnic, bilingual group starts off as being the alternative in the midst of established conceptions of ethnic separation. Jana Karaliya works in this context, subtly challenging the prevalent stories of separation and carving out common ground. Jana Sanskriti in India openly challenges the existing narratives of structural violence in search of emancipation and empowerment of the working classes. The community actively participates in challenging these hierarchies on and off stage. The transformation of these oppressive narratives is seen as a precondition for an authentic peace. Sarwanam in Nepal protests the post-peace agreement actions of the political elite and resists keeping the civilians in the margins of sculpting justice distribution. It continues to project the citizens' voice into the public discourse on conflict.

Implications for future research

Incorporating strategies that initiate, embody and promote multiple voices and dialogue can enhance the potential of peacebuilding through theatre. Multivocality and the dialogic can be integrated into different aspects of theatre to bring conflict parties together. Group composition and mobility, production elements such as the scripting process and flexibility offered through different theatre types, and audience engagement are examples of such aspects.

The analysis for each case study pointed to certain elements that facilitate multivocality and the dialogic of theatre. When appropriately contextualised these can be accelerators in developing theatre for peacebuilding initiatives. Thus, these pointers need to be contextualised. I discuss these elements under two themes: context related and activism oriented.

The first context related element that can facilitate the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre for peacebuilding is the level to which art and its appreciation prevail in the local context. Interest in the art form is a powerful motivator to bring people together. In the case of Jana Karaliya, this is what brings the community to the mobile theatre every afternoon: with Sarwanam, this is what makes people trickle down from the hills at the sound of the group's drum and songs announcing its arrival. With Jana Sanskriti, this is what makes the community engage with the same forum play over and over. Interest in theatre can also be an indicator of the support a group receives for its peacebuilding activities. The more a community is attuned to arts and see it as part of their everyday activities, the more apt they are to support, spend time on and engage with it, and therefore, benefit from the potential of theatre for peacebuilding.

The second context related factor that positively contributes to the process of peacebuilding through theatre is the sensitivity of the group to local politics. Being aware of the nuances and local complexities of conflict and politics can significantly contribute to peacebuilding, especially through a highly flexible medium like theatre. As Jana Karaliya demonstrates, this awareness helps in avoiding pitfalls and utilising the flexibility of theatre to find alternative ways of carrying out peacebuilding even in challenging circumstances. The group consciously refrained from directly engaging with the conflict issues through its dramas during the war period in order to ensure group safety and viability. This self-imposed censorship is a calculated strategy to survive in a highly volatile and a fragile political situation. Such sensitivity is crucial for determining the success of the overall theatre for peacebuilding initiatives, as the latter is inevitably shaped by the former to respond to the existing conditions while avoiding punitive action. Sensitivity to the local politics is therefore an important factor for peacebuilding through theatre.

The third context related factor that contributes to peacebuilding through theatre is group resilience. Resilience of a theatre group is important to ensure continued peacebuilding. The more a group embraces strategies of resilience, the more likely it is to survive. As the case studies amply demonstrated, these strategies of resilience can vary depending on the context and group nature: Jana Karaliya adapts to the existing conditions by expanding and contracting the group and group activities. It takes the political sensitivities into account in shaping the group approach and activities to ensure its survival: similarly, it takes financial sustainability into account

in planning activities such as periods for rehearsals, performance schedules, touring and breaks. Jana Sanskriti in Bengal has members who live and perform in their own villages, thereby reducing the financial obligations incurred in maintaining a fulltime theatre group. What results is a versatile group with a relatively simplified process of production. Sarwanam has come up with a strategy to ensure resilience through constructing a theatre complex for the group. It potentially generates sufficient income to sustain the group financially while freeing it from reliance on external funding sources. Having its own performance centre thus, allows Sarwanam to fully focus on theatre. Incorporating strategies for resilience is an important factor to consider in developing theatre initiatives for peacebuilding.

The first activism oriented factor that contributes to peacebuilding through theatre is the engagement with the community. This is twofold: the length of engagement and regular contact with the community outside the theatre space. While isolated performances can also make a significant impact, when a theatre group engages with a given community over an extended period, the potential for initiating change increases. Jana Sanskriti's practice of recurrent performances of the same forum play in a given location for a period, and Jana Karaliya mobile theatre performances over a three-month period testify to this. In both these cases, taking the time to work with the people ensures that the silences existing at different levels get an opportunity to be heard, and to engage in dialogue through theatre. It further ensures that the moments of healing, empathy, transformation or communication initiated through the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre are nurtured until they firmly take root. Witnessing the concrete impact of their work further motivates the activists. Regular performances over an extended period enhance the impact of using theatre for peacebuilding. Consistent contact with the community outside the theatre space is also an important factor that comes into play in relation to a group's engagement for peacebuilding. All three groups studied in this thesis ensure their accessibility to the community after the performances and on an everyday basis.[610] The audience gets to interact with the actors outside the theatre space at a personal level, taking theatre for peacebuilding beyond the limitations of theatre and further integrates the message of peacebuilding to the lives of ordinary people. It also becomes a forum for gaining

---

[610] Sarwanam and Jana Karaliya mingle among the audience after the performances when they travel. Their accessibility is somewhat limited at the conventional stage performance, due to the constraints of the model.

popularity and thereby, influence. Engagement with the community is an element that needs to be taken into account in approaching peacebuilding through theatre.

The second activism oriented factor that contributes to theatre for peacebuilding is the existence of political action stemming from or carrying forward the theatre group's work. Pre-planned political action that goes along with the performance can significantly enhance the impact of theatre for peacebuilding. Numerous commentators such as Niriella admit that the next step would require bold initiatives at a more high-profile political level that will utilise the transformation initiated at ground level.[611] Jana Sanskriti has aligned itself with appropriate national level institution-led movements at times when the agendas for social change overlapped. Such political mobilisation need not start at the high-profile level: as it does with Jana Sanskriti, theatre can easily become the seed for and contribute to a community level people's movement for justice that results in tangible positive outcomes. Through its interrelated theatre and political work, Jana Sanskriti is able to effect concrete village level change in the communities where it works. What is necessary for such a process is deliberate political action found upon insights gained from the multivocal and dialogic form of theatre for peacebuilding. The level to which the political movement is embedded in, based on and authentic to the theatre process and its outcomes is likely positively correlate with its impact upon the community.

