



‘Gifts of Art for Kenyan (M)Pigs’: Festival of Resistance Against Elite Impunity in Kenya

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Abstract

Drawing from the combined theories of Interaction Rituals and Symbolic Interactionism, this article analyses the performance of rituals and the social construction of symbols in the mechanisms of art resistance against elite impunity in Kenya. Through ethnographic research, the study explores the unique varieties of art resistance advanced by Kenyan youth, their primacy, creativity and symbolism in the struggle for social transformation and contention, and the power of those typologies to transform both participants and the general public into more tolerant, enlightened, critical and active advocates of social change.

Résumé

Cette étude, s’inspirant des théories combinées des rites interactionnels et de l’interactionnalisme symbolique, analyse la performance des rituels et la construction sociale des symboles dans les mécanismes de la réalité de la résistance artistique au Kenya. A travers la recherche ethnographique, l’étude explore les variétés uniques de la résistance artistique avancées par la jeunesse kenyane, leur primauté, leur créativité et leur symbolisme dans la lutte pour la transformation et l’affirmation sociales et la capacité de ces typologies à transformer les participants et les populations en défenseurs plus tolérants, éclairés, critiques et actifs du changement social.

Introduction

The history of Kenya is replete with examples of broken promises and unfulfilled dreams. The masses have seen their living conditions deteriorate and their democratic rights evaporate. These and other shortfalls have driven Kenya into ethno-political violent conflicts before, during and after elections. In the 1992 elections, violence spread across the country, it subsided in 1996,

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only to resurface on a smaller scale before the 1997 elections. While the 2002 elections were calm, the period leading up to and immediately succeeding the 2007 elections saw renewed blood-shed, as the country was almost engulfed in a fully-fledged civil war. The character and magnitude of the 2007/08 hostilities increased in intensity. Though the risk of mass atrocities was potentially high, in the lead-up to the 2013 elections Kenyans remained largely patient through a delayed, error-ridden and much discredited electoral process, with the exception of isolated incidents of violence (Mokua 2013a).

The unfolding cycle of violence is rooted in long-term, foundational issues that have remained unaddressed since Kenya gained independence from Britain in the 1960s, with elections serving as a key trigger for the vicious outbreaks (*ibid.*). The instruments of political violence are part of the inheritance that Britain left its former colony. And whilst the problems with which Kenya is afflicted are also of its own making, the colonialists too laid the roots of ethnic strife that they so ruthlessly exploited in crushing the African uprising and rebellion of the 1950s. Successive post-independence Kenyan governments have continued, entrenched and perfected years of authoritarian misrule, which have created new agonies of their own. As Asingo (2003:22) confirms, former president Moi perfected 'most of the negative practices predominant in the closing years of the Kenyatta era such as neo-patrimonialism and corruption'.

Intertwined with the history of violent conflict, is a history of economic injustice and landlessness, the condition of the country's majority poor, which continues to fuel tribal struggles for power and resources (Hawke 2013). Distribution of wealth is extremely unequal in Kenya. The 2004 United Nations Development Programme Human Development report (UNDP 2004) records that Kenya is the tenth most unequal country in the world, and that the richest 10 percent of the population controls 42 percent of the country's wealth, while the poorest 10 percent owns less than 1 percent of the wealth. Access to resources varies highly from region to region (Hansen 2009).

Kenya's deeply neo-patrimonial politics is one of the most significant shortcomings. Since independence, powerful political elites have established support using state resources, causing widespread grievances over inequalities and long-standing perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the distribution of state resources (Branch and Cheeseman 2008; HRW 1995; MacArthur 2008; Mueller 2008). Corruption and nepotism pervade Kenya's elite political class who are seldom punished judicially, electorally or otherwise. These and other constraints have dreadful consequences for leadership, accountability and representativeness. This patronage has weakened

fundamental state institutions like the judiciary, the police and parliament over so many years that they have lost their autonomy, public trust and confidence. What ought to be strong democratic institutions are instead perceived as 'partisan' and 'tied to the political elite, more particularly those representing the president's ethnic community' (Mueller 2008:195). This has meant these crucial institutions have remained but hollow shells that privilege the elite class and marginalize the populace (Branch and Cheeseman 2008; HRW 2008). The prevalence of weak and personalized institutions most inevitably causes discontent and sparks many contestations.

Ethnic and regional inequalities have not only infiltrated Kenyan politics but also the society more broadly, thus, polarizing the country along ethnic lines. Inter-ethnic rivalry and bitterness is more intense as the political elite's tribesmen and inner groups are rewarded with power, authority and state resources at the expense of other communities and groups. Amidst these deepening inequalities, resentment amongst those outside the favour of the political elite is certain to be more intense, and to feed the triggers and motivations for imminent violent conflict (Kanyinga and Walker 2013).

This ethnicization of politics, over the years, has increased the conditions for instability, fuelling perceptions that the outcome of elections would feed strongly on issues of inclusion and/or exclusion from the centre of state power and resources (Jonyo 2003; MacArthur 2008; Wrong 2010). All this spells trouble for the country if many of its long-standing issues of poverty, marginalization, inequality, past grand crimes and scams, youth unemployment, corruption, impunity, landlessness, ethnic divisions, poor governance and the lack of national cohesion are not urgently addressed. Issues such as the lack of institutional reforms, lack of land reforms, lack of transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs and imbalances in regional development are the combined motivations that spark violent conflict.

