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**Re-theorising empowerment through participation as a performance in space:
beyond a theory of tyranny to a transformative praxis**

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Abstract

Using the example of participatory HIV projects in Africa this paper explores the limits of the post-structuralist critique recently offered in the book *Participation: the New Tyranny?* It argues that while participation is undoubtedly a form of power, some forms of power are more dangerous than others. Indeed, precisely because there is no escape from power there is no escaping the necessity to deploy less dominating forms of power (like participation) in order to destabilise more dominating arrangements (such as those framing behaviour around HIV). The paper suggests that in its most radical and self-reflexive guise participatory power can be a mode of governance that facilitates resistance and transformation. Thus, despite current theoretical predilections, this paper argues that projects of ‘empowerment’ remain a practical necessity if ordinary people are to develop the means to out-flank existing frameworks of power in any sustainable way. However, empowerment must be re-conceptualised as an effect of discourses and practices (such as those that circulate within and constitute participation) that require repeated performance in order to stabilise their effects on agency. Rather than being a hazard to participation, this Foucauldian inspired reading does much to explain the mechanics and barriers to sustained empowerment particularly if participation and empowerment are understood as embedded in and constitutive of particular material sites and spaces. The paper concludes that a key challenge for the future is to find ways to facilitate the sustained re-performance of empowerment beyond the carefully managed but temporary socio-spatial arenas of specific participatory projects.

Introduction:

This is a paper that I have been trying to write for a very long time.¹ It emerges from an ongoing struggle to productively combine feminist, post-structuralist and participatory theory in ways that illuminate and facilitate work around HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. After many presentations and submissions I was eventually able to rework my ideas in response to the publication of Cooke and Kothari's (2001a) excellent book *Participation: The New Tyranny?* while the conference *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation*, organised to review the impact of that book, provided me with an opportunity to present those ideas. In essence, what this paper attempts to do is accept the post-structuralist critique offered by *The New Tyranny?* while at the same time suggesting that participatory approaches are nevertheless capable of facilitating *Transformation*. I come to this conclusion by refusing to be satisfied with the project of deconstruction and by exploring how the practice of participation can interrogate the limits post-structuralist theory. What emerges is a realisation that power cannot be avoided but must be worked with. This recognition necessitates a re-valuation of the notion of empowerment, but also its re-theorisation along post-structuralist lines. This in turn invites contemplation of the spatial embeddedness of the discourses and practices whose effects are empowerment because these present important new challenges for a renewed and more theoretically aware participatory praxis, post *The New Tyranny?*.

The contribution of the 'The New Tyranny?'

Participation: The New Tyranny? (Cooke and Kothari, 2001a) provides a stinging critique of participation but is certainly not the first critical evaluation. At least six of the key criticisms raised in this volume were previously recognised by contributors to the pro-participatory volume *The Myth of Community* (Guijt and Shah, 1998a)², namely: (i) 'Participation' is a discourse which can be attached to a wide variety of political agendas: (ii) Participatory approaches can re-inscribe the very power relations they seek to overcome if they are 'delivered' as a technocratic cargo': (iii) Practitioners of participation have under-theorised the notion of 'community' and have tended to view 'local' communities as discrete, socially homogenous entities and while seeking coherent and consensual 'community views':

¹ My thanks to the many people who have commented on the various incarnations of this paper: (a) *PRA praxis, beyond the representational Impasse?: struggling between theory and practice in the context of gender focused HIV research in rural Zimbabwe* (University of Glasgow, 27 November 1998): (b) *Re-theorising power, empowerment and spatiality in PRA praxis* (Institute of development studies University of Sussex, 13 May 1999): (c) *Space for Empowerment: Participatory HIV Education Programmes in Rural Zimbabwe* (Britain Zimbabwe Research Day, St Antony's College, Oxford, 12 June 1999): (d) *Beyond the representational Impasse? Retheorising power, empowerment and spatiality in PRA praxis* (paper rejected by *Antipode*, 3 October 1999): (e) *Re-theorising empowerment as a performance in space; the challenge for engaged human geography and grass roots participatory praxis* (Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers Annual conference, 3-6 January 2000: University of Sussex, Brighton): (f) *Participatory research as ethical geography and the ethics and geographies of participatory research* (Association of American Geographers 96th Annual Meeting, 4-8 April 2000, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania): (g) *Beyond 'The New Tyranny': a post-structural and spatialised understanding of empowerment through participation* (*Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation* Conference, University of Manchester, 27-28 February 2003).

² See also Mosse, 1994: Baylies and Bujra, 1995: Cornwall, 1998.

(iv) ‘Insider-outsider’ divisions have been over-emphasised and ‘local knowledge’ romanticised while inter-community divisions have been overlooked and the positive contribution of ‘external’ agents underplayed: (v) Action at the local scale has been over-emphasised while the need to ‘scale-up’ and link local interventions to wider processes and institutions has been neglected: Finally (vi) participation is not a panacea for the problems of development, but has its own practical and theoretical tensions. Unfortunately most of *The New Tyranny’s? authors* give insufficient credit to this ongoing ‘internal’ critique or dismiss it as insufficiently profound (Cooke and Kothari, 2001b). Like previous ‘external’ critics, they seem happy to conflate the many manifestations of participation and judge them all by the worst-case scenario (see Long and Van Der Ploeg, 1989a: Villarreal, 1992: Long and Villarreal, 1996). Thus ‘participation’ is condemned by association with everything from reworked World Bank modernisation theory (Henkel and Stirrat, 2001) and post-fordist management techniques (Taylor 2001) to Imperial anti-insurgency strategies (Hailey, 2001) and cold-war communist ‘brainwashing’ techniques (Cooke, 2001). While this reveals the ‘polyvalent’ qualities of ‘participation’ (i.e. it’s a discourse that can be attached to a wide variety of political agendas and deployed to produce quite different effects - See Foucault, 1978, p. 101 and Clegg, 1989, p. 154) this heterogeneity also *includes* radical, self-critical efforts to pursue ‘deep participation’. Just because ‘participation’ has been used to serve conservative agendas does not mean that could never be deployed through other epistemologies to more radical ends (Kesby, 2000a).

Having said this, *The new tyranny?* does offer the first coherent post-structural analysis of participation, and here its universal evaluation of all expressions of participation is justified. Not only does the book recognise that the ‘shallow’ use of participation is the dominant paradigm, it goes beyond the suggestion that the problem lies only with the ‘abuse’ of the *techniques* by those uncommitted to the *philosophy* of participation (e.g. see Maguire, 1987: Lather, 1991: Seeley *et al.*, 1992: Woelk, 1992: Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995: Mayoux, 1995: Walters and Manicom, 1996; Hagey, 1997: Smith and Blanc, 1997). Rather the book develops a Foucauldian analysis that undermines the comfortable assumption that participatory research and development are *alternative* approaches untouched by power. It questions whether advocates really are simply involved in projects that redistribute power and provide marginalized communities with the means to a voice among the powerbrokers of development, and marginal groups a voice within their own communities. *The New Tyranny’s* most controversial assertion is that even when participation is being pursued most ‘deeply’ it is still a form of power with potentially dominating effects.

A Foucauldian understanding of power:

Before *The New Tyranny*, most in the field of participatory development implicitly held a ‘sovereign’ view of power. In this paradigm, power is imagined as a commodity concentrated in the hands of a few. It emanates from the top down and from the centre outwards and is exercised instrumentally to dominate marginal groups and recreate ideologies that maintain relations of dominance. Power is a zero sum game polarised between the winners who have it and the losers who lack it (e.g. see Maguire, 1987; Kinnaird and Hyma, 1993). This model has underlain discussions on everything from the imposition of research agendas and development strategies by outside academics and government officials to men’s refusal to use condoms with

their female partners. While the post-structural view of power developed by *The New Tyranny?* does not dispute these relationships as *effects* of power, it does challenge the established understanding of how these effects are produced.

Foucault begins with the microphysics of power's production. From his post-structural perspective (Foucault, 1977, p. 194; 1978, p.92-102), power is not concentrated nor is it a commodity to be held, seized, divided or distributed by individuals. It is a much more decentred and ubiquitous force acting everywhere because it comes from everywhere. For Foucault, power is not inherent within powerful subjects but is dispersed throughout the complex networks of discourse, practices and relationships that position them as powerful and which justify and facilitate their authority in relation to others (Clegg, 1989, p. 207). Nor does he believe power to be inherently negative, limiting or repressive; rather it is inherently *productive* (of actions, effects and subjects) even when at its most oppressive. Thus, power 'governs' not simply by refusal but also by permission; by telling people what they must be, by enabling and conditioning the possibilities for their action and by constituting regimes of truth by which they may understand and live their lives. This kind of power is not mostly absent except when exercised; Foucault suggests it is constantly at work within the discourses and practices that structure daily life. Following from this, he stresses that the effects of power are not intrinsically stable but *appear to be so* for as long as the knowledges, representations and practices constituting positionings and assemblages continue to be reproduced. It is not just elites that do this work; *all* individuals simultaneously carry and undergo power. Dominated subjects are implicated in transmitting and reproducing the very discourses and practices that constitute them as inferior even as they act out their social defined roles and subjectivities. For Foucault, power is most effective and most insidious where it is 'normalised'; where self-expectation, self-regulation and self-discipline generate compliant subjects who by their own thought, words and deeds actively reproduce hegemonic assemblages without being 'forced' to do so.

