

Managing Collective Trauma amongst Displaced Persons in Daudu Community of Benue State, Nigeria: A Cultural Performances Approach

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Abstract

Die vorliegende ethnographische Studie befasst sich mit den Erfahrungen und Praktiken von Opfern gewaltsamer Konflikte, die durch Tanz, Musik und darstellendes Spiel ihre physische und psychische Integrität verhandelt und dadurch Hoffnung und Resilienz aufgebaut haben. Der von den Opfern hierbei verwendete, kulturell vertraute Kontext ermöglicht einen bottom-up-Ansatz, der positive Energien mit emotionalem Wachstum, psychischer Integrität und sozialen Kompetenzen mit dem Ziel verbindet, an der Vorstellung und Umsetzung einer besseren Zukunft zu arbeiten. Diese Forschungsarbeit stellt fest, dass der Konflikt zwischen Viehzüchtern und Landwirten, der die Gemeinschaft der Daudu und ihre Umgebung seit 2011 anhaltend entzweit, durch Vorfälle von brutalen Tötungen, Vergewaltigungen, Vertreibungen und Zerstörungen von Lebensgrundlagen und kulturellem Erbe geprägt ist. Diese Situation stellt laut Studie eine Herausforderung sowohl für die kulturellen Praktiken und Ausdrucksformen der beteiligten Menschen dar, als auch in ihrer Konsequenz für die kulturelle Nachhaltigkeit. Die untersuchten Performances wurden unter den Mitgliedern der vertriebenen Bevölkerung gefunden, die sowohl für sich selbst auftreten als auch, um dadurch gemachte Erfahrungen zu teilen und Hilfe zu mobilisieren. Diese kreativen Bemühungen der vertriebenen Menschen, die eine Konsequenz des Konfliktes zwischen Viehzüchtern und Landwirten darstellen, zielen darauf ab, die Geschichten der vertriebenen Menschen zu erzählen und bei der Bewältigung ihrer traumatisierenden Erfahrungen zu helfen.

Der Artikel basiert auf den Ergebnissen der Dissertation „Cultural Performances: A Study on Managing Collective Trauma amongst Displaced Persons in Daudu, Benue State, Nigeria“, die der Autor an den Universitäten in Hildesheim und Maiduguri (Nigeria) im Rahmen eines cotutelle-Verfahrens vorgelegt hat und die bei Peter Lang veröffentlicht wurde. Im Rahmen des Graduiertenkollegs [„Performing Sustainability. Cultures and Development in West-Africa“](#) der Universität Hildesheim (Deutschland), der Universität Maiduguri (Nigeria) und der Universität Cape Coast (Ghana) untersuchen Stipendiat*innen aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive die Rolle von Kunst und Kultureller Bildung in Konfliktsituationen in Westafrika. Das Graduiertenkolleg wird von 2016 bis 2025 vom DAAD aus Mitteln des Bundesministeriums für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) gefördert.

Abstract (Original)

This is an ethnographic study which documents the experiences of victims of violent conflicts, who used dance, music and drama to negotiate their wellbeing, and build resilience and hope. The culturally familiar context used by the victims is a bottom-up approach that generates positive energies enabling them to attain emotional growth and psychological integration; including social skills with which they imagine and work towards a better future. The study found out that the farmers/herders conflict which has plagued the Daudu community and environs perennially from 2011 to date, is characterized by incidents of brutal killings, rape, displacements, destruction of livelihoods and heritage, and this situation challenges the cultural practices and expressions of the people, and by extension the praxis for cultural sustainability. The performances studied are those found amongst the displaced persons who perform for themselves and also to share and communicate their experiences and mobilise for help. This creative endeavour of the displaced persons, which is a consequence of the farmers/herders conflict, targets to tell the story of the displaced and helps in managing their traumatic experiences.

Introduction

It is the thesis of this study that cultural performances are important in managing the collective trauma experiences of victims of violent conflicts as they help victims to attain catharsis, build an intense community spirit, deepen resilience and envision a brighter future.

