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Following the Renamo/Frelimo conflict and the 1992 Rome Accord ending hostilities, the Christian Council of Mozambique undertook to remove arms from the civilian population by trading them for development tools. The weapons were given to artists associated with a collective in the capital, Maputo. The weapons were cut into pieces and converted to sculptures that subsequently focused international attention on the Tools for Arms project, or TAE (Transformação de Armas em Enxadas). While succeeding in drawing attention to the proliferation of arms among civilians, and collecting a considerable number of arms and munitions, the project encountered difficulties in relating the production of art to the overall initiative. This paper examines the aspect of the project that produced art from weapons, with insights and observations based on fieldwork conducted for CUSO and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Introduction: the Renamo/Frelimo conflict

Disarming civilian populations following internal conflicts in countries that have been heavily armed is increasingly important, not only in order to minimise the chance of further armed conflicts erupting once peace has been achieved, but also to address the subsequent use of weapons—particularly small arms—in robberies, hijackings, and kidnappings (Rotfeld 2000; Angola Roundtable 1999). Mozambique's history of armed conflict is a long and tortuous one, commencing in 1962 with the formation of Frelimo and the initiation of an armed struggle for independence from Portuguese rule in 1964. Independence was no sooner achieved in 1975 when further conflict erupted: a confrontation that has been characterised by some as a civil war and by others as an invasion. Mozambique's independence and support for similar liberation struggles in Rhodesia and South Africa were the most probable reasons for the creation of Renamo (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*—also known as the Mozambican National Resistance or MNR). This guerrilla army originated in an agreement signed by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization and the Portuguese before the April 1974 coup that ended the military dictatorship in Lisbon. Renamo also recruited inmates who were freed in raids on Mozambican re-education camps and former Frelimo soldiers who had been imprisoned for corruption (Hall and Young 1997). Renamo received backing from Portuguese expatriates and right-wing private US foundations opposed to the Marxist leanings of the Frelimo government.

Renamo set about destabilising the Frelimo government. It conducted operations within the country aimed at destroying rail and hydro lines, roads, and bridges. It waged a campaign of

terror against local populations who were not supportive of Renamo. It burned and looted villages and kidnapped children, who were then used as soldiers. Following Robert Mugabe’s successful struggle against the Ian Smith regime, South Africa continued to provide support and a base for Renamo’s operations. It also supported Renamo bases in Malawi and inside Mozambique at Gorongosa, an area where it is believed there are still significant buried arms caches. The war was bloody, killing more than one million Mozambicans.

Founded in 1947, the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) attempted—commencing in 1988 - to bring both sides in the conflict to the negotiating table. Its efforts culminated the 1992 Rome Peace Accord. Anglican Bishop Dinis Sengulane describes what happened after a woman from Nampula Province asked at church seminar what would happen to all the guns in the country now that the armed conflict had ended:

So the following day, when the seminar was continuing, I thought: ‘Well, okay—we will implement a biblical disarmament programme which will consist of four operations—four steps. The first step is to persuade the people to bring in their guns. . . . The second step is making the gun unusable: to destroy it, if possible to dismantle it completely so that even if the same people who had given us the gun were to try to ambush us in order to get it back, it won’t be useful at all to them. The third is to give to the people, an instrument of production. It could be – we had the idea that it could be exchanged for a plough, or a bicycle or a sewing machine. And the fourth step would be to turn that gun into an instrument of production’. (Interviewed in Maputo, 3 July 2003)

The project outlined by Bishop Sengulane was launched on 20 October 1995. A major, but not the only, weapon of concern was the AK-47 Kalashnikov assault rifle. There is no reliable information on the number of weapons remaining in the country following demobilisation. One source (Smith 1996) reported that in 1995 six million AK-47s were believed to be in circulation. The situation was complicated by the caching of arms by former Renamo soldiers during the UN peace-keeping operation known as ONUMOZ, and who were distrustful of the peace accord. About 100,000 combatants were demobilised. Among the accord’s conditions was the holding of democratic elections. Renamo subsequently became a political party, seeking power by democratic means.

