



Exploring Hybrid Third Spaces in the Place Mappings of Malawian Youth

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Abstract

This article is based on a study of Malawian youths' understandings of place in relation to knowledge and practice and considers some implications for education. The study was conducted at Chinduzi Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills School in Machinga district in Malawi from September 2010 through January 2011. Data collection methods included place mapping and associated focus group discussions. The data were analysed following Collier and Collier's (1986) method for analysing photographs. Youth mappings of their favourite places suggested aspects of both hope and despair. From the youths' discussions, a sense of belonging was evident in the social relationships associated with the activities performed in their favourite places. The drawings also exhibited gendered features. Overall, the drawings and associated discussions revealed that the youth are largely rooted in their socio-cultural interactions within their community, but also influenced by globalisation – hence they operate within what Homi Bhabha (1994) calls 'hybrid third spaces'. In these spaces, they use their imagination to create optimistic futures. These findings have implications for environment-related education. People are part of and shaped by place; at the same time, they shape place through everyday social practices. Thus, studies on environment-related education in a particular local context need to take into account variations in experience based on learners' diverse backgrounds. Pedagogical engagements should consider the socio-cultural experiences of learners in particular contexts.

Keywords: Malawi, Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills School, youths, gendered places, hope and despair, hybridity, third space, sense of belonging, environmental education.

This paper reports findings from a study that explored how youth participants understand place in relation to knowledge and practice. 'Place', in this paper, is understood following Doreen Massey's (2009) articulation of an orientation to place that acknowledges the connections across local places and their influences on global circulations of knowledge and practice. Massey argues that while the local is often removed from any implication in wider processes, very few places are not in any way implicated in wider processes. Responding to a question on how to resolve the binary between place and space, Massey explains:

Well one way is precisely by integrating them relationally. But if you do that then it means you *have* to accept the implication of the local in the construction of the global. The global doesn't just exist 'up there'. It is made in places and there is hardly a place on the planet that in some ways isn't party to that making. (2009:412, emphasis in original)

Massey (1994) observes that the infusion of global culture into local contexts is a common characteristic of 'modern' life and responsible for contributing to global place making, even

in the remotest parts of the world. Undeniably, local attachments to place are influenced by Western values and perspectives (Appadurai, 2000; Wasserman & Jacobs, 2003). Indeed, places move and change over time, through connections with other places and the global or through physical processes (Massey, 2005). Places shape who we are; in turn, we shape and reshape places through our everyday social practices (Cajete, 2000). This suggests that place provides relevant education to learners and that learners' understandings of place should inform any type of education. This study sought to explore youths' understandings of place in their local context of a Malawian school and village.

My interest in the topic of youths' understandings of place stemmed from observing an increase of studies on environment-related education in a particular local context that did not consider the diversity of youth experience and backgrounds (Gough, 2009; Kayira, 2013; McKenzie, Kayira & Wals, 2009). Although Malawi received independence from Britain in 1964, the formal education system is still Eurocentric (e.g. Phiri, 2008). Thus, Malawian youths' understandings of place could be shaped by Eurocentric ideas. With globalisation impacting almost all places in the world, Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of a 'hybrid third space' provided an appropriate lens to frame the study. In this space, Bhabha argues, 'all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity' (cited in Rutherford, 1990:211). As a result, conventional thinking between and across cultures is disturbed, and Western perspectives are not allowed to be used as the standard for non-Western 'traditions' (Kapoor, 2008). Rather, the space enables other positions to emerge. The hybrid third space is thus a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility. This space is a relevant framework for exploring Malawian youths' understandings of place.

