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Sauti ya Jogoo

**Hip Hop and Empowerment
in Tanzania**

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„The fifth element of Hip Hop is Knowledge.“

- Afrika Bambaataa, African-American Hip Hop pioneer

“Knowledge is Power.”

- His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia,

JAH Ras Tafari

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May this work contribute to the awareness of Hip Hop as a tool for youth empowerment.

ONE LOVE

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1. Introduction

The idea for the title of this diploma thesis came to me one night in a parked car on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in September 2012. Earlier that day I had met a young Rapper who goes by the stage name Philly Techniques from an upcoming Hip Hop collective called Tamaduni Muzik at the YWCA in Azikiwe Road where I was staying. He was recommended to me as (and proved to be) a top guide into the Dar es Salaam Hip Hop world by my close friend George Kyomushula from Arusha. Although I had done research on Tanzanian Hip Hop and Reggae since I first travelled to Tanzania in 2009, until then I had primarily focused on Arusha and I was just building up my contacts in Dar es Salaam. After I had done a lengthy interview with Philly Techniques he took me across the city to what was said to be a ghetto district called Temeke. There I met another Rapper called Nash MC with whom I also did an interview. He was obviously a leading member within Tamaduni and highly respected as a knowledgeable elder, although he did not seem to be much older than his companions. I was highly satisfied and impressed with these contacts. Both of them were well informed about the history of US Hip Hop and very conscious about *keeping it real*.¹ That evening Philly Techniques took me to a popular beach at the northern outskirts of Dar es Salaam where more members of Tamaduni Muzik would gather to have a cypher, a spontaneous Hip Hop happening to attract people and sell their CDs. At night I found myself in a parked car together with Nikki Mbishi, Ray Teknohama and other members of Tamaduni who were eager to teach me about the realities of Hip Hop in Tanzania. In the interview Nikki Mbishi explained to me the significance of the meaning of his album title “Sauti ya Jogoo”, the voice of the cock. The chorus of the song runs like this:

Sauti ya jogoo inayowika mitaani

Heri tuwe macho...

The voice of the cock is croaking in the streets

We better open our eyes...²

¹ A popular expression within the Hip Hop vocabulary for staying true to the foundations of „real“ Hip Hop.

² Translated into English for me by Nikki Mbishi’s Tamaduni Muzik colleague Philly Techniques because Rap lyrics use slang expressions and inside-knowledge and should therefore be translated by the artists themselves or at least by someone within their crew to keep the intended meaning.

The more he elaborated on the mission of Hip Hop as being like the voice of a cock waking the people up to the realities that they find themselves in, the more I understood that this short expression encompasses the whole potential of Hip Hop for the empowerment of young people in Tanzania. It was already then that I decided to call this thesis after the expression *Sauti ya Jogoo*.

Being a longtime Hip Hop fan and practitioner myself and having been on field-research about Swahili Hip Hop four times since 2009, it was inevitable for me to focus on the empowerment aspect of Hip Hop. Because for me and many other Hip Hop fans and practitioners from the US, across the globe, to Tanzania, empowerment is not just another aspect of Hip Hop, but Hip Hop *is* empowerment, empowerment *is* what Hip Hop is all about, not just in lyrical content but also in style and way of life. Contemplating about our common love for Hip Hop with different Hip Hoppers throughout my journeys, I came to the realization, that it is exactly this notion of empowerment that we all love about Hip Hop. Consequently, the more I got into the Tanzanian Hip Hop world, the more I saw proofs of Hip Hop's empowering potentials. This research focus then shaped my research question: if, why and how Tanzanian youths use Hip Hop for their empowerment.

To answer my research question I have used literature research and analysis, text/lyrics analysis and field research in Tanzania which included participant observation and qualitative interviews, which I introduce in the **2. Methods** section of this thesis.

To comprehend the findings to which the methods I have used led me, I have used transnational theories, cultural studies and empowerment theories, on which I elaborate in the **3. Theories** section.

Following the two sections on methods and theories, in the **4. The Birth of a Culture** section I introduce the reader into the emergence of what this thesis is all about: Hip Hop. It gives the reader an overview about the history of US Hip Hop.

I then go on to give the reader an overview about when and how Hip Hop came to Tanzania and how it evolved there in section **5. Hip Hop in Tanzania**.

I then turn to my research focus on empowerment in the **6. Empowerment through Tanzanian Hip Hop** main section of this thesis.

Finally I try to emphasize my main findings in the **7. Conclusion** section.

I hope the readers will enjoy this journey into the world of Hip Hop.

2. Methods

To gather the information contained in this thesis I have used mainly four types of methods: (1) literature research/analysis, (2) text/lyrics analysis and (3) participant observation plus (4) qualitative interviews in the course of my field research. It turned out that these four methods have complemented each other very well and were, therefore, necessary to cover the different aspects of my research topic in order to be able to get a full and consistent picture.

Being a Hip Hop fan for most of my life, I have started analyzing Hip Hop lyrics very early. I have read academic literature on Hip Hop long before my time in university, although it especially increased during my university studies where I have time and again worked on the subject of Hip Hop. Even my field research and participant observation (including, of course, what you could call informal interviews) started long before I ever knew that one day I would write my diploma thesis about Hip Hop – in 2009 when I first visited Tanzania.

I say all this to explain that Hip Hop has been a part of my life since my early teens. This means that this topic is not a new topic to me or one that I have only chosen to write my diploma thesis about it. This topic has been a part of my life and will continue to be a part of my life after this diploma thesis. I say this because it would be naïve to think that my involvement into the topic about which I am writing has not influenced the methods that I have used and the way how I have used them. It is, therefore, for the understanding of the reader, only fair to explain that this work has been basically just an attempt to put into an academically acceptable format of what I have been doing anyway for much of my life: learning about Hip Hop.

2.1. Literature Analysis

Besides being a hobby for many years, studying literature about Hip Hop has become also part of my university studies for some of my essays I have written for classes and seminars and especially for my bachelor thesis which I have written about Hip Hop and Hip Hop in Tanzania for the African Studies Department at the University of Vienna, Austria.

Because of this long time involvement into the topic, the literature I have used for this diploma thesis basically covers everything from monographs and scientific articles to Hip Hop websites and Youtube-videos, but the emphasis was obviously on scientific articles. The reasons for this are, on the one hand, that using articles allowed me to get many different views from many different authors, and, on the other hand, simply because there are far more articles on this topic than monographs. As regards content, the literature ranges from the

methods and theories I have used, to the background and history of US Hip Hop and of course the Hip Hop movement in Tanzania.

Therefore, this work is, no doubt, based on scientific literature research. But in order to be able to use this scientific literature responsibly in a way that makes sense, I put great emphasis on critically analyzing and comparing it with first-hand accounts from some of the protagonists of the history of Hip Hop themselves. I had access to some of these accounts from recorded lectures and interviews in Hip Hop documentaries, concerning the US part, and through my own field research, concerning the Tanzanian part. In my opinion this comparative research and analysis is highly important in order to get the history not only from those who wrote about it but also from those who have made it.

2.2. Text Analysis

Text analysis, in this case, means analyzing Rap lyrics. Considering that Rap lyrics are the main means for spreading the message of Hip Hop artists, analyzing them is very central to understand what Hip Hop is all about. Although Hip Hop is a way of expressing oneself through all four elements of DJ-ing, breakdancing, graffiti art and rapping, rapping, being the vocal expression, is the element that gives us lyrics to analyze. Therefore, I have analyzed Rap lyrics concerning the focus of this thesis, the theme of empowerment.

Since, by now, there is an unmanageable flood of Rap songs and lyrics, both in US and Tanzanian Hip Hop, initially I have taken refuge in analyzing lyrics which have already been cited in the secondary literature. This I have done for two main reasons: first, to get an idea which songs/lyrics are of central importance, and second, to avoid the challenge of translating Swahili lyrics by myself. This challenge is a very difficult one not only because it takes a great understanding of Swahili, but mainly because Rap lyrics use slang expressions and refer to inside-knowledge. Translations by outsiders, especially such who are not even fluent in the original language like me, are often frowned upon by the artists themselves because they inevitably distort the original meaning intended. Where I have used lyrics directly from Swahili sources I have asked the artists themselves or some of their associates for translations. Where I have already used lyrics from the secondary literature, I obviously chose songs/lyrics, both from US and Tanzanian Hip Hop, which help me and the reader to grasp the topic of empowerment within Hip Hop, since this is the focus of my thesis. However, I keep in mind and do not try to make a secret of the fact that any kind of choosing has ultimately some subjective taste to it. Therefore, I will try to get rid of some of this taste by simply explaining why I chose what I chose when referring to it.

Following Manfred Lueger and Ulrike Froschauer (Lueger/Froschauer 2003: 93ff; Lueger 2000: 99f), I understand texts as part of social contexts and interactions and implement my text analysis accordingly. From this perspective, a profound knowledge of the texts' topics and contexts, in order to make sense of what is said, is far more important than applying formal rules and techniques, because "text elements can be understood only when integrated into the totality of social practice and not in their textual isolation" (Lueger/Froschauer 2003: 94; my own translation³).

2.3. Field Research

In the summer of 2009, one year after I had started my International Development and African Studies (including Swahili lessons) at the University of Vienna, I visited Tanzania (and Uganda) for the first time. The plan was a rather conventional one, learning about and experiencing different development projects in north-western Tanzania to broaden my own experiences and understanding about this International Development field to which I was then still very new. Back then I was not even yet aware of how popular Hip Hop is in Tanzania. But being a Hip Hop fan I automatically encountered Hip Hop in many places. I found out that nearly everywhere you find young people you also find Hip Hop being present. And I really mean *Hip Hop being present*. This means not only Rap being rather passively listened to and absorbed, but Hip Hop being virtually lived and Rap created.

My first encounter with the creation and production of Hip Hop music was in a small studio belonging to the Catholic Diocese in the small city of Kayanga in north-western Tanzania. I was there to learn about the (mostly youth-) development projects of the diocese. Part of it was a recording studio which was originally intended to record gospel music. But because of the urge from the youths the producer could not help but also give them the chance to record what they really wanted to record: Hip Hop / Rap and R'n'B. After getting to know some of the youths and hanging out with them I even re-recorded one of my own Rap songs in that studio. This was when I really started to feel how big Hip Hop is in Tanzania.

Therefore, when I came back the next year, in the summer of 2010, I was already prepared. This time my main destination was the city of Arusha, because my research had shown me that Arusha was the hub of underground Hip Hop in Tanzania. Besides that, in the meantime I had seen the documentary film "A Panther in Africa"⁴ about former leading members of the African-American *Black Panther Party for Self-Defense* living in political

³ German original: „Textelemente lassen sich nur integriert in die Totalität gesellschaftlicher Praxis begreifen und nicht in ihrem textuellen Inseldasein.“

⁴ Access it online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPcZ8Zm958M> [12.11.2013]

exile (wanted by the FBI) in Arusha, Tanzania. Being aware, through my studies of Hip Hop history, of the big influence that the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements had on the emergence of Hip Hop in the US, I definitely had to reach and experience Arusha. The Black Panthers in exile and many of the leading Hip Hop and Reggae artists (the boundaries often blur, as you will see) became my good friends and teachers. For the first time in my life I came face to face with the history of which, until then, I had been only reading about.

In the summer of 2011 I headed straight back to Arusha to deepen my understanding of (Tanzanian) Hip Hop. By then the idea had slowly emerged that I could write academically about my research. This conveniently forced me to study also the literature of the history of Tanzanian Hip Hop which put my own experiences and understanding in a bigger context. The results were some essays and my bachelor thesis for the Department of African Studies about Hip Hop in Tanzania. But these works were completely based on literature research as I had not yet figured out how to express my own personal experiences academically. So when my diploma thesis for the Department of International Development came closer I knew that I had to find some ways to incorporate these experiences into it because I knew literature research alone is not enough. Therefore, I dived into the literature of methodology and found out that what I had done all those years is called participant observation, and that “qualitative interviews play [...] an important role in research projects based on participant observation” (Hopf, Christel 2003: 350; my own translation⁵). So in the summer of 2012 I was back in Tanzania to record some qualitative interviews for my research.