Generally, violent conflict situations or disasters leave behind them a trail of regrettable consequences such as loss of loved ones, loss of livelihoods, bodily injuries leading to permanent disability or scars which are a constant reminder, horrific memories of carnage, some of which irreparably remain with the parties involved. Most times, these consequences include a mass of victims that will suffer traumatic experiences for a long time; either in their individual lives or as a collective within society. Individuals undergoing trauma experiences have symptomatic manifestations that include sadness, anxiety, depression, guilt, anger, grief, fatigue, pain, confusion, fear, despair, loss of self-esteem, and loss of trust. These traumatic experiences necessarily impact on the social dynamics, processes, structures, and functioning of a collective, or collectives. “Collective” here is defined as a family, an identity group or as a society (on a national, sub-national or trans-national level). It is important to note that the excessive stressful experiences of individuals within a shared geographical space become crystallized into a commonly shared feeling of disorientation, hence collective trauma. Cordula and König (2017) outline four collective identity

markers which combine to hamper learning and integration process of collective trauma, they include: collective narratives and memories of loss and despair; collective victimhood; collective angst; and exclusive values, norms, and mental models. They argue further that while some of these factors have been discussed in the effort to understand the protracted nature of violent conflicts (see for example Volkan 2004 and 1997; Azar 1990; Kriesberg et al. 1989; Kelman 1973), the lens of collective trauma has not been applied thoroughly enough in conflict transformation.

In considering such an application, it is important that spaces of creativity and aesthetics within a given cultural context are considered. According to Danita Walsh (in Lewis and Doyle 2008), “creativity underpins our health and wellbeing” as an enabling process that helps us “learn about, relate to and evolve with life” and is, therefore, an essential component in keeping us connected to the self and to others. For others, creativity is a means of emancipation, as skilfully executed works speak to the social situation of the makers (Riggs 2010). Citing Angus, Riggs (2010:23) opines that “the space in which creativity takes place can help victims reconnect links disconnected through trauma such as finding a sense of meaning, identity, and place”. Angus describes the creative space, where energy, laughter, purposeful activity, the beginnings of trust, creditability, and confidence prevail as “a privileged ground between a community's potential for action and change, and its alienated and deprived members” (see Riggs 2010). This is where the quintessence of the relationship between arts and well-being lies. The focus in this study is on the cultural performances bottom-up approach of the displaced persons in Daudu community of Benue State, Nigeria. Daudu community provides the space for creative performances as a place of refuge for displaced persons fleeing from the violence. The community houses a United Nations High Commission on Refugees’ (UNHCR) shelter facility provided through a partnership with the Benue State Government and the civil society network in Benue; this provides a sense of security and space for performances.

Cultural performance is an umbrella term encapsulating a wide variety of performance genres evident in people’s daily events and embedded as their way of life. These performances could be those events in which a culture’s values are displayed for their perpetuation: rituals such as parades, religious ceremonies, and community festivals as well as conversational storytelling, performances of social and professional roles, and individual performances of race, gender, sexuality, and class. In this way, cultural performances become veritable instruments with which people move through the world as individuals, construct identity, and build community together. The fundamental aesthetics of cultural performances serves a bifurcated function; one is reflective, i.e. showing ourselves to ourselves, and the second is reflexive, which is arousing consciousness of ourselves to see ourselves (Turner 1982). It is in this quintessential role of “showing ourselves to ourselves” (Turner 1982) and in the aroused consciousness to see ourselves that cultural performances become significant and critical mechanisms for managing collective trauma which is either occasioned by violent conflicts or disasters.

It is important to note that performances have the potential to tap into our expressive aspects of body, mind, and spirit through the use of music, sound, imagery, role play, dance, and movement. It is noteworthy too that the performative, beyond its entertainment value, portrays a spectacular representation of a culture, and it is a mirror for entire societies, where individuals gain an understanding of themselves in society, and therefore, in life. This means that the performing arts, and of course cultural performances can be viewed as an expression of a culture’s emotional state while also providing a conglomerate of forms that are all artistic with emotional outlets, creating a symphony of emotions, a

wealth of cultural information from the past, as revealed through dramaturgical enactments. Through the performative, there is created an emotional bond, known as empathy, developed between the performers and the audience. In this way, one can see that the performing arts do not only heal, but also reflect societal sentiments within that healing process. When confronted with social injustice, like the traumatic experiences of the displaced persons, it goes down a little more easily if you have something funny to take your mind off of the pain it brings. Klein elaborates on this concept in the *Healing Power of Humour*: „Humour helps us cope with difficulties in several ways. For one, it instantly draws our attention away from our upset (...). By focusing our energy elsewhere, humour can diffuse our stressful events" (Klein 1989:8). It is against this backdrop that this study considers the medium of cultural performances as appropriate for managing collective trauma amongst victims of farmers/herders conflicts in Daudu Community. Over the years, relations between crop farmers and pastoralist cattle herders have degenerated into violent clashes leading to mass sacking of settled farming communities in central Nigeria.