Foucault generated this model of power through his investigation of the development of 'disciplinary society' in modern Western Europe. Nevertheless, his notion that power circulates within discourses and practices has a much wider utility. For example, in my own work I have utilised this approach to the understanding of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial gender relations in Zimbabwe and their embeddedness in space (Kesby, 1996, 1999) as well as the social embeddedness of HIV in this context (Kesby, 2000b). I have explored the network of discourses and practices that simultaneously constitute gendered identities and local and domestic spaces in ways that position men as powerful subjects and women as dependant ones. Traditionally, communities and homes (the centres of all social, economic and political activity) were constituted patrilineally which conferred masculinity with a sense of permanence, presence and authority. Femininity meanwhile, was imbued with a sense of transience, otherness and difference because women never quite 'belonged' anywhere. Marriage practices meant daughters were destined to leave their father's place while wives were 'outsiders' in their husband's realm. Women's dependence on male guardians was a daily reminder that they should 'know their place' (since they were never quite in *their place*). Exchanged for cattle and transferred between homesteads at marriage, women disciplined themselves to fulfil their social roles as producers/reproducers lest they face the shame and economic hardship of being divorced/returned (or never married/transferred). Despite huge

upheavals and change during the colonial period, this network of discourse and practices has been reproduced in old and new ways and their power effects still shape domestic space and gender identities in contemporary Zimbabwe. Thus, women who 'know their place' find it difficult to initiate discussion of sexual risk or condom use within the domestic arena despite the prevalence of high-risk behaviour among both men and women. I would suggest that while the *effects* of power here are that men dominate women in sexual relations; their source lies in the discourses and practices simultaneously constituting gender and domestic space, not in the hands of men themselves. This is even the case where men use violence and coercion to obtain sex (which they frequently do see Wood *et al.*, 1998: Kesby, 2000b), although this may seem an obvious instance of 'sovereign' power. Men can act as they do because society condones the 'disciplining' of women who are 'not *Self*-disciplined enough' to respect their husband's authority and to 'perform their conjugal duties'. Moreover, women reluctantly recognise men's 'right' to behave this way (although attitudes are changing) and even use sex after a violent episode as a means to calm their partner, mend relations and forestall threats of divorce/eviction (Kesby, *et al.*, 2002).

While Foucault's understanding of power is extremely useful to the analysis of something as patently dominating as unequal gender relations, it has a sting in the tail. For him, power is everywhere; it permeates and constitutes *all* social relations. Thus, even humane, just, liberating and emancipating discourses and practices are entangled with power and contain forces of domination (Foucault, 1977: Sharpe *et al* 2000).

Participation as a form of power:

For advocates of participatory approaches a Foucauldian critique can seem threatening. Rather than being a means to distance oneself from the power relations inherent in the processes of research and development, participatory approaches turn out to *be* forms of power whose democratic principles, techniques and social relations can be deconstructed to reveal dominating attributes. The critique developed in *The New Tyranny?* (and elsewhere) makes the following penetrating critique:

First: although once marginal, participation is now so prevalent as to constitute a 'new orthodoxy' in development. A certain legitimacy has emerged around the approach that makes other forms of intervention and investigation seem unethical or invalid (Clever, 2001). This closure can make 'participation' a dominating form of knowledge that excludes other possibilities for research and action (Long and Villarreal 1996: Henkel and Stirrat, 2001).

From this "tyranny of techniques" (Cooke and Kothari, 2001b), a second problem flows: practitioner's enthusiasm for the utility and legitimacy of participation can obscure rather than reveal 'local knowledges' (Long and Van der Ploeg, 1989: Long 1989a: Lather, 1991: Patai, 1991: Villarreal 1992: Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995: Long and Villarreal, 1996: Mohan, 1999: 2001). This is particularly true of technocrats who view participation's technologies as neutral tools (Clever, 2001). In fact the maps, matrixes, sensitively managed discussion groups and famously 'relaxed approach' are already laden with the perspectives, logic, values and priorities of western experts and these shape and determine the knowledge they produce (see Long, 1992b: Mosse, 1994: Robinson-Pant, 1996: Kothari's 2001: and Mohan, 1999:

2001). However, there is more at stake than issues of 'indigenouness'. Even if practitioners utilised local forms of representation such as dance, song and story telling as a basis for participatory work (see Mohan, 2001) the approach would still constitute a frame through which participants' knowledge *becomes* (see Henkel and Stirrat, 2001). Thus, while participation is usually presented as a means to *reveal* subjugated knowledges and access silenced voices, its technologies and social relations actually *create* new forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. They summarise and condense the complexities of everyday life and produced linear and formalised representations (Kothari 2001). For example a diagram representing contexts for sexual activity (see Kesby, 2000b) generates visual, discursive and public ways of knowing things that were once performed, non-discursive and privately experienced. Moreover, while facilitators are usually regarded as benign moderators, the discourses and practices of participation actually constitute them as domineering agents who determine both *what* can be know and *how* it can be known (Guijt, Kisadha and Mukasa, 1998: Hailey 2001). This is "the tyranny of decision-making and control" (Cooke and Kothari, 2001b). So for example, the legitimacy that 'participation' brings to an HIV study can disguise the external imposition of this sexual health agenda on people with many other problems (Wallman, 1997: 1998) while the efficient management of community discussion can suppress particular experiences and alternative agendas even as they ascertain the 'general community' view on 'the topic under review' (Mosse, 1994: Long and Villarreal, 1996). Finally consultants who seek community consensus without recognising the existence of *competing* local knowledges can end up consolidating dominant social norms by re-constituting them through the legitimating frameworks of participatory knowledge ("the tyranny of the group", Cooke and Kothari, 2001b). In these various ways therefore, the production or participatory knowledge produces rather than uncovers truth and is inseparable form the exercise of power (Kothari, 2001). As such, participatory approaches do not escape the post-structural critique of representation levelled at other forms of research (See Clifford and Marcus, 1986: Mohan; 2001).

A third element of the critique reveals participation to be form of what Foucault calls *governmentality*. This term relates to the ways in which subjectivity is constituted within a constellation of powers and the way people are implicated in continuously and permanently governing themselves as an effect of those powers (Clayton, 2000a). Thus the discourses and practices of participation powerfully govern the possibilities of behaviour, reflection, representation and action within a given arena of research or intervention. They are powerfully productive of new subject positions: principally that of 'participant' (see Henkel and Stirrat, 2001). Within the bounds of a project 'participants' must learn to constitute themselves as equals to their peers; as part of a collective; as responsible for their own progress; as self-reflective, self-policing agents engaged in a rolling process of critical and rational self-analysis. I am particularly aware that participatory HIV work involves such governmentality since it explicitly seeks to govern the possible parameters for social behaviour and insists that participants constantly inspect and regulate their most intimate actions (Kesby *et al.*, 2003a). Here 'participation' seems inseparable from what Foucault calls biopower, by which he meant the techniques of self-surveillance that subjugate bodies and whole populations to hegemonic frameworks of power (Clayton, 2000b). Through participation people establish that they are requiring of intervention and become implicated in normalising the discourses and practices of participation. Meanwhile, participation's discursive claim to 'inclusively' excludes

those who decline the opportunity to participate while its 'legitimacy' makes their resistance 'invalid' (see Cleaver, 2001: Kothari, 2001). Finally, Henkel and Stirrat (2001) suggest that through participation people are drawn into becoming subjects who are compliant with broader social, economic and political rationalities of modernisation: this they say, makes empowerment through participation tantamount to what Foucault calls subjugation.

Kothari (2001) summarises the existing post-structural critique of participation using the trope of performance. The arenas of a given project are like a stage on which participants are invited to perform dramatised reproductions of their complex lives in ways that make sense to an external audience. She characterises this context as 'front-stage'; a place in which performances are enacted in order to make an impression in public life. They cannot therefore, she claims, allow performers to be sincere (read; give an *authentic* account) because they avoid/are devoid of the 'back-stage'; places where 'unrehearsed', 'private' performances, 'not intended for public consumption', take place in rehearsal for the production of front-stage performances. Rather, these performances are 'contrived' by facilitators who act as stage-managers and directors scripting events in ways conducive to project objectives and using genres and props that are alien to the performers. Those who lack the skills or talent to perform on this stage or who simply avoid it, are excluded from the spaces in which the legitimised, new front-stage performances are being sponsored and produced (Cleaver, 2001: Kothari 2001).

As is common among those employing a post-structuralist perspective, the authors of *The New Tyranny?* are long on the need to deconstruct the object of their critique by exposing its entanglements with power, but short on solutions to the problems they raise. The book offers little to replace the energy, enthusiasm and optimism that used to surround the use of participatory approaches. Their reading of post-structuralism is that its logic demands relentless, tireless deconstruction of the powers that govern our analysis and action. Thus Henkel and Stirrat (2001) call for an 'Anthropology of development' that focuses less on the people "out there" and more on a self-reflexive critique of "the whole process of 'development': its discourse, institutions and practices". For her part, Kothari (2001) evokes resistance to and subversion of, the 'tyranny of participation'. Drawing on Foucault's maxim that wherever there is power there are also opportunities for resistance (Foucault 1978 p.95), she urges performers to delude their external audience and in this way perhaps become empowered. Taylor (2001) meanwhile, seeks a 'genuinely radical' 'challenge from below' involving a '*spontaneous* coming together of different individuals and groups who see their common subordination to the social and economic power-relations of capitalism'.