Background on Research Site and Participants

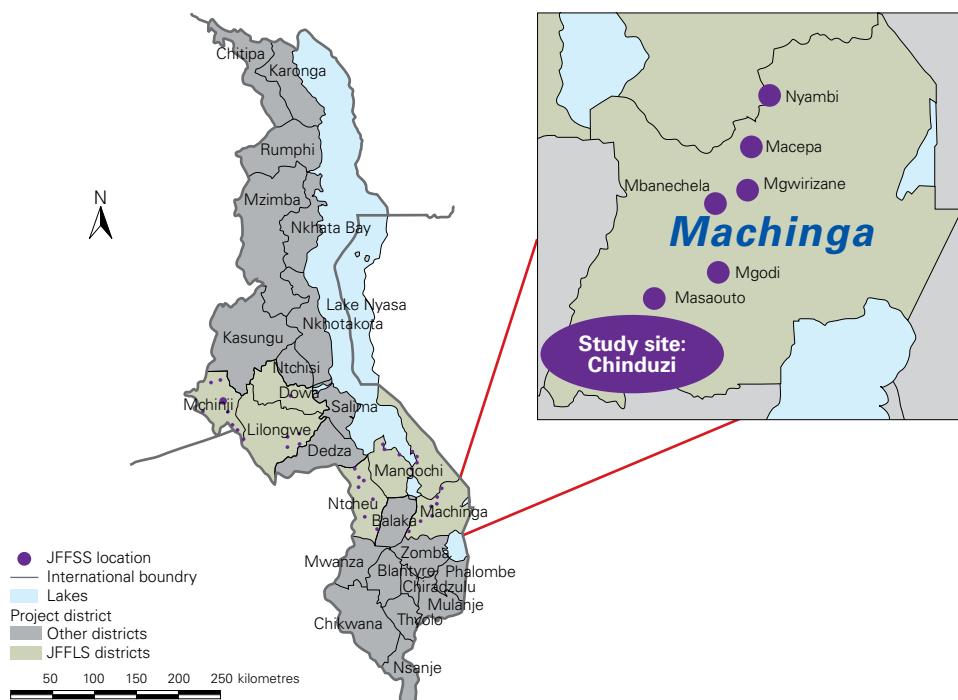
The study was carried out at Chinduzi Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills School (JFFLS) in the Machinga district in Malawi (Figure 1) from September 2010 through January 2011.

Chinduzi JFFLS is located at the local primary school. Before describing the JFFLS, I begin with a brief overview of the community of Chinduzi, highlighting socio-economic activities, the leadership structure and culture.

Chinduzi is a village in Machinga district in the southeastern region of Malawi. It is named after a hill in the village. Chinduzi hill has an elevation of 1 270 metres (4 170 feet), latitude: 15°10'51.82", longitude: 35°13'8.01" (online: geoviewinfo). Most people living in Chinduzi village are subsistence farmers growing a variety of crops, including but not limited to maize, groundnuts, beans, pigeon pea and cow pea (JFFLS facilitators Sabwelera and Lapukeni).¹ Cotton is also grown as a cash crop though not on a large scale. According to the JFFLS facilitators at Chinduzi, most of these crops are hybrid varieties. Apart from crop husbandry, a number of people in Chinduzi also keep livestock, such as goats and chickens, for consumption as well as sale.

¹ A JFFLS is run by facilitators from the community. Chinduzi JFFLS has three facilitators: Mr Sabwelera, Mr Lapukeni and one other. All participant names have been changed to protect their identity.

Figure 1. Study site: Chinduzi JFFLS, Machinga



Source: Kachale (2009)

The Chinduzi community has a distinct culture that promotes the idea of togetherness (Mtauchila, 2010). Two main tribes (Yao and Lomwe) call Chinduzi home. The Yao is the predominant tribe (85%) and is believed to be native to the village (facilitator Sabwelera). The Lomwe, on the other hand, came from Mulanje and Phalombe districts. The two tribes share commonalities such as emphasising initiation ceremonies in the socialisation of the youth as well as following a matrilineal system of descent (facilitator Lapukeni).² The relationship between the two tribes is understood to be cordial (facilitator Sabwelera; Mtauchila, 2010). For example, while each tribe has its own cultural practices, including language, people are free to borrow practices from the other tribe as they see fit – such as food and dances. The Manganje dance is a case in point. Most people participate in the dance even though it is a Yao custom. It is a celebratory dance performed during happy times, for instance when the community receives visitors (Mtauchila, 2010).

Colonialism and globalisation influence all parts of Malawi, including Chinduzi. Traces of these systems are apparent in the knowledge and practices of agriculture (Kayira, 2013), the school curriculum (Glasson, Mhango, Phiri & Lanier, 2010; Phiri, 2008) and ways of dressing.

² In a matrilineal system, ancestry is drawn from the mother and her descendants.