The farmers/herders crisis in Central Nigeria is characterized by mass atrocities including brutal killings, rape, displacements, destruction of livelihoods and heritage, and creating a generally unfavourable environment for cultural practices and expressions thereby leading to a loss of practices and adaptation of new ways of life in a bid for survival. This situation has sharpened divides which directly threaten the aspiration for inclusive communities. Thus, the ideal of ‘sustainability’ suffers as horrid and new experiences do not only destroy tangible and intangible culture, but also force on the victims new dynamics in their culture and its expressive forms. The displaced persons seek refuge in makeshift camps generally in poor conditions in areas considered safe from the attackers. One of such camps housing victims is in Daudu community. Daudu provides a good variety of study subjects with various degrees of traumatic experiences suitable for the study. It is important to note also that the displaced persons on their own indulge in cultural performances and this forms the basic motivation for this research which is designed as a scientific inquiry into the nature of these performances and how they function in managing collective trauma from the perspective of the displaced persons. This study used the ethnographic approach relying on the critical and performance ethnography modes. Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Observation and audio/visual recordings were used as methods for data gathering.

The Research Problem and Questions

Individual artists, cultural groups and peacebuilders working in areas of violent conflicts have engaged various art-based methods in peacebuilding. These methods include participatory theatre, narra-drama, painting, drawing, radio and television. Artists in every medium – visual arts, theatre, music, dance, literary arts, film, and so on are supporting communities in campaigns of non-violent resistance to abuses of power, creating opportunities for building bridges across differences, addressing legacies of past violence and imagining a new future. However, there is a dearth of scientific studies in Africa by Africans, interrogating the use of art-based approaches in conflict transformation and especially in managing collective trauma arising from these conflicts, particularly in Nigeria. Bisschoff and Van de Peer (2017) posit that the creative representation and aestheticization of trauma and the reception of such creative works are very complex, in particular when considering representations of African trauma and conflict created outside the continent, through global news networks, popular media, and cultural industries. They contend further that “many representations of African conflict by non-Africans, for example, mainstream Hollywood films using African atrocities as a backdrop, have not been useful in creating a multifaceted view of the continent. Rather they

have led to the desensitization of viewers, promoting voyeurism and a type of 'atrocities tourism', both real (...) and imagined (...)" (Bisschoff and Van de Peer 2017:5).

Similarly, Chiang (2008) with the work *Research on Music and Healing in Ethnomusicology and Music Therapy* posited that Ethnomusicology has involved extensive work on documenting traditional music and healing traditions. However, ethnomusicologists have neglected to contribute their knowledge and efforts to healthcare-oriented research while music therapy, on the other hand, has been focusing on the benefit of the patient, but rarely relates its practices to traditional music and healing traditions or non-Western music. Therefore, it is important that studies dealing with arts and wellbeing on the African continent, especially as they help victims of violent conflicts in managing collective trauma, are carried out. In the case of this study, cultural performances are seen as a veritable platform to anchor such an inquiry as they also give insight into the cultural makeup of the group under study. More specifically, the farmers/herders conflict is characterized by mass atrocities including brutal killings, rape, displacements, destruction of livelihoods and heritage. However, trauma management services remain in huge deficit in response to the conflict even as there are no medical trauma specialists attending to the psychoanalytical needs of the victims especially in the area under study – Daudu. Despite the several strategies adopted by stakeholders to sustain peace in the region, art-based approaches have received little or no attention. This research addresses this gap by exploring the potentials and effect of cultural performances in managing collective trauma and promoting wellbeing and peacebuilding amongst victims of farmers/herders' conflicts in Benue State. To clearly explore this research problem, the study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of Cultural Performances in Daudu community of Benue State?
2. What is the functionality of Cultural Performances in the management of collective trauma in victims of farmers/herders' conflicts in Daudu?
3. How can cultural performances be used in the management of collective trauma in victims of farmers/herders' conflicts?
4. What are the challenges and in what ways can they be mitigated in utilizing cultural performances to manage collective trauma in victims of farmers/herders' conflicts?
5. How can cultural policy and instruments of other cultural organizations enhance the effective use of cultural performances for management of collective trauma and the building of inclusive and sustainable communities?