2.3.1. Participant Observation

As I have already explained, I was in Tanzania four times to learn about Hip Hop, in the summers of 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. Basically it was to satisfy my own urge for ever deeper knowledge. Only the last visit, in the summer of 2012, was for the distinct purpose of academic research for my diploma thesis. But I found out that, even though I had not known it then, I had already done what is called participant observation. Because as a Hip Hop fan, and having recorded a series of Rap songs myself, I had always been received as a participant in the greater world of Hip Hop by my Tanzanian colleagues. And as a participant I was of course observing.

According to Roland Girtler (2001: 61ff) I had been doing so called ‘open’ or ‘free’ participant observation: “A participation already exists if the researcher from the outside is

⁵ German original: „Qualitative Interviews spielen [...] eine wichtige Rolle in [...] auf teilnehmender Beobachtung [...] basierenden Forschungsprojekten.“

introduced into the group by a member of the group and is able to observe the acting of the group and to talk with the other members” (Girtler 2001: 63; my own translation⁶). All credits for introducing me to many artists, and thus opening many doors for me, go to my good friend George Kyomushula whom I met when he worked at the Black Panthers’ *United African Alliance Community Center* in Arusha. Sharing my love for conscious Hip Hop and being deeply revolutionized by working together with former top-ranking members of the Black Panther Party, he was my perfect partner to set out on this research journey. To get a bigger picture of the Tanzanian Hip Hop scene, he even organized for me to meet with Hip Hop artists in Dar es Salaam, where I had not done any research yet, when I was on my 2012 field research trip (Arusha and Dar es Salaam being the two Hip Hop hotspots of Tanzania, as you will see).

The participant observation enabled me to experience this world of Tanzanian Hip Hop for myself instead of only reading about it. This means I was able to test the literature which I had already started to absorb by then (I had finished my bachelor thesis before my 2012 trip). This is how I found out that some of the information I had from the literature was, according to some of the protagonists of Tanzanian Hip Hop whom I met and talked with, simply inaccurate or, by then, outdated.

2.3.2. Qualitative Interviews

A big part of my participant observation was, of course, to get into conversations with people. That was especially so because, as I explained, my first three times in Tanzania I did not even know that what I was doing could be considered participant observation. I was simply there to meet people, hang out with them, have a good time, learn from them and talk with them. So I had no recorded conversations and I did not even take notes from those trips. All I had were some photos, a growing understanding about what Hip Hop in Tanzania is and a growing number of contacts. In the literature about field research I read about how important, although often difficult, it is to establish good contacts. Well, for me, I established my contacts without even knowing that I was establishing contacts – I was making friends and meeting Brothers and Sisters of the Hip Hop and Reggae families. And of course we were talking. So when I returned to Tanzania in 2012 with my intention to record some interviews for my diploma thesis I simply did what we always did, the only difference was that now I audio-recorded our conversations.

⁶ German original: „Eine Teilnahme besteht bereits, wenn der Forscher als Außenstehender durch ein Mitglied der betreffenden Gruppe in diese eingeführt und es ihm ermöglicht wird, das Handeln in dieser Gruppe zu beobachten und mit den anderen Mitgliedern zu sprechen.“

This means I did not do interviews in a classical sense. My interviews were not even semi-structured. I had no guidelines or fixed questions. All I had was my interest for Hip Hop, and this sincere interest yielded ten interviews with different Hip Hop artists, producers and activists from Dar es Salaam and Arusha. The only returning question which I tried to throw into each of these interviews was something like: “What is your opinion on the contribution of Hip Hop to the empowerment of young people in Tanzania?” This question was simply intended to put the focus of our conversations on empowerment.

What I was doing comes close to what Uwe Flick (2004: 141; my own translation⁷) called “ethnographic interviews” which he explained as “a series of friendly conversations”. This is exactly what I was doing. I was having a series of friendly conversations. It also comes close to what Roland Girtler (2001: 152; my own translation⁸) called “the ero-epic conversation” which “suits the humility of the true field researcher, who allows his dialog partner to take the lead, because he is a learner. He is in contrast to the arrogance of the usual interviewers who apparently know exactly what to ask and thereby impose themselves and their ‘reality’ on the partner.” To allow my interview partners to take the lead in the conversation was, therefore, very important to me. Any kind of (even semi-) structured types of interviews were, therefore, out of question. Furthermore, I tried to avoid the problem which the interview context, usually a very new and strange situation to most people, often poses and which therefore reflects on the conversation itself. (Lueger/Froschauer 2003: 95f)

Therefore, I tried to keep these conversations as natural and relaxed as all those conversations in the previous years had been. Still it would be overenthusiastic to say that I was completely successful in this undertaking and that the recording did not disturb at all. Having a recorder, and even if it is just a cell-phone as it was in my case, between me and my dialog partner was indeed sometimes a strange situation. At some occasions the issue of recording complicated and delayed conversations and one person even refused to be recorded. That is why I am convinced that my previous years of informal information gathering were highly valuable and gave me access to much information which I probably would have been denied if I had done formal research and interviews from the beginning. This was a lesson that Alex Perullo (2011: xix) too, although the other way around, had to learn: “Putting away my recording equipment, I continued my research in Tanzania and talked to people informally about music, daily life and Tanzanian society. Not surprisingly, people were more willing to

⁷ German original: „ethnographische Interviews [...] eine Reihe von freundlichen Unterhaltungen“

⁸ German original: „Es entspricht der Bescheidenheit des wahren Feldforschers, daß [sic] er von seinem Gesprächspartner sich leiten läßt [sic], denn er ist ein Lernender. Er befindet sich hier im Gegensatz zu der Arroganz der üblichen Interviewer, die anscheinend genau wissen, was sie zu fragen haben, und sich dabei aufdrängen und dem anderen dabei ihre ‚Wirklichkeit‘ aufzwingen.“

discuss both legal and illegal strategies used in the music business without being formally questioned.” Learning from this lesson, I tried to follow up from the very comfortable and informal encounters of previous years to make my interview partners feel as comfortable as possible and make them forget the recording during our long conversations which lasted up to one hour. In order not to break the social context of the people, which brings an artificial taste to the conversation, I usually interviewed them in their own homes and I only started to bring in the recording situation after we had already gone in a full scale debate about those topics of interest to me. The switching into a kind of interview situation then by introducing the cell-phone/recorder usually did not change much about the conversation in which we had already engulfed.

2.3.3. Critical Self-Reflections

There are two points which I especially want to address for a critical self-reflection of the field research that I was doing, so that the reader can retrace the process better from which a lot of the information contained in this thesis comes from.

First, please keep in mind that I did not start my research as a researcher. I started it simply as somebody who is interested in Hip Hop, regarding myself and being received as part of the world of Hip Hop. I was received as a member of the global family of Hip Hop, although as a *distant relative*⁹, but not as someone entirely from the outside. So it would be a deception if I now, writing this academic thesis, pretended that I have been a reserved researcher. I was, therefore, definitely what is looked down upon and known in the academic world by the racist notion of *going native*. But following Girtler (2001: 79), I am convinced that this so called going native gave me the access to go where I needed to go in order to get to know what I needed to know, because this way I could expose and avoid the obstacle which Girtler (2001: 79) calls *Vorverständnis* (preconceptions) and dismantle some of my own prejudices: “The researcher who becomes a ‘member’ of the group has the chance to get real results. Such a strategy can by no means be negative for the research results. On the contrary: In most cases an honest identification with the relevant environment will rather be helpful than harmful, because after all it contains something like respect for the people whose thinking and acting we want to understand and not to study from a distance” (Girtler 2001: 79; my own translation¹⁰). Therefore, “we should risk ‘going native’ since, in this way,

⁹ An allusion to the recent Distant Relatives Hip Hop and Reggae music project and collaboration of Nas and Damian Marley.

¹⁰ German original: „Der Forscher, der zu einem ‚Mitglied‘ der Gruppe wird, hat in diesem Sinn die Chance, zu echten Ergebnissen zu gelangen. Keineswegs kann jedoch eine solche Strategie negativ für die

preconceptions are dismantled and a real ‘understanding’ of unfamiliar acting is achieved” (Girtler 2001: 120; my own translation¹¹).

Second, a huge issue to me is what Harry Hermanns (2003: 361) calls the “Fairness-Dilemma”. Seeing myself not as a distant researcher but as a trusted relative of the Hip Hop family, I am not going to sell out those who have trusted me and opened their doors to me just to satisfy my own “self-interest (for my own diploma thesis / dissertation / research project)” (Herrmanns 2003: 366; my own translation¹²). In the methodological literature about field research and participant observation, this dilemma is often addressed, and from my own experiences I can see now why. People give you access to their world, their homes, their families. You get this access because they trust you. You need this access to learn about the world they are living in, about which you research and eventually write. But then you find yourself in this dilemma, because in all different “areas of living there are things about which the outside world shouldn’t know. The researcher must be a person of integrity whom people can trust. And he shouldn’t betray this trust” (Girtler 2001: 111; my own translation¹³). To solve (or avoid) this dilemma, I decided that I will use my observations and interviews like expert-interviews. This means I will not do an ethnographic empirical part about the people themselves, but I will write about what they have told me. Because what they have told me is what they wanted me to know and they were aware that I would write about it. I did not come into their homes as a spy to academically exploit their privacy afterwards. To write about anything that people did not share with me voluntarily with the clear awareness that I will write about it is what Girtler (2001: 77; my own translation¹⁴) rejects as “covert observation” and “comes close to deception sometimes”. Therefore, I will only cite my own interviews just like I cite some interviews from the secondary sources, since today the boundaries between primary and secondary sources are blurred anyway. For example, I use lectures which the Hip Hop pioneer KRS-One has given at various US-American universities, which some students have filmed with their cell-phone or other simple cameras and put on Youtube. Watching these videos gives you a similar perspective like the students had who attended the lecture. Is this now a secondary or a primary source? Therefore, I will not betray people’s trust and

Forschungsergebnisse sein. Im Gegenteil: In den meisten Fällen wird eine ehrliche Identifikation mit der betreffenden Lebenswelt wohl eher nützen als schaden, denn schließlich enthält sie so etwas wie Achtung vor den Menschen, deren Denken und Handeln man verstehen und nicht distanziert studieren will.“

¹¹ German original: „das ‚going native‘ solle man riskieren, da so Vorverständnisse abgebaut werden und ein echtes ‚Verstehen‘ fremden Handelns erreicht wird.“

¹² German original: „Eigennutz (für die eigene Diplomarbeit / Dissertation / Forschungsarbeit)“

¹³ German original: „In all diesen Lebensbereichen gibt es irgendwelche Dinge, über die die Außenwelt nichts erfahren soll. Der Forscher muß [sic] eine integre Persönlichkeit sein, der man vertrauen kann. Und er soll dieses Vertrauen nicht mißbrauchen.“

¹⁴ German original: „verdeckte Beobachtung“ kommt „mitunter dem Betrug nahe“

invade their private spaces, I will not write about their private lives but about what they, as experts in the Hip Hop field, have told me and showed me about what is relevant to my research about empowerment, because “[the researcher] must be careful to be seen as somebody who doesn’t ‘betray’ the community to be studied [...]. And he must not, in anyway, have the intention to do so. Otherwise he should quit his undertaking and become a police officer [...] instead” (Girtler 2001: 72; my own translation¹⁵).

¹⁵ German original: „Er [der Forscher] muß [sic] nun darauf achten, als jemand gesehen zu werden, der die zu erforschende Gemeinschaft nicht ‚hineinlegt‘ [...]. Und er darf auch keinesfalls die Absicht haben, es zu tun. Ansonsten sollte er sein Unterfangen seinlassen und Polizist [...] werden.“

3. Theories

To grasp the complex phenomenon of Swahili Hip Hop, I found great help in (mainly) three theoretical approaches: (1) transnational theories, (2) cultural studies and, of course, (3) empowerment theories. As I will emphasize, all of these three theoretical approaches are mutually intertwined and connected and thus ultimately form together the theoretical complex of culture – identity – power, with identity being the connecting link between the three theoretical approaches. I will start by separately explaining each theoretical approach and its relevance for my topic after the other. Thereby the link between the three will become apparent without much further explanation or interpretation on my part.

3.1. Transnational Theories

When we take a quick look at Hip Hop as an (originally) African-American form of cultural expression which has become popular with young people around the world, it immediately becomes obvious that we are talking about a phenomenon which is not limited by national boundaries. Therefore we talk about something that goes beyond national or state boundaries, something that has become a mighty cultural force in such geographically distant places like North-America and East-Africa. This is maybe the first point of interest that naturally strikes the reader when learning about Hip Hop in Tanzania: How and why has it come there? It is, therefore, important to start our journey with making sense of this obvious issue.

