

THE GLOBAL STREET THEATRE

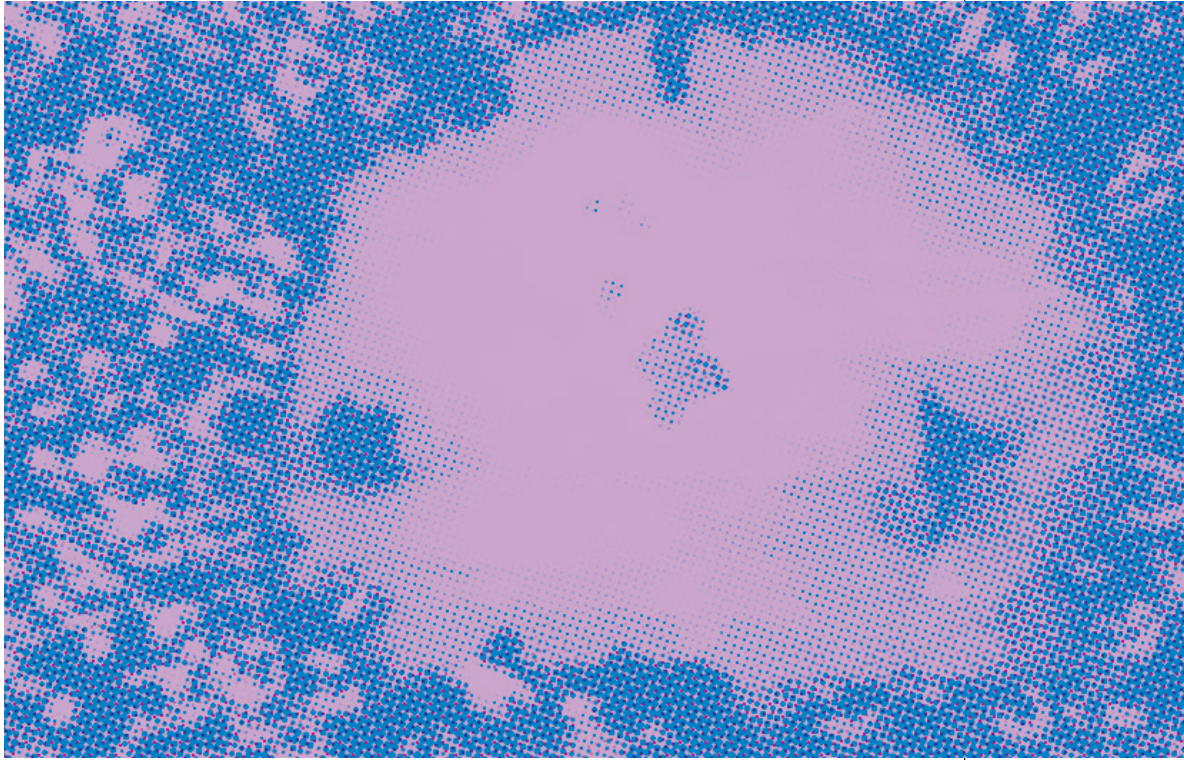
Alternative Pedagogies & Cultural Modes of Resistance

SOCI3340: Globalization & Resistance

Prof. Ratiba Hadj-Moussa

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WHAT IS THE GLOBAL STREET THEATRE?

Cultural modes of expression like street theatre are an alternative pedagogical approach working class and oppressed populations use to educate, inform, mobilize, influence, and incite action (Boal). The objective of theatre is to transform spectators, through the use of its arsenal of symbols, visualization, and communication tools, into subjects who launch into action.

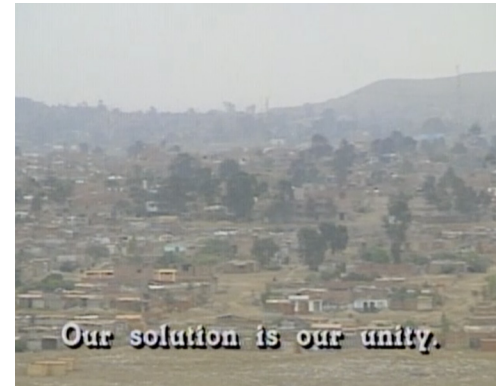
Street theatre are forums as they are public spaces of discussion that take place in local community settings. We will examine how forums bring local narratives to the global stage through their depictions of neoliberal globalization, counter-hegemonic ideas, and visualization of an alter-globalization.

**“HUMAN BEINGS ARE NOT BUILT
IN SILENCE, BUT IN WORD, IN
WORK, IN ACTION-REFLECTION”**

Paulo Freire,

Pedagogy of the Oppressed(1968)

CASE STUDY 1: VILLA EL SALVADOR



The rural community of Vila El Salvador highlights the cultural richness of community engagement, utilizing street theatre as pedagogical tool for empowering members and raising awareness of key issues. Demonstrated in the film *Vila El Salvador* (1989), theatrical performances are used to discuss local history, resource distribution, and infrastructure. Fostering a global community, local level concerns are brought to the International Conference of Mayors, where several political representatives discuss matters within their locale. Calling attention to the impact of social forums, the street theatre and the Mayors Conference, create spaces for knowledge production, transnational alliance building, and resistance against neoliberal globalization.