Cultural Performances of the Displaced

The displaced persons in Daudu community do not claim to be of an ethnic extraction other than the *Tiv*, one of the most populous ethnicities in central Nigeria. Thus, the performances found amongst the displaced population in the study community are the same with those of the *Tiv* in terms of nature, form, structure, and cultural aesthetics. However, the thematic preoccupation, and indeed the aesthetic accompaniments of performances within the community of the displaced are unique to the extent of their context of operation. The performances are either an adaptation of old forms to suit their present reality, or some improvisation sufficient for aesthetic functionalism. It is important to accentuate the place of improvisation and spontaneity in the performances of the displaced. It is a key characteristic of the performances that participants spontaneously recreate their experiences of the violence they survived, and other members of the group respond seamlessly to this sudden dynamic introduced

The displaced persons used mainly the song, dance and drama modes in their cultural performances for managing collective trauma. Numerous songs were encountered and collected in the course of the fieldwork. However, a careful review and observation of these songs in performance helped the researcher to narrow down to six songs. These six songs stood out as they created a more engaging atmosphere for a generality of the displaced persons to participate. These songs carry a more holistic picture of their experiences and they have in them more performative nuances that spur the people more into expressive actions. Two of the songs are presented here below:

Song One

<i>Tiv</i>	English
<i>Oo imbya ne mba er nena?</i>	Oh! What's done in a matter as this?
<i>On-Tiv oo imbya ne mba er nena o,</i>	<i>Tiv</i> offspring, what's done in a matter as this?
<i>Oo imbya mba er nena?</i>	Oh! What's done in a matter as this?
<i>Agwei zenda Tiv oo, imbya ne mba er nena</i>	<i>Agwei</i> has sent away the <i>Tiv oo</i> , what's done in a matter as this?
<i>On-Tiv oo imbya mba er nena? (2x)</i>	<i>Tiv</i> offspring, what's done in a matter as this?

In this song, the displaced sing about the general sense of disorientation and helplessness. In the song, the displaced do not seem to know what to do in their volatile circumstances, thus they ask: "What's done in a matter as this?". They address their question to the younger and more energetic youths whom they consider as more knowledgeable in the circumstance and who perhaps would be more proactive to address their woes. The song also makes a sweeping accusation that the "*Agwei*" (a nickname for the herder) has ransacked the *Tiv*, meaning also that it is the entire *Tiv* nation that has been attacked. This conveys collective victimhood and at the same time wins over into sympathy *Tiv* or their friends who may feel safe since they may not be experiencing any physical attack themselves. This, to an extent also implicates all those who in one way or the other could do something to salvage their conditions. The song is also silent about any provocations or retaliations, but rather focuses on the concern for a way out of the circumstances.



Figure 1: Displaced persons in a song and dance session

In a focus group discussion session, the participants specifically articulated that their song performances are lamentations unto their children and others who could help:

Agwei ngu a zenda u we a za gba shighen u genegh u ndivir, nyityôkwagh igenegh je kpaa i fatyô u eren we her. Ve se lu vaan mlyam man se aluer se alu a mbayev kera yô, ve ungwa mlyam ma ujijambaungôôv vev mban ve lu vaan ne.

Mlyam ma se lu vaan man ka sha ci u mbavesen mbara ve ungwa kwagh u Fulani ve lu eren a vese ne. (FGD 2018)

When the *Agwei* (herders) chase after you and you fall, sometimes you dislocate, any other thing at all could happen to you there. That is why we cry out so that if at all we have children out there, let them hear the cry that their old broken mothers are crying.

The lamentation (referring to songs) we do is such that the big people (those in authority) should hear what the Fulani are doing to us. (FGD 2018)

The notion as expressed in the excerpt above presents the essence of the singing endeavour. The displaced persons are convinced that help has to come, but they must also reach out to the world in order to tell by themselves what the challenge is, and also take responsibility in asking for help.

Song Two

Tiv

English

A hia kpa a hia wan mbaior

If they're burnt they should burn; child of a people

Akôr a hia kpa a hiaka uma wase ga

If the yam-seedlings are burnt they should burn, it's not our lives

A hia kpa a hia wan mbaior

If they're burnt they should burn; child of a people

Akôr a hia kpa a hiaka uma wase ga

If the yam-seedlings are burnt they should burn, it's not our lives

Alôgô rumun zwa wase ga,

The *Alôgô* do not accept our tribe

Torkula Fulani rumun zwa wase ga

Torkula Fulani do not accept our tribe

Ior mban zua zwa a vese m karayem o

These people have ganged up against us, I'm on the run

Akôr a hia kpa a hiaka uma wase ga

If the yam-seedlings are burnt they should burn, it's not our lives

In song two, the general message is about the value the displaced attach to their lives above material things and properties. In this song, the displaced people dismiss with outright nonchalance their burnt yam-seedlings, and by extension their entire crops and livelihoods, saying that those things are not their lives, meaning it is more important to them to be alive.