When trying to make sense of processes which go beyond national boundaries we are offered a variety of possible theoretical approaches to choose from. The first that might come to mind may be the theories of globalization. Following these theories, Hip Hop could be understood as something coming from the west which, through the media, has become globalized and diffused to many different parts of the world, including Tanzania, since “globalization seem[s] in large parts synonymous with westernization” (Hannerz 2000: 18). But as we will see, there are at least two points to consider which make globalization theories a rather unfitting approach to understand the widespread of Hip Hop culture: First, globalization has come “to describe just about any process or relationship that somehow crosses state boundaries” (Hannerz 2000: 6) and has, thereby, become a very vague term which could literally mean everything (global) and therefore has often come to mean nothing exactly. The notion of globalization thus becomes misleading (also in the context of Hip Hop), when “many such processes and relationships obviously do not at all extend across the world” (Hannerz 2008: 6). This first point is a general problem of the concept of

globalization. Second, especially when it comes to Hip Hop, notions of globalization as westernization or western diffusion are tremendously misleading to such an extent where we even miss one of the keys to understand how Hip Hop has become so powerful in Africa. Because in the understanding of many African as well as US-American Hip Hop artists, Hip Hop is not simply something that originated in the USA and then swapped over to Africa like many other western trends. To them, and many academic scholars agree, Hip Hop is, in the words of the Somali-American Rapper K'naan, an "African Way"¹⁶ from indigenous African forms of spoken words and drum beats to the afro-centric expressions of African-American ghetto youths via a violent history of slavery and exploitation. From this point of view Hip Hop is something that originated in Africa and has finally come back to Africa, something which could be described by the general meaning of globalization, but which is completely misrepresented by any notions of westernization with which the concept of globalization has become so closely linked.

When globalization is found inappropriate to understand the phenomenon of Hip Hop, which other theoretical approaches could be of help? A second notion that comes to mind when talking about processes which cross national boundaries is the international one. But to speak of Hip Hop in terms of international processes is also misleading since "many of the linkages in question are not 'international', in the strict sense of involving nations – actually states – as corporate actors" (Hannerz 2000: 6). To avoid all these misleading implications some scholars have come up with the idea of understanding such processes, which are not necessarily entirely global and also not international in the strict sense of the word, as transnational, because in "the transnational arena, the actors may now be individuals, groups, movements, business enterprises, and in no small part it is this diversity that we need to consider" (Hannerz 2000: 6). These ideas make transnational theories the most promising approach for my topic to understand not only what place Hip Hop has among Tanzanian youths, but also why it has this place and of what importance it is.

Having found now a theoretical approach which leaves enough freedom to understand international and global processes without overemphasizing the role of the nation or state and which does not bind us to notions of westernization but instead gives us a very general frame to understand distant geographical connections, we have to ask ourselves: What is it that is transnational in these processes? What is the link?

¹⁶ See especially the live version of K'naan's song „The African Way“ on his 2007 “The Dusty Foot on the Road” album.

Literature about transnational theories seems to answer this question, not exclusively but very prominently, with the small but hugely complex word: culture. Unfortunately, culture has become, even more than globalization, a nearly meaningless fits-all category. Everything from ballet and Goethe to nationalistic justifications to everyday life has come to be described in terms of culture. But in contrast to globalization we lack satisfying alternative terms to reach a more specific meaning. That is why it is necessary and of a great help to define the specific meaning which we want to get across when using the term culture in certain contexts. In transnational theories we try to get away from nationalistic ideas of equating culture with exclusive and separate entities, because, first of all, we try to focus on other actors than the state, and second, because that “image of a cultural mosaic, where each culture would have been a territorial entity with clear, sharp, enduring edges, never really corresponded with realities” anyway (Hannerz 2000: 18). To deconstruct these essentialist illusions of culture as isolated entities we must, therefore, “emphasize connections [...] which in more general terms make cultures in the plural into something other than isolated units” (Hannerz 2000: 31). At this point transnational theories meet cultural studies. And the phenomenon of Hip Hop itself, which is predominantly understood as a culture, is actually helping to deconstruct essentialist notions of culture and to understand the complexity of the subject. Because, even though we try to deconstruct the essentialist illusions of culture, we cannot deny that “culture is a pervasive dimension of human discourse that exploits difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity” (Appadurai 1996: 13). But a more realistic understanding of cultures as something that has more connections and links with each other than it is separating each other, allows us to understand culture in its empowering form of resistance against dominant and oppressing forms of culture. And as we will see, Hip Hop is a very good example of this.

3.2. Cultural Studies

Using transnational theories to understand the distant connections of the Hip Hop world has led me to culture as that one main “thing” which is transnational within transnational theories. Keeping in mind that Hip Hop itself is often called, both by its own protagonists and academic scholars, a culture, I have come to understand more and more that culture is in fact an important key word for my quest of understanding Tanzanian Hip Hop, the empowering aspects of Hip Hop, and Hip Hop in general. Because of its apparent importance for my topic, I have come to realize that I cannot avoid culture, although it is, as we have seen, a very problematic concept. But like Ulf Hannerz (2000: 43), “I do not personally think that the

culture concept ‘will have to go.’ We will only have to keep on criticizing it, and reforming it.” Given the prominent status which culture has both for Hip Hop protagonists and transnational theories, this is exactly what I will have to do, with some help from cultural studies.

As I went deeper into cultural studies to understand culture and its meaning for Hip Hop, transcending the narrow essentialist concepts of culture, something unexpected happened. As transnational studies have led me directly to culture, cultural studies directly pointed me to yet another concept, the one of identity. Because “seen through the prism of cultural studies, culture presents itself as a field of power-relations on which social identities are articulated conflict-like” (Marchart 2008: 16, my own translation¹⁷). Therefore, cultural studies do not only point out the relation between culture and identity, but also that this relation has always something to do with power. These three concepts, culture – power – identity, are so intimately linked and fundamental for cultural studies, that Oliver Marchart (2008: 33f, my own translation¹⁸) has called their playing together “the magic triangle of cultural studies”, because “none [of the three categories] occurs without the respective others”. This was another unexpected surprise to me, because cultural studies have not only led me to notions of identity, but to its importance for power as well. The same power as in empowerment, because “power implies resistance, this is the [...] assumption of cultural studies” (Marchart 2008: 35, my own translation¹⁹).

More and more I started to understand the connections between culture, identity and power which cultural studies emphasize: To create cultural hegemony you need power, and once created, it also gives you power, discursive power, defining power, power to include or exclude certain groups based on norms which you have created through your cultural power. But hegemonic cultural power always provokes resistance to these labeling processes and their sociopolitical consequences, and this resistance in turn enables those who have been externally labeled by hegemonic cultural forces to define their own identity. Therefore, “culture [is] the actual medium of power [...], the terrain where social identity is constructed” (Marchart 2008: 34, my own translation²⁰). So if culture is the actual medium of power, because it is the terrain where social identity is constructed, then culture can also be a medium

¹⁷ German original: „Durch das Prisma der Cultural Studies betrachtet, stellt sich Kultur als ein Feld von Machtbeziehungen dar, auf dem soziale Identitäten [...] konfliktorisch artikuliert [...] werden.“

¹⁸ German original: „Das magische Dreieck der Cultural Studies“, „Keine [der drei Kategorien] tritt ohne die jeweils anderen auf.“

¹⁹ German original: „Macht impliziert Widerstand, so die [...] Annahme der Cultural Studies.“

²⁰ German original: „Kultur [ist] eigentliches Medium der Macht [...], das Terrain, auf dem soziale Identität konstruiert wird.“

of empowerment when it is used to regain the agency over one's own identity. Hip Hop, as we will see, is such a resistance against hegemonic cultural attempts of external labeling by regaining the power over the agency of one's own identities. Having the agency over one's own identities is not only a theoretical discourse, because this discourse shapes social and political realities, and that is why "cultural studies are always interested in how power infiltrates, contaminates, limits and *also enables* the potentials of people to live their lives in a dignified and save way" (Grossberg in Marchart 2008: 36, my own emphasis and translation²¹). Ideas of power that enables one to live one's own life "in a dignified and save way" are at the root of empowerment theories. If we understand "a dignified and save way" as an essentially self-determined way, then we have reached the core understanding of empowerment within the Hip Hop movement, as we will see.

3.3. Empowerment Theories

For my focus on the empowerment aspects of Hip Hop in general and Tanzanian Hip Hop in particular, the necessary approach obviously is empowerment theories. But like all the other concepts which I have introduced so far, empowerment is a much contested field, because "there is no universal definition of empowerment" (Yowell/Gordon 1996: 24). That is the reason why I found it quite important to slowly trace the way from transnational theories through cultural studies to grasp the complex connections of culture, identity and power and its significance to empowerment to reach a fitting understanding of empowerment within Hip Hop.

Although empowerment is a contested field and there is no universal definition of empowerment, "empowerment theorists agree that the processes of empowerment include the following aspects: mastery and control over one's life, the mobilization of resources to achieve one's goals, and a critical understanding of one's sociopolitical context" (Yowell/Gordon 1996: 23). In absence of any universal empowerment definition I will take this "agreement" and show how it applies to Hip Hop, which means I will try nothing less than outlining a Hip Hop empowerment model by blending empowerment theorists with Hip Hop protagonists. And all "models for empowerment must begin with the assumption that all human activity is intentional in nature and grounded in the cultural identity of the individual" (Yowell/Gordon 1996: 23). As in cultural studies, in empowerment theories too cultural identity occupies a key position, because "[c]ulture provides the reference points for both

²¹ German original: „Cultural Studies sind immer daran interessiert, wie Macht die Möglichkeiten der Menschen, ihr Leben auf würdige und sichere Art zu führen, infiltriert, kontaminiert, begrenzt und auch ermöglicht.“

group and individual identity” and “one’s sense of self is the fuel of social interactions, while cultures serve as both the vehicle and the context for behavioral adaptation” (Yowell/Gordon 1996: 22).

The understanding of empowerment within the Hip Hop movement is usually not shaped by academic empowerment theorists but by its heroes of the Black Power (and to a lesser extent the Civil Rights) Movement and “there has been a tendency among the Hip Hop generation to turn to the Black Power era because it is fresh in African America’s collective memory, many of the activists from this period are still alive, it is more appealing than the non-violent direct action strategies of the Civil Rights Movement, and it provides an obvious form of militancy and radicalism with which many hip hoppers (especially those self-proclaimed ‘thugs’ and ‘gangstas’) can relate” (Dagbovie 2005: 309). This is why many Rappers’ lyrics are “reminiscent of the critiques and ideas of such black leaders as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Kwame Toure [originally known as Stokely Carmichael who coined the Black Power rhetoric], Angela Davis, and the Black Panthers” (Alridge 2005: 227). The original affection of the Hip Hop movement for the Black Power and Civil Rights movements goes so deep that some Rappers even emphasize that they “are basically pretty much the same, it’s just the timing is different. Martin [Luther King, Jr.] saying some of the same things we saying now, Malcolm [X] saying some of the same things we saying now” (the Atlanta-based Rapper Witchdoctor in Alridge 2005: 232f). By pointing out that “just the timing is different”, some Rappers really understand the Hip Hop movement as an updated version of the Black Power Movement, and when we talk of Black Power, we automatically talk about Black Em-Power-ment. But by seeing themselves as carrying on the legacy of the Black Power Movement, they, at the same time, question and sometimes even delegitimize their own parent-generations’ claims to that position. Because after the destruction of the Black Power Movement by illegal means such as the Counter Intelligence Program of the FBI and the appeasement of the Civil Rights Movement, many young people felt betrayed by their own parent-generation and clung to the last survivors of the Black Power Movement and to the memories of those who did not survive it, most prominently Malcolm X, because the “popularization of Malcolm X was very important in fostering a black historical consciousness within the BP [Black Power] Hip Hop generation” (Dagbovie 2005: 305).