Despite some reforms in the country and international judicial proceedings against high flying personalities suspected of organizing and abetting the 2007/08 violence, many of the underlying drivers that motivate the cycle of electoral violence remain salient. The monumental impacts and brazen ramifications of ethno-political violence and their implications for peace, governance, development, stability and democracy remain alive (Mokua 2013b). Despite Kenya's international recognition as a country with the most progressive constitution with extensive freedoms and civil liberties, it has failed to engender public ideological support for elite leadership. The general apathy expressed by the populace threatens the democratic gains, nationalistic endeavours, national unity and identity (Murunga 2011).

In the wake of the phenomenal repercussions of past episodes of violence, a group of Kenyan youths determined not to allow the country to regress to such catastrophes in future, re-conceptualized, re-designed, re-formulated and re-framed public art, rather unconventional but innovative artilleries, into alternative tools for campaigning for social change (Mokua 2013a). The youths employ art as a weapon of challenging and finally breaking the chain of political elite patronage, hegemony and excesses. They collectively question the logic behind the political elite's domination, exploitation, oppression and mis-rule over Kenyans. With these lenses, public artworks are a way of demonstrating dissatisfaction with the cruel conditions of life that stand in contrast to the elite's comfortable way of life, which is perceived by the poor to result from political connections and corruption.

'Occupy parliament' protests

On Tuesday 14 May 2013, the youth organized a majorly successful protest dubbed 'Occupy Parliament'. The mega protests were an assault and offensive against the collective greed and gluttony of Members of Parliament (MPs) who unilaterally demanded increased salaries and allowances. Against advice by the Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC), the only constitutionally mandated institution to fix salaries for state officers, MPs envisaged increasing their perks. In exercising their patronage and hegemonic excesses the MPs tried to arm-twist, manipulate and coerce the Salaries and Remuneration Commission to succumb to their demands. Increased perks for MPs meant increased patronage and hegemonic control over the populace and a skewed allocation of resources by the elite few.

Political power has long been monopolized and used by elites to mobilize support, to determine policies regarding the allocation of resources, and to benefit individual ascendancy to leadership. Ng'ethe and Katumanga (2003:328) contend that

the general orientation of the political class in Kenya is that of capturing the state. State power is perceived as the key issue, essentially because it facilitates wealth and capital accumulation given the salient role the state plays in the economic realm. The capture of the state is perceived by the elite as the *sine qua non* for political and economic survival.

These are major ingredients and triggers for violent conflicts.

Defining Art

'Art' as used here refers to what Chaffee (1993) characterizes as all types of performances, products or events involving creativity, expression and symbolism. Empirically, a typology of the purposes of art in protests can

be classified according to two dimensions: the intrinsic and/or extrinsic value recognized or attributed to art by its promoters, and the nature of the domain (i.e. social, political, personal, cultural etc.), that art (and its promoters) tackles and wants to affect. Intrinsic value means that the artists show insights of, and appreciation for, the reasons for which people make art in the first place; they describe the content and meaning of artworks, the 'creative drive' that originates them, or they perform under that drive. Extrinsic value means artworks are considered and valued for their extrinsic qualities such as having audience appeal, popularity and economic marketability. The socio-political domain means when artists work on social and political issues and want their artworks to have a social and political impact. The personal and cultural domain means when artists focus on intimate emotions and meanings, or when they focus on cultural capital issues, external to the political sphere. The peace protestors reside in the protesting experience as though they inhabit an alternative social world.

Given the dynamic presence of artforms in the 'Occupy Parliament' protests, the movement has been dubbed a 'creative movement'. The strong presence of art during the 'Occupy Parliament', protests provokes questions about the varied types of artforms present, as well as their significance, symbolism and meanings. More specifically, the study addresses three major questions. First, what forms of art were present in the 'Occupy Parliament' movement? Second, what impact do artistic objects and performances have on protests and popular resistance? Third, what are the connotations of each of the artforms employed?

Theoretical Frameworks

The mechanisms of art resistance reality constructions in Kenya are deeply embedded in the performance of rituals as postulated by 'Interaction Rituals' theory (Collins 2004; Durkheim 1964; 1984), and similarly operate to the processes of social symbolic construction as posited by 'Symbolic Interactionism theory' (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Mead 1934).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism deals with the conceptualization, design and production of objects, physical signs and symbols as primary means of interaction (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934; Madison 2005). The concept of symbolic interactionism asserts that: 1) people act toward objects and events on the basis of the meanings those objects possess for them; 2) meanings are derived from human social interaction; 3) people interpret the objects and events in their social environments in order to create meaning (Mead 1938; Musolf 2003).

Just as Gandhi (O'Brien and O'Brien 2009) transformed ancient religious practices such as fasting, simple clothing and adherence to truth into meaningful techniques of creative struggle, so have the Kenyan art protestors conflated peace values and art aesthetics with societal and national values to form a pecuniary philosophy which conditions peace programming. In other words, art protestors place a protest value on everything, even beauty, love, truth, generosity, friendship, faith, ecology and animals. By referencing the societal and national values of a people, the acts of art resistance are moral acts. They take place because people of conscience understand the moral, rather than the practical, imperative of rebellion. They are carried out not because they are effective, but because they are right.