The limits of the existing post-structural critique of participation

While I welcome and agree with the post-structural critique offered by *The New Tyranny?* I believe it is limited in several significant ways. First I think its tone is far too pessimistic. My own experience of using participatory techniques (Kesby, 2000a: b) and evaluating participatory HIV education and empowerment programs in Africa (Kesby *et al*, 2002) make me want to remain optimistic about the potential of

participatory approaches. Take for example, the *Stepping-Stones*³ programme which uses a manual and illustrative video to guide facilitators and participants through a suggested sequences of eighteen, three-hour exercises over twelve weeks addressing core issues surrounding HIV in their communities. Discussion on sexual health are linked to others about alcohol abuse, money and household decision-making and the hopes and fears of young people. Later sessions develop assertiveness and explore ways in which people can change their behaviour and prepare for the future, even in the face of death. Peer group meetings are interspersed with mixed sessions helping individuals, peer groups and communities to explore their different social, sexual and psychological needs and to analyse the communication blocks they face. While a rather directive approach to participation, *Stepping-Stones* attempts through the intervention of outsiders to enable participants to reflect on their own experiences using techniques such as role-play and diagrammatic visualisation. Crucially the program provides people (particularly women) with an arena within which to ‘rehearse for reality’ the alternative social interactions they have explored (see Welbourn, 1995: 1998: Gordon and Phiri, 2000: Jewkes, 2000: Strategies for Hope, 2001). Far from simply extolling the virtues of indigenous understandings (see Mohan and Stokke 2000: Cleaver, 2001: Mohan: 2001), projects like this can help identify the limits of local knowledge, break silences and improve communication around HIV/AIDS and go some way to empower Africans *themselves* to renegotiate their own socio-sexual identities and behaviour (Cornwall and Welbourn 2000: Kesby, 2003b). Evaluations suggest that the programme is having many positive impacts. Certainly domestic relations seem to improve among participants; violence and alcohol consumption reduces while negotiation about household expenditure and safe sex improves. Participants also report a greater willingness to care for those with AIDS, to write wills⁴ and discuss sexual matters with children. There is also some evidence that condoms use has increased and that women have become more confident about attending public meeting (Welbourn, 1998: Kesby *et al.*, 2002).

My positive feelings toward participation are coloured by this context (you will make your own judgement as to whether my arguments have utility in the contexts you know best) and it seems to me that in the context of sub-Saharan Africa’s HIV pandemic, participation is not the *most* oppressive form of power that people will ever encounter. Thus, while I agree with Foucault (1983, p. 343) that “everything is dangerous” (by which he meant that even emancipatory discourse are systems of power with the capacity to dominate), I think it is important to establish that some things are more dangerous than others. Foucault’s own death from an AIDS related illness in 1984 illustrates this. Had he lived, Foucault might well have characterised contemporary safe-sex discourse as a form of power the productive effects of which are bound to be resisted (see Kesby *et al.*, 2003a). Nevertheless his own experiences in the gay bathhouses of late 1970s San Francisco (see Miller, 2000) would have been a lot less dangerous if this form of biopower had been pervasive enough to subjugate his and others anatomical performances at that time.⁵

³ *Stepping-Stones* is run by the NGO ActionAid and local partners across the continent.

⁴ Under both the general and the customary legal systems in Zimbabwe, the absence of a will results in most of a dead man’s property devolving to his male relatives. As a result widows can be dispossessed of land, homes and other valuable property.

⁵ It is essential to constitute such forms of Biopower in the African context, at least until an affordable vaccine is found or something other than sexual relations is *proved* to be the major

Secondly, although advocates of participation have been accused of placing themselves at the centre of the development process by self-consciously suggesting that they can make a difference if they only learn to let the other speak (see Mohan, 1999: Mohan and Stokke, 2000), I believe that this is much more of a problem for the kind of ‘Anthropology of development’ proposed by Henkel and Stirrat (2001). Coming from critical Human Geography which not yet caught in the tyrannical grip of a participatory paradigm but which is replete with self-reflexivity, I am attracted to participation’s practical attempts to make *others*’ decision-making, self-analysis and action central to what research might be about (Kesby 2000a: 2003b). Thus rather than an anthropology of development, I prefer Mohan’s (1999: 2001) call for an exploration of dialogic research that recognises the limitations of all subject positions (such as those of ‘outsiders’ and various groups of ‘insiders’). However, it seems to me that the participatory arena is precisely the kind of material space in which it might actually be possible to “work... the hyphen between dualisms” (Mohan, 1999, 50) and where the textual spaces opened up by complex academic debates could begin to have some practical effects on the ground.

My third problem with the *The New Tyranny?* is that its authors limit themselves to using post-structuralism simply to deconstruct participation and fail to consider whether a discussion of participation could help re-theorise post-structuralism. It is my belief that post-structuralist critique can *and must* say more than that power is ubiquitous and ‘resistance’ (not least to ‘participation’) is the best that can be hoped for. Calls for resistance to all forms of power must seem a little intangible to those faced with a combination of poverty, gender inequality and HIV risk in southern Africa, and perhaps require a certain privileged positionality to appear tenable. As Whitford (1994 in Robinson, 2000) has observed; in political terms, while the imagined stability of power immobilises, so do calls for its perpetual disruption.

Fourthly, in the context of my work the evocation of people to ‘resist’ their subjection to participation is problematic not least because they need practical means to resist HIV transmission *more* than they need to resist the power effects of participatory HIV projects. Moreover, while ‘resistance’ is readily evoked in *The New Tyranny?* its meaning is poorly-theorised: (i) there is a risks of re-introducing the very binary logic for which participation is criticised (see Kothari, 2001: Mohan, 2001), this time in the form ‘power: bad/resistance: good (or as good as can be expected)’. In fact resistance cannot be viewed as powers’ polar opposite, but must itself be seen as entangled with domination (Sharpe *et al*, 2000). *The New Tyranny’s* own account makes this point if we remember that participation (now accused of tyranny), originated as a form of resistance to earlier orthodoxies. (ii) Furthermore, the reification of ‘resistance’ is itself ‘dangerous’ since not all forms of resistance can be celebrated. Sometimes it is motivated by reactionary principals intent on re-fixing forms of power far more domineering than those constituted by participation; the desire to maintain the marginalized position of women and youth for example. Besides, participants hardly need encouragement to resist, and are more than capable of transforming interventions at the interface between external agencies and local

cause of rapid HIV transmission in this region (e.g. recent claims that reuse of contaminated hypodermic needles is the root cause of 60% of infections in Africa, see BBC, 2003).

communities (Long, 1992a,b c and Long and Villarreal, 1996 e.g. reinterpreting assertive language techniques as traditional politeness in ways that reinforce as much as challenge dominant gendered frameworks see Kesby *et al.*, 2002). (iii) A silence surrounds the catalysts and frameworks that will make 'resistance' practicable. Thus while Taylor (2001) claims that participation must be 'spontaneous' if it is to be authentic not contrived, his implicit belief that Marxist discourse will frame a more 'authentic consciousness' only escapes deconstruction as itself a form of power/knowledge because it remains muted. (iv) Finally, while advocates of participation certainly need a better understanding of individual action (see Cleaver, 2001), the post-structural critique advanced in *The New Tyranny?* would *also* benefit from a closer inspection of the connections between structure and agency as they relate to the nature and sources of resistance. The book's lack of clarity about the notion of resistance leaves readers caught between two impossible positions; on the one hand, yearning for a form of knowledge and action beyond power and on the other, feeling that if power is so pervasive and 'unauthored' then it is impossible to feel optimistic about the possibilities of 'authentic/spontaneous' resistance (see Sharpe *et al.*, 2000).

Beyond 'The new Tyranny?': Understanding unstable frameworks of power and the processes (and sources) of resistance and change:

If we are to say something more (practical) than that power is everywhere, and must be resisted everywhere, a closer reading of post-structuralist notions of power is necessary particularly as they relate to the processes of change. While Foucault's work stresses the pervasiveness of power, it also emphasises its instability: assemblages of discourse and practices require constant reproduction and re-performance, if they are to survive, appear unchanging and resist transformation. Notwithstanding these processes of reproduction however, constellations of power continually undergo mutation, dislocation, change and occasionally, transformation. The key question is how?

Rather structural interpretations of Foucault's ideas emphasise subject's constitution through structures of meaning that compel them to repetitively re-perform and re-signify these same norms. Herein change might be explained as occurring via two kinds of accidental and gradual systemic 'slippage' (see Butler 1990 in Nelson, 1999; Robinson 2000): In the first case flesh and blood bodies may fail to 'flawlessly' re-perform the discourse/practices constituting them. This occurs because discourses that seize upon and reify particular corporeal capacities (e.g. child bearing) cannot entirely preclude alternative interpretations or wholly erase the effects of other corporeal capacities (e.g. intellect) that contradict the dominant readings of another capacity. So for example 'women' who occasionally undertaking 'men's work' or decision-making roles insufficiently re-enact dominant constructs of 'femininity', thereby initiating contradictions in and transformation of, the meaning of femininity. Second, a surplus of meaning can open up between a discursive pairing in ways that subvert a dominant interpretation of their relationship. For example heterosexuality requires homosexuality as its deviant other, but at the same time provides homosexuality with a presence that may gain its own trajectory and disturb the supposed normality of heterosexuality.