But when I researched for literature about black empowerment, I was perplexed that I initially encountered a very different idea of empowerment than I had expected. I slowly started to understand the context in which Hip Hop emerged in the 1970s, considering that,

while “the decade of the 1960s is viewed as one of black resistance and ‘black rage,’ [...] the period of the 1970s can be assessed as one of rapid movement toward the political empowerment of an urban black petit bourgeoisie, marked by increased black voter participation and subsequent election of large numbers of blacks to fill important political roles” (Headley 1985: 193). It is hard to believe that Black Power exponents such as Walter Rodney, who taught black and other oppressed people that in order “[t]o advance, they must overthrow capitalism” (Rodney 2012: 10), or Malcolm X, who taught that “you will never get real freedom and recognition between black and white people in this country [USA] without destroying the country, without destroying the present political system” (in Lew-Lee 1996), would have seen their vision of Black (Em-)Power(-ment) fulfilled by “this new black petite political class (a class which, first and foremost, seeks its own material advancement in capitalist America)” (Headley 1985: 195). Malcolm X, who was shot to death in 1965, might have responded that they have confused empowerment with integration, and we know, as a Black Muslim, coffee was the only thing he liked integrated. (Malcolm X 1968: 13) And indeed: “By political empowerment – or political *incorporation* [which is just another word for integration; my emphasis], as some have called it [...] – we mean the extent to which a group has achieved significant representation and influence in political decision making” (Bobo/Gilliam 1990: 378). This means that in the interim from the 1960s’ Black Power generation to the 1970s’ early Hip Hop generation, for the black elite and mainstream society, black empowerment had come to mean black integration. And this is not just an overemphasis on terminology. Because besides attaining some appeasement by integrating the black petite bourgeoisie into political positions, where the “most notable black gains, we believe, have been at the mayoral level” (Bobo/Gilliam 1990: 379), this as empowerment disguised integration has not brought any real empowerment to the black masses: “The conventional wisdom was that black mayors, and the black political elite in general, would now see to it that the black polity, as a distinct interest group, would at least begin to share on a co-equal basis with other competing interest groups in the economic largesse of the city coffers. [But] most (if any) of these gains have not been forthcoming”, so “that the situation for blacks – despite some fifteen years of black political empowerment at the city level – is getting absolutely and relatively worse” (Headley 1985: 194, 203). Note the assessment of “fifteen years of black political empowerment”, which means, written in 1985, since 1970. This is very interesting given the well-known fact that the Black Power Movement was destroyed in the early 1970s. Therefore, what is called black political empowerment here is obviously something different from the Black Power Movement and its ideas of empowerment. But it is

exactly the context in which the early Hip Hop generation found itself from the 1970s onward.

It is, therefore, no wonder that black ghetto youths, for example in the South Bronx where Hip Hop emerged, had no relation to this kind of so-called empowerment which only existed in some academic articles but had no real impact on their everyday lives. Their revitalization of the Black Power Movement and rejection of their parent-generation's ideas of black petit bourgeois empowerment have often been a central theme in the Hip Hop culture, from comical attempts in "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" TV series to the deadly serious realities of Gangsta Rap which emerged in Los Angeles, where, despite "a black mayor, Tom Bradley, per capita numbers of 'homicide by police' have not declined appreciably" because of "Bradley's refusal to replace his white [police] chief, Daryl Gates, who has made few efforts to hide his racist sentiments" (Headley 1985: 199).

The early Hip Hop generation rejected the contemporary so-called black political empowerment of the 1970s because it did not bring them real empowerment. That is why it is more fitting to call it political incorporation or integration. Because, although this incorporation or integration was supposed to lead to empowerment, it never really did. It did not bring African-American ghetto youths any control over their own lives, enable them to mobilize resources to achieve their goals or give them a critical understanding of their sociopolitical context, none of what "empowerment theorists agree that the processes of empowerment include" (Yowell/Gordon 1996: 23). But what gave them a critical understanding of their sociopolitical context were the ideas of the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements, because Hip Hop "shares with the CRM [Civil Rights Movement] a critique of the problems that plague U.S. African Americans and oppressed people throughout the world" (Alridge 2005: 228). And while the black petite bourgeois political integration has failed to bring real empowerment, it has brought cultural alienation from the high ideals of black cultural empowerment concepts of the 1960s.

All this is important to emphasize that we have to try to put ourselves into that particular situation to understand the Hip Hop generation's concept of empowerment. It was the final disillusionment with integration and the cultural identity crises that integration caused which brought forth Hip Hop's emphasize of culture, identity and the self, because, as already mentioned, "models for empowerment must begin with the assumption that all human activity is intentional in nature and grounded in the cultural identity of the individual" (Yowell/Gordon 1996: 23). And here we have come back to the beginning of my argument. To understand the unique empowerment model of the Hip Hop generation and how it came

into being we had, first of all, to understand the sociopolitical context in which it was born and the history which produced it. Now we can better understand why the Hip Hop culture put so much emphasis on finding the self through cultural empowerment while rejecting integration, which made Hip Hop often look like an oppositional culture to the outside. (Martinez 1997: 268)

Now we can put together academic empowerment theories, our understanding of the sociopolitical context since the 1970s and the ideas of Hip Hop protagonists themselves to get an overview of what empowerment means to the Hip Hop culture. If empowerment means to have control over one's own life, it automatically implies freedom. Freedom is very central to both the Black Power and Hip Hop Movement's ideas of empowerment, because the Hip Hop generation was heavily influenced by Black Power exponents like the famous Assata Shakur, who was a member of the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army and is now living in political exile in Cuba. "Her message to the Hip Hop generation is that freedom is the 'right to be yourself, to be who you are, to be who you wanna be, to do what you wanna do'" (Alridge 2005: 231). This freedom means liberation from hegemonic cultural labeling and, thus, a whole cultural re-creation. This is why Hip Hop pioneer KRS-One (in Dagbovie 2005: 299) emphasizes that "[w]e, as a Hip Hop people, must re-create ourselves. True freedom for us Hiphoppas is to create and live a lifestyle that uniquely empowers us ... True freedom is self-creation." It is, therefore, this self-creation "to be who you wanna be, to do what you wanna do" that creates a lifestyle that uniquely empowers. This is the essence of Hip Hop.

But in order "to *be* who you are" you need to *know* who you are. That is why "[k]nowledge of self" as a means of bringing about self-determination for African Americans" (Alridge 2005: 236) has become an important quest for the Hip Hop Movement, which was inspired by cultural Black Power groups like the Nation of Islam. In their footsteps Rappers "asserted that 'knowledge of self' is critical to black self-determination because it helps free black people from 'mental slavery'" (Alridge 2005: 237). So let's recapitulate: Empowerment in the Hip Hop generation's context means freedom, freedom to be who you are and who you want to be, to be who you are you need knowledge of self, which, in turn, gives you the freedom that empowers you. This is the Hip Hop "matrix for black empowerment" (Manning Marble in Dagbovie 2005: 318).

Now that we have seen how this "matrix for black empowerment" came into being and how it is basically constituted, let's go on to see how it was translated into a way of life that has become attractive to youths not only in the USA but in distant places like Tanzania as well. Maybe this manifestation can be best understood when imagined as a two-step-process.

It starts at the level of the self, the self-creation, the knowledge of self, the agency over one's own identities. This is the foundation from which a culture emerged that gave the individual self-creation a frame of reference, because, like Walter Rodney (2012: 34) put it, "culture is a total way of life. It embraces what people ate and what they wore; the way they walked and the way they talked." To create an own unique culture independent and in defiance of the hegemonic culture which brought forth slavery, Jim Crow, Lynch-ism, and the ghettoisation of the African-American population was, therefore, the necessary first step of empowerment, "grounded in the cultural identity of the individual" (Yowell/Gordon 1996: 23). That is why RZA from the legendary Wu-Tang Clan (in Spierer 1997) explained that "Hip Hop is how you walk, talk, live, dress, act, see, smell, fart, shit, fuck" to emphasize Hip Hop's role as "a total way of life". Pras from the Fugees (in Spierer 1997) added: "That's what Hip Hop is. It's the way you dress, it's your style. [...] It's about the culture you live. It's not just saying, 'Yo, I do Hip Hop.' You gotta live it!" And scholars of cultural studies would have added: "Style *is* identity. It provides a substantial contribution to the definition of the self-image of a subculture to the inside as well as the outside" (Marchart 2008: 105, emphasis in the original, my own translation²²). Culture becomes a tool for empowerment when "nonEuropean groups, such as African Americans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans, draw on their own cultures to resist oppression under dominant ideologies and, in turn, influence the dominant culture". This is exactly what Hip Hop - "as an important African American popular cultural form" (Martinez 1997: 265) - has done. This is the first step in the two-step-process of the Hip Hop empowerment model, the cultural or mental step. It is this step which the so-called black petite bourgeois political empowerment of the 1970s has skipped or compromised for integration. That is why their integration has not brought any empowerment, because it caused a weakening of African-American cultural identity instead of strengthening it.

But if the cultural identity is strengthened, then this mental empowerment manifests itself physically also, which is the second step. This is how "hip hoppers use the medium of Hip Hop culture to help build a stronger black business class while also working to ameliorate the social, economic, and political conditions of black communities" (Alridge 2005: 245), exactly what the so-called black petit bourgeois political empowerment failed to do. This is the "mobilization of resources to achieve one's goals" (Yowell/Gordon 1996: 23) part of empowerment processes that enables self-determination. Therefore, in its fullness "Hip Hop must be taken seriously as a cultural, political, economic, and intellectual phenomenon"

²² German original: „Der Stil ist die Identität. Er liefert einen wesentlichen Beitrag zur Definition des Selbstbildes einer Subkultur nach innen wie nach außen.“

(Alridge/Stewart 2005: 190). In its most materialistic form this was often associated with Gangsta Rap, but “[e]ven Gangsta Rap of the late 1980s and early 1990s, as nihilistic and misogynistic as it often was, sometimes advocated self-determination” (Alridge 2005: 236).

When discussing style as identity-constituting-resistance to the norms of mainstream society, the concept of Gangsta Rap is very important, because the “power of the *Gangsta*, his self-empowerment, looks quite fascinating” (Raab 2006: 90, my own translation²³) to many Rappers. The idea of the Gangsta concept was often demonized and misunderstood by the outside and its mainstream media. It is part of what Werner Zips and Heinz Kämpfer (2001: 275) called „*Signifyin(g)*” of the “*Black Talk*“, where derogatory terms were adopted and reversed to mean something positive in order to counter external labeling processes by the dominant culture. „The classic example is of rappers adopting ‚nigga‘ as the term for friend, thus immunizing themselves against its offensive content and drawing extra power from the contamination” (Stroeken 2005: 502). Similarly, “Gangsta Rap appropriates a racist discourse – blacks are criminals – and re-articulates it as a local struggle for power, a struggle in which blacks’ subjugation has placed them all the more in command, because they have so little to lose” (Quinn 1996: 73). Among many Rappers the image of the Gangsta has become a new Black Power ideal. It is, therefore, “quite possible to argue that Gangsta Rap is a form of resistance, however misguided one might believe it to be, to economic and cultural marginalization, empowering black youths by showing them blacks who, as Ice-T [one of Gangsta Rap’s pioneers] puts it, ‘don’t take no shit from nobody’” (Quinn 1996: 72). Given the attraction of the (often very positive) Gangsta image among young Rappers, both in the USA and Tanzania, I will repeatedly come back to this argument.

Considering that the empowerment model of Hip Hop focuses much on the individual self-creation, it is a model that has empowered various different people in various different contexts. The very adaptable idea of empowerment through cultural self-creation and agency over one’s own identities has, therefore, also led to female empowerment, although this is a somewhat marginalized topic. But from the very beginning, female MCs have used Hip Hop to create “spaces from which to deliver powerful messages from Black female and Black feminist perspectives” (Keyes 2000: 255). As the general empowerment concept of Hip Hop is about identity and agency, it has also helped women in this quest. “In their lyrics, they refer to themselves as ‘Asiatic Black women’, ‘Nubian Queens’, ‘intelligent Black women’, or ‘sistas droppin’ science to the people,’ suggestive of their self-constructed identity and intellectual prowess”, and their “rhymes embrace Black female empowerment and spirituality,

²³ German original: „Die Power des *Gangsta*, seine Selbstermächtigung, wirkt durchaus faszinierend.“

making clear their self-identification as African, woman, warrior, priestess, and queen” (Keyes 2000: 256f). Although gender is a much contested field within the Hip Hop culture, there is no doubt that Hip Hop’s basic ideas of claiming agency over one’s self has empowered many young women just like it has empowered many young males. Nevertheless, it is true that, unlike young men, young women often had not the opportunities to manifest their mental empowerment physically.