Ritual Performance

The mechanism for art protests in Kenya are also deeply ingrained in ritual performance, i.e. the rhythmic, coordinated group activity and/or performance that guides individual behaviour in a common direction. Collins (2004:7) defines 'interaction ritual' as 'a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership' or simply as 'focused interactions' (Summers-Effler 2006:135). Interaction rituals may take various forms, including singing, dancing, ululating, marching, laughing, clapping hands, and even conversations. Such interaction forms an emotional, sacred atmosphere among people, making them feel that they transcend their everyday life, so that they increase their collective identity, social solidarity and bonding. Indeed:

the central mechanism of interaction ritual theory is that occasions that combine a high degree of mutual focus of attention, that is, a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment... result in feelings of emotional energy of individual participants, giving them feelings of confidence, enthusiasm, and desire for action in what they consider a morally proper path (Collins 2004:42).

The contents, medium and location of artforms together constitute a frame – a schema of interpretation for locating, perceiving, identifying, punctuating and labelling events that occur in the Kenyan life world.

Research Methods

A combination of ethnographic techniques including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, individual in-depth interviews, non-participant observation and content analysis generated the data for this study. The data

demonstrates how art activists utilize a variety of traditional, innovative and creative artforms to register their frustration and apprehensions with the Kenyan political elite. To maintain the integrity of the research enterprise the moral and ethical principles of doing research were strictly adhered to.

Art in Social Movements

Extant literature (Adams 2002; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Halfmann and Young 2010; Moore and Roberts 2009; Reed 2005; Taylor, Rupp and Gamson 2004; Tucker 2010) on art in social movements demonstrates how this malleable form has the potential to perform a variety of roles within social movements. First is how artistic and cultural productions have the capability of disseminating information and delineating grievances. Second, is how artistic workshops and performances provoke dialogue among activists and those observing the performance. Third, is how aesthetic techniques – such as narratives or use of ‘grotesques’ – produce strong emotions, ultimately leading to mobilization and solidarity. Finally is the focus on the pleasure and spectacle of protest, specifically how movements utilize art and culture for leisure, entertainment and fun.

Youth and Artivism in Kenya

On Tuesday 14 May 2013, a day notification of which had been publicized earlier, a collective of protestors referred to as ‘Occupy Parliament’ arrived at the main entrance of Kenya’s parliament buildings. Outside of the parliamentary gates, a line of police officers dressed in camouflaged anti-riot uniforms and carrying with them guns, batons, shields and helmets had surrounded the buildings before the arrival of the protestors. They separated the buildings’ entrance from the numerous youthful protestors and their supporters who had arrived to demonstrate solidarity with the ‘Occupy Parliament’ movement.

Apart from setting the agenda of the protests, ‘We will occupy against pay hikes, corruption, insensitivity of MPs, violation of the people’s rights and freedoms etc.’, the ‘Occupy Parliament’ movement’s call for protests also fixed the day’s programme of activities as follows: ‘Throughout all day we will have performances, music, poetry, art, workshops, and concerts.’ The use of culture within movements is critical, and the use of art to produce a ‘festival of resistance’ is without doubt dynamic. In emphasising the importance of diverse artforms in protests, Reed (2005: 255) acknowledges that:

Traditional demonstrations and protests, while essential, oftentimes alienate the general public, and are ignored by policy makers. Taking to the streets with

giant puppet theatre, dance, graffiti, art, music, poetry and the spontaneous eruption of joy breaks through the numbing isolation [...]. We must strike to use all our skills in harmony to create an enduring symphony of resistance. The cacophony against capital will [...] culminate in the largest festival of resistance the world has ever seen. We will make revolution irresistible.

The members of the 'Occupy Parliament' dressed in black trousers and white t-shirts, carried with them handkerchiefs, and water in bottles. They had earlier-on converged at the historic Uhuru Park's Freedom Corner to bond and strategize. As more protestors arrived at the entrance to parliament, members of 'Occupy Parliament', led by a retired Church Minister, summoned the congregation into sermon, solemn prayer, supplication and singing. In a tense but calm atmosphere, the protestors approached officials of the police force and demanded entrance to the hallowed chambers of the August House. The police remained adamant and denied them entry.

Overall, to be able to strategically reach their goals, the 'Occupy Parliament' movement incorporated a multiplicity of artforms, as different individuals brought different talents to the tactical creative repertoire. Both more traditional and newer, innovative artforms, such as flyers, murals, protest songs, poetry, cartoons, photography, dance and street theatre were utilized.

Street Theatre

During the protests, a collection of activists, their supporters, sympathizers and the public regularly engaged in performances. As they marched, they would occasionally stop, all lying flat on the ground, chanting anti-MPs slogans. By and large, the activists felt that street theatre made the movement more dynamic, thus serving to generate increased mobilization and media coverage. In particular, the activists claimed this particular form was capable of communicating complex grievances in a way that other forms are unable to do. The performances, often incorporating humour and satire, were capable of easing tensions. In one specific performance, two protestors carrying a dummy pig and dressed in white t-shirts, all soaked in blood, in a comical imitation of the police, paraded past and saluted the other protestors and the assembled public. This particular performance acted out the contradiction of values and beliefs between the brute force applied by the police against the demonstrators and the justification for the police (in)action vis-à-vis the debauchery of the political elite who are not held accountable for their scams and thievery. Many are the times when members of the police force, on being criticized for their individual (in) actions, recount with disdain: 'I am just following orders.'

Another group of protestors accompanied by drum corps made rhythmic march-pasts, raising and lowering their slogan-filled hand-held posters in unison. And in yet another meticulous performance, a group of protestors wearing t-shirts emblazoned with 'Bunge Sio Biashara, Bunge ni Huduma', loosely translated to mean 'Parliament is not for profit, but a service', cheered and jeered as they sang and shouted particular MPs' names. The protestors made use of multiple forms of art in their performances, and the sheer size and sound of the performances evoked an atmosphere of carnival and festival.