The third activism oriented factor that contributes to theatre for peacebuilding is the ethical commitment of the group. Ethical commitment emerges as a significant element among the case studies, holding them together amidst financial and other hardships. This commitment is two-fold: ethical commitment to the group aims of peacebuilding and preserving this integrity in the group processes. The group aims - in the cases I studied - became a uniting force for the individuals within, and they in turn, expected the group processes to embody and be true to these principles. Theatre groups for peacebuilding succeed in winning the trust of their audience and sustaining themselves over a long period when they demonstrate ethical commitment in these two ways.

---

[611] Interview with author and Harshadeva Amarathunga, Thambuttegama, February 22, 2008.

In conclusion, this thesis has examined the breadth of avenues and actions available once peacebuilding enters the space of theatre. The theatre groups discussed serve as a testimony to the alternative approaches to peacebuilding that are uniquely moulded by and addresses the complexities and traces of conflict found in the local context. Given this context specificity, multiplication or generalisation of the same approaches would be problematic. The contribution of the study is found in the theoretical reasoning that emerged as a central theme in all three case studies: multivocality and the dialogic. Through its multivocality, theatre can empower the silenced voices in conflict contexts to speak out and preform resistance to intolerable conditions and injustice. This resistance, due to the absence of physical violence and the separation from the outer world allowed through the permeable membrane of theatre's imaginary, facilitates a dialogue within and between representatives from different parties. Such dialogue, in turn, leads to a transformed relationship. It is the initial step in envisioning a collaborative future. Incorporating theatre opens alternative avenues thorough which we can approach and build peace.

This thesis demonstrated that the arts based approaches can play a significant role in broadening the boundaries of peacebuilding to address certain identified gaps in the prevailing approaches. The multivocal and dialogic form of theatre is particularly suited to express conflict complexities and to establish communication between conflict parties. Facilitating this multivocality and the dialogic through its form, peacebuilding through theatre can prepare the ground for and garner support for the continuation of a peace process while ensuring that the community itself is included as part of the process. Prevailing approaches to peace have repeatedly failed in establishing this ground work, though it is central to the success of a peace process. Using theatre as a case, this thesis illustrates that theatre for peacebuilding can play a key role in building a people's movement: a movement that resists prevalent conflict narratives and mainstream peacebuilding through local strategies that urge conflict parties to seek sustainable peace. It pushes the existing boundaries of peacebuilding and conflict resolution to open up and draw from other relevant disciplines such as performance studies and mobilisation. Theatre for peacebuilding incorporates the questions of ethical values, emotions and creativity as an approach located within and engaging with the people and their everyday lives at a local level. Peacebuilding through the arts can become a platform that opens up alternative local solutions for

conflict that is outside the realm of prevalent approaches to peacebuilding. As this thesis has shown, accessing the alternative local spaces is where the prevalent peacebuilding approaches are lacking the most, and it is here that incorporating peacebuilding through arts can make a significant contribution in conflict situations.

Bibliography

Abeyratne, Upul. "The Ethnic Problem and Sri Lankan Political Culture,." In *Dealing with Diversity: Sri Lankan Discourses on Peace and Conflict*, edited by Frerks Georg and Bart Klem. The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2004.

Ackroyd, Judith. "Applied Theatre: An Exclusionary Discourse?". *Applied Theatre Researcher* 8 (2007). Accesed May 8, 2011. http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/52889/01-ackroyd-final.pdf.

———. "Applied Theatre: Problems and Possibilities." *Applied Theatre Researcher* 1 (2000). Accesed May 8, 2011. http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/81796/Ackroyd.pdf.

Agathangelou, Anna M., and Lily H.M. Ling. *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Agathangelou, Anna M., and L. H. M. Ling. "Fiction as method/method as fiction: Stories and storytelling in the social sciences." International Affairs Working Paper 2005-5, Graduate Porgram in International Affairs, The New School, New York, November 2005. Accessed June 13, 2013. http://milanoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Ama_Ling2005-05.pdf

———. "The House of IR: From Family Power Politics to the Poisies of Worldism." *International Studies Review* 6, no. 4 (2004): 21-49.

———. "Power, Borders, Security, Wealth: Lessons of Violence and Desire from September 11." *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2004): 517-38.

Aitken, Viv. "Conversations with Status and Power: How *Everyday Theatre* Offers 'Spaces of Agency' to Participants." *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 14, no. 4 (2009): 503-27.

Akhtar, Shaheen. "Managing Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Going Beyond the LTTE." In *Fixing Fractured Nations: The Challenge of Ethnic Separatism in the Asia-Pacific*, edited by Robert G. Wirsing and Ehsan Ahrari, 159-80. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

Amnesty International. *Amnesty International Report 2012 : The State of the World's Human Rights*. London, United Kingdom: Amnesty International, 2012.

———. *Nepal : A Spiralling Human Rights Crisis*. Amnesty International, April 4, 2002. Accessed June 7, 2012. http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA31/016/2002/en/b8c8c0e5-d88f-11dd-ad8c-f3d4445c118e/asa310162002en.pdf.

———. *Sri Lanka: Reconciliation at a Crossroads: Continuing Impunity, Arbitrary Detentions, Torture and Enforced Disappearances*. Amnesty International, October - November 2012. Accessed February 15, 2013. http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/asset/ASA37/008/2012/en/5747cec0-7e77-486f-9859-9623ee127b20/asa370082012en.pdf.

Andersen, Anette Storli , and Jon Nygaard. "Narod Sobie - Theatre as the Nation in Itself : Three Case Studies of Theatre and National Emotions." *Nordic Theatre Studies* 21 (2009): 40-50.

Andrieu, Kora. "Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm." *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 5 (2010): 537-58.