Farming practices in Malawi combine both indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge. For example, a study exploring the forms of knowledge and practices in the JFFLS programme at Chinduzi revealed that both indigenous and Western knowledge and practices are evident (Kayira, 2013). Furthermore, instances of colonialism/globalisation are evident in the school curriculum in Malawi. For instance, Phiri (2008) explored the integration of indigenous science in the primary school science and technology curriculum. He found that the indigenous knowledge included in the curriculum focuses primarily on autochthonous technology (e.g. drums as technology for sending messages, bows and arrows as technological innovations), leaving out all other local knowledge relevant to science. According to Phiri, such representation of the knowledge of the forefathers 'might mean that Malawian educators do not fully accept the value of all other forms of Indigenous knowledge except technologies, or that curriculum developers are not well informed about the value for [of] bringing Indigenous knowledge in the science curriculum' (2008:138). Glasson *et al.*'s (2010) study on the same curriculum found that the Eurocentric scientific concepts taught in schools are often decontextualised from the local culture. They posit: 'Presently, Eurocentric science has the power and influence in the school science curriculum but is largely irrelevant to most Malawian villagers' (2010:138). This is an area where the curriculum could be enriched by relevant and appropriate indigenous knowledge found in the communities. These colonial legacies and globalising trends contribute to Chinduzi village youths' sense of place.

While the overview of Chinduzi village presents a positive picture of the intertribal relationships, it was difficult for me as a researcher to get a sense of the politics and power issues within and across the two tribes. Although I am Malawian, I do not come from that community; if I had grown up in Chinduzi, I would perhaps have had different insights into these issues. Having provided an overview of the community of Chinduzi, I now describe the Chinduzi JFFLS.

The JFFLS initiative was initially developed in 2003 by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations and the World Food Programme to help address a growing number of orphan³ and vulnerable⁴ children (FAO, 2008). The approach was initially implemented in Africa and has since expanded to other parts of the world, such as the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Nepal (Dalla Valle, 2009; FAO, 2010). Malawi piloted the JFFLS programme in 2006 at eight sites in two districts. The programme has since expanded to 41 sites in six districts (Kachale, 2009). Chinduzi JFFLS was established in 2008. The goal of a JFFLS is to empower orphaned and vulnerable children and youth⁵ by offering them livelihood options and gender-sensitive skills needed for long-term food security, while minimising their vulnerability to destitution and instilling positive coping behaviours (FAO, 2008; FAO & WFP, 2007). The programme also ensures that an equal number of girls and boys participate.

³ NSO and ICF Macro (2011) define an orphan as a child under the age of 18 who has lost one or both parents.

⁴ A vulnerable child is defined as a child under the age of 18 who has a chronically ill parent or who lives in a household where an adult is chronically ill (NSO & ICF Macro, 2011).

⁵ Youth are defined as those aged 15–24 years (Chigunta, Schnurr, James-Wilson & Torres, 2005). However, the term 'youth' is used in this paper to refer to the JFFLS students, aged between nine and 17.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through focus group discussions and place-mapping activities. All discussions were held in the local language of Chichewa.

Focus groups

Twenty-six youths (18 females and eight males; age range 9–17) participated in four focus group discussions. The first discussion was aimed at learning about their experiences in the JFFLS programme. During the second focus group, the youths discussed how they understood place in relation to knowledge and practice. At the end of the discussion, they were given a homework assignment to draw their favourite place(s) in their community (see place-mapping below). Their drawings were discussed during the third and fourth focus group discussions.

At the beginning of the first focus group discussion, we mutually agreed on guidelines so that everyone would be comfortable, could speak freely and would be respected. At the end of each discussion I prepared a summary of the main points, which were shared at the beginning of the next meeting. All group discussions took place at the school and were approximately two hours long.

Place mapping

The participants were asked to work individually to draw pictures of their favourite places in their community. To give additional context to the drawings, they were asked during focus group discussions to explain what they do in the place, when they go to the place and with whom, how they use the place and how they feel about it. This method gave them the opportunity to visually describe their sense of place, but also revealed their unspoken and unheard stories and reflected the socio-cultural realities that influence their understanding of place.

Visual methods of collecting data are regarded as helpful in probing youth understandings and representations of place (Aitken, 1994; Béneker, Sanders, Tani & Taylor, 2010; Christensen & O'Brien, 2003; McKenzie & Bieler, 2016). Specific to working with African youth, Van Blerk and Ansell (2006) posit that drawing methods are particularly effective as they allow youths time to deliberate on and compose narratives before recounting them.