The song also articulates the perceived conspiracy against the *Tiv* ethnic group by their neighbours, the *Arago* (pronounced *Alôgô* by the *Tiv*) and the *Fulani* to whom the *Arago* have been a long-time vassal. In the song, the displaced performers go further to petition *Torkula*, the then king of the *Tiv* people that the *Fulani* and *Arago* do not like their tribe and have thus conspired against them that is why they are on the run.

Dramatic Enactments

Dramatic nature of storytelling as practiced in community groups is a prevalent performance mode in Africa. It is usually the narrative content of the storytelling that is approximated into dramatic enactments. Improvised music such as handclapping, foot-tapping, vocalizations, or some piece of metal or wood found on the ground. This performance mode is almost innate with the *Tiv* such that even in the face of turmoil and the traumatizing experiences of the displaced, they find it convenient to dramatize their experiences. What is most interesting here is that the displaced persons did not wait for some professional therapist to prompt them to action or organize them in like manner. From the depths of their emotions, they reached within themselves and to their cultural repertoire, and from there adapted existing materials while also creating new ones in order to communicate their situation and also enhance their well-being.

The dramatic enactments performed by the displaced are completely improvisational. They do not have the kind of structure known to the West, just as they are episodic. Anyone from the crowd could start action based on the common experiences the victims shared as they fled violence. However, no two episodes are played at the same time, once one member of the group starts up an action, the rest of the members join in by doing complimentary action of finding improvised props and other elements to compliment the scene. In this way, several episodes get performed thereby creating an enriching experience of their circumstances.



Figure 2: Displaced persons dramatizing how they fled with their belongings (Ukuma 2018)

Key Research Findings

Prominent amongst the findings was the function these performances play for the displaced that enhance the management of trauma amongst them. The question of the identity of the displaced persons was very important to them as it was thematized in their songs. It was important that they communicated exactly not just who they are as an ethnic group, but also as the victims in the violent relationships between the herders and farmers. There was a clear indication by participants in the study that their performances very much represent who they are, whether they are directly saying who they are in the songs and dances, or whether they convey other subtle messages that are peculiar with them or their aspirations, it all sums up to defining who they are. This strong notion of identity was profoundly described by an FGD participant thus: „*Well, that is who we are, of course. You can tell from our performances that we are farmers, we are peace loving, we love our brothers, we care about our land. What else?*” This submission resonates with the wider literature on identity construction which point the fact that dance, music, puppetry, masquerading, sculpture, painting and naming are all invaluable in gathering information about people or understanding their cultural ideologies (Ezeifeke 2019; Jeannotte 2016; Itulua-Abumere 2014; Ugbem 2013; Cerulo 1997). Participants described the issues of identity in various ways they perceived as crucial.

Propagation was highlighted as a sub-theme of identity. Participants described their performances to be about promoting who they are and projecting this notion to themselves and the world around them. They described the performances as “*our thing*”, “*our being*”, “*our practices*”. A participant was emphatic the “*practices mark us out as unique*” and “*make us easily known*”. This notion resonated with the participants at the FGD session. This underscores that the participants see identity to be perceptions or perspectives that are engaged in defining the self, a group or groups, ethnicities, and other social elements that may bind people together. Scholars like Hult (1999), Huntington (1997) and Clark (1990) also hold a similar view as they posit that theoretical constructs emanating from discourse of national identity have been erected around the concept that certain distinct elements mark out a culture and makes the same adaptable to other cultures and that the totality of these elements constitute its national identity. Other issues were ‘communication’ and ‘documentation’. It was important to the displaced that their experiences are communicated to the world around them and beyond. They hoped that such communication will bring them the much needed help. They also hoped that their experiences are never forgotten so documenting them in songs and dramatic enactments will ensure that they are passed unto generations after them.

Another finding of the study is that the extent of knowledge on the effect of cultural performances in managing collective trauma amongst the people was significant. Participants knew that the performances were a way of helping them relieve themselves of the burden of their excruciating experiences as they find in them positive and healthy energies which help in releasing the overwhelming emotions that envelope them. A participant said:

„Kwagh u ngu ana ve se mba gberen amo ne kpa shi se vinen yô, shien u genegh ishima ngi a vihi u man we a gberen amo yô, Aôndo ngu a na jijingi u msaaniyol ken a we; nahan shien u ka we a hii u vinen kpa u kera fa ga. Shien u gen je yô, ka u vaan kpashi u vinen" (FGD 2017).