BBC. "Army Deployed after Calcutta Riot." November 21, 2007.

Azar, Edward E. "Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions." *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations* 12, no. 1 (1985): 59-70.

Babbitt, Eileen, and Fen Osler Hampson. "Conflict Resolution as a Field of Inquiry: Practice Informing Theory." *International Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (2011): 46-57.

Bagshaw, Dale, and Margaret Lepp. "Ethical Considerations in Drama and Conflict Resolution Research in Swedish and Australian Schools." *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (2005): 381-96.

Bain, William, ed. *The Empire of Security and the Safety of the People*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Balasubramaniam, Vejai. "Ethnic Politics and Multicultural Societies." *International Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (2010): 105-09.

Balfour, Michael St Clair. "Mapping Realities: Representing War through Affective Place Making." *New Theatre Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (2012): 30-40.

Balme, Christopher B. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Bandarage, Asoka. *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka : Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

———. "Women, Armed Conflict, and Peacemaking in Sri Lanka: Toward a Political Economy Perspective." *Asian Politics & Policy* 2, no. 4 (2010): 653-67.

Baranyi, Stephen, ed. *The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding Post -9/11*. California: Stanford University Press, 2008.

Barnett, Michael, and Christoph Zürcher. "The Peacebuilder's Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood," in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, edited by Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, 23-52. London and New York: Routledge, 2009

Basu, Kasturi. "Violence on Women in W Bengal." *Liberation - Central Organ of CPI (ML)*, October 2012.

Beardsley, Kyle. "The UN at the Peacemaking-Peacebuilding Nexus." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30, no. 4 (2013): 369-86.

Beller, Sarah D. "Sowing Art, Reaping Peace: Toward a Framework for Evaluating Arts-Based Peacebuilding." The American University, 2009. Accessed August 9, 2011. http://search.proquest.com/docview/304844739?accountid=14723.

Belloni, Roberto. "Civil Society in War-to-Democracy Transition." In *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*, edited by Anna Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk, 182-211. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

———. "Hybrid Peace Governance: Its Emergence and Significance." *Global Governance* 18, no. 1 (2012): 21-38.

Bernhard, Anna, and Janel B. Balvanek. "The Importance of Dialogical Relations and Local Agency in Governance Initiatives for Conflict Resolution " In *CORE Policy Brief*. Oslo: PRIO, 2013.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Bhonsle, Rahul. "Sri Lanka: South Asia's Forgotten War?", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (2006). Accessed May 4, 2012.

http://www.ipcs.org/article/maldives/sri-lanka-south-asias-forgotten-war-2119.html.

Bixer, Jacqueline E. "Re-Membering the Past: Memory-Theatre and Tlatelolco." *Latin American Research Review* 37. no. 2 (2002): 119-35

Bleiker, Roland. *Aesthetics and World Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

———. "Conclusion-Everyday Struggles for a Hybrid Peace." In *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism*, edited by O.P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell, 293-309. Hampshire, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

———. "Forget IR Theory." *Alternatives* 22, no. 1 (1997): 37-66.

———. "'Give it the Shade': Paul Celan and the Politics of Apolitical Poetry." *Political Studies* 47, no. 4 (1999): 661-76.

Boal, Augusto. *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Boix, Carles. "Economic Roots of Civil Wars and Revolutions in the Contemporary World." *World Politics* 60, no. 3 (2008): 390-437.

Bose, Sumantra. *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Boulding, Elise. *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1990.

Boyu Chen, Ching-Chane Hwang, and L.H.M. Ling. "Lust/Caution in IR: Democratising World Politics with Culture as a Method." *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (2009): 743-66.

Brewer, John. "Sociology and Peacebuilding." In *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, edited by R Mac Ginty, 159-70. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Brigg, Morgan. "Culture: Challenges and Possibilities." In *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, edited by Oliver P Richmond, 329-46. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Brigg, Morgan, and Roland Bleiker. "Autoethnographic International Relations: Exploring the Self as a Source of Knowledge." *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): 779-98.

Broom, Benjamin. "Managing Differences in Conflict Resolution: The Role of Relational Empathy." In *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, 97-111. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.

Bullion, Alan. "The Peace Process in Sri Lanka." In *Conflict and Peace in South Asia*, edited by Manas Chatterji and B.M. Jain, 149-69. Bingley, Uk: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2008.

Byrne, Bridget. "Qualitative Interviewing." In *Researching Society and Culture*, edited by Clive Seale, 180-84. London: Sage, 2004.

Campbell, Susanna, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam, eds. *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding*. London: Zed Books, 2011.

Campbell, Susanna, and Jenny H. Peterson. "Statebuilding." In *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, edited by Roger Mac Ginty, 336-46. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Carlin, Phyllis Scott, and Linda M. Park-Fuller. "Disaster Narrative Emergent/Cies: Performing Loss, Identity and Resistance." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2012): 20-37.

Central Bureau of Statistics – Government of Nepal. "Nepal in Figures 2013." Kathmandu, Nepal: Central Bureau of Statistics. 2013. Accessed May 5, 2014.

http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2014/Nepal%20in%20figure/Nepal%20In%20Figures%202013_English.pdf

Chandler, David. *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building.* London: Pluto Press, 2006.

———. *International Statebuilding: The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance.* New York: Routledge, 2010.

———. "Race, Culture and Civil Society: Peacebuilding Discourse and the Understanding of Difference." *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (2010): 369-90.

Chinyowa, Kennedy. "Emerging Paradigms for Applied Drama and Theatre Practice in African Contexts." *Reearch in Drama Education* 14, no. 3 (2009): 329-46.

Chou, Mark. "Democracy and Tragedy in Ancient Athens and Today." PhD diss, The University of Queensland, 2010.

———. *Greek Tragedy and Contemporary Democracy.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.

Chou, Mark, and Roland Bleiker. "The Symbiosis of Democracy and Tragedy: Lost Lessons from Ancient Greece." *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (2009): 659-82.