While 'systemic slippages' undoubtedly occur, the elimination of human agency in Butler's reading of Foucault is unfortunate and underplays the emphasis that Foucault placed in his later work on agents' ability to self-fashion themselves which offers a more coherent notion of social change and resistance (Sharpe, *et al.*, 2000). As Nelson (1999) argues, an enthusiasm for post-structuralism must not lead to the neglect of Giddens' (1984) insights into the complex relationship between 'structure' and 'agency'. These need to be reworked within the new post-structuralist genre particularly by those for whom spatially embedded, *intentional* human practices and historical/geographical *change* are central concerns (Nelson, 1999). My own empirical studies in Zimbabwe concur with this assessment and illustrate the 'conscious' strategising of individuals as they seek to exploit opportunities to provoke change and/or tactically evoke available discourse and practices to suture up breaches in meaning that threaten dominant formations. 'Everyday' examples of 'system crises' include the wife who used her own income to build a bedroom in her migrant husband's compound; an action that breached dominant socio-spatial boundaries by challenging her husband's exclusive ownership of the home and her own provisional/temporary status within it. Following reports from surveillant neighbours the husband countered this challenge by returning home, discipline his wife (using socially acceptable levels of violence) and making a more substantial investment (a three-roomed house) on the site (Kesby, 1999). Similarly, women's active attempts to use sexual health messages as a means to reconstitute gender relations in the home are frequently countered by men's claim that it is 'not a wife's place' to question their husband's sexual behaviour and that they better 'know their place' if they don't want to be divorced/evicted from 'his place' (Kesby, 2000b). More positively, some widows inspired by radio coverage of equal rights legislation, have retained access to their late husbands' farms by refusing to allow the legal heirs to seize it unless they meet their new legal duty to provide for widows maintenance although their example of economic, social and sexual independence is marginalized by a society which labels them 'whores' (Kesby, 1999). My work also identifies the central role of agency in the wider scale historical processes of colonisation, anti-colonial war and independence that opened up material/conceptual spaces in which subjectivity was less effectively regulated by customary discourse/practices and in which women and young men in particular were able to re-constitute their subjectivities differently (although sometimes only temporarily). Agents have produced, recognised and responded to these historic 'systemic landslides' just as they have to everyday 'slippages'. Thus women have actively exploited the opportunities offered by the opening of missions, commercial farms, mine compounds, protected villages and urban streets as a means to exit the rural community spaces where prevailing forms of femininity were most readily replicated. Meanwhile, men in general and elders in particular, have persistently countered this resistance by appealed to the colonial and post-colonial state to return 'runaway girls' to the reserves, discipline young male recruits to respect elders, re-empower traditional authorities and clear the urban streets of 'prostitutes' (Kesby, 1996: 1999). From this it seems clear to me that at moments of lifecycle and historic crisis in gender relations, subjects act with conscious purposeful agency in attempts either to reproduce inherently volatile networks, make them seem fixed and stabilise their power effects or to force open spaces for resistance and change within and between presently available discourses and practices.

Therefore, despite Butler's interpretation, I would argue that it is possible for a Foucauldian understanding of power to encompass a central role for conscious and reflexive agency. It might even be possible to accommodate the lexicon of structuration if we say that: the 'tactics and strategies' (or 'agency') of individuals generate emergent 'constellations' (or 'structures') of power that form an envelope of possibility in which the 'double conditioning' (or 'structuration') of these 'subjects' (or 'agents'), who both bare and reproduce power, takes place. However, such a synthesis only works if two conditions apply: First, Giddens' tendency to privilege agency in this 'duality' must be resisted (Clegg's 1989) for while Foucault emphasised power's instability and need for reproduction, he also stressed the durability (in time and space) of its effects over and above their immediate instantiation by reflective agents. Without this recognition, constellations of power (structures) seem too fleeting; appearing and disappearing simply at the behest agents. In fact, while structures are created and reproduced by agents, power relations are at the same time also ontologically prior and external to that activity. This raises the second and related condition: that agency and self-reflexivity, cannot be seen as 'transparent', beyond power or as the attributes of individual actors in the way imagined by humanists. Rather, agency must be understood as *constituted* (differentially over time and space) through available discursive and practical social relations in relatively enduring ways that frame the possibilities for agency itself (see Clegg, 1989, p. 138-148). Agency is something to be achieved not something innate. Thus while conscious and reflexive, agency is also partial and positioned (Nelson, 1999). Strategic action is informed by a *situated* consciousness of one's location and interests within an evolving constellation of powers (Kesby, 1999). Nevertheless, human beings do have an innate capacity for invention, fabrication and problem solving (see Thrift, 2000) and can draw inspiration for reflection and action from a wide variety of sources simultaneously (e.g. various discourses, practices, historical precedents, memories, role models, spatial arrangements etc.) and often do so selectively, incompletely and with many contradictions. These activities are bound to generate dynamism, hybridity and new structural forms even though agents are drawing on available structural resources. Thus while power frames action, power, resistance to power and transformation can all be produced by conscious human action not simply systemic logic or its accidental 'slippage'.

In development studies ideas along these lines have received much discussion within the 'actor oriented' school and their project to investigate 'interface situations' (the 'locales' in which exogenous development interventions intersect with the life-worlds of endogenous people) (Long, 1989b: 1992b: Long and Villarreal 1996). The school focuses on the discontinuous process of knowledge acquisition, utilisation and transformation and particularly on the role that actors' play in these processes. Using the idea of 'strategic agency' they suggests that, in an attempt to fulfil or maintain their situated interests, agents constantly struggle to enrol others into facilitating various projects (see also Clegg, 1989). They achieve this by manipulating the available network of powers and social relations, drawing on existing repertoires, validation processes and disciplinary mechanisms. All agents attempt to do this but power effects in any given field mean that some agents are better positioned to achieve this than others. Thus, those reified as *holding* power and *possessing* knowledge (e.g. an intervening NGOs) are able to enrol others into their projects more effectively than those imagined as powerless and ignorant (Long 1992a:b: Long and Villarreal, 1989). However, this process of enrolment is never simple or complete

because (in the absence of violence) power relies on compliance (Clegg, 1989: Long, 1992b). Compliance can be disrupted by the reflexivity of agency, which, via appeals to other available frameworks of power, gives individuals the capacity for discretion, innovation and resistance, thereby enabling them to transform power in the pursuit of their own projects. Hence endogenous agents are frequently able to create ‘room for manoeuvre’ between the new forms of knowledge/power introduced by intervening agencies and existing ones: thereby reshaping both (Villarreal, 1992: Long and Villarreal, 1996). Notwithstanding the usefulness of this approach, Long’s image of ‘enrolment’ tends to over-emphasise agency and the active instantiation of enrolment into specific projects whilst under-emphasising the reproduction and the effects of the frameworks structuring agency in broader terms. The ‘actor oriented approach’ could be strengthened if it were more explicit about the ways in which actors also enrol *themselves* into the projects of others. Constituted through prevailing frameworks, subjects are often already ‘self-disciplined’ enough to know the roles they should play and do not need to be enrolled directly. Thus the situated consciousness and active strategising of agents is often most evident at moments when dominant frameworks appear to be insufficient to effect the self-enrolment of agents into the usual projects (see my examples above, although Villarreal 1992 does make this latter point).

Unfortunately, as the precursors to *The New Tyranny*, the actor-orientated school is particularly dismissive of ‘participation’ which they view as little different from other managerial interventions that posit ‘enlightened’ and ‘powerful’ outsiders ‘delivering’ empowerment to less discerning local ‘insiders’. They believe that these impositions are unlikely to work or will do so only at the expense of innovation and adaptability, which depends on the diversity and fluidity of knowledge rather than its systematisation. Crucially, they suggest that the ‘dilemma of empowerment’ is that while intervening agents claim to seek the enhancement of a community’s capacity to decide its own development priorities, they actually set and pursue key goals and agendas themselves (Villarreal, 1992: Long and Villarreal, 1996 see also Clegg 1989, p.95). The ‘inherent value of participation’ would be a good example of such an a priori establishment of insiders ‘best interests’: the prioritisation of sexual health within the *Steppingstones* programme would be another. Frustratingly, while Long (1992c) insist that unless the concept of ‘empowerment’ can take on a more sophisticated understanding of power and agency “it will become... relegated to the dusty shelves of the archives of development policy”; he declines to provide such a theorisation.

Now while this critique was made before the publication of more self-critical assessments of participation like *The Myth of Community* (Guijt and Shah, 1998a) it is regrettable and surprising that the actor-oriented school did not attempted a more positive engagement with participation rather than emphasising the difference (see Long, 1992c).⁶ Ironically, I see little prospect that the actor-oriented approach can ever practically ‘enable ordinary people to better understand planned interventions and interface situations’ (Long, 1992a,b: Long and Villarreal, 1996) without resorting

⁶ A degree of institutional/disciplinary rivalry seems to underlie Long’s (and Cooke and Kothari’s 2001b) desire to demarcate and undermine academic advocates of participation (championed in the UK by IDS at Sussex): an ‘anthropology [and geography] of development’ that perhaps Henkel and Stirrat (2001) should deconstruct.

to the very participatory techniques they condemn. By comparison, a participatory diagramming session focused on identifying ‘the ways in which NGOs attempt to enrol you into their projects’, might be a very good means to facilitate such understanding. However, this would involve the deployment of power and the constitution of agency. In the absence of a preparedness to deploy such powers, Long and Villarreal must be content with the traditional scholarly preoccupation of simply observing while endogenous actors struggle to find their own room for manoeuvre using ‘the weapons of the weak’. Perhaps this is the ‘dilemma of actor-orientation’.