Some insight into the extent of the arms problem can be gained from an examination of weapons collected by the TAE project as well as weapons and ammunition collected as part of a joint undertaking by the Governments of South Africa and Mozambique. Dubbed ‘Operation Rachel’, this annual military exercise uncovered and destroyed 611 weapons caches between 1995 and 2003 (see Table 1). These numbers can be compared with arms and munitions collected through the TAE project (see Table 2). The figures are revealing. It is evident that, compared to government activity, the CCM efforts were largely of symbolic value. This suggests that the manner and the extent to which CCM was connected to the civilian

Table 1: Weapons collection results from Operation Rachel, 1995–2003

Type	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Handguns	8	13	79	353	453	18	372	101	45	1442
Submachine guns	91	68	980	735	1874	126	467	346	235	4922
Rifles	981	355	4345	3183	8864	2205	2943	2072	1302	26250
Light/Heavy machine guns	47	52	279	467	845	66	148	47	1	1952
Mortars	15	44	35	21	115	70	32	5	0	337
Ammunition	23,153	136,639	3,000,000	155,314	3,315,106	83,276	486,000	2,004,018	2,200,000	11,403,506

Table 2: Arms collected by the TAE Project, 1995–1999

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	TOTAL
Firearms	280	543	465	867	338	2493
Explosives	1172	844	57	103	33	2209
Ammunition	10489	9943	2881	33307	10226	66846
Accessories	147	128	371	187	22	855
Engineering Matter	5	7	1	0	2	15
Bayonets	75	4	1	1	0	81
TOTALS	12,168	11,469	3,776	34,465	106,21	72,499

population, and was able to use this relationship to raise the awareness of Mozambicans, was at least as important as the number of weapons collected. The figures also indicate that there were probably considerably fewer AK-47s in the country than suggested by Smith (1996).

Arms to art

The transformation of weapons into works of art began in 1997 with funding from the Canadian High Commission and the assignment to the TAE project of a cooperant working for the Canadian NGO, CUSO. (1) An experimental workshop, *‘Transformação de Armas em Objectos de Arte’* was organised with 15 artists to see what they could do with the material. This successful undertaking was followed by an exhibition of the work in Maputo. From the outset, there were indications that future complications might arise with the transformation process. In Mozambique – perhaps more so than is characteristic of Northern countries—artists are not always taken seriously. The idea that artists ‘do art’ for a living is not well understood. Artists are often seen as a ‘fringe culture’, doing art as a passion or hobby, while making a living through some other activity. At the time, some artists indicated they wanted to be paid for their efforts.

One of the artists explained the origins and relationship with the project as follows:

The project started in '97 and in the beginning, nothing happened. We just worked; there were not any exhibitions. After two to three years, we still worked. We had to find the money. We used our own money to buy the materials [welders, welding rod, saws, etc]. . . . When the project started we had all the materials from the project. But after that, all the material is broken—you know—and we still work and we continue to use our money to do—to work—because we are artists and we're interested to work with this project. (Interview with Gonçalo Mabunda, 10 June 2003, Maputo)

Prior to receiving US\$35,000 in March 1997, the TAE project had received about US\$60,000 from the German government, with which it had provided welding equipment and supplies. However, as the process of collecting weapons developed, this activity increasingly absorbed funds that might have been used to provide ongoing support for the artists. This is noteworthy not only because of the general attitude towards the artists’ role, but because the number of weapons collected, their condition, and classification, was increasingly viewed as a quantitative and reassuring indicator of the project’s success. Recognising this, project staff rapidly began to focus their efforts and attention on weapons collection. The processes of transformation and providing civic education aimed at creating a culture of peace and reconciliation thus came to play secondary roles in the overall project. The CUSO cooperant attempted to formalise a working relationship between the artists and TAE, but quickly came up against the attitudes

referred to earlier. Furthermore, as a religious organisation, TAE and its parent organisation, CCM, felt that the works of art should be a charitable donation to the project: a form of expression for which people should probably not be paid.

The role of the art and of the artists quickly became a source of controversy. In seeking further financial support for the TAE project, its founding director, Jacinto Muth, was inclined to take pieces of sculpture and offer them as gifts to individuals he was visiting. Such items subsequently found their way into the hands of church leaders and other potential funders. By some accounts, 40 to 50 pieces of art produced in 1997 ‘went missing’ (Tester and Teves 2004:49). The artists were not reimbursed for these items. The working relationship between TAE and the artists began to deteriorate.