Clements, Kevin P. "Peace Building and Conflict Transformation." *Peace and Conflict Studies* 4, no.1 (1997). Accessed June 30, 2011. http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ:10398/Peace_building_a.pdf.

Cochran, Clarke E. "Joseph and the Politics of Memory." *The Review of Politics* 64, no. 3 (2002): 421-44.

Cohen, Cynthia. "Creative Approaches to Reconciliation." In *The Psychology of Resolving Global Conflicts: From War to Peace*, edited by Mari Fitzduff and Christoper E Stout. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc, 2005.

———. "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence." In *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity after Violent Ethnic Conflict*, edited by Martha Minow and Antonia Chaves. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Cohen, Cynthia E., Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker, eds. *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 1: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence.* Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2011.

———. *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Volume 2: Building Just and Inclusive Communities.* Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2011.

United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. "Mandate of the Peacebuilding Commission." United Nations. Accessed April 12, 2013. http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/mandate.shtml.

Constituent Assembly of Nepal. "Constituent Assembly." Constituent Assembly of Nepal. Accessed June 7, 2012. http://www.can.gov.np/en

Cramer, Christopher. "Does Inequality Cause Conflict?". *Journal of International Development* 15, no. 4 (2003): 397-412.

D'Angelo, Raymond, and Raymond Nicholas D'Angelo. *The American Civil Rights Movement: Readings & Interpretations.* New York: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2001.

Da Costa, Dia. *Development Dramas: Reimagining Rural Political Action in Eastern India.* New Delhi: Routledge, 2010.

———. "Introduction to *Where We Stand*, edited by Sanjoy Ganguly, 9-20. Kolkata: CAMP, 2009.

Danchev, Alex, and Debbie Lisle. "Introduction: Art, Politics, Purpose." *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 4 (2009): 775-79.

Darusman, Marzuki., Steven Ratner, and Yasmin Sooka. "Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka": The United Nations, March 31, 2011.

Das, Lipika. "Shakespeare in Odisha: A Study of Selected Odia Translations." *Odisha Review*, May 2012, 45-52.

de Mel, Neloufer., Kumudini Samuel, and Chandima K. Soysa. "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and Transformations." in *Handbook of Ethnic Conflict: International Perspectives*, edited by Dan Landis and Rosita D. Albert. 93-118. New York: Springer, 2012.

De Silva, Kingsley M. *Reaping the Whirlwind: Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998.

Dennis, Rea. "Inclusive Democracy: A Consideration of Playback Theatre with Refugee and Asylum Seekers in Australia." *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 12, no. 3 (2007): 355-70.

Department of Census and Statistics – Sri Lanka. "Sri Lanka Census of Population and Housing, 2011." Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics - Sri Lanka, 2012. Accessed July 24, 2013. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/

DeVotta, Neil. "Ethnolinguistic Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka." in *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia*, edited by Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly, 105-39. MA: MIT Press, 2003.

———. "Sri Lanka: From Turmoil to Dynasty." *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 2 (2011): 130-44.

Dissanayake, Ellen. *What Is Art For?*. Washington DC: University of Washington Press, 1990.

Donais, Timothy. *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus-Building*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

———. "Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes." *Peace & Change* 34, no.1 (2009)

"Drama Therapy Frees Imagination of Kids with Autism." *NewScientist*, April 15, 2014. Accessed July 20, 2014. http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22229653.600-drama-therapy-frees-imaginations-of-kids-with-autism.html#.VL9u1UeUf0c.

Duffield, Mark R. *Development, Security and Unending War : Governing the World of Peoples*. Cambridge: Polity, 2007.

Fernando, Marissa. "Flict Super Stars." 2006. Accessed February 12, 2011. www.janakaraliya.org/Archaives/Real%20Super%20Stars.doc

Fischer, Martina. *Peacebuilding and Civil Society in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007.

Fischer, Markus. "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects." In *BCSIA Discussion Paper 2000-07*. Kennedy School of Government: Harvard University, 2000. Accessed April 24, 2012. http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/fischer.pdf.

Fixdal, Mona. *Just Peace: How Wars Should End*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Fjelde, Hanne and Gudrun Østby. "Economic Inequality and Inter-group Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990-2008." Paper prepared for the conference on Inequality, Grievances and Civil War, Zurich, November 2011.

Franks, Jason, and Oliver P. Richmond. "Coopting Liberal Peace-Building." *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 1 (2008): 81-103.

Frerks, George, and Bart Klem, eds. *Dealing with Diversity: Sri Lankan Discourses on Peace and Conflict*. The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2005.

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. *Nepal in the Year 2012: A Glance*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013. Accessed January 2, 2014. http://www.fesnepal.org/reports/2012/annual_reports/annual_report_2012.htm

———. *Political, Economic and Social Development in Nepal in the Year 2011*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012. Accessed May 2, 2013. http://www.fesnepal.org/reports/2011/annual%20report/annual_report2011.htm

Funk, Nathan C. "Building on What's Already There: Valuing the Local in International Peacebuilding." *International Journal* 67, no. 2 (2012): 391-408.

Gallagher, Kathleen, and Ivan Service. "Applied Theatre at the Heart of Educational Reform: An Impact and Sustain Ability Analysis." *Research in Drama Education-The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 15, no. 2 (2010): 235-53.

Galtung, Johan. "Cultural Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 291-305.

———. *Peace and Social Structure*. Copenhagen: Ejlers, 1978.

———. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167-91.

Ganguly, Sanjoy., ed. *Where We Stand: Five Plays from the repertoire of Jana Sanskriti*, Kolkata: CAMP, 2009.

Gilligan, James. *Preventing Violence*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001.

Goodhand, Jonathan. "Stabilising a Victor's Peace? Humanitarian Action and Reconstruction in Eastern Sri Lanka." *Disasters* 34, no. s3 (2010): S342-S67.

Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. "Provisional Population Totals Paper 1 of 2011 (India & States/Uts)." Accessed June 24, 2013. http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/census2011_PPT_paper1.html.