Thus, while the ‘actor orientated’ school’s understanding of how resistance becomes is more sophisticated than that of *The New Tyranny?* it still sees participatory interventions only as something to be resisted. Interestingly, indications that participation might also be something that can *enable* resistance lie in sections of Clegg’s (1989) text little referenced by the ‘actor-oriented’ school. Exploring why the dominated so frequently consent to their subordination, Clegg (using Mann 1986) suggests that people are embedded within existing power frameworks and often “lack the organisational resources to outmanoeuvre existing networks and alliances of power” (Clegg, 1989, p. 19: 223). They may lack the knowledge resources to construct a credible alternative. They may be isolated from similarly positioned individuals and groups or they may simply feel that the likely high costs of resistance outweigh the slim chances of success. By comparison, those intent on reproducing dominant frameworks are usually able to draw on discourse and practices capable of ‘outflanking’ others’ attempts at resistance thereby re-stabilising established force fields. In light of this Clegg (1989, p. 207) suggests that there are two basic types of resistance: First, resistance to the *exercise* of power that leaves unquestioned the fixity of the terms in which that power is exercised (e.g. African women’s attempt to use the presentation of food and use of ‘praise names’ to reduce husbands’ violence and use of coercive sex, Kesby, 2000b): Second and more rarely, resistance that is capable of ‘outflanking’ existing frameworks because it is capable of consolidating itself into a new form of power (e.g. the establishment of women’s ‘equal rights before the law’).

These ideas are hugely significant and counter the *The New Tyranny’s* assertion that as a form of power, participation can only be resisted. The notion of a ‘spontaneous’ resistance untainted by power is clearly a fiction. Perspectives offered by location at the margin (see hooks 1990: Rose 1993, p 155-9) are insufficient to constitute a strategic agency capable of outflanking dominant frameworks. These must be constituted through, and help constitute discursive and practical forms of organisation like feminism (or participation) which are themselves forms of power (see Desbiens, 1999). Thus, power and resistance are entangled: “Resistance involves power, it requires it, releases it and generates effects of power... and it is only because there is power in resistance that we can be... optimistic... in supposing that resistance will happen” (Sharpe *et al.*, 2000, p. 31). Interestingly, while Sharpe *et al.* emphasise the creativity of human agency in their text they relegate to a footnote the idea that to achieve ‘self-conscious intentionality’ people “...cannot avoid drawing upon a wider terrain of ‘helpful discourses’” (p. 35). Yet this point is absolutely central, at least to the debate about the validity of participatory approaches. If there is no escape from power, we have no choice but to draw upon *less* dominating forms of power in order to destabilise and transform *more* dominating frameworks. Hence, the key issue is not whether participation is a form of power and hence should be resisted, but whether participation is a form of power that might also be able to frame and

organise resistance. Thus while efforts need to be made to reduce its dominating tendencies, participation's failure to escape from power and its association with governance do not prevent it from being one of many 'helpful discourse' on which to draw in the pursuit of radical political praxis. Indeed, it is precisely *because* of its capacity to *govern*, to *organise*, and to reconstitute the strategic agency of both interveners and endogenous people (potentially with a degree of reciprocity and mutuality, and to do so within 'interface situations' not merely academic texts), that participation in its most radical, flexible and self-reflexive manifestations may be able to facilitate resistance to something like the tyranny of HIV/AIDS in Africa. If everything is tyrannical, but some things are more tyrannical than others, perhaps participation offers a means to 'transformation *through* tyranny'.

From this perspective we can return to Kothari's (2001) opposition of the 'contrived' 'front stage' performances of the participatory arena, with the 'unrehearsed' more authentic behaviour of the 'back stage'. This notion of performance can now be exposed as too Goffmanesque and too dramaturgical (see Gregson and Rose, 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000). A post-structuralist analysis suggests that *all* social identity is a contrived performance achieved via compliance with dominant frameworks of power. The private performance of very publicly sanctioned gendered and sexual identities in the 'back-stage' spaces of the domestic sphere would be a particularly good example of this, not an exception. No matter on what stage they perform agents are 'actors' whose conduct is guided through 'scripts' that structure the field of their possible action (see Foucault 1984 in Rabinow 1984; Clegg 1989, 17). Performance is a citational practice and always saturated with power (Gregson and Rose, 2000) and even when 'improvising', agents draw inspiration from available repertoires.⁷ The difference between a performance in a participatory arena and one on either the front or back-stage of everyday life might be exactly that its contrived nature could be more readily perceived. Through this, the contrived nature of other 'unrehearsed' performances might also be exposed. This is entirely what 'rehearse for reality' in a participatory project like *Stepping-stones* might be able to accomplish and is precisely the opposite of what Kothari (2001) imagines: dramatisation of risky situations (saying no to sexual advances, negotiating condom use, practicing the use of assertive language) in the participatory 'front-stage' can be a life-saving rehearsal for performances on the everyday 'backstage'. In this way participation can help: (i) expose the performative nature of all social relations, (ii) reconstitute strategic agency in ways that enables actors to imagine 'acting' differently and (iii) provide an organisational framework through which actors can 'outflank' existing frameworks and produce and fix new structures of meaning and behaviour.

Thus despite the current preference for the project of *deconstruction* and the lexicon of resistance, a discussion of participation suggests that *reconstruction* and something like 'empowerment' is necessary by post-structuralisms own logic. If we think in practical rather simply philosophical terms, a project of perpetual deconstruction and permanent flux in meaning is impossible for two reasons: First, to ensure their sanity and enable social life, people require power to provide them with

⁷ Hence, Thrift and Dewsbury's (2000) attempt to use improvised dance and music as metaphors to explore human's capacity for invention somewhat overextends the role of agency and underplays the role of citation and framework.

some rudiments of symbolization and stability (Robinson's 2000): Second, because reactionary agents unafraid to become sullied by power will rush to fill any post-deconstruction vacuum in meaning left if more self-critical alternatives fail to do so. Thus for example, the deconstruction and 'outflanking' of discourse and practices currently constituting gender and sexuality in rural Zimbabwe could not be sustained without agents drawing on an ensemble of new knowledges/powers/practices (a fact born out by the historical geography of women's attempts to draw Christianity, market economics, nationalism, socialism, feminism and customary law, and hybrid combinations of these, as a means re-constitute themselves). Radical participatory HIV projects might provide such a resource. One might even say they could 'empower' participants (see Rose 1993, 158; Desbiens, 1999, 181 for similar claims about feminism). To say this however, one would have to take up Long's challenge and re-theorise the notion of empowerment through participation in light of an expanded post-structural critique.

A post-structural re-conceptualisation of empowerment:

While participatory programmes like *stepping-stones* explicitly seek to facilitate 'empowerment', this idiom is completely out of favour with those well versed in post-structuralism's lexicon of power, domination and resistance. In my own discipline, volumes on power (Sharp *et al*, 2000) and even dictionaries of terms (Johnston *et al* 2000) eschew the term empowerment. While the *Feminist Glossary of Human Geography* can hardly avoid empowerment, its entry conveys an embarrassment about the term's link to a rather passé and modernist notion of identity politics (McDowell and Sharpe, 1999). Notwithstanding these aversions and despite the popularity of the new lexicon, I feel that a post-structural re-theorisation of empowerment is both possible and overdue. Moreover, I think a notion of 'empowerment' is worth retaining for four reasons: First, the term *empowerment* might be made to acknowledge the 'entanglements of power' more explicitly than do the terms 'resistance' or even 'resisting power', which, even in the hands of Sharpe *et al* (2000), can seem to put a distance between power and resistance: Second, *empowerment* might be made to emphasise the positive, creative capacities of power while 'resistance to' can sometimes seem rather reactive and negative: third, empowerment's proud political heritage is valuable and worth evoking: Finally, the notion is so widely used and valued at the grassroots level that post-structural theory might 'travel' further if it encouraged people to re-conceptualise rather than abandon their longstanding commitment to empowerment.

By comparison to Critical Human Geography, Development Studies is replete with references to empowerment. However, while central to debates on participation there is general agreement that empowerment remains poorly theorised (see Wallerstein, 1992: Batliwala, 1994: Baylies and Bujra, 1995: Guijt and Shah, 1998b: Cook and Kothari 2001b). Discussions tend to focus on issues like: the practical obstacles to empowerment (Mayoux, 1995, Leurs, 1996): Empowerment's de-politicisation and co-option by technocratic main-stream development (Guijt and Shah, 1998b: Cleaver, 2001): whether 'empowerment' and 'participation' transfer the costs and responsibilities for development but not decision-making power to participants (Madan, 1987: Long and Van de Ploeg, 1989a: Villarreal, 1992: Schoepf, 1998: Mohan and Stokke, 2000): whether groups or only individuals can gain

empowerment (Wallerstein, 1992; Stein, 1997) and: whether limited lifespan participatory projects actually *dis*-empower participants by giving them a sense of their problems but no means to tackle them (Nelson and Wright, 1995). Definitions of empowerment are much more difficult to come by but where available, can be characterised as providing a ‘sovereign’ view of empowerment. Thus, people are imagined as *possessing* empowerment and thereby *holding* the capacity to act in particular ways (see Rappaport, 1987: Hawks, 1991). Through empowerment people previously denied the ability to make strategic (as opposed to everyday) choices in their lives, *gain it* (Kabeer, 1999). While like (sovereign) power in some ways empowerment is imagined as distanced from it in others. Thus, rather than the commodity being concentrated in the hands of a few, through empowerment power is redistributed among the hands of the many. Rather than being a hierarchical/vertical relationship that is dominating and exploitative, empowerment is described as a reciprocal/lateral relation that is accountable and facilitating. Rather than denoting power *over* others, empowerment describes the capacity to exert power *with* others (see Maguire, 1987: Chambers, 1994a,b,c,: 1997: Wallerstein and Bernstein, 1988 in Stien, 1997: Hawks, 1991: Wallerstein, 1992; Batliwala, 1994: see Farrow *et al.*, 1995: Allen, 1999).⁸