Data Analysis

Research focused on youths' perceptions of place or space tends to be unconcerned with their competence with the visual methods used (e.g. their ability to draw or create maps according to scale), and more interested in learning about the formal and informal spaces that children respond to and reconstruct through the methods (Burke, 2005; Watts, 2010). Therefore, when analysing the place-mapping drawings, the images were not analysed for technical, conceptual or aesthetic competence. Instead, the analysis was based on Collier and Collier's (1986) method for analysing photographs. This approach starts with a holistic view of the photograph dataset in which general thoughts, questions and impressions are noted. It then proceeds to a detailed analysis of pertinent characteristics, image by image, and concludes with another holistic view.

In the second phase of detailed analysis in this study, each drawing was looked at with its accompanying focus group transcript, in order to explore the relationship between the features depicted and what the participant said about them. This process resulted in the identification of three themes, which are presented in the next section.

Findings and Discussion

Following the analysis described above, three themes emerged: hope and despair; sense of belonging; and gendered places. Many of the drawings depicted positive features such as modern houses and people dressed in fashionable clothes. However, some drawings included features that could be interpreted as signs of despair, such as deforestation and vulnerable homes. This gave rise to the theme of 'hope and despair'. The second and third themes (sense of belonging and gendered places) arose from analysing features included in the drawings as well as the youths' comments on their time spent in their favourite places.

In presenting the findings, I quote directly from the focus group discussions. To maintain the authenticity and integrity of the data, I present the quotes verbatim as spoken by participants in the local language of Chichewa, followed by an English translation.

Hope and despair

Hope was evident in most drawings. Although the youths were asked to draw their favourite places *in* the community, many of the drawings did not resemble any specific place in the community. Instead, they were drawings of imagined places, what others have called mental maps (Futch & Fine, 2014; Giesecking, 2013). Mental maps are personal, subjective and intimate, and hold '*great promise for interrogating the terrain between individual experience and social reality*' (Futch & Fine, 2014:42, emphasis in original). It is argued that details on mental maps reflect a high level of meaning and personal connections that the mapmaker has with his or her depicted lifeworld. Children are imaginative and are 'intense and intuitive mappers' (Macfarlane, 2016:326). It appears that the mental maps or imagined places of the JFFLS youth not only convey their lived realities, but also signify possible desires and aspirations. Thus, they represent their hopes.

Youth drawings showed hope in the imaginaries of the journey to success, represented, for example, through depictions of baobab trees and modern houses. The baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) is a symbol of hope and success and was drawn by many of the youth. A prominent bank in Malawi, Standard Bank (previously Commercial Bank of Malawi), also used this tree as a symbol to represent the success of investment. Chimwemwe's drawing of her favourite place depicts a hut and a baobab tree (Figure 2). The baobab tree in this drawing is proportionally bigger than the hut. Although Chimwemwe currently lives in a small hut, perhaps she does not see her life continuing in those conditions. The drawing suggests she envisages a better future, represented by the baobab tree overshadowing her hut. In describing her place, she focused more on the tree than on the hut: '*malo anga akhale ndi mitengo [...] chifukwa mitengo imatipatsa mthunzi ndi mpweya*' (my place should have trees [...] because trees give us shade and air). In a way, what is important for her is not her current condition, but rather her hope for the future.

Studies have shown that in their drawings, children tend to include only details that highlight issues that they deem important (Watts, 2010). Thus, for Chimwemwe, the hut appears to be less important than the envisaged future represented by the baobab tree.

Figure 2. Chimwemwe's favourite place showing a hut and a baobab tree



Another symbol of hope depicted in the youths' drawings was a modern house along with the woman of the house wearing fashionable clothes and shoes. This is evident in Enelesi's map (Figure 3).

Enelesi aspires to have a place that will enable her to perform household chores easily but she also wants to wear fashionable clothes and shoes (see the woman in her drawing standing near the tap). Enelesi says: '[...] a mayi a pakhomo adzioneka bwino [...] adzibvala malaya okongola,

nsapatoso zokongola [...] akhale ndi madiledi' ([...] the woman of the house should look nice [...] should dress in beautiful clothes, beautiful shoes also [...] should have braids [hair braided]). These could all be viewed as hopeful aspirations.