In conclusion, the empowerment model of Hip Hop is basically a two-step-process: mental empowerment leads to physical empowerment. Mental empowerment means “to be yourself, to be who you are, to be who you wanna be, to do what you wanna do” (Assata Shakur) in order “to create and live a lifestyle that uniquely empowers us” (KRS-One). This is the foundation on which the Hip Hop culture emerged in the 1970s. I, therefore, argue that Hip Hop culture, from the beginning, was built around the central urge for real self-empowerment. And it is this central position of empowerment within Hip Hop which has made Hip Hop so attractive to people from very diverse backgrounds and geographical regions. This basic Hip Hop empowerment model will, therefore, guide me to understand the power of Hip Hop in Tanzania.

4. The Birth of a Culture

To understand the context in which Hip Hop emerged as a black youth culture in New York in the 1970s we have to go far back in history. Hip Hop evolved out of the history of African people who were kidnapped from their continent during the transatlantic slave trade and their resistance against the White Power structure in the Americas. Werner Zips and Heinz Kämpfer (2001) described Hip Hop as the peak of this long history of oppression, and the resistance against this oppression, which had its beginning in the slave forts of the African west coast, continued through the plantations of the so called new world, found its expression in Black Nationalism and finally manifested itself in the streets of New York as a popular counterculture, from where it found its way back to Africa: “Through the parallel globalization of the *underground*, or the ‘counterculture’ to the (capitalist) *mainstream*, the musical medium of Rap Music became a publication forum for black perspectives and political programs – a ‘propaganda voice’ for the concerns, experiences and interests which could also be heard on other continents (especially Africa)” (Zips/Kämpfer 2001: 313, my own translation²⁴).

4.1. From the slave forts of the African west coast to the Housing Projects of the South Bronx – or how it all began.

“Between the 1440s, when Portuguese mariners first began to kidnap and to purchase Africans, and 1867, the year of the last recorded slaving voyage to the Americas, some 12 million men, women, and children were turned into commodities and exported from the continent” (Parker/Rathbone 2007: 78). Many of them came, either directly or via the Caribbean and other transfer sites, to North America and to what has become the USA. But these are only estimates and vary widely. “Estimates based on commercial registries, eyewitness accounts and descriptions of slave markets range from 9 million to over 100 million. Consensus prevails largely for a figure between 11 and 14 million” (Schicho 2010: 57, my own translation²⁵). Despite the fact that mainly the west and south-west African coastal regions were effected, in the course of the transatlantic slave trade, which continued despite abolition late into the 19th century, almost no African regions and societies were

²⁴German original: „Durch die parallele Globalisierung des *Underground* bzw. der ‚Gegenkultur‘ zum (kapitalistischen) *mainstream* entwickelte sich das musikalische Medium der *Rap Music* zu einem Veröffentlichungsforum für Schwarze Perspektiven und politische Programme – zu einer ‚Propaganda-Stimme‘ für die Anliegen, Erfahrungen und Interessen, die auch auf anderen Kontinenten (allen voran in Afrika) gehört werden konnte.“

²⁵ German original: „Schätzungen auf der Basis von Handelsregistern, Augenzeugenberichten und Beschreibungen von Sklavenmärkten reichen von 9 Mio. bis über 100 Mio. Weitgehend Übereinstimmung herrscht letztlich für eine Zahl zwischen 11 und 14 Millionen.“

spared the horrible trade in human beings and its far reaching consequences. Although the first slave voyages were initiated by the Portuguese in the 1440s, these slaves were brought to the sugar plantations on the islands off shore the African west coast and other places in the so called old world because the so called new world was not yet “discovered”, of course. But “when the very first slave ship with African people on board reached the Caribbean island Hispaniola in 1502, the [over] 500 years lasting history of Africa in the so called ‘New World’ began. This history is without a doubt a history of suffering. The capture in Africa, the passage on the slave ships, the slavery as well as the centuries-long oppression and cultural dispossession were those factors which defined the suffering. But it is likewise a history of rebellion, because with the first enslaved Africans the resistance against the whites’ claims to power was also brought to the Americas” (Zips/Kämpfer 2001: 50, my own translation²⁶). Therefore, the history of African slaves and their descendants in the western hemisphere has never only been a history of passive suffering but has always also been a history of active resistance, and Hip Hop is part of this history of resistance.

After the destruction of the Black Power Movement and the appeasement of the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1970s and the assassinations of black leaders like Malcolm X in 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 and the leading Black Panthers Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter and Fred Hampton in 1969, among many others, African American youths faced a dire reality in the 1970s. In this context, “Hip Hop emerged from the social, economic, and political experiences of black youth from the mid- to late 1970s. Hip Hop pioneers such as Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, among others articulated the post-civil rights generation’s ideas and response to poverty, drugs, police brutality, and other racial and class inequities of postindustrial U.S. society” (Alridge 2005: 226). Because of structural racism and (unofficial) segregation, black inner-city communities had to carry the heaviest burdens of the postindustrial decline. “At the same time, the number of black elected officials continued to expand, creating the illusion of broad inclusion and creating difficulty in identifying the agents responsible for the worsening conditions” (Stewart 2005: 218), as I already discussed in the 3.3. Empowerment Theories section of this thesis.

²⁶ German original: „Als im Jahr 1502 das allererste Sklavenschiff mit afrikanischen Menschen an Bord die Karibikinsel Hispaniola erreichte, begann die [über] 500 Jahre andauernde Geschichte Afrikas in der so genannten ‚Neuen Welt‘. Diese Geschichte ist ohne Zweifel eine Leidensgeschichte. Die Gefangennahme in Afrika, die Überfahrt auf den Sklavenschiffen, die Sklaverei sowie die jahrhundertelange Unterdrückung und kulturelle Enteignung waren jene Faktoren, die dieses Leid bestimmt haben. Es ist aber ebenso eine Geschichte der Auflehnung, denn mit den ersten versklavten AfrikanerInnen wurde auch der Widerstand gegen die Herrschaftsansprüche der Weißen in die Amerikas getragen.“

Being part of a long history of self-empowerment and resistance against the racist conditions in US-American society, Hip Hop did not just pop up out of nowhere but builds on a long history of African American artistic cultural expressions. From Soul to Blues to R'n'B to Funk, African American music, throughout the 20th century, always contained commentaries on African American life and, therefore, expressed varying strategies of empowerment and political involvement. But the “type of aggressive, challenging political commentaries that were fueled, for example, by the Black Power Movement were inconceivable to even the most visionary Blues performers” and also a “significant body of R & B songs with political commentary did not begin to appear until the mid-1960s after some of the initial victories in the Civil Rights Movement” (Stewart 2005: 205f). It was not until the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the height and decline of the Black Power Era, that a new musical style exploded with a loud mix of cultural and political defiance: Funk. James Brown’s 1969 black cultural empowerment hymn “Say it Loud (Black and Proud)” and the Chi-Lites’ 1971 political statement “(For God’s Sake) Give More Power to the People”, echoing the omnipresent Black Panthers slogan “All Power to the People”, were blasting out of black Housing Projects and ghettos around the country. These funky expressions of black empowerment were among the more appealing records for black youths which their parents played on some old record players. And they were, for that matter, the best option that black youths had access to. That is why the “music and the foundation of the music of Hip Hop comes from records that we found in our parents’ crates, you know what I mean? Old Funk and Soul grooves. We have given new life to artists like James Brown” (Grandmaster Caz in Ice T/Baybutt 2012). But most black youths did not get the chance to follow into the footsteps of their idols like James Brown, since “ghetto kids didn’t really have the money to learn how to play instruments or take singing lessons but they found a way regardless” (Salt-n-Pepa in Spirer 1997). Because of this lack of professional music education and equipment, caused by structural racism, “we took the fucking record player, the only thing that’s playing music in our fucking crib, and turned it into an instrument, which it wasn’t supposed to be” (Lord Jamar in Ice T/Baybutt 2012). This is how Hip Hop started, virtually from nothing. It was some talented youths who were barred by society to fulfill their talents, listening to old records of their parents in their subhuman ghetto dwellings. But there, without any support, any material means, they “created something from nothing with Hip Hop. That’s what the whole spirit of Hip Hop is” (Lord Jamar in Ice T/Baybutt 2012). Because Hip Hop went beyond just listening to parents’ Funk records and messing around with their record players. Hip Hop built a whole frame which united African/Black consciousness, Black Power

radicalism and a whole history of African American musical influences through the fundamental technique of sampling: “Rap selected samples ranging from African drums and doo-wop croons to Malcolm X’s voice and James Brown’s shouts” (Martinez 1997: 272). Sampling was one of those techniques ghetto youths used to “create something from nothing”. But how did it all begin?

4.2. The South Bronx: The Birthplace of Hip Hop

In order to really understand Hip Hop, “you have to visit the South Bronx. Look at the [Housing] Projects, look at the people, see the environment that Hip Hop started in, [...] just stand there and imagine the birth of a culture happening in this very spot” (KRS-One in Spierer 1997). There is a mutually shared and respected awareness that Hip Hop emerged in the South Bronx, New York, and nowhere else, which even west coast Rap pioneers like Dr. Dre (in Spierer 1997) acknowledge: “They originated it. Anybody who doesn’t believe that is tripping.” There everything started. Why there, and not anywhere else, will probably never be determined. There were probably many different reasons why “Hip Hop, which included rap, graffiti and breakdancing emerged out of the social dislocations and structural changes that formed the postindustrial urban climate of the South Bronx – one of the poorest communities in New York” (Martinez 1997: 272). Hip Hop was so much tied to the environment in which it emerged, that Hip Hop pioneers like Grandmaster Caz (in Spierer 1997) emphasize that the “Bronx *is* Hip Hop. Graffiti, breakdancing, MC’ing and DJ’ing all came from the Bronx.”

One of the reasons why Hip Hop emerged precisely in New York might have been the strong Jamaican presence there, since the ones who started it in 1973 were “two Jamaican-American immigrant teenagers [who] decided to throw a back to school party. Cindy Campbell and her brother Clive, better known in the neighborhood as DJ Kool Herc, organized the dance in the recreation room of their government subsidized apartment building at the now famous address of 1520 Sedgwick Avenue” (Chang 2007: 61). The Jamaican influence might have been so important because it brought the Sound System Culture to New York. Sound Systems emerged in Jamaica as mobile discotheques, because only few establishments and radio stations played Jamaican music, whereby especially poorer Jamaicans felt culturally marginalized in their own country. This attitude of taking matters into one’s own hands resonated with black youths in New York City who were also marginalized and excluded from the city’s music and club scene by racist barriers. So they started their own block parties where they developed their own musical counterculture during the 1970s. At these parties, DJs like Kool Herc would play their parents’ Soul and Funk

records on their parents' record players. But when Kool Herc noticed that the party mood reached its heights especially during the instrumental parts of the records, where the beat "breaks down", he started to use his record player as an instrument to mix these *break beats* from different songs together: The turn tables, record players used as instruments, and the DJ'ing/Scratching was born as the first element of the Hip Hop culture. That is why "DJs are the ones who started this Hip Hop thing: Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, all of them in the Bronx" (DJ Lord Jazz in Spierer 1997). Some youths started to dance on these break beats which were suitable for new acrobatic moves: this became known as Breakdancing, the second element. The visual element, Graffiti art, developed simultaneously in the context of the first two elements. Finally the MCs (Masters of Ceremony), who announced and commented on the songs which the DJs played, discovered that break beats could not only be used for some acrobatic moves but also to rhyme and lyrically flow on them: Rap was born out of the MCing as the last of the four elements. In this Rapping was also inspired by the Jamaican Sound System Culture where DJs and so-called Selectas had long been "talking over" the records they were playing in a Rap-like style called "Toasting". Legendary Jamaican Toasting pioneer U-Roy explained that "the difference between a singer and a toaster [is that] a toaster talks and a singer sings. Toasting started way back in the sixties here in Jamaica. I don't know specifically the time that Rap started in the [United] States, but I know that it was way after Toasting had been down here."²⁷

"These were hip-hop's *original* 'four elements' – MCing, DJing, b-boying (or 'breakdancing'), and graffiti" (Chang 2007: 61, my own emphasis). These *original* four elements, which could be seen as making up the technical structure of Hip Hop, were extended early on by pioneers like Afrika Bambaataa (in Ice T/Baybutt 2012) with the fifth element of Knowledge, which could be seen as the ideological element that gives the four technical elements their content. Another Hip Hop pioneer, KRS-One, "expanded the four elements into nine elements: breaking, MCing, graffiti art, DJing, beat boxing [the art of using one's own voice as a beat box, which is the ultimate expression of 'making something out of nothing'], street fashion, street language, street knowledge, and street entrepreneurialism. If you can live Hip Hop in these nine elements, not only will you raise yourselves' worth and your value, but you'll be preserving the culture for real because you are living it!"²⁸ But although many different artists, pioneers and protagonists expanded the list of elements, the four original ones are the only universally agreed upon elements, although most artists, of

²⁷ U-Roy interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmiYGWGXP8Q> [18.08.2013]

²⁸ KRS-One interview: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2cHCvYzY28> [18.08.2013]

whom I also encountered some in Tanzania²⁹, have a strong consciousness about additional ideological elements, of which the most frequently cited one is definitely Knowledge, even though there exists no compulsory list beyond the four original elements.