Not only are current visions of empowerment rooted in a sovereign view of power but understandings of becoming empowered are framed by a linear notion of ‘enlightenment’. Whether inspired by a Freirian notion of conscientization (Wallerstein, 1992: De Koning and Martin, 1996: Stein, 1997) or a second wave feminist understanding of consciousness-raising (Stanley and Wise, 1983), empowerment is said to involve a *journey of self-discovery*. This takes place either through some sort of awareness training or politicisation process and/or via a life event that stimulates a revolving, recursive movement between participation, experience, reflection and action for change. It prompts an emerging self-recognition that one can free oneself from the tyranny of helping to reproduce the status quo and seize control over the material assets and the processes of knowledge production that govern daily life. Once *attained*, such enlightenment fills individuals with feelings of self-efficacy and gives them a sense of connection and identification with those sharing a similar positionality. In this sense, many feel that empowerment can never be given or delivered by outsiders (the actor-oriented schools critique of participation but one shared by many advocates of ‘deep participation’): outsiders can only facilitate insiders’ struggle to *take* or *achieve* it for themselves. Individual transformation is only the vital *first stage* toward empowerment however: It must develop into collective forms of struggle if people are to strategically challenge their positioning with existing hegemonic formations by for example, changing the laws, property rights and institutions of society.⁹

⁸ While most of my analysis has been inspired by work in the areas of development and gender studies I have drawn useful insights from work in the area of disability studies (see Chouinard, 1997: Oliver, 1997: Kitchin, 1999).

⁹ This brief review has been drawn from the work of Rappaport, 1987: Lather, 1991: Friedman, 1992: Wallerstein, 1992: Batliwala, 1994: Chambers, 1994b: Baylies and Bujra, 1995: Rocheleau, 1995: Edwards, 1996: Leurs, 1996: Patel, 1996: Hagey, 1997: Stein, 1997: Crawley, 1998.

Several features of this formulation prevent empowerment from being compatible with the post-structural notions of agency, change and resistance developed in the sections above. If the notion of empowerment through participation is to be maintained (as Baylies and Bujra, 1995 argue it must be in the life and death context of HIV in Africa) and better understood, they need to be re-theorised along the following lines: First, if we reconceived empowerment in Foucauldian, rather than sovereign terms, it becomes useful to stress the similarities between the two rather than the differences. Thus rather than a commodity to be handed over, delivered or even taken and held by enlightened individuals themselves, empowerment should be seen as an effect of powerful discourses and practices: for example those that govern participatory interventions. Participation's techniques and relations do not redistribute power and facilitate empowerment they *produce* power/empowerment. Second: empowerment should not be conceived as distanced from power but as entangled with it. Thus, empowerment involves governance of participant's (and interveners', see Blackburn and Holland, 1998) behaviour towards themselves and others, it involves the deployment of powers, the enrolment of others into participants' projects and they into the projects of interveners. Ultimately it facilitates strategic out-flanking through the constitution and fixing of new constellations of meaning and behaviour that must seek to become 'normalised' in order to become effective. Third: empowerment cannot be seen as free from entanglement with domination. The creation of organisational frameworks that can enable effective strategic agency is likely to occasion instances of domination and thus, radical (as opposed to reactionary) forms of resistance. These should be anticipated and addressed as positively as possible. Thus, just as feminists have attempted to acknowledge and address the historic bias toward white, middleclass and heterosexual ways of knowing within radical feminist politics (see Sharpe *et al.*, 2000) so advocates of participation must acknowledge and attempt to reduce the instances of domination mapped out in *The New Tyranny?*. Fourth: the underlying trope of 'enlightenment' and assumptions that empowerment enables the discovery of authentic agency and the attainment of a true/transparent consciousness, must be dropped. Rather, the discourses and practices of participatory empowerment, shaped by intervening agents (Cooke, 2001) and reshaped by endogenous agents (Long and Villarreal, 1996), must be seen as producing and constituting the agency and consciousness achieved. Thus, while this consciousness may be very different from existing expressions of agency and may be capable of outflanking existing frameworks of power, they must nevertheless be seen as partial and situated and subject to future challenge and resistance. Indeed the radical legitimacy of empowerment must lie in its acknowledgment of the absence of absolutes and the self-recognition that it is a contestable, imperfect 'work in progress' (see Rose, 1993, p. 160). At the same time however, empowerment's radical practical utility lies in its preparedness to appeal to and deploy, potentially domineering 'ground rules', contestable meta-narratives and strategic essentialisms (such as equality and justice) where these are *less* oppressive, and more open to the possibility of further realignment than the powers it seeks to destabilise and replace.¹⁰ The most radical, flexible and self-reflexive manifestations of participation that address issues like the social embeddedness of HIV in Africa, might strive to achieve this difficult balance.

¹⁰ Clearly this was not the case with Chinese Communism, which is why Cooke's (2001) attempt to use it as a warning of the domineering potential of participation is somewhat extreme.

Finally, empowerment can no longer be conceived simply as a linear, cumulative process leading to the eventual attainment of permanently enlightened agency. Rather the discourses and practices that enable empowerment, reflexivity and 'consciousness' must be constantly reproduction and repeatedly *performed*. Indeed if the effects of empowerment are to be stabilised they must be 'double conditioned' by both the micro scale tactics of performing agents and by the establishment of grand alignments of discourse/practice on which agents may repeatedly and strategically draw.

Thinking about empowerment in these ways will greatly help those seeking to study and facilitate participatory approaches to development. To further such efforts however, one further dimension of the analysis is necessary.

Spatialising empowerment through participation:

Historically, empowerment and participation have primarily been conceived in temporal terms (even by geographers, e.g. see Allen, 1999: Kitchen, 1999, 232). For example, Stein's (1997) exhaustive review concludes with an elaborate flow diagram of the empowerment process that makes no explicit mention of space at all nor hints that any of the 'stages' of empowerment are embedded in space in anyway (p. 286-7). Debates focus on *moments* of collaboration/transformations, or empowerment's indeterminate *end* results (Edwards, 1996: Baylies and Bujra, 1995): the need for *longitudinal* research (Rappaport, 1987) or the necessity for facilitators to engage with participating communities over an extended *time* period (Guijt and Shah, 1998b). This privileging of the temporal emerges from linear model of 'enlightenment' underlying empowerment (e.g. see Batliwala, 1994) but is compounded by the linearity of the 'project lifecycle' that frames many participatory interventions (see Long and Van der Ploeg, 1989a: 1989b). In short, it is said that empowerment through participation 'takes time' and where it fails, it is because initiatives did not 'last long enough'.

By comparison, thinking about the spatial dimensions of participation and empowerment has remained underdeveloped. While reference is often made to the *settings* and *contexts* of empowerment and the need for an *ecological* understanding of empowerment is recognised (Rappaport (1987: Wallerstein, 1992), the embeddedness imagined is primarily cultural, social and historical, not spatial. To-be-sure, spatial *terminology* frequently appears in the literature but usually in rather abstract ways: participation is said to 'opens *spaces* for empowerment' (see Evens, 1979 in Stein, 1997: Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995) and to enable people to perceive themselves as 'occupying decision-making *space*' (Crawley 1998). Similarly, while focused on encounter *horizons*, *battlefields* of knowledge and actors attempts to create *space* for their projects and for manoeuvre, the 'actor-oriented' school consistently fails to conceive 'interface situations' as spatial arena (see Long, 1989b: Long and Villarreal, 1989: 1996 Villarreal, 1992). In their efforts to establish that interventions are not isolated in time and space (as 'project lifecycle' approaches often imagine), they ignore the spatial dimensions of their own data which suggests that the strategic agency of the Mexican women they studied varied considerably depending on whether they were in the spaces created by the project intervention, their own homes or the decision-making forums of the community. Occasionally authors have hinted

at a more concrete understanding of the spatial dimensions of participation. Mosse (1994) argued that participatory interventions are *public* therefore rather formal events constituting somewhat risky *spaces* in which established conventions might either be challenged or reaffirmed. Guijt and Shah (1998b) meanwhile, talk about the need to find *forums* in which dialogue between the genders can take place as well about the danger that women may not take the opportunity to enter these *spaces* because of conflicting commitments. Finally Cornwall (1998) points out that gendered behaviour may be different in one *setting* than another. Notwithstanding these observations, a coherent spatialised account of participation and empowerment through participation eludes existing accounts.