Figure 3. Enelesi's favourite place showing a house, stream, tap, woman, chicken and trees



While hope was evident in the youths' drawings, despair was also a common feature. Signs of despair depicted in many of the drawings are exemplified by deforestation and small dwelling huts. These could signify roadblocks to moving forward to a better life. In many instances, the drawings represented both despair and hope, as seen in the imaginary place of Thandizo (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Thandizo's favourite place represents hope (e.g. house with iron roof, chimney; woman in fashionable clothes; truck; girl milking cow) and despair (deforestation)



The top portion of Thandizo's drawing represents what could be regarded as great hope in the form of a house, albeit a small one, with an iron roof and a chimney, even though none of the houses in Chinduzi has a chimney. The top portion of the drawing also includes flowers around the house, a well-dressed woman, a young girl driving a truck and another milking a cow, and maize to which fertiliser has been applied. Thandizo talks about her place in this way:

Thandizo: *Ndajambula nyumba, maluwa chifukwa amakongolesa pakhomo.* (I have drawn a house and flowers because flowers beautify a place.)

Jean: *Malowa ali ndi zinthu zambiri monga anthu, ng'ombe, galimoto. Ungalongsore kuti chikuchitika ndi chiyani?* (This place has a lot of items, such as people, cow and truck. There is a lot of story here. Can you take us through what is going on?)

Thandizo: *Ine malo amene ndimakonda ndi omwe pali nyumba yamakono, maluwa, komanso amayi atabvala zobvala zamakono zachizungu, handibagi yokongola. Komanso mtsuko wabwino wotungila madzi. Komanso pakhale ng'ombe za mkaka, galimoto monga ipi, munda wa chimanga wothila feteleza.* (My favourite place is one with a modern house, flowers, the lady of the house dresses in fashionable, Western-style clothes with a beautiful handbag. Also a good clay pot for drawing water [top right]. In addition, the place should have milk-producing cows [second row, middle], a car like this one [second row, right], a maize garden to which fertiliser has been applied [second row, left of cow].)

Jean: *Chifukwa chani ukufuna kugwiritsa ntchito mtsuko potunga madzi osati ndowa?* (Why do you want to use a clay pot for drawing water and not a pail?)

Thandizo: *Chifukwa mtsuko umadzidziritsa bwino madzi kusiyana ndi ndowa.* (Because the clay pot cools the water unlike a pail. [She is referring to drinking water. Refrigerators are not common in the community and storing drinking water in clay pots is a common indigenous practice for many rural communities in Malawi.])

Jean: *Wanena kuti pamalo pakhale ng'ombe zamkaka, galimoto ndi munda wa chimanga wothila feteleza. Ungalongsore zifukwa zake?* (You have said the place should have milk-producing cows, car and a maize garden to which fertiliser has been applied. Can you explain why your favourite place should have such things?)

Thandizo: *Ng'ombe zamkaka zimapeleka mkaka chomwe ndi chakudya chopatsa thanzi komanso tiyi wothira mkaka amakoma. Ndimasirira ndikaona anthu akuyendetsa galimoto [...] feteleza amathandiza kukolola zochuluka.* (Milk-producing cows provide milk which is a nutritious food but also tea to which milk has been added tastes good. When I see people driving cars, I wish I would be the one [...] fertiliser helps harvest more.)

Jean: *Kodi malo okhala ngati amenewa alipo ku Chinduzi?* (Does such a place exist in Chinduzi?)

Thandizo: *Ayi, koma ndi malo omwe ndimala-laka nditakhala nawo mmudzi muno.* (No, but I aspire to have such a place in this village.) (Third focus group discussion)

The bottom part of Thandizo's drawing, however, is not as hopeful as the top portion. It shows signs of despair, particularly deforestation and environmental degradation. This is how Thandizo describes this part of the drawing: '*Chilengedwe chikuonongeka kwathu kuno [...] kudula mitengo kumaononga chilengedwe*' (There is environmental degradation in our community [...] cutting down trees destroys the environment). The caption under the fallen tree at the bottom left in

Thandizo's drawing reads, 'Tree has fallen due to strong winds.' The caption at bottom right reads, 'Environmental degradation.' While the negative environmental impacts are all literal, one wonders whether Thandizo is using these statements as metaphors for her real life as well. Although both of her parents are alive, she is vulnerable and faces many challenges. She is a *tree* trying to stand firm but the challenges of life are pulling at her and trying to break her. Yet, Thandizo does not give up because she is hopeful for the future. It appears hope is more important to her; thus, she represents it with more features and at the top of the illustration where the eye is drawn to first.

