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Title:

Agroecology on stage: theatre as a technical device for intermediating knowledge

Abstract:

"I'm not an authority, not an administrator, not a political authority, but thanks to music and art, when I speak people take note. People receive me, it's thanks to art, thanks to music, people take note of what I say. I don't say things to say them, I say them to raise awareness, to create a collective.

ASAPID Ambassador, 10/05/2024; Forest Festival in
Diouloulou (Senegal) during an interview with ARTS.

The statement made by this cultural player in Casamance allows us to question the effective scope of art and the place of cultural intermediation in a social transformation such as agroecology. Although art can be conceived of as entertainment, it is above all an aesthetic-political system of knowledge, capable of initiating genuine expression and powers of action at community level (Volvey 2014; Balkema and Slager 2004). At least in recent decades there has been a renewed international interest in the arts as devices capable of informing science and transforming societies (Hawkins 2015; Chapman and Sawchuk 2012; Mercier-Lefevre 2017).

Among the methods that have literally returned to centre stage is the Théâtre de l'Opprimé (Landrin 2021; Mottin 2018). Born during the dictatorship in Brazil and formalised by Augusto Boal in the 1970s, this participatory approach to theatre sees the stage as a testing ground for ongoing revolutions (Boal 2014). Initially based on revolts against the big landowners, this technique linking the arts, social justice and the place of agriculture above all makes it possible to "discover what we have to say" (*Ibid*). Attentive to endogenous knowledge and concrete options for transformation, this system is now circulating within an intense international network, offering avenues for thinking and acting from Agroecology.

However, in Senegal, as in most other countries, forum theatre is currently used mainly for awareness-raising purposes, or in response to commissions from NGOs. In the ARTS programme (Agroecology for Resilient Territories in Senegal),

art-science-society experimentation aims, on the contrary, to redevelop the powers of intermediation and action triggered *in situ* by these stage practices. So we need to ask ourselves how the theatre can offer spaces of enunciation that are conducive to endogenous knowledge? How can we move from the register of theatre actor to that of actor for change or preservation? How do narratives, imaginations and affects play a part in these transitions? Finally, how does the theatre go about triggering registers of self-determination?

Based on experiences in collaboration with artists, we will discuss how agroecology and theatre interact, through the prism of epistemologies of point of view, epistemic agentivity and transformative processes that enable us to rethink the notion of participation in transitions.

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