What this means is, that “Rap is something that is being done, [while] Hip Hop is something that is being lived” (KRS-One in Spierer 1997), because “Rap is the music in Hip Hop, or the vocal delivery of Hip Hop, but Hip Hop is a full-blown culture” (Ice T in Spierer 1997), and therefore “Hip Hop is a culture, the mother of four, five different elements, like Rap, scratching, breakdancing and graffiti” (Kurtis Blow in Spierer 1997). This means that Hip Hop is a full blown culture of which Rap is only one of four (or more) elements of expression, the verbal one. And because this verbal element of expression was best suited to bring Hip Hop’s messages to the masses, and for that matter also better suited to be marketed by the capitalistic record industry, it has come to be the most visible of the four elements to such an extent that many people, “when they say Hip Hop, they don’t know exactly what is Hip Hop. They automatically think, when you say Hip Hop you are just talking about Rap. But when we talk about Hip Hop, we are talking about the whole movement” (Afrika Bambaataa in Ice T/Baybutt 2012).

This new self-determined and self-organized cultural music scene soon began to go beyond the block parties and assumed its place in the streets of the South Bronx community. Crucial for turning the party phenomenon into a social force was a young gang leader who called himself Afrika Bambaataa, after the South African Zulu leader. Thereby, “Afrika Bambaataa was one of the first hip hoppers to make the spiritual connection between Hip Hop and Africa. He recalls that growing up in the South Bronx, many young blacks lacked a sense of pride and gravitated to gangs and violence as a means of dealing with oppressive conditions” (Alridge 2005: 245). To alleviate the situation, he used his leading position in the Black Spades street gang to form peace-coalitions with other gangs to use their organizational structures for the benefit and not the menace of the communities they were living in. By providing and supporting community self-help programs, they stood in the tradition of the Black Panther Party, like many early gangs after the destruction of the Black Power Movement. The new cultural music scene which emerged at the block parties proved to be a uniting element to bridge gaps between competing gangs. “Inspired by DJ Kool Herc, he [Afrika Bambaataa] too began hosting hip-hop parties”, and soon “New York underground journalists were writing that Bambaataa was ‘stopping bullets with two turntables’” (Chang

²⁹ Personal Interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012: “Knowledge is the fifth element of Hip Hop.”

2007: 62). After seeing a television program about the Zulu resistance to British imperialism (and a rumored visit to Africa itself, which I could not verify), Afrika Bambaataa founded the legendary Zulu Nation as a Hip Hop alternative to gangs and their associated violence somewhere in the 1970s. For him the rhetoric of a Zulu Nation automatically stood for black empowerment: “Just to see these Black people [Zulus] fighting for what was theirs against the British, that always stuck in my mind. I said when I get of age, I will start this organization and put all these ideologies together in this group called the Zulu Nation. So what I did, with myself and a couple other of my comrades, is get out in the street, start talking to a lot of the brothers and sisters, trying to tell them how they’re killing each other, that they should be warriors for their community” (Afrika Bambaataa in Alridge 2005: 246). To understand the power and influence which the Zulu Nation, founded in the 1970s, had on the development of Hip Hop, Jeffrey Decker’s assessment in 1993 (:57), almost 20 years later, says a lot: “Today Bambaataa and his Zulu Nation are a powerful source of inspiration for high profile, nation-conscious rappers.” Afrika Bambaataa’s organizational structuring of Hip Hop (some say he defined the four elements and even gave Hip Hop its name) exposed the new culture in the early 1980s for the first time to the whole USA and even beyond its borders.

4.3. How Hip Hop re-invented everything

As I have already explained, Hip Hop is a rather recent part of a long history of oppression and the resistance against oppression, and it is therefore in many regards a result of this history. This is very crucial to understand, because many Hip Hop pioneers like Grandmaster Caz (in Ice T/Baybutt 2012) go so far in describing the process of Hip Hop’s emergence to say that “Hip Hop didn’t invent anything, but Hip Hop re-invented everything.” This means, to understand Hip Hop we have to understand what Hip Hop re-invented and how this was done.

The idea of being an MC (Master of Ceremony), which brought forth the best known of the four elements of Hip Hop, MCing or Rapping, was not born for the first time at the early block parties of the 1970s, but was originally introduced by the well-known exponents of the Black Power Movement. In their study about the roots of Hip Hop, Werner Zips and Heinz Kämpfer (2001) traced not only the content but also the spoken word art form itself back to the Black Power Movement (and beyond that to African oratory, of course). For them, popular speakers like Malcolm X or Louis Farrakhan of the black-nationalist Nation of Islam (NOI) were didactic masters and their speeches composed ceremonies, thus they were the original Masters of Ceremonies. Tracing these roots shows that the essence of Rap/MCing lies

not only in fitting words on a beat (the Spoken Word form shows that a beat/music is not even necessary), but above all in giving members of a marginalized and usually voiceless social group the opportunity to speak up and address their concerns and be heard and noticed in order to defend themselves against “cultural forms of injustice – denial of recognition, misrepresentation, appropriation, disrespect” (McCorkel/Rodriquez 2009: 357). As nationwide speakers of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan excited and inspired the black masses, and Farrakhan, whom many Hip Hop artists openly supported especially during the early days of what is today called Old School Hip Hop, is doing so to this very day. They stood in a long tradition of eloquent and powerful preachers who spoke confidently and with a rhythmic intonation that cast a spell on their listeners. When watching a speech of Louis Farrakhan it becomes quite clear that he conveys his message not just by what he says, but, equally important, by how he says it. But it was yet another member of the Nation of Islam who especially influenced the early Hip Hop generation’s Rappers, the world famous boxer Muhammed Ali. He combined eloquent and daring Rap-like battles of words with his impressive physical presence. The connection between what Muhammed Ali did and what early Rappers did was so obvious to the early Hip Hop generation, that when Chuck D of the legendary Rap group Public Enemy (in Spirer 1997) heard a Rap MC for the very first time, he immediately realized that “the guy on the microphone was just doing that same stuff that Muhammed Ali did”. It was exactly this empowering feeling of standing up, voicing ones opinion, being heard and taken seriously and being able to change something, to contribute something, and thereby to be somebody, which the pioneers of Hip Hop admired so much about their heroes of the Black Power Movement, and which they themselves were suddenly able to do through their music on an even bigger scale. That is why “Public Enemy’s purpose is to visually connect Hip Hop to the larger BFS [Black Freedom Struggle] and to show Public Enemy as the progeny of previous black leaders” (Alridge 2005: 230). In doing so, they constantly referred through their contents and militant appearance to their prototypes within Black Nationalism, because “Public Enemy draw inspiration not only from the NOI but also from the vanguardist Black Panther Party” (Decker 1993: 65). Thereby the idea of a black nation as the ultimate fulfillment of black empowerment was at the center of their self-portrayal. This idea of a black nation in America as the only real fulfillment of black empowerment stimulated the long history of Black Nationalism. Already Marcus Garvey, one of the best remembered pioneers of the early struggle within the Black Power and Hip Hop movements, “asked: ‘Where is the black man’s Government?’ ‘Where is his King and his kingdom?’ ‘Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his

men of big affairs?’ I could not find them, and then I declared, ‘I will help to make them’” (Garvey 1986: 126). Many organizations followed in Marcus Garvey’s footsteps, declaring that they “will help to make them”, of which the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party are only two examples, and which so called black-nation-conscious Hip Hop kept alive. In this endeavor, the Rappers of Public Enemy (the name itself is a statement questioning the legitimacy of the USA), called themselves, in reference to the Black Panther Party, for example Minister of Information or Minister of Defense. In addition, their security-crew, the Security of the First World (S1W), was a clear reference to the paramilitary wing of the Nation of Islam, the so called Fruit of Islam (FOI).

When the black-nationalist organizations lost their strong leadership-role within the black communities during the 1970s, the empowering and self-affirming rhetoric of an own black nation survived within the Hip Hop movement: “In the late 1970s, while the Nation of Islam was reorganized after the death of Elijah Mohammed, the hip hop nation was born largely through the efforts of one of rap music’s pioneers, Afrika Bambaataa” (Decker 1993: 57). But unlike Public Enemy who stepped in the footsteps of the early pioneers during the 1980s and who made nation-conscious Rap big, Bambaataa himself, through his name and the Zulu Nation, did not only focus so much on the Black Power era, but beyond that directly on African history itself. Because although the South Bronx was the undisputed birthplace of the Hip Hop culture, its origination process was born out of a mutually shared African experience from the continent to the western hemisphere.

This mutually shared experience resonated with poor black youths in the ghettos throughout the US-American nation, because “rap suggests how audiences exist within a nexus of subjugation and resistance to the dominant political order” (Quinn 1996: 66), and therefore Hip Hop spread like a wildfire “as the voice of urban African American youth, and [...] this voice is a form of resistance to and survival within the dominant social order” (Martinez 1997: 272). From the east coast Rap soon spread to the west coast in the early 1980s, with their respective centers in New York and Los Angeles. But through the transfer from east to west coast there was an obvious shift in focus, highlighting Rap over the other three elements. Strictly speaking this means that not the whole Hip Hop culture was transferred because the focus was mainly on the verbal element while the other elements, which constitute the whole culture, were rather neglected. Observe how Ice T (in Spirer 1997), one of the pioneers of west coast Rap, describes the emergence of west coast Rap as something slightly different from what had originated as Hip Hop in New York: “While they were having the Hip Hop scene in New York, we were having the gang scene. Due to the fact

they called themselves gang, people called this Gangsta Rap. Violence is part of that lifestyle, so you have to rap about it.”

Los Angeles, which was founded in 1781, had a long and violent history of black ghettoization and the resistance to it. The first “ethnic concentration” which could be called a ghetto formed around 1900, when Los Angeles replaced San Francisco as the largest concentration of African Americans in the State of California. Not later than 1930 a physically well-defined ghetto developed along Central Avenue, the beginning of the notorious South Central Ghetto, the birthplace of Gangsta Rap. (De Graaf 1970: 326ff)

The first gangs emerged in the 1940s to defend black communities against the racist violence and segregation enforced by white gangs, “because those White boys in South Gate would set you on fire“ (Alonso 2004: 664). These gangs were highly politicized during and after the 1965 Watts Riots and many gang members became members of the Black Panther Party to pool their resources against the common enemy. The now famous leader of the Black Panthers in Los Angeles, for example, was Bunchy Carter, former member of the Slausons Gang. During and after the destruction of the Black Panther Party and the Black Power Movement the different gangs were played against each other by the illegal FBI Counter Intelligence Program to depoliticize them and prevent a revival of the Black Panthers. This caused a street war in Los Angeles’ ghettos that has claimed more victims than the war in Northern Ireland. (Peralta 2007) This is the violence that Ice T and other Gangsta Rappers were talking about. That is why Ice Cube (in Ice T/Baybutt 2012), original member of the legendary Gangsta Rap crew (which actually called itself a gang) NWA (Niggaz with Attitude), called Gangsta Rap “Street Knowledge”, in the sense that Gangsta Rap is communicating street realities to the politicians and mainstream society. The reason why Gangsta Rap was often violent, aggressive, and also sexist, was because it was a child of and a reaction to the environment it was born in. In this sense, “it is reality rap in its truest form. And the fact that you could do this and sooner or later these records started selling, just saying whatever we wanted to say, it was great, it was like god came and said: Here is something that you can do!” (Ice T in Spierer 1997). But Gangsta Rap was not only empowering because it gave a voice to the voiceless, but by doing so it also challenged mainstream society’s and the media’s notions of black youth identity, because “Gangsta Rap accepts the gang member-drug seller role assigned to urban black youth by the media and then hyperbolizes these representations until the rappers become exactly what whites fear:

Straight outta Compton
Crazy motherfucker named Ice Cube
From the gang called Niggers with Attitude
When I'm called off, I got a sawed-off [shotgun]
Squeeze the trigger and bodies are hauled off
You too boyee if you fuck with me
The police are gonna have to come get me.
(N.W.A, "Straight Outta Compton").