The initial idea of transformation—melting down weapons and making them into ploughs, scissors, and other practical instruments—had local symbolic value. This can be attributed to the fact that the concept originated with a church organisation that had a considerable community-based constituency in Mozambique, and because these implements had a local and practical use. The concept was retained, albeit by different means. Beneficiaries were to receive development tools (bicycles, sewing machines, cement, corrugated roofing, etc.) in exchange for weapons. The transformation of weapons into sculpture—something of symbolic but not practical value to local people—subsequently diminished the significance of conversion to the overall project. However, while the sculptures gave the TAE project international attention, the pieces were rarely used in Mozambique for purposes of civic education. One reason given by TAE field staff was that rural people would not understand the artists’ ideas and might even mistake the sculptures for magic charms (Faltas and Christian-Paes 2004). Whether this was a complete explanation or whether the TAE staff, who were focused on weapons collection rather than civic education, had little interest in lugging pieces of sculpture into the field for this purpose, is debateable. Pictures of the art (see Figure 1) were published on numerous occasions in local papers and some pieces were exhibited in Maputo on 5 and 16 November 1998.

As the working relationship between TAE and the *Nucleo* artists continued to deteriorate, their art was starting to attract international attention. In May 1999, the sculptures were displayed throughout Maputo during an international ‘Landmines Ban Treaty Conference’. Between November 1999 and January 2000, CUSO organised a Canadian tour of the art and one of the artists. The tour included seven cities and included displays and talks in Canadian schools. The increasing attention given to the art and growing tensions between TAE and the artists gave impetus to a formal agreement that attempted to address their role in the project. Brokered by a CUSO cooperant, it proposed giving 45 per cent of sales to the artists, 45 per cent to the TAE project, and 10 per cent to *Nucleo de Arte*. The artists’ collective was in

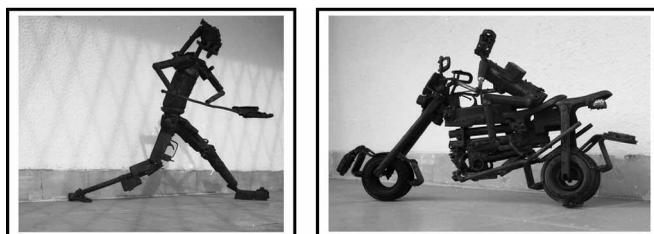


Figure 1: Examples of sculptures produced as part of the TAE project by artists working for *Nucleo de Arte*. (Photo credits: Frank Tester 2003)

difficulty. Electricity bills resulting from the welding of weapons into sculptures and unpaid rent threatened to close the facility used by its members in Maputo.

Following the Canadian tour, pieces were shipped to New York for exhibition at the United Nations Conference on Small Arms held in June 2001. Thereafter, pieces were sent to London and shown at the Oxo Tower Wharf Gallery in January 2002, in an exhibition sponsored by Christian Aid. Over 30 pieces of art were subsequently sold, some of which were displayed in prominent public places - The Imperial War Museum, The Commonwealth Institute, and The British Museum in London (see Figure 2), and the Royal Armouries in Leeds. The sale raised CDN\$56,103, money that was reportedly to be used to support the TAE project (Satori 2002).

However, what was unfolding behind the scene was considerably more complicated. Contrary to the agreement reached between TAE and the artists, the latter were promised only CDN\$4500 from the sale, far short of the agreed 45 per cent. To complicate matters further, the then director asked the artists if he could borrow this amount from the artists to cover TAE staff salaries. Canadian government funding was officially to end on 31 March 2002 and no additional support had been confirmed at the time. The artists agreed to this,