A small group of men and women activists had their bare bodies fully painted with symbolic images and messages. They moved through the crowd of protestors using various dance moves without making a sound, while carrying more explicit messages on placards. For example, in an interesting performance, activists painted their bodies into particular MPs and individual images, while carrying posters that stated words for reflection, dialogue and analysis.

In these ways, the public performances generated a significant amount of excitement and dynamism. They also managed to capture the attention of both local and international media, together with generating entertainment, awe and spectacle. For instance, an awed member of the public who happened to watch the protests on live TV wondered, 'This is virtually unheard of in Kenya – young women in nude painted bodies! It is something very different, very new'. Essentially, all performances were important in making a real lasting legacy of the protests. In addition to the performances producing emotion among the activists and spectators, and therefore ensuring bondage and identity, they also released tension among them. A member of the public recognized this and remarked, 'This estranged performances have helped break the tension, and the harshness of the moment between the police and the protestors. I found them quite interesting because they walked that fine line between theatre and reality.'

Lastly, the leader of the activists remarked about the ability of street performances conveying complicated grievances, as contrasted with other forms, such as political cartoons or poetry readings: 'Although it might be easy to simply read the performances as carnivalesque in their style; however, a closer reading – particularly of the dramatized posters carried by the protestors – plays on slogans related to mega-corruption, fraud, drug-running, nepotism, patronage, impunity and nationalism. For instance, the slogan, 'Kenya is not for sale' describes the commitment of the protestors and excites emotion of nationhood.'

Visual Arts: Cartoons, Flyers, Posters and Murals

In addition to performances by activists and protest collectives, numerous flyers, posters and political cartoons were created in reference to the protest movement. While these cartoons and flyers were printed and posted throughout the city of Nairobi, they also proliferated on social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Some flyers were released, posted and used on Facebook as individual profile pictures. The protesters, unveiled the hashtag #MPigs as their reference to allow people to follow the protests online. The call for protests had been coordinated on social media networking sites on the previous days.

During the course of the 'Occupation', activists most conspicuously suspended prominent posters on the iron gates of parliament buildings. Slogans and graphic illustrations were combined with catchphrases to make statements about the protests, as well as specific grievances. The substance of the 'Occupation Parliament' movement was founded on the substantial salaries and allowances of MPs. To ground their cause on facts and evidence, the protestors printed and made posters of the official salary payslip of the leader of the majority in parliament. The overriding commentary on the payslip was, 'A Kenyan MP's salary is 425 times higher than the average (per capita) income of Kenyans. And they still want a pay rise', while millions of Kenyans are in dire need of the basics of life and welfare. More infuriating, shocking and emotion-evoking were real time posters and pictures of a malnourished and emaciated child from the drought-stricken part of the country. The catchphrase read, 'Shame on You MPs! 4 Million Kenyans Who Voted for You, in Need of You Now'. In addition, a woman protestor prominently held to a flyer that seemed to doubt the leadership capabilities of MPs: 'After 50 Years of Greed, Let's Have 50 Years, Where You Lead?' Other protest slogans had young women wearing t-shirts that read, 'Feed the needy, Not the greedy'. More protest posters and fliers proclaimed an appeal to the (dis)honourable legislators: 'MPs do not mortgage our children's future.' In the visual graphics; fliers, posters cartoons and murals, the protestors spiced humour with hard facts and evidence to deliver their message.

In addition, the protestors produced and distributed posters and fliers with images, icons and murals. They also painted walls and concrete benches of the city with murals. These murals generally featured any number of slogans that called for a critical dialogue with MPs. Additionally, murals were painted on almost all road junctions, highways, flyovers, public toilets, unfinished building sites and abandoned building structures. These engaged protestors and the public in collective picketing, and also allowed the protestors to claim the right to freedom of association, movement and picketing.

A graphic cartoon caricature (Figure 1) describes the features of a three-headed frog, a headless-chicken and a mammal that lays eggs instead of giving birth as, 'The World's Weirdest Creatures'. Also described in this group is a Kenyan MP as a 'creature with small brains which is known for not paying taxes, amnesia, hypocrisy, lack of leadership and direction, and a penchant for passing obnoxious bills! It's insatiable thirsty for huge salaries, perks and allowances is legendary and unrivalled around the world'. The political cartoon describing 'The World's Weirdest Creatures' went viral on social media sites.