———. "Provisional Population Totals Paper 2 of 2011 (India & States/Uts)." Accessed June 24, 2013. http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/census2011_paper2.html.

Gunawardana, R. A. L. H. "Roots of the Conflict and the Peace Process." In *Buddhism, Con- Flict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka* edited by M. Deegalle, 177-201. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Hall, Edith. "The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy," In *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, edited by P. E. Easterling 93-126. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Hammond, Nick. "Introducing Forum Theatre to Elicit and Advocate Children's Views." *Educational Psychology in Practice* 29, no. 1 (2012): 1-18.

Han, Jongwoo, and Lily H. M. Ling. "Authoritarianism in the Hypermasculinized State: Hybridity, Patriarchy, and Capitalism in Korea." *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998): 53-78.

Harrison, Frances. "Witnesses Support Claim That Sri Lanka Army Shot Prisoners." *The Independent*, February 24, 2013.

Haugerudbraaten, Henning. "Peacebuilding: Six Dimensions and Two Concepts." *African Security Review* 7, no. 6 (1998): 17-26.

Hawes, Dena L. "Crucial Narratives: Performance Art and Peace Building". *International Journal of Peace Studies* 12, no. 2 (2007): 17-29

Holt, Sarah. *Aid, Peacebuilding and the Resurgence of War: Buying Time in Sri Lanka.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Holund, Kristine, and Camilla Orjuela. "Hybrid Peace Governance and Illiberal Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka." *Global Governance* 18, no. 1 (2012): 89-104.

Hughes, Jenny. *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012.

Hughes, Jenny., James Thompson, and Michael Balfour. *Performance in Place of War*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2009.

Human Rights Watch. *Nepal: Country Summary*. Human Rights Watch, January 2012. Accessed 18 March 2012. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/nepal_2012.pdf

———. *Recurring Nightmare : State Responsibility for "Disappearances" and Abductions in Sri Lanka*. Human Rights Watch, March 6, 2008. Accessed May 3, 2011. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/srilanka0308web.pdf

———. *World Report 2012: Sri Lanka*. Human Rights Watch, 2012. Accessed June 2, 2013. http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/world-report-2012-sri-lanka

Hutchison, Emma, and Roland Bleiker. "Emotional Reconciliation: Reconstituting Identity and Community after Trauma." *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 3 (2008): 385-403.

Hutchison, Emma, and Roland Bleiker. "Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics". *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 1 (2008).

Hutchison, Emma, and Roland Bleiker. "Reconciliation." In *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, edited by R.M. Ginty, 81-90. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Hutt, Jenny, and Bev Hosking. "Playback Theatre: A Creative Resource for Reconciliation". Working paper of *Recasting Reconciliation through Culture and the Arts*, Peacebuilding and the Arts, International Centre for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, 2005. https://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/peacebuildingarts/pdfs/HuttHoskingPlayback.pdf.

Hutt, Michael, ed. *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2004.

Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON), *Sexual Violence in the "People's War": The Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Girl in Nepal"* Kathmandu: IHRICON, 2006.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). *Nepal Annual Report*. ICRC, 2011. Accessed June 7, 2013. https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/annual-report/current/icrc-annual-report-nepal.pdf

Jackson, Anthony. "The Dialogic and the Aesthetic: Some Reflections on Theatre as a Learning Medium." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39, no. 4 (2005): 104-18.

Jacoby, Tim. "Hegemony, Modernisation and Post-War Reconstruction." *Global Society* 21, no. 4 (2007): 521-37.

Janakaraliya. "Janakaraliya - Interview conducted by CH&JH." By Charlotte Hennessay and Jenny Hughes (September 2005). Accessed March 2, 2011. http://www.janakaraliya.org/Archaives/PDF/Janakaraliya%20Intervie-02.pdf.

Jayawardena, Kumari. *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientist's Association, 2003.

Jennings, Sue and Ase Minde. *Art Therapy and Dramatherapy: Masks of the Soul*. London: Jessica Kingsley publishers, 1993.

Jeong, Ho-Won, ed. *Approaches to Peacebuilding*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Johnson, W.J. *The Sauptikaparvan of the Mahābhārata: The Massacre at Night*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Kansteiner, Wulf. "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies." *History and Theory* 2, no. 41 (2002): 179-97.

Kaplan, Robert D. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*. London: Picador, 2005.

Kappler, Stefanie, and Oliver Richmond. "Peacebuilding and Culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Resistance or Emancipation?". *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 3 (2011): 261-78.

Kariyakarawana, Saman. "Attitude and Responsibilities of the Southern Academics." In *Dealing with Diversity: Sri Lankan Discourses on Peace and Conflict*, edited by George Frerks and Bart Klem, 97-112. The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2004.

Kaufman, Stuart J. "Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap: Reconciliation Initiatives and Conflict Resolution in Ethnic Wars." *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 2 (2006): 201 - 18.

Keesing, Roger M. *Custom and Confrontation: The Kwaio Struggle for Cultural Autonomy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Keethaponcalan, S. I. "The Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka and the Dynamics of Party Activity." In *Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace Building*, edited by Jayadeva Uyangoda, 204-224. Colombo: Colombo University, 2005.

Kershaw, Baz. "Performance, Community, Culture." In *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*, edited by L. Goodman and J. De Gay, 136-42. London: Routledge, 2000.

Kirby, Michael. "On Political Theatre." *The Drama Review: TDR* 19, no. 2 (1975): 129-35.

Kruuspere, Piret. "Estonian Memory Theatre of the 1990s: Emotional Scale from Fear to Laughter." *Nordic Theatre Studies* 21 (2009): 89-97.

Landis, Dan and Rosita D. Albert. *Handbook of Ethnic Conflict: International Perspectives*. New York: Springer, 2012.

Landy, Robert. *Drama Therapy : Concepts, Theories and Practices*. Springfield: Charles C Thomas, 1994.

Lappin, Richard. "Peacebuilding and the Promise of Transdisciplinarity." *International Journal on World Peace* 26, no. 3 (2009): 69-76.

Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997.

———. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford, MA: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Levitas, Ruth. *Utopia as Method : The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Liamputtong, Pranee. *Qualitative Research Methods, Fourth Edition*. South Melbourne, Vic: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Ling, Lily H. M. "Journeys Beyond the West: World Orders and a 7th Century Buddhist Monk." *Review of International Studies* 36, no. S1 (2010): 225-48.

———. "Rationalizations for State Violence in Chinese Politics: The Hegemony of Parental Governance." *Journal of Peace Research* 31, no. 4 (1994): 393-405.

Lisle, Debbie. "The Art of International Relations." *International Studies Review* 12, no. 4 (2010): 656-57.

Long, William J., and Peter Brecke. *War and Reconciliation: Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*. MA: MIT Press, 2003.

Mac Ginty, Roger. "Hybrid Peace: How Does Hybrid Peace Come About?". In *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* edited by Susanna Campbell, David Chandler and Meera Sabaratnam, 209-25. London: Zed Books, 2011.

———. "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-up Peace." *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (2010): 391-412.

———. *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

———. "No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace." *International Politics* 47, no. 2 (2010): 145-62.

———, ed. *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Mac Ginty, Roger. "Gliding the Lily? International Support for Indigenous and Traditional Peacemaking." In *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, edited by Oliver P Richmond, 347-66. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010.

Mac Ginty, Roger, and Oliver Richmond. "Myth or Reality: Opposing Views on the Liberal Peace and Post-War Reconstruction." *Global Society* 21, no. 4 (2007): 491-97.

Mani, Rama. "Women, Art and Post-Conflict Justice." *International Criminal Law Review* 11, no. 3 (2011): 543-60.

Mastronarde, Donald J., *The Art of Euripides: Dramatic Technique and Social Context*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Mayall, James. "Security and Self-Determination." In *The Empire of Security and the Safety of the People*, edited by William Bain, 94-115. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

McCandless, Erin. "Lessons from Liberia: Integrated Approaches to Peacebuilding in Transitional Settings." Occasional Paper 160, Institute for Security Studies, 2008.

McGaugh, James L. *Memory and Emotion : The Making of Lasting Memories*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Mda, Zakes. *When People Play People: Development Communication through Theatre*. London: Zed Books, 1993.

Mitchell, Audra. "Quality/Control: International Peace Interventions and 'the Everyday'." *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 1623-45.

Mohan, Dia. "Reimagining Community: Scripting Power and Changing the Subject through Jana Sanskriti's Political Theatre in Rural North India." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 2, no. 33 (2004): 178-217.

Montiel, Cristina J. "Toward a Psychology of Structural Peace Building', in *Peace, Conflict and Violence: Peace psychology for the 21st century.* edited by Daniel J. Christie, Richard V. Wagner and Deborah Du Nann Winter. 282-294. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2001.

Moore, Adam. *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns*. Ithaka: Cornell University Press, 2013.

Moosavi, Marjan. "Dramaturgy in Post-Revolution Iran: Problems and Prospects." In *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, edited by Magda Romanska, 68-74. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Moreno, Jacod Levy. "The Therapeutic Theatre." In *Psychodrama, First Volume*, 26-29. New York: Beacon House, 1946.

Nash, Steve, and Nick Rowe. "Safety, Danger and Playback Theatre." *Dramatherapy* 22, no. 3 (2000): 18-20.

National Crime Records Bureau - Ministry of Home Affairs, India. *Crime in India - 2011 Statistics*. New Delhi: National Crime Records Bureau, 2012. Accessed May 24, 2013. http://ncrb.nic.in/CD-CII2011/Home.asp

———. "Crime in India - 2012 Statistics." New Delhi: National Crime Records Bureau, 2013. Accessed March 18, 2014. http://ncrb.nic.in/CD-CII2012/Statistics2012.pdf

———. "Crime in India - 2013 Statistics." New Delhi National Crime Records Bureau, 2014. http://ncrb.gov.in/CD-CII2013/home.asp

Negash, Girma. "Art Invoked: A Mode of Understanding and Shaping the Political." *International Political Science Review* 25, no. 2 (2004): 185–201.

Neupane, Manisha. "Scars of War." *The Kathmandu Post*, July 10, 2012.

Newman, Edward. "The International Architecture of Peacebuilding." In *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, edited by Roger Mac Ginty, 311-24. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Newman, Edward, Oliver P. Paris, Roland. *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*. Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University Press, 2009.

Nicholson, Helen. *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Nicholson, Steve. *The Censorship of British Drama, 1900-1968*. Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2003.

Notter, James, and Louise Diamond. "Building Peace and Transforming Conflict: Multi-Track Diplomacy in Practice." Occassional Paper 7, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, Washington DC, 1996.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Political Emotions*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013.

Obeyesekere, Rajini *Sri Lankan Theatre at a Time of Terror*. New Delhi: Sage, 1999.

Orjuela, Camilla. *The Identity Politics of Peacebuilding : Civil Society in War-Torn Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: SAGE India, 2008.

Österlind, Eva. "Acting out of Habits – Can Theatre of the Oppressed Promote Change? Boal's Theatre Methods in Relation to Bourdieu's Concept of Habitus." *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 13, no. 1 (2008): 71-82.

Palihapitiya, Madhawa. "The Created Space: Peacebuilding and Performance in Sri Lanka." In *Acting Together: Volume I*, edited by Cynthia E. Cohen, Roberto Gtierrez Varea and Polly O. Walker, 73-95. Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2011.

Paris, Roland. *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004

———. "Critiques of Liberal Peace." In *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* edited by Susanna Campbell, David Chandler and Meera Sabaratnam, 31-51. London: Zed Books, 2011.

———. "International Peacebuilding and the *'Mission Civilisatrice'*." *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 4 (2002): 637-56.

———. "Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism." *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997): 54-89.

Parpart, Jane L., Shirin M. Rai, and Kathleen A. Staudt, eds. *Rethinking Empowerment : Gender and Development in a Global/Local World*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Pettigrew, Judith. "Living between the Maoists and the Army in Rural Nepal." In *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, edited by Michael Hutt, 261-84. London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2004.