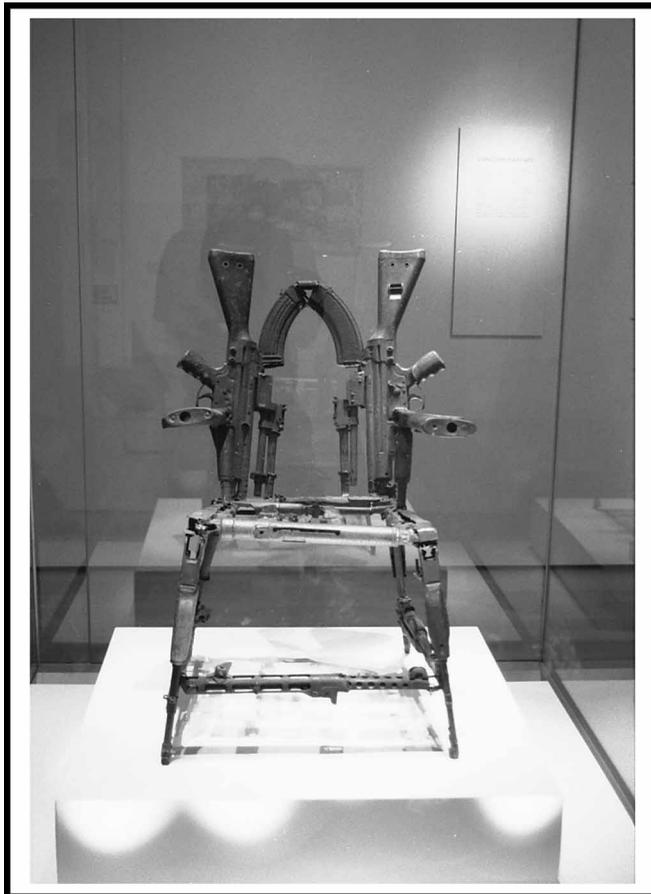


Figure 2: Chair made of rifle parts displayed at the entrance to the Africa Arts Exhibit, British Museum, London. (Photo credit: Frank Tester 2003)

and the director provided a letter stating that the amount would be paid back in full. One of the artists explains what subsequently happened:

We work with TAE. It's a good project. We must respect [TAE's need for funds] because other people work under demands too. So, okay, no problem. We ask [the TAE director] for the money and he says we must wait. Must wait. And we still wait. And then in December [2002] around Christmas we ask for the money and he said: 'I am going to give you 55 per cent.' . . . He said to come back Monday and we are going to give you 55 per cent. Okay, when we get there on Monday he says: 'No. I don't have the money.' He is just—like—joking with us. We have a family. We have a house. We are artists. (Interview with Gonçalo Mabunda, 10 June 2003, Maputo)

The issue remains unresolved. What happened after the Oxo exhibition and sale appears to have fundamentally changed the working relationship between the *Nucleo* artists and the TAE project. It was becoming increasingly obvious to TAE that the art, whatever its symbolic importance might be, had commercial value that could benefit the project.

The TAE director then decided to hire several of the artists on salary to produce art that could be sold to raise funds for TAE operations. This divided and created considerable tensions within the collective. Some of the artists strongly contended that artists don't work for a salary in this way, and that the arrangement undermined their independence and would affect the process of artistic production. At the same time, *Nucleo* artists needed the TAE project as a source of materials for their art. And, as for most artists, making a living in Mozambique, particularly by selling art, is a difficult undertaking. TAE also held equipment—welding machines and welding rods—needed by the artists. Necessity was ultimately to drive several of the artists to work directly for TAE.

When funds were given to the TAE project to produce a sculpture for a meeting of the African Union, held in Maputo in July 2003, two of the artists—after much debate and dissent in their ranks - agreed to work for TAE. They produced a large globe and a map of Africa for the conference, both made entirely of weapons. Others broke ranks entirely, producing and advertising their work on the Internet. Gonçalo Mabunda (previously cited) advertised 20 pieces for sale on a virtual gallery based in Amsterdam (Designserver 2004). Exhibitions of work by *Nucleo* artists have also been held in Barcelona at the Universal Forum of Cultures and in Paris at the Pompidou Centre. Artists, like other producers, need money to survive: to feed their families, to pay their rent. The lesson is this. Addressing institutional attitudes towards visual and performing artists in relation to their potential role in development education, is an essential to project planning and the successful integration of art with peace-building and community development work.

Art: symbolism and significance

The role and potential of art in addressing the aftermath of armed conflicts has received only limited attention from the international community. The TAE experience suggests that both the potential and limitations of art require a closer examination in contributing to building cultures of peace and reconciliation.