As noted, all youth participants were orphans and/or vulnerable. Many, including the JFFLS facilitators, did not have high hopes for them. They thought the youths would not go beyond the village and that the emphasis should therefore be on teaching them knowledge and skills that would enable them to survive in the village. They argued: 'We focus on teaching them things that are found locally [...] most of them [youth] will not leave Chinduzi' (facilitator Lapukeni). However, the place-mapping exercise could be described as an escape for the youth to reimagine a different future, one that is more positive.

Sense of belonging

Youths' depictions of a 'sense of belonging' were largely grounded in narratives of friendships. Many spoke passionately about their favourite places and described them as their own; places where they could hang out with friends and feel free to play, talk about anything and study. Dalitso describes his favourite place as follows:

Dalitso: *Malo amene amanditsangalatsa ndi phiri lathu la Chinduzi.* (My favourite place is our local hill of Chinduzi.)

Jean: *Chifukwa chani?* (Why?)

Dalitso: *Chifukwa pali malo ena mphirimu ndimakonda kupidako, ndipo ndikakhala malo amenewa, ndimakhala omasuka.* (Because there is a specific place in the hill where I like to go, and when I am at this place, I feel free.)

Jean: *Umapita ndi ndani? Chifukwa chani umakhala omasuka?* (Who do you go with and why do you feel free?)

Dalitso: *Ndimapita ndi anzizanga, timakhala omasuka chifukwa timatha kukamba nkhani zambiri-mbiri mopanda kuopa kuti wina atimvera.* (I go with my friends. We feel free because here we are able to discuss many issues without fear of being heard by anyone.)

Jean: *Nkhani zake zimakhala zotani, ungapeleke zitsanzo?* (What sort of issues do you discuss? Can you give examples?)

Dalitso: *zambiri, timakamba za sukulu, kuthandizana ku sova masamu. Komanso timakamba za atsikana ndi zibwenzi.* (We discuss many things, such as school stuff. We help each other

solve maths. Also, we talk about girls and relationships. [Everybody laughs]) (Third focus group discussion)

It was evident that friends were an important aspect of youths' favourite places. Whether it was under a mango or *Ngwemba* tree playing *bao*⁶ or *phada*,⁷ swimming and fishing in the nearby Shire River, standing on the Shire bridge watching boats or studying on the Chinduzi hill, youths did not visit these places alone, but rather with friends, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

Landileni: *Malo a ine ndipansi pa mtengo wa mango. Timasewera bao ndi anzizanga [...] komanso timakamba nkhani zathu. Timakonda malo ameneuva makamaka nthawi ya mango chifukwa tikamva njala timatha kuthyola mango ndikumadya [...] timatha kuverenga pansi pamtengowu chifukwa umapeleka mpueya uwozirira bwino.* (My place is under a mango tree. I play *bao* game with my friends [...] also we discuss a lot of issues among ourselves. We like this place particularly when mangoes are in season so that when we get hungry, we reach for the mango fruit in the tree [...] we also like to study under the tree because we get a good breeze of air.)

Fatsani: *Ndimasewera ndi anzanga pansi pa mtengo wa Ngwemba [...] timasewera masewero monga phada, mpira wa manja. Komanso timakambiranu zinthu zambiri-mbiri monga zokhuzana ndi sukulu ndi zina Zotero [...] ndimakonda mtengo wa Ngwemba chifukwa zipatso zake timatha kupanga juvisi.* (I play with my friends under the *Ngwemba* tree [...] we play different games, including *phada* and netball. We also discuss a lot of issues, such as school work, etc. [...] I like the *Ngwemba* tree because we use its fruits to make juice.)

Mayeso: *Ine malo amene amanditsangalata ndi mtsinje wa Shire. Ndimapita ndi anzizanga kukasangalala [...] timasambira, kapena kuima pa bridge ndikungoona zochitika.* (My favourite place is the river Shire. I go there with my friends for recreational purposes [...] we swim, or stand on the bridge hanging out watching what goes on.) (Third focus group discussion)

Many of the youths' favourite places are where they socialise, and friendships are thus regarded as an important aspect.