CASE STUDY 2: DALIT MOVEMENT

The Dalit movement was born out of resistance to the Indian Hindu caste system. The Dalits are at the bottom of the Indian caste hierarchy, and faced constant caste based discrimination and violence as a result. They sought to combat this by creating a transnational network of activists to further their cause. In addition, the Dalits employed the use of street theatre in an effort to connect with the masses and portray their struggle in a manner that allows people from all walks of life to critically interpret it. This was an effort to combat socio-economic barriers that previously prevented certain groups from having their voices heard, ie. high fees to enter WSF. Street theatres proved to be a successful medium to deliver the Dalit's messages of the harms of economic globalization along with caste based discrimination.



2. Dalit Street Theatre Performance

CASE STUDY 3: VIA CAMPESINA

3.



3. Street theatre performance & protest in Seattle for peasant farmers



4. Performance at International Day of Peasant Struggle

Via Campesina is known as the global peasant's movement that includes farm and agricultural workers, landless, indigenous and migrants. On April 17, the movement celebrates the International Day of Peasant's Struggle by organizing actions all around the world. Street theatres are organized by local groups on diverse topics, ranging from food sovereignty, biodiversity and climate change, agrarian reforms, trade, etc. Visualizations in the skits include satirical representations of the problems (TNCs, governments, trade policies, etc.) as well as visions of collective identity and goals.

CASE STUDY 4: TAHRIR SQUARE



5. "People Demand Removal of the Regime" – Protest at Tahrir Square

A revolutionary figure in the movement against authoritarianism, Laila Soliman adopts theatre and performance as a tool of resistance against state oppression. Her work during the 2011 Tahrir Square protests against the authoritarian Egyptian regime, primarily brought attention to human rights issues, militarism, and political imaginations. As a social activist, artist, and scholar, she aims to create spaces for critique, allowing female dramatists a platform to discuss specific issues of gender through embodied acts of resistance. Contesting hegemonic structures, she utilizes street theatre to discuss the concerns of local communities then guiding her creative impact to an international stage.

"SOLIMAN REAFFIRMS HER COMMITMENT TO USE THEATER AS A FORUM FOR SOCIAL CRITIQUE, POLITICAL CONTESTATION, AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES."

Brinda Mehta, Staging Tahrir: Laila Soliman's Revolutionary Theatre



6. Photo of Laila Soliman

ANALYSIS

Street theatre 1) identify systems of exploitation and oppression 2) emphasize resistance as a pathway of change 3) visualizes alternatives to hegemonic structures.

The case studies demonstrate activists using street theatre to raise awareness and consciousness, often by enacting oppression. In doing so, they are able to directly connect with viewers, many of whom are impacted by the same systems of exploitation and oppression. Demonstrating relatable scenarios enables the expressive ability of theatre to generate and produce knowledge and counter-hegemonic ideologies.

Along with realizing systems of exploitation and oppression, resistance becomes realized and empowers people to take action. By visualizing politics and resistance, street theatre has the potential to foster a desire to participate and solve important problems. Resistance is also envisioned through solidarity within the community and beyond borders.

Lastly, street theatre visualizes solutions to the problems through radical societal restructuring. Although they are perceived as idealistic, theatre becomes a space to reimagine local and national geographies and relations. In doing so, theatre becomes a space to imagine and articulate an alter-globalization guided by 'from below' perspectives, horizontal democratic structures, and values of social justice and human rights.

CONCLUSION

The Global Street Theatre reclaims the spaces diminished by neoliberal hegemony and emphasizes the transformative potential of oppressed communities. It is a forum space where [issues] are identified and global solutions are realized.

Images:

1. All images from Villa El Salvador(1989)

2. Dalit Street Theatre performance

<https://archive.indianculturalforum.in/2017/08/25/dalit-theatre-and-ambedkar/>

3. Street Theatre performance in Seattle – International Peasant Struggle (2010)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ow_S6BKTH1U

4. Via Campesina Cultural Performance in Matola, Mozambique (2008) https://inmotionmagazine.com/global/yoona_int.html

5. “People Demand Removal of the regims” Egypt, 2011 – Tahrir Square Protest(2016)

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2016/01/egypt-revolution-160124191716737.html>

6. Photo of Laila Soliman

<https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-the-egyptian-theatre-director-laila-soliman-vomit-until-the-revolution-comes>

Illustrations by Marvin Veloso

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Via Campesina English. 2020. Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI) To Organise Around The Int’l Day Of Peasant Struggles (April 17) And Rights Of Peasants Day (April 20) - Via Campesina. [online] Available at: <<https://viacampesina.org/en/event/serikat-petani-indonesia-spi-to-organise-around-the-int-l-day-of-peasant-struggles-april-17-and-rights-of-peasants-day-april-20/>> [Accessed 22 June 2020].