By exploding the media's representation of young black males as gang members and pushers, N.W.A. inverts a power relation in which whites are on top and blacks on the bottom, the latter only able to succeed illegally" (Quinn 1996: 71). This is a strategy to reclaim the agency over one's own identities, even if these identities are shaped by the external labeling of mainstream society, the authorities and the media. Part of this strategy is the "empowering" rhetoric of Gangsta Rap – the 'bitches and hoes', the 'mothafuckers' and 'niggers'" (Quinn 1996: 86) which is intended to take over these external labels from the oppressors and use them in a self-determined way to take back the agency over one's own identity. Like male Rappers calling themselves "Gangstas" or "Niggas", female Rappers often call themselves "Bitches" to emphasize that they "don't take no shit from nobody", like Ice T (in Quinn 1996: 72) put it. So whether it be material resources or notions about identity, "Gangsta Rap is about 'takin' what's yours' pure and simple, without regard for consequences, just for your own pleasure and feeling of empowerment" (Quinn 1996: 74).

"As so often in processes of identity attribution and social representation, it is about a mirror-image power structure in which characteristics that say more about the particular domination discourse, which underlies the projections, than the actual 'others', are attributed to others" (Marchart 2008: 97, my own translation³⁰). This means that the "freedom which one denies oneself (and which is denied to oneself), is resented to those who are assumed to have claimed it – and is ultimately denied to them" (Marchart 2008: 97, my own translation³¹). Especially if this freedom means freedom from the hegemonic domination discourses and mainstream society's claims to be of universal values. Claiming this freedom

³⁰ German original: „Wie so oft in Prozessen der Identitätszuschreibung und sozialen Repräsentation hat man es mit einer spiegelbildlichen Machtstruktur zu tun, in welcher der anderen Seite Eigenschaften unterstellt werden, die mehr über die den Projektionen zugrunde liegenden jeweiligen Herrschaftsstrukturen aussagen als über die tatsächlich ‚anderen‘.“

³¹ German original: „Die Freiheit, die man sich selbst versagt (und die einem versagt wird), wird denjenigen, denen unterstellt wird, sie nähmen sie sich, übel genommen – und letztendlich wieder abgesprochen.“

is in itself a critique on those structures from which one is longing to be free, and therefore “the critique on the internal contradictions of capitalism [for example racism] is expressed by subcultures through style and living practices, and does not necessarily have to be explicitly verbalized” (Marchart 2008: 110, my own translation³²). So even those Gangsta Rappers and songs that are not explicitly political or even critical, express a kind of critique through their style which emphasizes “we are not a part of you”, “we do our own thing”. This comes with the idea that the most empowering thing you can do if somebody excludes you is not trying to please them in order to be included one bright day, but to build up your own alternatives independently of those who exclude you. That is why “part of the media furor surrounding Gangsta Rap is a result of young African American males’ ‘success, inventiveness, and basic black entrepreneurship’” (Quinn 1996).

Accordingly, many Gangsta Rappers like Tupac Shakur or The Notorious Biggie Smalls, to mention two of the most famous and successful ones, have often addressed these “stereotypes of a black male misunderstood”³³. Examples show that many Gangsta Rappers were well aware of these stereotypes and that they deliberately played with them. For example, there is a big misunderstanding that Gangsta Rap automatically means to glorify gangs and violence. Basically it is just a description and expression of this violence in which many youths are forced to grow up. One of the best known examples for this was Coolio’s 1995 “Gangsta’s Paradise” anthem with its chorus:

We’ve been spending most of our lives
living in a Gangsta’s Paradise.
Tell me why are we too blind to see
that the ones we hurt are you and me.

The song was the title soundtrack for the 1995 movie “Dangerous Minds” which brought urban poor inner-city youth realities to the cinemas and TVs around the nation and the world. In the video for the song, Michelle Pfeiffer, who is starring in the movie as a white middle-class teacher, asks Gangsta Rapper Coolio: “You wanna tell me what this is all about?”, after which the song lyrics, describing ghetto realities, follow as his answer.

Another more recent attempt to remind Gangsta Rap of its empowering character and to politicize it came with Dead Prez’ slogan and 2004 album title “Revolutionary But Gangsta”,

³² German original: „die Kritik an den inneren Widersprüchen des Kapitalismus werde von Subkulturen durch Stil und gelebte Praktiken formuliert und müsse nicht unbedingt explizit verbalisiert werden.“

³³ A line in Biggie Smalls’ breakthrough hit „Juicy” on his 1994 album “Ready to Die”.

a reference to the abbreviation RBG which usually stands for Red Black and Green within Black Power contexts, the flag of the Marcus Garvey movement. Thereby the “Revolutionary But Gangsta” slogan was a brilliant move to connect the Gangsta scene with the Black Power struggle and to highlight its revolutionary character. Moreover, with Marcus Garvey Dead Prez not only refers to the American Black Power struggle but also to Garvey’s *Back to Africa* philosophy, because “dead prez also espouses a Pan-African philosophy in their music” (Alridge 2005: 247). Pan-African-, Back to Africa-, Marcus Garvey-, Rastafarian- and black solidarity-themes had a big revival within Hip Hop during the 1990s with conscious Rap artists like Mos Def and Talib Kweli who called their 1998 collaboration album “Black Star”, after Marcus Garvey’s commercial enterprise. In Dead Prez’ song “I’m a African” from the 2000 “Let’s Get Free” album the Pan-African consciousness of the Hip Hop culture found one of its most eloquent expressions (in Alridge 2005: 247):

No, I wasn’t born in Ghana,
but Africa is my momma
And I did not end up here from bad karma
Or from B-Ball, selling mad crack or rappin’.
Peter Tosh try to tell us what happened.
He was sayin’ if you black then you African....
A-F-R-I-C-A, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and J.A. [Jamaica]
New York and Cali, F-L-A
No it ain’t ‘bout where you stay, it’s ‘bout the motherland.

Although US-American Hip Hoppers were not physically born in Africa, they never forget that it is Africa where their genetic, cultural and musical roots lie, and that they did not end up in the Americas from bad karma, which means that it was not just bad luck or even their own fault why they came to America, but that there was a violent history of oppression which Hip Hop addresses. With Peter Tosh they refer to the Jamaican roots of Hip Hop and the African Black consciousness of the Rastafari Movement. This consciousness emphasizes that “if you black then you African” and thereby attempts to give US Hip Hoppers back their stolen African identities and to form a universal African unity and connection between “Africans at home and abroad” (Garvey 1986: 138), because “black Americans lost touch with Africa. Therefore, black Americans can be characterized historically as a distinctly uprooted and isolated minority group” (Merelman 1993: 332). In this context A-F-R-I-C-A becomes the

uniting element and it does not matter anymore if one lives in New York, Los Angeles, Kingston or Dar es Salaam, for “it ain’t ‘bout where you stay, it’s ‘bout the motherland”. The influence of this consciousness cannot be overemphasized and was even expressed by Rappers from “the motherland”, for example K’naan from Somalia who sampled Peter Tosh’s song “African” on his “Blues for the Horn” track of his “My Life is a Movie” album:

Don’t care where you come from
as long as you are a Black Man
you are an African.
Don’t mind your nationality
you have got the identity
of an African.

It was exactly these transnational connections that triggered the emergence of Hip Hop in the United States of America and made it a relevant force even back in “the motherland”, in far-away places like Tanzania.

5. Hip Hop in Tanzania

When M1, one half of the US Hip Hop duo Dead Prez, visited the East African Swahili Hip Hop scene (Kenya and Tanzania) in 2007, it was to strengthen the transnational connections of the Hip Hop world through the consciousness of black solidarity, out of which Hip Hop was born in the 1970s and which so-called Conscious Hip Hop still articulates: Black (Em-)Power(-ment). Conscious Hip Hop and Black Empowerment have been interrelated since the beginning, because “[i]n order to be a ‘conscious’ rap artist, one must devote the majority of his/her lyrics to discussing ,empowerment through politics and knowledge“ (Dagbovie 2005: 304). Therefore, Dead Prez are known to be “one of the most recent and popular underground groups to call for black self-determination” (Alridge 2005: 238).

In 2007 Hip Hop in Tanzania had already a history of more than 20 years and Dead Prez was enthusiastically welcomed as representatives of this *common* history: „[E]verybody wanted a piece of the action!! They were on the tightest of schedules, a whirlwind tour of just a few days that would take them to the Ukooflani MauMau Youth Center in Dandora [Nairobi], and the sprawling, vibrant ghettos in Kibera; to the congested, tree lined streets of Arusha [Tanzania] and fire lit nights under the stars at the United African Alliance Community Center UAACC in Imbaseni; to the slave forts of Bagamoyo and the hectic nightlife of Dar [es Salaam]”, Charlotte Hill O’Neil (without year) wrote about Dead Prez’ first visit to East Africa. Being a former member of the Black Panther Party in Kansas City, USA, who is living with her husband in political exile in Arusha, Tanzania, Charlotte Hill O’Neil and her husband Pete O’Neil were the transnational connections which linked Dead Prez to the Tanzanian Hip Hop scene. The US-American Hip Hoppers played a few concerts in Kenya and Tanzania and recorded some songs with Kenyan and Tanzanian Hip Hop artists, of whom I was able to meet some, “to record the connection between Mau Mau warriors of the 50’s; Black Panther revolutionaries of the 60’s; and Hip Hop activists of today” (Hill O’Neil without year). Thereby, Charlotte Hill O’Neil, better known by her stage name Mama C, who is also a musician and Spoken Word artist, automatically placed Hip Hop in that same history of militant Black Freedom Struggles from Africa to USA, implying that Hip Hop is carrying this same torch right now. And it is, for that matter, a transnational torch.

Conscious Rap artists like Dead Prez, in the footsteps of pioneers like Public Enemy, have influenced the post-socialist generation of Tanzania since the 1980s. Koen Stroeken (2005: 489) thinks that in the critique on the post-socialist system, the “first African American rap bands such as Public Enemy, who promoted the utopia of a ,Nation of Islam‘ representing

all black Americans,“ offered Tanzanian youths an important inspiration for a new, better, and more equal Tanzanian society and nation shaped by youths. This leads Koen to an interesting comparison: “Today their [Public Enemy’s and others] music is respected as ,old school‘, meaning that its style and content are seminal but outdated. Nyerere’s idealism likewise lacks the sophistication of the politics that succeeded it.” Thereby, yesterday’s heroes, Public Enemy and Tanzania’s first President Nyerere, inspire the nation building of today and tomorrow in the minds of the Tanzanian Hip Hop generation, while today’s politicians and Rappers, like the US-American mainstream Rapper 50 Cent, represent the sell-out status quo, which must be overcome with old-school ideals: “The indifference of the post-socialist generation to the normative project of visionary founding fathers tallies remarkably well with the position US gangsta acts such as 50 Cent nowadays take in relation to the founding fathers of hip-hop such as Public Enemy“ (Stroeken 2005: 501).

As we see, US Hip Hop has had a strong influence on Tanzanian youths. Now I will turn to explaining how and why Hip Hop came to Tanzania and how it was shaped and transformed to be a force for that same purpose for which it was intended when it emerged in the 1970s in New York: Empowerment.

5.1. Transnational Connections

“ALL HIP-HOP IS LOCAL”, Jeff Chang (2007: 64) wrote in *It’s a Hip-Hop World*. Although Hip Hop was born as an expression of local realities which marginalized youths faced in urban ghettos and Housing Projects in the USA during the 1970s, their means of expression were influenced by a great variety of cultural forms throughout the African Diaspora in the western hemisphere, so that the realities that were expressed were always local. When Hip Hop reached the US west coast, it could not just copy New York Hip Hop but had to express Los Angeles gang realities, wherefore Gangsta Rap developed as an expression of these local realities. So even within the USA Hip Hop had to adapt to different local realities to be an authentic mouthpiece of those living in these realities. I have already discussed some of the reasons *why* Hip Hop emerged in New York: the different cultural and ideological influences. We have also seen that not only the spread of Hip Hop but already its emergence was the result of transnational processes. Now I want to focus on the fact *that* it emerged - which shows that there was a need for youths to find their own ways to express their own realities. This appealed to marginalized youths all over the world who also tried to find their own ways to express their own realities because obviously they did not feel adequately represented by mainstream society.