Gendered places

The data suggest that youths' understanding of place is also gendered. While both girls and boys visit their favourite places to socialise, most girls indicated they also go to these places (e.g. the local hill, local stream) to fulfil household chores, such as fetching firewood and

6 A traditional board game for two players.

7 *Phada* is a common game played by children in Malawi, usually girls. It is similar to hopscotch. A matrix of boxes is drawn on the ground. The player throws a small stone into a box. The player loses their turn if the stone does not land on the targeted box or if they step on the outline of a box on their way to collect the stone.

drawing water. For example, the favourite place for Spiwe, a girl participant, is the local hill of Chinduzi. This is how she describes it: '*Malo anga ndi phiri la Chinduzi [...] ndimapita ku phiri ndi anzanga kukafuna nkhuni*' (My favourite place is Chinduzi hill [...] I go with my friends to fetch firewood) (Fourth focus group discussion). In contrast, while the favourite place for Landileni, a boy participant, is the same local hill, unlike Spiwe who goes there to fetch firewood, Landileni visits the hill mostly to hang out with friends and relax or study. This is how he describes it:

Malo onditsangalatsa ndi phiri la Chinduzi [...] ndimapita ku phiri ndi anzanga kukawerenga, chifukwa cha mpweya wabwino, timatha kumva bwino zowerenga. Komanso timatha kukhala kungoyang'ana mitengo, chinthu chomwe chimanditsangalatsa zedi. (My favourite place is Chinduzi hill [...] I go with my friends to the hill to study, because of the refreshing air, we are able to understand what we are studying. But also we spend time just looking at the trees, something that makes me happy). (Fourth focus group discussion)

Another gendered point concerned the level of detail in the drawings, which reflected differing gender roles. Drawings made by girls tended to have more details (e.g. houses, rivers, taps, chickens). This is exemplified in the favourite places of Enelesi (Figure 3) and Thandizo (Figure 4). Conversely, drawings made by boys often included only a single feature, such as a tree (e.g. see Austin's favourite place in Figure 5). The differences may be due to the types of chores girls and boys do. As outlined under the 'hope and despair' theme above, Thandizo describes her favourite place as having milk-producing cows to provide good nutrition, a bumper harvest of maize, as well as a clay pot for cooling drinking water. Similarly, Enelesi speaks of the importance of having water nearby, hence a tap outside the house: '*pa nyumba pakhale mpopo wa madzi*' ('my home should have a tap of water'); the tap is in front of the house, on the left, in Figure 3). However, realising that taps often run dry in this area, her favourite place needs to be close to a stream so she does not have to go a long distance to draw water when the tap runs dry: '*ndajambulanso mtsinje [...] chifukwa nthawi zina madzi satuluka ku mpopo [...] nyumba ikakhala pafupi ndi mtsinje sindiyenda mtunda waatali kkukatunga madzi*' ('I have also drawn a stream [...] because sometimes the tap runs dry; if a home is near a stream I won't have to walk a long distance to draw water'; see top row in Figure 3). In addition, she wants to have trees near the dwelling to provide firewood as she does not like travelling long distances to look for wood: '*pa malo anga pakhale mitengo [...] kuti tipeze nkhuni mosabvuta [...] kukafuna nkhuni ndi kutali*' ('my place should have trees [...] so that we should get firewood easily [...] the place where we look for firewood is far'; see front of house, bottom row. Most people in the community use firewood for cooking). Furthermore, her favourite place must have chickens to provide a nutritious diet: '*ndajambulanso nkhuku chifukwa pa khomo payenera kukhala nkhuku [...] chifukwa ndi ndiwo zaburino zimapereka thanzi*' ('I've also drawn chickens because a home should have chickens [...] because they are a good relish⁸ and nutritious'; see front of house, right of water tap). Thus, girls appear

⁸ Relish is any protein dish that is eaten with the staple dish of *nsima* (made from maize flour and water). The relish could be stew containing chicken, beef, beans or vegetables (green or dry) or fish.

to take into consideration many of the tasks a female child performs in a home. Consequently, their favourite places must enable them to do these tasks with ease.

Place in Malawi, like in other sub-Saharan Africa countries, is gendered. For example, in a study exploring rural children's use of wild food in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, McGarry and Shackleton (2009) found noticeable differences between how girls and boys access wild food, including the places where they collect it. Girls collect wild spinach, shellfish and firewood while boys hunt, tend cattle and work in the fields.

