The Arts in Development:  
An Investigation of the Contribution of Contemporary Dance to Development in Urban Fiji

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the contribution of the arts to development, taking the cultural turn in development as its point of entry. It treads new ground in that the cultural turn, largely, does not examine the specific area of ‘the arts’ as deliberate and heightened expressions of culture (Pérez González, 2008:11). Complementing the cultural turn’s emphasis on agency and multiplicity, the thesis also argues for the location of the arts within the aspiration for choice and freedom (Kabeer, 1999: Sen, 1999), and it looks to alternative development for modes of ‘doing’ development. These are models driven by concerns for participation, therefore, recognising agency, diversity, freedom and voice. A model is developed delineating three possible levels of contribution of the arts to development and suggesting that the inherent value of the arts underlies and unlocks the economic and other instrumental values that they also possess (McCarthy et al, 2004:37-39).

This research uses a qualitative research methodology. Fieldwork was carried out in Suva, Fiji, with a focus on Vou Dance Company, a part-time, semi-professional dance group. Qualitative methodology was appropriate to the research because it responds to the importance that is placed on the search for values and meanings within the understanding of development as freedom as well as in the cultural turn and alternative development. Three methods of data collection were used. These were observation, participant and key informant interviews, and a participatory dance workshop.

The research findings established a multifaceted definition of development and supported all of the types of contribution of the arts suggested by the model developed in this thesis in attaining development. The members of Vou and other respondents emphasised the importance of choice and perceive themselves as responsible for making choices available to others. A balancing of the economic contribution of the arts against values regarded as ‘inherent’, particularly those relating to preservation of elements of (traditional) culture, alongside the negotiation of hybrid contemporary identities, was consistent across all respondents. An analysis of national, regional and global policy documents revealed alignment of policy at all levels to these twin emphases of economy, and heritage and identity.
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A definition of development

The use of an arts-based method

Sub-question 2: In what ways do the arts, in particular contemporary dance, contribute to the achievement of development as conceptualised by this group of urban, semi-professional dancers in Fiji?

The inherent value of the arts in development

Assertion and reclamation of identity and heritage

Enrichment of lives and inclusion

Freedom and resistance

The arts in economic development

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### ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACP</td>
<td>African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States</td>
</tr>
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<td>AFS</td>
<td>American Field Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency (United States of America)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Council of Pacific Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESD</td>
<td>Education for Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FAC</td>
<td>Fiji Arts Council</td>
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<td>FAVC</td>
<td>Fiji Audio Visual Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIVOS</td>
<td>Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Netherlands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGP</td>
<td>Income Generating Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCBBF</td>
<td>National Council for Building a Better Fiji</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCACPS</td>
<td>Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIF</td>
<td>Pacific Islands Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAAT</td>
<td>Southern African AIDS Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPC</td>
<td>Secretariat of the Pacific Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIMs</td>
<td>Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (of the WTO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIPS</td>
<td>Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (of the WTO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCTAD</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Trade and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>University of the South Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZWW</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Women Writers</td>
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