Phelps, Elizabeth A., and Tali Sharot. "How (and Why) Emotion Enhances the Subjective Sense of Recollection." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 2008 2008): 147-52.

Power, Seamus A. "Towards a Dialogical Model of Conflict Resolution." *Psychology & Society* 4, no. 1 (2011): 53-66.

Prendergast, Monica, and Juliana Saxton. *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice*. Bristol: Intellect, 2009.

Pugh, Michael. "The Political Economy of Peacebuilding: A Critical Theory Perspective." *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 2 (2005): 23-42.

———. "The Problem Solving and Critical Paradigms." In *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, edited by Roger Mac Ginty, 11-24. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Rai, M. Shirin, and Georgina Waylen, eds. *Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Rai, Shirin, ed. *Mainstreaming Gender, Democratizing the State? Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Rai, Shirin M. "Analysing Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament." *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 16, no. 3 (2010): 284-97.

———. "Political Performance: A Framework for Analysing Democratic Politics." *Political Studies* (2014). Accessed October 12, 2014. doi: 10.1111/1467-9248.12154

———. "The Politics of Access: Narratives of Women Mps in the Indian Parliament." *Political Studies* 60, no. 1 (2012): 195-212.

Rajabhandari, Retika and Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC). *Violence against Women in Nepal: A Complex and Invisible Reality*. Kathmandu, Nepal: WOREC, 2006.

Rancière, Jacques *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. Translated by Steven Corcoran. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

———. *The Politics of Aesthetics* Translated by Gabriel Rockhill. New York: Continuum, 2004.

Rank, Carol. "Promoting Peace through the Arts." Paper presented at the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), Leuven, Belgium, July 2008.

Reilly, Benjamin. "Democratic Validation". In *Contemporary Peacemaking*, edited by J Darby and R Mac Ginty, 174-83. London: Palgrave, 2003.

Richards, Paul. *Fighting for the Rain Forest. War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone.* Oxford: James Currey, 1996.

Richardson, Laurel. *Writing Strategies: Researching Diverse Audiences*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990

Richmond, Oliver P. Richmond, Oliver, and Henry Carey, eds. *Subcontracting Peace: The Challenges of Ngo Peacebuilding*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

Richmond, Oliver P. "De-Romanticising the Local, De-Mystifying the International: Hybridity in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands." *Pacific Review* 24, no. 1 (2011): 115-36.

———. *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

———. *Peace in International Relations* New York: Routledge, 2008.

———. "A Pedagogy of Peacebuilding: Infrapolitics, Resistance, and Liberation." *International Political Sociology* 6, no. 2 (2012): 115-31.

———. "Post Westphalian Peace-Building: The Role of Ngos." 2001.

———. *A Post-Liberal Peace*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

———. "A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism and the Everyday." *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 557-80.

———. "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace."*Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2010): 665-92.

———. "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace." In *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* edited by Susanna Campbell, David Chandler and Meera Sabaratnam, 226-43. London: Zed Books, 2011.

Richmond, Oliver P. "A Geneology of Peace and Conflict Theory." In *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, edited by O. P. Richmond, 14-38. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

Richmond, Oliver P., and Ioannis Tellidis. "The Complex Relationship between Peacebuilding and Terrorism Approaches: Towards Post-Terrorism and a Post-Liberal Peace?". *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 1 (2011): 120-43.

Richmond, Oliver P., and Jason Franks. *Liberal Peace Transitions : Between Statebuilding and Peacebuilding*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Roberts, David "Beyond the Metropolis? Popular Peace and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding." *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011): 2535-56.

Romanska, Magda. *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Ross, Alison. "Derrida's Writing-Theatre: From the Theatrical Allegory to Political Commitment." *Derrida Today* 5, no. 1 (2008): 76-94.

Ross, Marc Howard. "Psychocultural Interpretation Theory and Peacemaking in Ethnic Conflict." *Political Psychology* 16, no. 3 (1995): 523–44.

———. "Psychocultural Interpretations and Dramas: Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict." *Political Psychology* 22, no. 1 (2001): 157-78.

Ross, Marc Howard "The Politics of Memory and Peacebuilding." In *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, edited by Roger Mac Ginty, 91-102. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Rothstein, Robert L. *After the Peace : Resistance and Reconciliation*. Boulder, Colorado: L. Rienner Publishers, 1999.

Routledge, Paul. "Nineteen Days in April: Urban Protest and Democracy in Nepal." *Urban Studies* 47, no. 6 (2010): 1279-99.

Rowe, Nick. *Playing the Other: Dramatizing Personal Narratives in Playback Theatre*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1994.

Samarasinghe, Vidyamali ""A Theme Revisited"? The Impact of the Ethnic Conflict on Women and Politics in Sri Lanka." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 33, no. 4 (2012): 345-64.

Sandole, Dennis J.D., and Hugo Van der Merwe. *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.

Schellhaas, Constanze, and Annette Seegers. "Peacebuilding: Imperialism's New Disguise?". *African Security Review* 18, no. 2 (2009): 1-15.

Schirch, L. *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding: A Vision and Framework for Peace and Justice*. Good Books, 2004.

Schirch, Lisa. "Strategic Peacebuilding - State of the Field." *Peace Prints: South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 1, no. 1 (2008): 1-18.

Scott, J.C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.

Sen, Amartya Kumar. "Democracy as a Universal Value." *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (1999): 3-17.

Sending, Ole Jacob. "The Effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power." In *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* edited by Susanna Campbell, David Chandler and Meera Sabaratnam, 55-68. London: Zed Books, 2011.

Shank, Michael, and Lisa Schirch. "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding." *Peace & Change* 33, no. 2 (2008): 217-42.

Sharma, Mandira and Prasain, Dinesh. "Gender Dimensions of the People's War: Some Reflections on the Experiences of Rural Women." In *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion* edited by Michael Hutt, 152-65. London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2004.