The tendency to ignore geographical issues and/or to use space only metaphorically is not uncommon in social science especially in discussions of resistance, empowerment and the transformation of existing frameworks. For example, while feminist literature revolves around notions like public and private and centre and margin and is full of references to location, space, place and embeddedness, theorists like Judith Butler leave little room for *material* space in their conceptualisation of gendered performances (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000). More particularly, Butler has little to say about what performances *where* will facilitate the transformation of dominant discourses and practices (Robinson, 2000). Geographers have worked hard to illustrate that gendered identities are embedded in real material places and spaces but many are themselves guilty of developing rather abstract, metaphorical geographies, especially when it comes to questions of transformation (e.g. see Rose's 1993 notion of 'paradoxical space' or Soja's 1996 'third space'). Robinson's (2000) recent attempt to demonstrate the 'spatial imaginaries' underlying the work of three prominent feminists actually reinforces the fact that they 'locate' the source of change in gender relations within *temporal* zones (either the present, some distant future or an arcane childhood stage). Like other complex, abstract and metaphorical 'spaces of resistance' emerging out of 'the cultural turn' in Human Geography, there is a failure here to explain how these 'zones of transformation' are connected to real struggles in material spaces and places (see Mitchell 1997). Compared to this the work of Routledge (1992; 1996; 1997 and Routledge and Simons, 1995), is a notable exception which through empirical investigation of contemporary protest movements, illustrates that resistance is embedded in space and place and that transformation requires material, not simply conceptual, spaces in which to develop. Chouinard (1994a; 1994b; 1996) is similarly insightful in her work on disability but stops short of suggesting that empowerment requires a space conducive to its performance (which is surprising given that the performances of disabled people would seem acutely relational to the socio-material environment). Building on these studies, and drawing again on Foucault's philosophy, I will suggest that participatory arenas can offer such material spaces for resistance and empowerment.

While Foucault made few explicit references to space in his most famous works (Soja, 1996) and by his own admission left this dimension somewhat underdeveloped (Foucault, 1980) his work has much to offer to a discussion of space and empowerment. Surprisingly these insights are not best identified in the one essay in which he does address issues of space explicitly, the more-or-less posthumously published set of lecture notes entitled *Of Other Spaces* (Foucault 1986, original 1967). Here his account of "heterotopias" is frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent and

incoherent (Soja, 1996). Moreover, rather than being a manifesto about spaces of resistance as many have implied (e.g. Tamboukou, 2000), these musings should be read as an attack on structural views of history and as a prelude to his later works which (implicitly) explored the embeddedness of *power* within particular sites (e.g. asylums and prisons) (see Soja, 1996: Allen, 1999). Thus while Foucault (1986) suggests that heterotopias act as ‘mirrors’ that reflects back on “all the other sites inside of which human life is partitioned” in ways that ‘contest’, ‘invert’ and ‘reveal them as illusory’, the examples of ‘counter sites’ he provides are: (a) primarily implicated in the production of power, not resistance (or empowerment) or: (b) function to contain or dissipate the energy of resistance not propagate and extend it and: (c) exist in relation to other spaces in ways that facilitate the reproduction of dominant frameworks of power. Asylums and prisons for example, are the ‘other spaces’ in which disciplinary power first developed and they reflect back images of what constitutes normalcy and non-deviance in ways that generate self-disciplining agency throughout the rest of society. Meanwhile, Foucault’s ‘crisis heterotopias’ of traditional societies seem to facilitate the containment and curtailment of individuals whose corporeality most threatened to destabilise dominant frameworks (one thinks of the ways initiation rites/sites displaced the central importance of women’s bodies in the biological production of subjects by emphasising *social* rebirth into adulthood through ritual, while simultaneously shaping the energy and identities of youths in ways conducive to the maintenance of existing configurations). Similarly, nineteenth century brothels were ‘heterotopias of illusion’ from the perspective of which ‘Victorian’ sexual morality was exposed as yet more illusory, yet they simultaneously perpetuated this deception by providing ‘other spaces’ in which potentially disruptive ‘immorality’ could be contained. Therefore, a coherent view of the importance of space to resistance and to empowerment will not be garnered from an uncritical application of the term ‘heterotopias’, but might be gathered from a logical extension of Foucault’s works on power and its implied embeddedness in space.

If we re-conceptualise empowerment along Foucauldian lines then it is probable that (like power) the discourses and practices that constitute its effects will be embedded in and constitutive of, particular material sites and spaces. Similarly, if empowerment cannot be won or possessed, but must be repetitively performed in order to stabilise these effects, then it is surely important to think about the spaces that enable such performances. Thus, while usually neglected, questions of space are absolutely central to participatory power and its ability to generate sustainable empowering effects. They may also hold answers to the questions: can participation facilitate empowerment? (see Crawley, 1998: Cleaver 2001) and what factors encourage or discourage empowerment? (see Rappaport, 1987: Wallerstein, 1992). This is particularly true in the case of the project-based participatory HIV/AIDS interventions discussed in this essay. Integral to these interventions is that they constitute temporary time-space social arenas within the heart of target communities. While these arenas may open up in a variety of everyday settings (beneath a tree, in a community hall, school, village square or open field), they constitute very special ‘other spaces’ governed by discourses and practices quite unlike those that order everyday space and agency within them. Within participatory arenas, participants condone the positioning of facilitators as powerful agenda-setters and arbiters in ways that can circumvent the frameworks that usually privilege particular agents in everyday life. The powers constituting facilitation enable interveners to carefully manage discussion of controversial issues, defuse conflicts and mediate disputes in

ways that can prevent normally dominant subjects silencing others. Within these spaces the discourses/practices of 'equity', 'free speech' and 'collectivity' govern the behaviour of participants, encouraging them to treat each other as valid peers. Meanwhile, the techniques of participation persuade people to construct themselves as reflexive agents, abstractly analysing the difficulties of everyday life and provide them with a set of tools through which to constitute/represent their opinions and experiences to themselves, their peers and facilitators. Within this field, opportunities open up for people to: (i) disentangle the complex web of everyday life and make explicit connections between specific elements (e.g. between use of alcohol, commercial sex/coercive-sex and HIV infection): (ii) reflect on the performativity of everyday life and: (iii) rehearse performances for alternative realities. In short, the discourses and practices circulating within and constituting the 'other spaces' of participation are the same ones that constitute and facilitate the performance of empowered agency. They are material sites in which knowledge, skills and performances capable of outflanking dominant constellations of power (such as those framing gender and sexuality) can come into being.

So perhaps participatory arenas can provide a *concrete* space for resistance and a *tangible* 'paradoxical space' (a space 'beyond' dominant power geometries but in the here and now, where it matters, not just in some distant utopian future/zone see Desbiens, 1999). Perhaps they can provide 'heterotopias' of reflection and reordering: locations from within which to contest, invert and reveal as illusory the spaces and relations of everyday life: spaces in which the performance of empowered agency becomes possible. However, if these optimistic chorographies are to have a chance of success, the spatial dimensions of empowerment through participation need further careful thought. Participatory arenas are spaces that open up *within* existing societies/geographies. In this sense Long and Van der Ploeg (1989a) are correct to suggest that planned interventions are not isolated in time and space but are part of broader social, cultural historical (and I would argue, spatial) processes. These must be recognised as pressing in on and permeating participatory arenas, preventing them from being too coherent and self contained (see also Gregson and Rose, 2000). Thus, although the governance of participation is powerful, no amount of 'ground rules' or sensitive facilitation, can hope to dissolve all unequal power relations between participants thereby enabling their unfettered speech (see Ellsworth, 1989). Moreover, because the technologies of participatory practice are public, visual and immediate they intimately link the right to speak with the responsibility of being seen and heard to do so. Thus, perhaps more than other qualitative techniques they run the risk of inadvertently exposing the strategies of the marginalized to dominant groups (e.g see, Brace, 1995, p. 42).¹¹ The 'other spaces' of participation are not then 'free spaces' but are to a considerable extent affected by relations that exist in the everyday spaces that surround them *and to which participants must return*. Therefore the performances of agents and their ability and willingness to draw on the helpful powers of participation within the participatory arena, will be shaped by their imminent return to the power soaked public and domestic spaces of the everyday. Embedding participation in this way may help explain observable 'slippages' in the smooth reproduction and performance of participatory powers: for example, the

¹¹ See Ellsworth, 1989; Stacey, 1991; Gilbert, 1994; Katz, 1994; Nast, 1994; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995 for critiques that raise this problem in relation to other qualitative research methods.

continued 'self-muting' and submissive performances of marginalized groups presented with the organisational means to outflank these positionalities. As has been observed, people rarely limit their perception of reality to that defined by the intervening agency as constituting the 'program' (Long and Van Der Ploeg, 1989a; Wallman, 1997; 1998). In light of this, while Gregson and Rose (2000) (among a first geographers to discuss the spatiality of performativity, Pratt, 2000) are correct to suggest that it is not just social actors but also the spaces in which they perform that are produced by power, their account overplays agents' active instantiation of space through performance while underplaying the role that spatial structure plays in framing agency and performance. Location and geographical comparison are key elements of situated consciousness and the way people draw on available discourse and practices. For example, a 'participant' in a project may think: "here is a space in which it seems possible to act differently and to 'do gender' differently, but this is not where I am most of the time, so is it prudent then to act differently here?" In this sense, part of what makes participatory space 'paradoxical' is that while it is brought into being by the performance of discourses and practices that can facilitate empowerment, empowered performances within it may be curtailed by relations constituted in other places.