It is not difficult to understand the international appeal of the sculptures produced by *Nucleo* artists from weapons handed in to CCM by people committed to the idea of a lasting peace in Mozambique. The idea of a menacing piece of metal, designed to destroy life, being transformed into a form suggesting play, whimsy, irony, and humour is appealing. For example, a miniature Eiffel Tower, one of the pieces made of arms by the *Nucleo* artists, is symbolic of the cultural achievements of Europe built on the exploitation of former colonies. It conveys,

in a glance, many messages thoroughly grounded in a post-Soviet experience of international conflict. Far from addressing the horrors of armed conflict through silencing them in the name of national reconstruction, as Michael Humprey (2002) suggests is characteristic of post-colonial nation building, the *Nucleo* art reminds the viewer of the over 1 million people who lost their lives in the Renamo/Frelimo conflict. Simultaneously, it suggests the 'normal things' of life that point to the need for peace and reconciliation. These sentiments are captured by a review of an Oxo gallery exhibit held in January 2003:

As I walked around the exhibition, I was struck by the technical virtuosity of the artist's work and their choice of subject. Birds, musical instruments and chairs seem to reaffirm the everyday joys of peaceful life that most of us take for granted. . . . To see them forged from modern weapons seemed a triumph of the human spirit over adversity and of the artistic imagination over the dead hand of war. (Saunders 2003:1)

The reviewer very likely wants (and perhaps needs) to see what he has eloquently put to paper. The real social relations engendered by this artistic production—in this case giving rise to conflict and adversity, albeit of a fundamentally different order than that of the armed conflict inspiring the sculptures - are hidden from view.

Unfortunately, apart from the relationship of the artists to their own processes of production, the TAE art has contributed less than might have been possible in both processes of healing and in building a culture of peace and reconciliation. At the same time, the art has drawn a distanced—and aestheticised—attention to armed conflicts such as that experienced by Mozambique. Little has been written about artistic production as a form of catharsis, while 'art as therapy' is a popular topic among Western academics. To the extent that art is cathartic—as illustrated by the following quote from one of the *Nucleo* artists, - a much wider role for art and artistic production in building cultures of peace and reconciliation is suggested:

There are some days that are difficult to work because I have memories. . . . These are of old situations, because I lost school. It was a time of war. There are days when you get up and you are not feeling well. It is these things . . . you see something in the most destroyed state and your head doesn't support it. But there are days when I tolerate—I tolerate because, 'OK', [the weapons] are cut and I can do something different with them. (Interview with Fiel Desantos, 6 June 2003)

The quote provides some insight into the implications of alienating the artists from the process of production by locating them, and the production of art, within a space (and presumably time—a working day) under the control of the TAE project. Placing the artists on a salary (presumably related to their ability to produce art of commercial value to the project) has additional implications and raises questions about whether art—the subject of often fleeting and unpredictable imagination—can be produced in this way. If so, what kind of 'product' might be the result?

The mixed record of the role of art in the TAE project suggests that artistic production and expression as part of international development strategies and processes merit closer examination. The initial concept, articulated by Bishop Segulane, is reminiscent of ideas advanced by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse: the idea that art in a European Romantic tradition can provide critical insight and act as 'a last refuge for critical ideas as well as for the expression and experience of beauty and satisfaction, thus auguring a better society' (Agger 1998:90). The TAE sculptures appear to suggest such possibilities to an international community while, regrettably, not having played a significant and comparable role within Mozambique. As initially conceived, the TAE sculptures have a 'conscious, methodological alienation from the entire sphere of business and industry and from its calculable and profitable order' (Marcuse 1964:58). Paradoxically, this romantic appeal—for which there

exists an international market—has given rise, within the project that conceptualised this conversion, to relations, dynamics and tensions, reminiscent of Adorno's lament about the absorption of culture into commodity relations (Adorno 1984). In this case, the art retains its aesthetic and transformative potential—albeit restricted to the ideas of those far removed from what needs to be a site where transformation to a culture of peace and reconciliation takes place *in practice*. However, the dynamics created within Mozambique between artists and others working to disarm the civilian population are far more reminiscent of commodity relations. Critical questions need to be asked about how such dynamics fit with developing a culture of peace and reconciliation.