Figure 5. Austin's favourite place showing a mango tree. The caption says, 'This tree makes me happy because it provides good fruits, protects soil and provides fresh air.'



Methodological Reflections

Making meaning of the youths' drawings of their favourite places was based on their descriptions of the drawings during focus group discussions as well as on my own interpretation of the drawings. However, it was sometimes difficult to know for certain why they included particular features or experiences in their drawings. A one-on-one conversation with each participant, to discuss each component of their drawing, may have been more illuminating than a focus group discussion (particularly given that there were 26 youth of varying ages in the focus groups). Although the participants were not rushed when talking about their drawings (we discussed the drawings in two meetings), in hindsight it would have been more effective if we had one-on-one conversations or two separate focus groups meeting at different times: one for the younger participants and the other for the older ones.

Conclusion

While all the youths in the study were orphans and/or vulnerable, when given the chance to draw their favourite places, they refused to be defined by their realities, choosing instead to dream and reimagine their places. Through the exercise, the youths imagined different realities. The fact that the drawings included both positive and less positive aspects could be interpreted as revealing the ambivalence and complexity of the youths' lived realities, suggesting that they operate in a 'hybrid third space' (Bhabha, 1994). In this space, they can dream but are also forced to face reality, indicated by the inclusion of features in their drawings that could be interpreted as symbolising despair.

It was also evident that gender played an important role in the imaginations and realities of the youths' favourite places. Unlike their male counterparts, girls appeared to take into consideration many of the tasks a female child typically performs in a rural Malawian home. As a result, their favourite places were envisioned as enabling them to do these tasks with ease.

While it is clear that the JFFLS youth in Chinduzi are largely rooted in their socio-cultural interactions with friends, knowledge and practices within their community, they are also influenced by global culture. This hybridity is evident not only in their drawings depicting the characteristics of places – both real and imagined – that they see as meaningful and significant, but also in the type of clothing they wear, their views and their perspectives on the indigenous knowledge of the area (Anderson, Datta, Dyck, Kayira & McVittie, 2016; Kayira, 2013). This type of exposure and acceptance of global culture is consistent with Massey's (1994) observation that the infusion of global culture into local contexts is a common characteristic of 'modern' life and responsible for contributing to global place making, even in the remotest parts of the world. Indeed, local attachments to place are influenced by Western values and perspectives (Appadurai, 2000; Wasserman & Jacobs, 2003). Thus, Chinduzi youth operate in a 'hybrid third space', whether it is in their imaginations or in real situations. In this space, they use their creativity to reimagine their places and their future.

The finding that youths operate within hybrid spaces of local and global culture is not unique to this study. In a study examining the use of place-based activities to enhance

youth engagement with local environments, Farrington (2008) found that while youths are influenced by global media and ideologies, they are also grounded by their social and embodied interactions within their communities, families and peer groups. She argues that youth in South Africa are ‘not the passive victims of the structural forces of globalisation, but are actively engaged in the world and with the circumstances and conditions that surround them’ (2008:203). Indeed, children’s worlds of meaning are ‘at one and the same time global and local, made through “local” cultures which are in part shaped by their interconnections with the wider world’ (Holloway & Valentine, 2000:769). Likewise, Chinduzi youth are situated in the community with its knowledge and practices, but at the same time are influenced by global Western knowledge and practices.

The study reaffirms that people are part of and shaped by place; at the same time, they shape place through everyday social practices. It is therefore important that studies on environment-related education in a particular local context consider variations in experience based on learners’ diverse backgrounds. Pedagogical engagements need to take into account the socio-cultural experiences of learners in particular contexts as each learner has a story which is embedded in their experience, culture and place. The place maps the youths drew revealed both their imagined positive futures and signs of the despair currently being experienced. Fashionable clothes, houses with modern features such as chimneys and iron roofs, and cars are indications of the influence of a global culture and were regarded as positive by the youth. The study also showed that youths’ chosen places are not neutral; they are nuanced and gendered. Additionally, the stories shared about the use of the places suggest a strong sense of belonging enabled in and by these places. Such information about learners is key to informing the content of environment-related education as well as the pedagogical tools used. Hence, to make learning relevant and meaningful, it is important for educators to consider how learners are affected by the communities of which they are or are not a part, both locally and globally.

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