Returning to the idea that empowerment is not simply a process of enlightenment provides a second reason to take care when mapping participatory arenas as 'heterotopias' of reflection and reconstitution. If empowered agency is the effect of discourses and practices that constitute and govern the temporary time-space social arenas of participation then how are empowered performances to be sustained beyond this field in everyday spaces governed and constituted by quite different powers? This is a particularly pertinent question for participatory HIV projects that seek to empower individuals to negotiate safer-sex in the most private, most power filled spaces of the home. In the literature, the difficulty of facilitating *sustainable* empowerment is recognised as technical or ethical problem (see Maguire, 1987, p. 57; Shaw, 1995 p. 97) the remedy for which is for interventions to take *more time* (e.g. BenMayor, 1991; Blackburn, 1998). However, if empowerment is re-theorise, not as a linear process of enlightenment, but as a repetitive performance in space, then it is likely that it is the ephemeral nature of the participatory *environment*, as much as the limited *lifespan* of projects, that undermines the sustainability of empowerment. Thus contra the 'actor-oriented' school; although planned interventions cannot be separated from the general social milieu, they very often *do* constitute discrete socio-spatial arenas. Many participatory projects are relatively short or one-off exercises that, while aiming to provide the catalyst for sustainable action (Webber and Ison, 1995), often prove unsustainable once the external research team withdraws (see Leurs, 1996; Preston-Whyte and Dalrymple, 1996) *and the arena of empowerment they have sponsored implodes*. So then, perhaps some of the very 'fragility' and segmentation that Long and Villarreal (1996) suggest besets the new knowledge repertoires introduced by interveners, can be explained by the difficulties that actors have in drawing on these knowledges once outside the carefully managed and facilitated arena of a project intervention. Indeed, spatial dimensions may be central to what Long (1992a,b, Long and Villarreal, 1989: 1996) describe as 'transformation at the interface' whereby endogenous actors fail to adopt initiatives in the manner interveners expect.

Therefore, in contrast to the example given in the paragraph above, one can imagine an *ex*-participant who thinks: “I know there is/was another space in which I once acted quite differently, so why is it now so hard for me to act that way here?” The answer is of course that consciousness, agency and performance are socio-spatially relational. If university students find it hard to maintain their empowerment outside the supportive, participative classroom (See Lather, 1991, p.142), how much more difficult will it be for *ex*-participants of HIV education programs in rural Zimbabwe? It will not be easy for ‘empowered’ agents to outmanoeuvre dominant frame-works from within everyday contexts that are integral to the reproduction of prevailing alignments and the performance of established identities. It will be especially difficult where non-participants (and some *ex*-participants) determine that they have a vested interest in the status quo and so struggle to manipulate the meanings embedded in the minutiae of everyday spaces in order to reposition participants within pre-existing frameworks of power. Meursing's (1997) limited success (after intensive one-to-one counselling) in catalysing sustainable behaviour change among HIV positive Zimbabweans once they returned to their own communities and homes, indicates the dangers of simply ‘enlightening’ participants without thinking through how empowered performances are to be transported to, and reproduced within, everyday life spaces. Work by other geographers on the spatiality of performance fails to address this problem directly. For example, while Gregson and Rose (2000) are enthusiastic that the social relations constituting and constituted within ‘car-boot’ sale arenas have the *potential* to influence performances within ‘mainstream’ consumer society, they provide few substantive examples and are much clearer about how dominant frameworks penetrate these alternative arenas. Meanwhile, Rose (1997) records but does not develop the point that participants in an Edinburgh women’s HIV/AIDS project felt the need to re-enter the space of the project *everyday* in order to re-perform the positive identities they had developed there and to gain the strength they needed to live the rest of their lives.

A major challenge for the future is to find ways to facilitate the sustained re-performance of empowered performances beyond the carefully managed environments constituted and governed by participation. The discourses and practices of participation and empowerment need to be embedded in the spaces of everyday life *thereby transforming them* (changes in society necessitate changes in space, see Lefebvre, 1991 in Robinson, 2000). One strategy (pursued by the Edinburgh HIV project above) is to open permanent ‘project spaces’, however this risks ‘project dependency’ and/or impracticality in situations of limited resources. Another strategy involves attempting to establish self-sustaining social groups that will periodically re-constitute arenas governed by the discourses and practices of participation after the cessation of the formal participatory intervention. The *Stepping-Stones* program attempts this through its propagation of age-sex peer groups. These are entirely novel organs in most African communities and although popular during the project lifecycle because of their independence from the family, church and customary institutions, prove difficult to sustain if intervening agents do not continue to provide periodic facilitation, feed-back and material support (Kesby *et al.*, 2002: see also Cornwall, 1998). A third possibility is for interventions to mobilise pre-existing, organic grouping and/or identify and support local initiatives; feeding participatory discourse and practices into social networks and forums that have a momentum and *presence* independent of a issue specific intervention (see De Koning and Martin, 1996: Baylies and Bujra, 1995). Whatever strategy is adopted, only the ‘normalisation’ of the

discourse and practices that enable empowered performances will enable the out-flanking of dominant frame works and the sustainable re-performance of empowered agency. Thus despite Mohan's (1999) reservations, the metaphor of participation as a virus (Blackburn 1998) is useful and particularly apt to HIV interventions: if empowerment through participation is to become endemic a host community its discourses and practices must escape from the 'laboratory' of participatory projects and be transmitted and repeatedly circulated and among the general population (Kesby *et al.*, 2002). If the challenge of extra-program sustainability is not met we risk of creating the kind of temporary carnivalesque social [spatial] frameworks that Preston-Whyte and Dalrymple (1996, p.166) suggest characterise certain South African HIV drama projects, which allow yet contain the a 'ritual of rebellion' against prevailing frameworks. It might be that the World Bank, now so enthusiastic to promote 'local participation' has made precisely this calculation: that the 'other spaces' it now sponsors will absorb the energies of the poor in ways that do not threaten the Banks global neo-liberal strategy. If is up to advocates to find ways to prevent participatory projects becoming like Foucault's brothels: heterotopias from which to reflect on the world, but not change it.

Finally and briefly, if we think about empowerment as something that circulates within discourse and practices then a link can be made between what I have said about space and what others have said about scale. While an individual may feel 'empowered' immediately after leaving a participatory project, their cognitive transformation is unlikely to bring about significant changes in dominant frameworks unless it is reinforced and reproduced by wider scale collective action (see Rappaport, 1987, 139; Wallerstein, 1992; Stein, 1997, 67; Crawley 1998, 29). The sites of that action may need to extend beyond local projects however (Mohan, 1999; Mohan and Stokke 2000). HIV/AIDS for example, illustrates how participants in a village project are linked via sexual networks to other communities across a variety of geographical scales and how their vulnerability is a product of gendered cultural frameworks, judicial structures, government policies, chronic poverty and international market mechanisms not simply of their own decision-making. If ex-participants are to sustain empowered performances at the level of their everyday lives then social relations constituted at other scales must be conducive to those performances. Blackburn and Holland's (1998) go some way to addressing this issue by exploring 'scaling up', by which they mean getting governmental and non-governmental organisations to embed participatory discourse and practices within their management structures not just their community 'projects'. Using Smith's (1993) dynamic view of scale as a *socially produced* phenomenon we can see 'scaling-up' as an attempt to 're-scale' participation as an organisational and national (not merely local) phenomenon. In line with Mohan and Stokke's (2000) critique, Smith's (1993) politics of 're-scaling' and 'scale-jumping' could become projects for participatory activity itself. So for example, participants could reflect on the national and international (not just local) sources of vulnerability to HIV and activities in participant communities could be linked with national and international HIV/AIDS organisations and campaigns; drawing on their resources and contributing to their decision making processes. Issues of scale and rescaling are central to the project of embedding empowering discourses and practices in everyday extra-project arenas.

Conclusions

When participation really does *tyrannise* it must of course be resisted. Nevertheless, we live in a tyrannical world and difficult choices must be made between competing frameworks of power. If everything is tyrannical, surely some things are more tyrannical than others. While participation is certainly a form of power with potentially dominating effects it is also a form of governance that can constitute agency in transformative ways: a means to transformation *through* tyranny perhaps. In a world in which dominating power fixes but constant flux immobilises, there is a practical necessity for projects of empowerment if agents are to outflank more dominating forms of power in any sustainable way. The theoretical legitimacy of such projects resides in their acknowledgement of their own situatedness and their relative openness to the possibility of further realignment. However, their practical political utility lies in their preparedness to construct and deploy forms of power and governance capable of holding more oppressive forms of power at bay. Thus, participation can offer *one* real and practical means for ordinary people, not just intellectuals, to identify, discuss, re-negotiate, outflank and transform *more dominating* systems of power and to do so with a degree of reciprocity and mutuality within 'interface situations' not merely academic texts. The empirical and practical realities of participatory HIV programs in southern Africa illustrate the limits of post-structuralist theory. They indicate the need to maintain projects of empowerment through participation (not merely those of deconstruction and resistance) in this life and death context if the circumstances that facilitate rapid transmission of this virus are to be transformed. At the same time however, participatory approaches can learn much from post-structuralism. The more I work on issues to do with the social embeddedness of HIV in Africa (and more recently among Africans in the UK) the more I think it is important to conceive empowerment not as a possession or a process of enlightenment, but as the product of discourses and practices that must constantly be re-performed if their power effects are to be stabilised. More particularly, in the context of these interventions, I think it is vital to think about the spatial dimensions of participation and the contextual nature of empowerment. The post-structuralist critique of participation does much to expose both the dominating and productive effects of participatory power within the arena of its own governance but we are only just beginning to contemplate the implications of what the spatial embeddedness of participatory power means for the sustainability of empowered performances beyond the carefully managed boundaries of such interventions. These questions are of vital importance for those working on HIV since our hope is to facilitate empowered performances in the most private spaces of home; arenas governed by and constituted through, discourses and practices quite different to those that constitute arenas of participation. It is my hope that this paper will help stimulate discussion around the very important questions of how empower performances can be sustained in everyday spaces and how the normalisation of the discourse and practices that effect empowerment can eventually come to transform everyday spaces/relations.

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