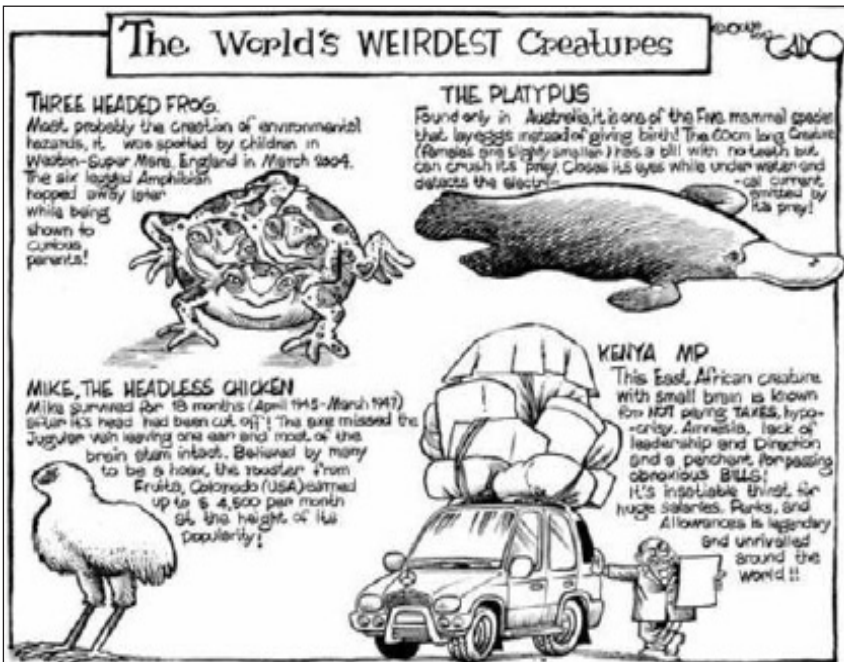


Figure 1: The World's Weirdest Creatures

The themes of hypocrisy, insensitivity and selfishness of MPs were also captured by other posters and fliers. A parody (Figure 2) headlined, 'As If Milking The Cow Was Not Enough', had pig-looking-like people with briefcases, labelled MPs, stuffed with overflowing loot, cheering and applauding their colleague as he beastly rapes a skeletal bandaged cow labelled 'Kenya'. The cheering group seem to be waiting for their turn in the queue to, equally, rape the cow. Another poster continuing a similar theme has a caricature of an emaciated person (Figure 3) labelled as, 'the people' feeding a baldy chubby overweight man, labelled as the 'government'. What a comedy of contradictions! To crown the protesters' messages, a flier appealed to the MPs, 'KAMA PESA HAITOSHI U-RESIGN', loosely translated to mean, 'If the money is not enough, you resign'.

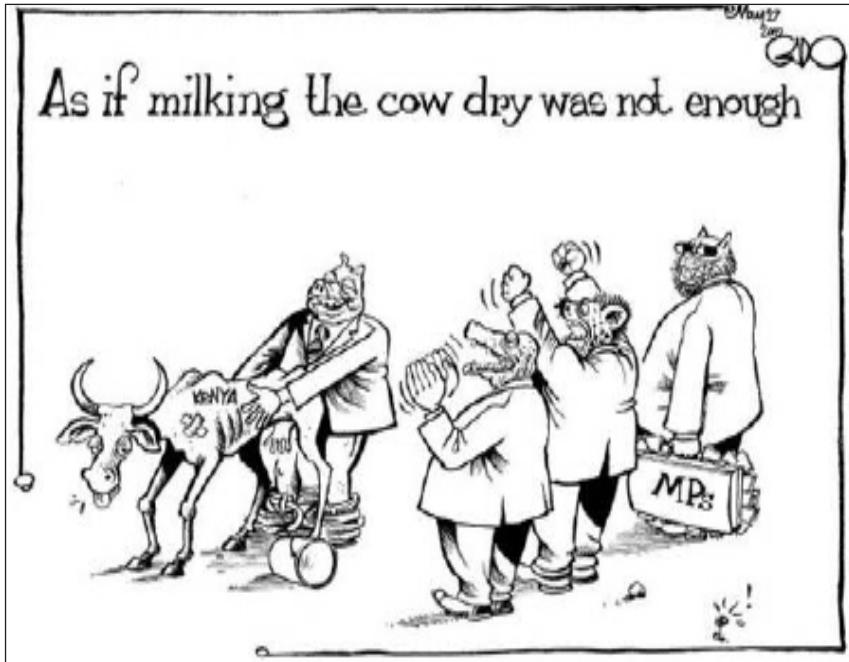


Figure 2: Raping the emaciated cow, Kenya, after milking it dry



Figure 3: People feeding government

The movement drew great inspiration and grounding from historical iconic personalities who sacrificed and even paid the ultimate prize – with their lives – for Kenyans to attain and enjoy the current freedoms. Face murals of Kenya's freedom fighters, Dedan Kimathi and Pio Gama Pinto, and that of the late world environmentalist and human rights crusader, Professor Wangari Maathai, graced the flysheets and billboards. These face murals evoked the spirits of self-sacrifice and defiant commitment to the cause of the movement, for just as in the past, ultimately the cause will be realized. As Mokua (2013a) contends, nothing and totally nothing can stand between the truth and the journey for its realization.

Given their portability, particularly in computerized forms, these artistic forms were able to disseminate ideas and information quickly. Also, these particular forms of protest had the capability of fostering solidarity and collective identity. The murals and labelling that covered the walls and benches of the city generally referenced particular concerns and grievances of ordinary Kenyans, and on a 'we-versus-them' political economy of classification produced a sense of identity with the movement. In addition, the production and display of posters and placards was generally a collective project, which enabled groups of protestors to work together to create artistic displays for the movement. Movement identity was thus filtered through participation in the protests.

Music

Protest songs were incorporated into the 'Occupation Parliament' protest movement. Percussionists and renowned individual musicians chorused the protestors as they marched from Freedom Corner to the main entrance of parliament buildings. The procession of protestors, while holding cloth flysheets, placards and billboards, would march in a circular line, as they chanted, sung, ululated and clapped in unison. The participating musicians also performed live musical concerts. The concerts allowed members of the audience to sing along with the musicians. Protest songs were mainly derived from the lyrics of the National Anthem and traditional nationalistic and folklore songs adapted for the specific circumstance of the protest. The incorporated lyrics were narratives of national values relying upon a call and response form. Sometimes inserting humour into the lyrics, the singing, ululating and clapping created enough noise that drew nearby bystanders into the protests.