These dynamics must also be understood within a larger structural context of poverty and unemployment. The official unemployment rate in Mozambique is about 21 per cent. This figure must be interpreted taking into consideration that 80 per cent of the population lives in rural settings where many Mozambicans are involved in subsistence and marginal agricultural production. While Westerners may view the TAE project as primarily a humanitarian undertaking (and church officials within the country apparently also conceptualised it in this way), for those collecting arms, the TAE project was employment; a tenuous job dependent upon foreign donations. Paying staff (whose collection of arms is essential to measuring the success of the project and hence, its viability) comes up against paying artists whose contribution to overall funding may be important, but in terms of dollar amounts, is considerably less so than grants available from foreign donors. It appears that in the case of funds raised from the sale of art, the TAE project director gave clear priority to paying the staff involved in arms collection.

The priority given to arms collection and the apparently peripheral role of the art and the artists in the delivery of the project in Mozambique is also tied to international funding priorities. Considerable attention was directed towards measuring the success of the TAE project. The most obvious and concrete measures of that success were the number and types of weapons and munitions collected. Questions about what was being collected, and in what amounts, were the most common directed at project officials by international dignitaries and others visiting the project. Furthermore, this information was quickly identified by project staff as important to international agencies in considering funding requests. Statistics on arms figured prominently in reports to CIDA, applying 'results-based management' criteria to project reporting (Tester and Teves 2004). It was an emphasis that, as noted by the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, 'diverted attention away from the impact on people's mentality and the effect on public security' (Faltas and Christian-Paes 2004:31).

What was initially conceived as a project in which only one objective was the collection of guns, and the others were 'reducing violence; educating the civil society to abandon violence; and to build up a culture of peace' (Christian Council of Mozambique 1996:2) quickly evolved into an exercise primarily in weapons collection. This was the most expensive aspect of the overall project and one with a particular appeal to the military experience of TAE staff. It was an emphasis that also affected gender dimensions of the project, as potential roles for women were underplayed by such a focus.

Conclusion

The relationship of art to processes of peace and reconciliation has received relatively little attention in the international development literature. Writing about the use of art and images collected by the Antioquia *barrio* in the Colombian city of Medellín, to address a history of violence, Pilar Riaño Alcalá documents a process in which the victims of violence play a role in assembling objects symbolising memory for people in the neighbourhood (Riaño Alcalá 2003).

This exercise becomes an active one, involving the *barrio* in artistic production and a range of activities developing from the display of artefacts in a bus, constituting a museum that could move around the city. Unlike the Columbian experience, the TAE project, while producing art that had international appeal, did not actively involve Mozambicans in its production.

The TAE experience suggests that the potential and pitfalls of incorporating artistic production in similar processes deserve more attention. Are the dual objectives of drawing international attention and acclaim to a project and using art as a tool for community organising compatible? In the case of TAE, it was clearly not possible for the average Mozambican to be involved in cutting and welding pieces of arms into sculptures. But the role of these pieces in generating discussion about peace and reconciliation was never fully appreciated. Furthermore, the role and importance of the artists was never fully developed or recognised. Perhaps of greater significance, the international image—the *idea*—of what was subsequently happening in Mozambique to build a culture of peace, as conveyed by the sculptures, falls short of what actually transpired.

This is not to say that the TAE project was not partially successful in achieving its objectives, but to acknowledge that collecting arms, in and of itself, is largely a symbolic act. Building a culture of peace is an undertaking that requires more active public involvement. In this case, the sculptures might have been moved around the country and used to generate other activities: the writing of plays or poetry, the telling of stories, the use of other artefacts to complement the sculptures in addressing the fallout from years of violent conflict. The TAE experience suggests nonetheless that the symbolic and material roles of art in processes of peace and reconciliation are potentially considerable and that their incorporation requires careful consideration and design.

Note

1. CUSO (originally known as Canadian University Services Overseas) is a Canadian NGO that sends 'volunteers'—known as cooperants—to work with partner organisations addressing issues of social justice and working for sustainable alternatives to conventional forms of development. Its strength is its relationship with NGOs in the South and its role in supporting the development of this aspect of civil society. It has had a presence in Mozambique since 1978.

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