„What makes us sing these songs and dance, sometimes when you are sad and you begin to sing songs, you get enveloped by some soothing feeling, and because of that you do not even know when you begin to dance. Sometimes you will be crying but still dancing" (FGD 2017).

Iorapuu (2019) asserts that the people themselves, even if they are not saying it, are aware of the effect of cultural performances in managing their traumatic experiences. He opines further that „the people themselves, despite their pains, their traumatic experiences, are able to gather some energy to recall to performances, their pains, trying to console themselves to deal with their shock and their pain, and even encourage themselves that all of this notwithstanding, let’s pull together and move on”.

Another finding was ‘subjectivity’ which was evident in the extent of individual trauma experiences, perceptions about the performance mode being a serious approach, and religious sentiments. The gravity of these experiences made some displaced persons shut down completely. This made such persons withdrawn and never disposed to participating in anything. This cannot mean that the cultural performance mechanism is not effective, but it is rather challenged because the target group may generally suffer this type of severe trauma and may therefore not be disposed to availing themselves for the process.

Also, the men considered the cultural performances mechanism a less serious one, only fitting for women and children. This disposition is no doubt rooted in the framing of African masculinities where right from boyhood, the males are socialised to operate within a certain cluster of norms, values and behavioural

patterns expressing explicit and implicit expressions of how men should conduct and represent themselves to others. From this kind of background therefore, the men may not only stay away from participating but also retain a bias against the approach. Such a disposition will take root in their subconscious and thus resist any effect the cultural performance mechanism could have in alleviating their trauma experiences.

Religious sentiments inherent in some of the displaced persons determined whether they participated in the cultural performances or not, irrespective of their effect in managing collective trauma. Religious dispositions are crucial especially to devout adherents of Christianity who consider cultural materials to be profane. Even though from the materials encountered in the field, one could not identify that which is profane, it holds still that cultural performances generally are considered fetish and associated with unbelievers. Therefore, people suffering trauma and who identify as Christians may be averse indulging this approach, except where they find a homogenous group of their kind and they select the material that they deem appropriate according to the dictates of their doctrines.

Furthermore, as people who are used to communal lifestyles, group action helps them respond better to their circumstances as they are able to simulate the communal lifestyles they are used to. From their communal philosophy, shared burden is considered to be no longer too heavy, so as they continue to group together and perform together and generate positive energies amongst themselves, they feel that not all is lost. This makes dealing with hurtful feeling less severe even if it is momentarily. This resonates directly with Turner's (1969:132) idea of *communitas*. *Communitas* which is Latin for "unstructured community" in which people are equal, or the very spirit of community manifests as the cultural performances by the displaced persons of Daudu galvanize an intense community spirit, the feeling of great social equality, solidarity, and togetherness. This indeed typifies a characteristic of people experiencing liminality together.

Conclusion

The thrust of this study is the generation of evidence on the effect of a non-Western approach to wellbeing as seen in the role cultural performances have played in managing collective trauma amongst displaced persons in Daudu community of Benue State. The evidence further underscores the notion that bottom-up approaches that are context specific best suit any sustainable development initiative as transplantation of context through predesigned templates can be problematic and do not inherently empower the target population. Such a viable mechanism can only be given potency through legal operational frameworks like a cultural policy to guide the actions of state and non-state actors who will engage it, while also enhancing the quintessence of cultural performances in contemporary African society, in a manner that guarantees their availability in the future.

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Anmerkungen

Der Artikel basiert auf den Ergebnissen einer Dissertation im Rahmen des Graduiertenkollegs „[Performing Sustainability. Cultures and Development in West-Africa](#)“ der **Universität Hildesheim** (Deutschland), der Universität Maiduguri (Nigeria) und der Universität Cape Coast (Ghana). Die Stipendiat*innen untersuchen aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive die Rolle von Kunst und Kultureller Bildung in Konfliktsituationen in Westafrika. Das Graduiertenkolleg wird von 2016 bis 2025 vom DAAD aus Mitteln des Bundesministeriums für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) gefördert. Die Wissensplattform KULTURELLE BILDUNG ONLINE dankt den Mitarbeiter*innen des Instituts für Kulturpolitik der Universität Hildesheim für die Ermöglichung dieses Wissenstransfers.

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