While these musicals may simply be seen as entertainment and leisure, they were also capable of generating solidarity and a form of collective effervescence, as large groups came together to display their support for the protest. As one respondent remarked of the carnivalesque atmosphere,

‘Most political and public events are only good if there is song. It has to do with this carnivalesque atmosphere. The song get people away from their homes to come and participate in public. This assures massive support. The carnivalesque atmosphere is part of the reason people do go out and participate’.

Symbolic objects

The ultimate in the ‘Occupy Parliament’ movement protests was when the protestors released a lorry-load of pigs with several piglets in the main entrance of Parliament (see Figure 4). Each pig and piglet had a human name smeared on its body skin representing a greedy MP. The father pig – the gender was apparently evident – representing a patriarchal parliament, presided by a patriarchal Speaker, as an independent institution remained condemned for allowing a sponsored motion seeking a pay hike for its piglets (individual MPs). Parliament’s reputation as the home of dignity had been replaced as a den of filthy politics with greedy legislators. The pigs were drenched with several gallons of blood. The pigs started licking the blood oblivious of what was happening around them. Since their mission in life is to eat and fatten, no matter the state of affairs, they remained focused on the blood and stuck to that, rather than deliberating, as MPs, on crucial issues in Parliament’. This was symbolic of the gluttony of MPs who were robbing ordinary Kenyans without due regard and/or care. The greedy legislators were riding roughshod over the wishes of Kenyans in order to continue looting and plundering the economy.



Figure 4: Artists release pigs and piglets, all drenched in blood

The symbolism generated by the pigs was strikingly accurate. Because when pigs eat, they do so with great feeling, wailing to express their appreciation for a good meal, or grunting and shoving aggressively when other animals threaten to grab their food. This was too similar to the din generated by the MPs, swearing by the gods of their piggishness to disband the Salaries and Remuneration Commission for reducing their pay perks, and therefore the amounts available for their indignant pillage.

Happening just hours before the National Assembly convened for the day's afternoon session, the protesters forced MPs to use alternative routes to gain entry and exit out of Parliament. The few MPs who braved to drive through the messy entrance were jeered and mocked as they drove their sleek cars. Some few MPs came out, only to read their names on the pigs' skin bodies, as did Kenyans who quickly joined the protestors assembled around Parliament's grounds. 'They did not dare look at the pigs' food-filled snouts, perhaps wishing the protestors had brought toothbrushes for the animals,' remarked one protestor. This made it plain that however much the MPs dressed-up the protestors' contestations, the underlying nature of the grievances remained unchanged.

For their greed, selfishness and complete disregard for the populace who elect them to parliament, MPs compare quite closely with the nonchalant gluttony of pigs. The symbolic piggishness had the name pig encrypted with the acronym MPs for Kenyan legislators to acquire a cryptic symbolic cue name, (M)Pigs. As Bormann (1985:132) contends, in an appropriate fashion 'the cryptic symbolic cue may be a code word, phrase, slogan, or nonverbal sign or gesture; it may refer to a geographical or imaginary place or the name of a person; it may arouse tears or evoke anger, hatred, love and affection as well as laughter and humour'.

Another prominent feature of the 'Occupy Parliament' movement protests was the conspicuous use of both miniature and banner flysheets and billboards bearing the colours of the Kenya National Flag. The protestors would drape themselves with clothing materials bearing the colours of the Kenya National Flag of black, green, red and white. Also, the leaders of the 'Occupy Parliament' movement encouraged other protestors including the spectating public to celebrate Kenya by standing and reciting stanzas of the Kenya National Anthem. Derived from a traditional folk song, the protestors and gathered public would recite and sometimes paraphrase the lyrics of the National Anthem, passionately beseeching:

O God of all creation, Bless this our land and nation, Justice be our shield and defender, May we dwell in unity Peace and liberty. Let one and all arise, With hearts both strong and true, Service be our earnest endeavour, And our homeland of Kenya, Heritage of splendour, Firm may we stand to defend.

The Kenya National Anthem and Flag are strong symbolic objects to the Kenyan people generally. They both evoke a deep sense of patriotism among Kenyans, reaffirming their loyalty, nationalism and identity.

Symbolisms and Connotations

These connotative meanings are derived from descriptions, as defined by Kenyan culture, of the supposed behaviour, habits, properties, characteristics, appearance, quality, value and mythological beliefs on the animals and objects of the protests. Explanations of the connotative meanings of animals and objects used in the 'Occupy Parliament' movement provide an answer to the general perceptual background and thinking of the protestors. Animals and objects are not merely symbols for their images. Instead, greatly influenced by the contexts of local history, religions, natural factors and customs, they exert great influence on and have rich connotative meanings for human beings (Yanchang and Runqing 1991). These influences intimate human emotions of delight, love, celebration, hatred, ridicule, repulsion, envy and fear.

Pigs

For their characteristics, pigs are understood to symbolize the extremes of humanity's appetites and lack of restraint. Reference to pigs is often to their ascribed negative attributes of dirtiness, idleness, stupidity, rudeness, gluttony, fatness, shabbiness, selfishness, canny and greed of various forms. Pigs are aggressive predators and cannibalistic animals. And these ascribed attributes have often led to critical comparisons between pigs and humans. The allusion of humans to pigs is often used in reference to their gluttony or monopolization of resources.