Silva, Neluka. *The Hybrid Island : Culture Crossings and the Invention of Identity in Sri Lanka*. London: Zed Books, 2002.

Speiser, Vivien Marcow, and Phillip Speiser. "An Arts Approach to Working with Conflict." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 47, no. 3 (2007): 361-66.

Spencer, Jonathan. *Anthropology, Politics and the State: Democracy and Violence in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Stamnes, Eli. "Values, Context and Hybridity: How Can the Insights from the Liberal Peace Critique Literature Be Brought to Bear on the Practices of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture?". NUPI Working Paper, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa, 2010.

Steinberg, Gerald M. "The Limits of Peacebuilding Theory." In *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, edited by Roger Mac Ginty, 35-53. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Suhrke, Astri. "Virtues of a Narrow Mission: The UN Peace Operation in Nepal." *Global Governance* 17, no. 1 (2011): 37-55.

Talentino, Andrea K. "Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace." *International Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (2011): 506-13.

———. "Perceptions of Peacebuilding: The Dynamic of Imposer and Imposed Upon." *International Studies Perspectives* 8, no. 2 (2007): 152-71.

Tar, Usman. A. *The Politics of Neoliberal Democracy in Africa: State and Civil Society in Nigeria*. Vol. 22, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009.

Taylor, Diana, and Sarah J. Townsend. *Stages of Conflict: A Critical Anthology of Latin American Theater and Performance*. Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Taylor, Phillip. *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community*. Michigan: The University of Michigan, 2003.

The Hindu. "Hold West Bengal Rural Polls in Three Phases." January 13, 2013.

The Times of India. "Peace Eludes Troubled Deganga." September 09, 2010.

Thillainathan, S. "Rehabilitation of ex-LTTE Cadres, Not Highlighted in Geneva." *Sunday Observer*, March 17, 2013.

Thompson, James. *Digging up Stories: Applied Theatre, Performance and War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

Thompson, James, and A Jackson. "Applied Theatre / Drama : An E-Debate in 2004: Viewpoints." *RIDE-Research in Drama and Education* 11, no. 1 (2006): 90-95.

Thomspn, James. *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

TRIAL (Swiss Association against Impunity), CVSJ (Conflict Victim's Society for Justice)., PPR (Forum for the Protection of People's Rights) Nepal, HimRights (Human Rights Monitors), NEFAD (Network of Families of Disappeared and Missing), THRD Alliance (Terai Human Rights Defenders Alliance), and OTV-Nepal (VIctim's Orphan Society of Nepal). "Nepal: Written Information for the Adoption of the List of Issues by the Human Rights Committee with Regard to Nepal's Second Periodic Report (Ccpr/C/Npl/2)." April 2013. Accessed July 15, 2013. http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/ngos/TRIAL_Nepal_HRC108.pdf

Umachandran, Shalini. "The Freedom Struggle Performers Staged." *The Times of India*, August 15, 2010

United Nations. *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping*. New York: United Nations, June 1992. Accessed February 23, 2011. http://www.unrol.org/files/a_47_277.pdf

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Nepal Conflict Report 2012*. Geneva: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, October 2012.

United Nations. *Nepal's Hidden Tragedy: Children Caught in the Conflict*. United Nations, 2006. Accessed July 7, 2013. http://www.un.org/events/tenstories/06/story.asp?storyID=2400

United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), "Mandate," UNMIN. Accesssed March 14, 2012. http://un.org.np/unmin-archive/?d=about&p=mandate.

Upreti, Bishnu Raj. *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*. New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2009.

Uyangoda, Jayadeva. "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Changing Dynamics." *Policy Studies* 32, (2007).

Uyangoda, Jayadeva, and Neloufer De Mel. *Reframing Democracy: Perspectives on the Cultures of Inclusion and Exclusion in Contemporary Sri Lanka*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Social Scientists' Association, 2012.

Van Dijk, Teun A. "Discourse and Manipulation." *Discourse and Society* 17, no. 3 (2006): 356-83.

Walter, Maggie. ed. *Social Research Methods: An Australian Perspective*. South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Werther-Pietsch, Ursula, and Anna-Katharina Roithner. "Linking Peacebuilding and Statebuilding - a New Paradigm for UN Response to Fragile Situations." *Development Dialogue*, no. 55 (2011): 153-82.

White, Jonathan, and Cynthia Cohen. "Strengthening Work at the Nexus of Arts, Culture and Peacebuilding", Search for Common Ground & The Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts at Brandeis University, February 13, 2012.

Whitfield, Teresa. "Nepal's Masala Peacemaking" in *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace*, edited by Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, Suman Pradhan, 155- 174. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Williams, David. 'Remembering The Others That Are Us- Transculturalism and myth in the theatre of Peter Brook'. In *Intercultural Performance Reader*, edited by Patrice Pavis, 67- 78. London: Routledge: 1996.

Women Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC). *ANWESI: A Year Book on Violence Against Women 2008*. Kathmandu, Nepal: WOREC, 2008.

Woodhouse, Tom. "Peacekeeping, Peace Culture and Conflict Resolution." *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 4 (2010): 486-98.

Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. "Civil and Political Rights, including the questions of: Disappearances and Summary Executions: Question of Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances." United Nations, January 18, 2002.

Wyeth, Vanessa, and Timothy Sisk. "Rethinking Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries: Conceptual Clarify, Policy Guidance, and Practical Implications (draft)" New York: International Peace Institute and The Josef Korbel School of International Studies, 2009

Yarrow, Ralph. "People Playing People in India: Sanjoy Ganguy" In *Where We Stand: Five Plays from the repertoire of Jana Sanskriti*, ed. Sanjoy Ganguly, 5-8. Kolkata: CAMP, 2009.

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research : Design and Methods.* 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2009.

Yordán, Carlos L. "Towards Deliberative Peace: A Habermasian Critique of Contemporary Peace Operations." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 12, no. 1 (2009): 58-89.

Zelizer, Craig. "The Role of Artistic Processes in Peace-Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Peace and Conflict Studies* 10, no. 2 (2003): 62-75.