For their selfishness, pigs will fight fiercely to protect what they consider their own. As a general derogatory term, 'pig' is used as a slang term by revolutionaries to describe any supporter of the status quo, including police officers, and in the Kenyan instance, (M)Pigs. Often, a comparison is drawn between pigs' enjoyment of wallowing in mud and their willingness to do the 'dirty work', such as bending the rules to suit their needs, and/or cutting deals. For their conception of many piglets at one time, they are recognized as symbols of fertility and closely linked to the prowess of abundance. The lore of treasure calls them and they are thrifty, and big spenders. They typically have several love affairs. The (M)Pigs typify a society without morality, where leaders are obsessed with corruption and promiscuous activities and uninterested in the people's welfare.

Pigs are often regarded as unworthy sacrifices to the gods by many religious faiths the world-over (Buckland 2003). The Bible (Leviticus 11:7)

forbids the keeping of pigs and eating of pork in any form, considering the pig to be an unclean animal. Pigs as lazy scavengers are the embodiment of vice. In Christianity, Jesus is recorded as having cast demons possessing a swine herder into swine herder's pigs (Matthew 8:30–37; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:27–38). The Islamic Qur'an treats pigs as unclean and inedible animals par excellence, the animal that is central to the concept of *haram*. They are often regarded as harbingers of bad luck. Reference of the characteristics of pigs to the traits of Kenya's political elite aptly amplifies their image. They thus qualify for their newly acquired title of (M)Pigs.

Blood

Blood, is especially rich in connotative meanings. Blood is often associated with thoughts of death, wounds and pain. Blood is life. Blood is sacred, but the predatory characteristics of the (M)Pigs (represented by the pigs licking blood) won't allow them not to lick the blood and sweat of their constituents, the protests of ordinary citizens notwithstanding. This is analogous to (M)Pigs sucking, draining and nonchalantly monopolizing, for themselves and their families, Kenya's national resources. Instead of the police offering security and protection to the citizens who pay taxes and for their properties, it is the (M)Pigs who are offered security and guarded, as the police kick, manhandle, molest, intimidate, arrest and detain harmless protestors.

Kenya's struggle and eventual independence from the colonialists was won by the shedding of blood by Kenyan nationalists. Equally, the struggle to liberate Kenyans from the legacy of neo-patrimonialism and the impunity of the political elites will be won by the shedding of more blood. The 'Occupy Parliament' movement is prepared and ready to offer itself as a sacrifice for the complete emancipation of ordinary Kenyans. Blood is the ultimate atonement the 'Occupy Parliament' movement is prepared to pay for a just cause.

Black and White

The call for 'Occupy Parliament' protests stipulated the dress code of the day as black trousers and a white t-shirt. This was intentionally so, because black is the darkest colour, the result of the absence or complete absorption of light. It is the opposite of white and often represents darkness in contrast with light. In most cultural mythologies (Buckland 2003), black is the colour of mourning and is frequently associated with all the vices of wickedness, the devil, hell, death, sin, evil, witchcraft, sorcery, magic, the end, cruelty,

brutality, violence, power, secrets and elegance. Black is the colour of the underworld. For all these characteristics black inspires real fear, panic and anxiety. On the contrast, white represents 'purity, innocence and all the virtues'.

Black and white are often used to describe opposites. Black contrasts with white and white contrasts with black. While white is the embodiment of all that is pure and virtuous, black is a representation of all that is mysterious and sinister. Black is the absorption of all colours and the absence of light. Black hides, while white brings to light. What black covers, white uncovers.

Conversely, black has come to be a symbol of individuality, and intellectual and social rebellion, the colour of those who don't accept established norms and values. Black is the colour of rebellion and revolution. Black implies self-control and discipline, independence and strong will, and giving an impression of authority and power. The use of Black Power in social movements can be traced to the struggle for political equality of African Americans in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s. It developed into the Black Power Movement that popularized the slogan 'Black is Beautiful' (Baylor 1996).

The black and white dress code symbolically contrasted all that is represented by the vices of the colour black, and all that is extolled by the virtues of the colour white. Black and white mark the end of an era and the birth of another. Black marked the condemnation and end of the era of nepotism, tribalism, bribery, open pilferage of public funds and patronage. The politics of exclusion had symbolically come to an end. On the other hand, white marks the birth of the new era of hope; effective, visionary, moral, accountable, responsible and selfless leadership. A patriotic, responsive, fair, fearless, sincere, honest, intelligent, competent, courageous, dedicated, service-and solution-oriented, and corrupt-free leadership had dawned. A people-centred leadership which treasures communal virtues, and subscribes to the values to which the community and people hold dear. And therefore, black compared to all the gloom, misery and ineptitude wrought by the political elites. White on the other hand represented light at the end of the tunnel of darkness. White constitutes hope. Hope that despite the doom spelled out by the political elites, there is still faith in a brighter future.

Freedom Corner

The call for the 'Occupy Parliament' protests had stipulated Freedom Corner as the convergence and starting point of the procession to Parliament. This ground has significant historical implications for Kenya's struggle for

democratic liberation and human rights. The ground gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s as the site for the induction of public resistances. Public resistances for democratic space, human rights and political freedoms from an authoritarian Kenya African Nation Union (KANU) government were originated from this ground.

The site is symbolic of the birth of the democratic campaign for the Second Liberation which eventually led to there peal of section 2(a) of the constitution in the 1990s. Section 2(a) of the constitution held Kenya as one a party state and KANU as the only constitutional and legally registered political party. The struggle for and the attainment of multiparty democracy was launched from this ground.

The brutality and totalitarianism of KANU was witnessed on this ground when mothers of KANU's political detainees converged here and demanded the release of their sons. With KANU's obstinacy, the women started fasting. The KANU government descended on the women with a vicious, brutish and ruthless force never witnessed in independent Kenya. Helpless before the armed forces of the state, the women undressed their clothing to nakedness. This was clearly a curse on whoever was holding their sons and reigning terror on them. The actions of the elderly women finally paid-off as all political detainees were later released.

Earlier, the then President, Daniel Arap Moi, had planned to construct a sixty-storey building, KANU headquarters, at the Freedom Corner site. This would have meant a great compromise to the physical environment, urban transport and traffic, and architectural space of the city of Nairobi. The renowned environmentalist and human rights crusader, the late Professor Wangari Maathai, petitioned the government to reconsider its plan and halt the project. The government remained obstinate. Professor Wangari Maathai appealed to international governments and donors who had pledged to finance the project. They heeded her call and withdrew their financial pledge. With no financing and growing opposition, the project was finally shelved and the ground earned the title of Freedom Corner. Thus, the site has a significant symbolism for Kenya's long walk to freedom.

National Anthem and Flag

A collective singing of the National Anthem by the 'Occupy Parliament' movement protestors was too powerful, too political and too radical. The lyrics stirred visible emotions in men and women who do not normally share similar feelings. The National Anthem is the song that signifies Kenya's independence, liberation and history. Singing the National Anthem is a statement of intent. In passionately singing the National Anthem, the 'Occupy

Parliament' movement was sharing its determination, commitment, resolve and intent to liberate the country from the domiciles of the dominance and impunity of the political elites.

The Kenya flag exemplifies Kenya's national unity and reflects the historical events that have shaped the country. The colour black in the flag represents the indigenous people of the Republic of Kenya, red stands for the blood which was shed during the fight for independence, green for the country's rich landscape and natural resources, and the white fimbriation symbolizes peace and honesty. The black, red and white traditional shield and two spears signify that Kenyans are always ready to defend the independence and freedoms they fought so hard for.

The Second Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) defines the National Flag and National Anthem as national symbols. The National Anthem together with the National Flag are the first symbols of common nationhood as a country, symbols of collective identity, symbols that brought, and therefore bring, Kenyans together: they belong to no tribe yet they belong to all tribes, they belong to no religion yet they belong to all religions, they belong to no class yet they belong to all classes, they belong to no region yet they belong to all regions. In addition, of special significance to Kenyan youth, the two national symbols are a reminder that independence from colonialism was fought and won largely by the youth. Equally, the symbols demonstrated and affirmed the Kenyan identity and citizenship of the protestors. It is in these symbols that the protestors shared in a collective positive Kenyan belonging and experience.

Conclusion

Overall, the presence of various artforms in the 'Occupy Parliament' movement performed several different roles ranging from evoking passion to commitment and solidarity, originating collective identity and tapping into collective consciousness, disseminating information, provoking dialogue, mobilizing individuals and the public, providing entertainment, creating spectacle, movement ambience, excitement and fun, and releasing tensions and emotions.

The activists strategically utilized different creative artforms for specific phases and purposes during the protests. The symphony of resistance thus created has since endured to become an important feature of Kenyan activism. Kenyan artists are creatively using art expressions to create a national narrative for negotiating similar and other conflicts. Clearly, highly charged symbols and rituals have become vehicles for triggering symbolic contention for civic persuasion.

The artworks employed were aimed at ensuring a non-violent and socially just Kenya for all. As is generally noted, peace is not just about the absence of direct violence, it is also about moving towards peaceful societies grounded in values such as justice, equality and inclusion. This entails more inclusive approaches with targets providing for equality and fairness in relation to access to security, justice and the rule of law, as well as basic services and resources. As evidenced in the 2011 World Development Report on Conflict, Security and Development (World Bank 2011), peace can only be upheld by states that are inclusive, responsive, fair and accountable to all. Inclusive governance, ensuring that all social groups participate in the decisions that affect society, is a key component. The artworks, therefore, are symbolic of a desire for another way of governing that is inclusive, focused, mature, pro-devolution, pro-human rights, pro-people and anti-corruption.

In the artworks, narratives were re-designed to re-establish public faith in collective institutions, the government and elite leadership by interrogating and inquiring about their responsiveness. The artworks registered the public's frustration over the limited degree of progress made in addressing issues such as poverty, public safety and corruption, which threaten the country's political stability. The artworks pushed their impact as they advocated for the government and political leaders to improve the lives of the ordinary Kenyans.

The artworks attacked incompetence, corruption, tribalism, nepotism and intolerance of the political elites. They framed and advanced a peaceful and prosperous Kenya in a fair, responsive, transparent and accountable leadership. The activists grounded their arguments in social, economic, political, psychological and governance issues. These are contentious issues that are easily exploited to instigate violence for political ends. In doing so, the activists empowered their audiences by drawing upon two important strategies that guided their activism: (1) they spiced art with humour; and (2) they centred their arguments on the experiences of everyday life of Kenyans. In sum, art and humour supported the movement's arguments and functioned as powerful tools to coalesce the public into a collective 'Kenyahood'. In the protests, the activists appropriated artistic expressions for social critique and change.

The art in the 'Occupy Parliament' movements advocated for and supported oversight, transparency, accountability, effective legislation and responsiveness of the political leadership in Kenya. The artforms functioned in engaging the populace and political leadership through public education and consciousness. There is, however, a need for more research on what role symbolic and culturally rich artistic displays play in contexts of political and civic engagement.

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