Undoubtedly, one of the major reasons why Hip Hop spread so wide and fast is because it was a phenomenon that emerged in the USA, “which is, [Ulf Nielsen in Hannerz 2000: 119] suggests, ‘everybody’s second homeland,’ hardly even a foreign country – ‘it is as if every country on earth had built an electronic bridge to the USA and found the messages it carries so fascinating that one has decided to shut out those from more nearby.’” However, this strong western influence led and exemplified by the USA was perceived as a cultural and ideological threat to the Tanzanian society by the Socialist Government under the first president Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. Although “Tanzania’s movement toward socialism began soon after independence from British rule in 1961”, officially, “Tanzanian socialism began with the Arusha Declaration (Azimio la Arusha), a policy presented by TANU [the Tanganyika African National Union independence party] on February 5, 1967, which Julius Nyerere argued ‘reaffirmed’ that Tanzanians were free to develop on their own” (Perullo 2011: 14f). This freedom “to develop on their own” presupposed the defense against western (US) cultural imperialism, the socialist government was convinced. This means that everything western “was forbidden in the socialist period, such as televisions, recording equipment, and foreign music” (Perullo 2011: 11). Therefore, although the US-American “way of life” had become omnipresent in many places all over the world through TV and pop culture, only small bits of it were able to trickle through the Tanzanian borders. And because US Hip Hop was not understood as a black cultural form growing out of African experiences but misunderstood as just another US American brainwash leading youths astray from their African roots, Hip Hop too was not allowed into the country. “This mentality began to change, however, when [Julius Nyerere abdicated and] Ali Hassan Mwinyi became president in 1985. Almost immediately, Mwinyi accepted loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These loans came with drastic Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) that made Tanzania more dependent” (Perullo 2011: 10) and led to the opening of the country towards western influence. “With independence came the socialist party’s experiments in national awareness, followed in the mid-1980s by a near-180-degree change of ideological direction“ (Stroeken 2005: 490). This almost schizophrenic “near-180-degree change” from socialistic rhetoric, which is still credited for its integrity but which, on the other hand, denied Tanzanian youths western influences like Hip Hop, to western oriented policies, which are blamed for corruption and capitalistic materialism but which enabled Hip Hop’s success in Tanzania, strongly shaped the Tanzanian Hip Hop generation, because “[m]ost of the young rappers and reggae musicians were born after independence and witnessed the rise and fall of Nyerere’s nation-building project and the CCM [Chama Cha

Mapinduzi, Julius Nyerere's 1977 merger between TANU and the government party of Zanzibar] policies of *Ujamaa*, Africanized Socialism" (Remes 1999: 1). "Therefore, from the outside, we face a paradox situation: Rappers sing about national unity and Tanzanian values, which are traced back to *ujamaa*. But for this they use a music that would have never been possible under *ujamaa*" (Raab 2006: 143, my own translation³⁴). For most Tanzanian Rappers, Julius Nyerere is a hero to whom they often refer, either lyrically or visually, and *Ujamaa* is widely respected as truly African.

Because the "national radio station, Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam, [attempted] to restrict or remove foreign cultural forms" (Perullo 2011: 16), young Tanzanians who were especially interested in African American cultural forms, to which they could easily relate, had to find ways and means to overcome these barriers. Like everywhere in the world, with money and contacts you can get everything. But this meant that mostly wealthier youths from the middle and upper classes, who had relatives or other contacts in the west or the financial means to substitute them, were initially exposed to Hip Hop. That is why youths "from upper class or well-educated families tend to conceive of hip hop's emergence much earlier than other youth" (Perullo 2007: 253). This means that until the late 1980s, when "socialist practices that limited people's access to foreign music and culture began to break down" (Perullo 2007: 252), these wealthier youths operated as "cultural brokers" (Raab 2006: 53), slowly but surely introducing the Hip Hop culture to more and more Tanzanian youths. Therefore it is important to note that while Hip Hop was created by marginalized African American youths, it initially reached privileged youths in Tanzania, which was a completely reversed point of departure: „Prior to the fall of Ujamaa, unlike the marginalised consumers and producers of Hip-Hop in the US, Hip-Hop was confined to a cosmopolitan ‚middle class‘ who gained access to Hip-Hop music through foreign family connections and travel" (MusicInDevelopment 2011). But „rap did not remain a privileged affair" (Remes 1999: 10), because „from the richer youths the music reached where, according to Hip Hop's original narrative, it belonged – into the streets" (Raab 2006: 50, my own translation³⁵).

While many authors who have written about Hip Hop in Tanzania (for example: Remes 1999: 3; Suriano 2006: 1; Stroeken 2005: 489; Halliday 2011; MusicInDevelopment.com 2011) dated the emergence of Hip Hop in Tanzania to the late 1980s and early 1990s, Alex Perullo (2007) traced the beginnings of Hip Hop in Tanzania as

³⁴ German original: „So stehen wir in der Außenbetrachtung vor einer scheinbar paradoxen Situation: Die Rapper besingen nationalen Zusammenhalt und tansanische Grundwerte, die auf *ujamaa* zurückgeführt werden. Aber sie tun dies mit einer Musik, die unter *ujamaa* nie möglich gewesen wäre.“

³⁵ German original: „[v]on den reicheren Jugendlichen aus gelangte die Musik dorthin, wo sie, der HipHop-Ursprungserzählung nach, hingehört – auf die Straßen.“

far back as 1984. The difference in dating probably comes from Perullo's (2007: 253) understanding that Hip Hop is not just Rap, but a whole culture consisting of the four original elements „breakdancing, deejaying (also called mixing), rapping (also called MC-ing), and graffiti art“, and that Breakdancing preceded Rap's arrival as the first element of Hip Hop culture reaching Tanzania: “In Tanzania, youth were first drawn to hip hop culture through breakdancing. In 1984, Dar es Salaam youth saw their first images of breakdancing on videocassettes” (Perullo 2007: 253). These first impressions of Breakdancing on videocassettes sent from relatives living in the USA came with novel beats and flowing rhymes, whereby Hip Hop music and Rap initially reached the Dar es Salaam dancing scene as a rather less noticed by-product. But “[w]hile breakdancing was the first dominant element of hip hop culture to appear in Dar es Salaam, a handful of youth did rap. These mostly elite youth tended to be well educated and have connections with people abroad that allowed them access to music from the United States“ (Perullo 2007: 253). Klaus Raab (2006: 27) too believes that Hip Hop had already reached Tanzania in the early 1980s, but was initially only available to a wealthy minority.

In a personal interview Charlotte Hill-O'Neil, also known as Mama C, a former Black Panther from the United States who has lived in Tanzania since the early 1970s, has told me of how she experienced the time when western influence was banned and how it still trickled through and reached some youths:

“TV used to be banned here. [...] All through the 70s and early 80s, I guess. And that was because President Nyerere and other progressive leaders said they didn't want the influence of westernization here. So we didn't have TV, nobody had TV. But my mother-in-law, in the early 80s or maybe mid-80s, sent us a little eight-inch TV, but not for broadcast TV, and a video player and we had eight cassette tapes.”

On one of those video cassettes there “was MTV. [...] And our children saw that. Our daughter was 15 and our son was like 18 or something like that. They grew up here herding cows and they had a village life. But something about that [MTV] excited them and plus they hadn't seen our relatives. They said we wanna go to the States just to experience it, just to see how that part of the world is.”³⁶

³⁶ Personal interview with Mama C at the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC) in Imbaseni Village, Arusha, Tanzania, on 24.09.2012.

Although most other children in Tanzania did not have the opportunity to actually visit the United States, many still longed to hear and see something of it. Therefore, Charlotte Hill-O'Neil's children might have been some of those "cultural brokers" who provided their Tanzanian friends with some longed-for impressions of the United States.

5.2. Adopting a foreign culture?

Since Hip Hop was born out of a common African experience and history, its appropriation in Tanzania cannot be understood in terms of adopting a foreign culture, because its earliest roots go back to African spoken word poetry and it is therefore not surprising that African youths could relate to these very familiar sounds. It is important to understand that youths in various different places on this earth, not only in Tanzania, related to US Hip Hop, and that they did not just copy it. Because, by definition, Hip Hop cannot be copied. If it is copied it is no longer real because it does not express your own reality. And if it is not real, it is not Hip Hop. That is why US Hip Hop has hardly ever been copied in any other Hip Hop scene, although initially most Hip Hop scenes across the globe stuck very tight to US Hip Hop in order to learn what Hip Hop is all about. But once this foundation was laid, Hip Hop had to adapt to local contexts in order to express local realities to be respected as real Hip Hop. This means that "HipHop is, no matter where on earth it arises, a locally shaped art form. [...] As a matter of principle, local realizations cannot be mere imitations, because HipHop stipulates the reflection of local and own personal experiences" (Raab 2006: 22, my own translation³⁷). Accordingly, Hip Hop might be best understood as a tool (a mouthpiece) which youths from all different geographical and cultural backgrounds could use to express their own local realities, messages and experiences, because "hip-hop is a lingua franca that binds young people all around the world, all while giving them the chance to alter it with their own national flavor" (Chang 2007: 60). But in order to have an effective tool, in spite of all local flavoring, there is of course a fundamental consensus within the Hip Hop culture about what we mean when we talk of Hip Hop. Technically this means staying true to the four elements. Ideologically it means the element of Knowledge and consciousness. That is why "one thing about hip-hop has remained consistent across cultures: a vital progressive agenda that challenges the status quo" (Chang 2007: 60). This is the essence of Hip Hop, which "remained consistent across cultures", and the reason why this culture that originated in New York has become so attractive especially to marginalized youths all over the world, because

³⁷ German original: „HipHop ist, egal wo auf der Welt er entsteht, eine lokal ausgestaltete Kunstform. [...] Lokale Umsetzungen können schon vom Prinzip her nicht bloße Imitationen sein, weil HipHop die Reflexion lokaler und eigener persönlicher Erfahrungen vorschreibt.“

“[a]lthough hip-hop has become mainstream in many parts of the world today, it is still considered a voice for the oppressed, and a provocation for those in power“ (Chang 2007: 63). And that is why it is also true for Tanzania that there emerged a completely unique culture, “which is at the same time without any doubt Hip Hop” (Raab 2006: 14, my own translation³⁸).

This means that for a broader mass of Tanzanian youths to be able to identify with Hip Hop as their own culture, Hip Hop could not just be copied in its US-American form and rather passively absorbed, but it had to be autonomously practiced and lived, because, as we have seen, “HipHop demands the digestion of local experiences. [...] It might seem paradox, but the ‘global’, that which is spread worldwide, is that HipHop must be local” (Raab 2006: 46, my own translation³⁹). Therefore Hip Hop had to be adapted to Tanzanian realities in order to be a tool expressing them. Especially two aspects which were central to US Hip Hop had to be strongly reconsidered in order for Tanzanian youths to use Hip Hop for expressing their own realities, messages and experiences: content and language.

5.2.1. Content

Although US Hip Hop has its roots in and had always strong connections to Africa, which was one of the main reasons why Hip Hop has become so attractive to Tanzanian youths in the first place, the experiences of the US-American and the Tanzanian Hip Hop generations to some extent differed considerably. As already described, Hip Hop emerged in the USA in a context of violence and racism that shaped African American history from the slave ships through the plantations to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and “members of the Hip Hop generation are linked mainly by the fact that we were born after the major struggles of the Civil Rights Movement and have collectively inherited a great deal from the battles waged by our elders“ (Dagbovie 2005: 302). Because the US-American Hip Hop generation was so strongly shaped and influenced by this context of racism and violence in which it emerged, racism and violence became one of the central issues within the discourse of US Hip Hop. But Tanzanian youths of the Hip Hop generation, who were born long after the abolition of official colonialism and its inherent racism, grew up as black people in a black country and were therefore spared witnessing the horrible realities of White Power racism and segregation. The issue of racism within Tanzanian Hip Hop was therefore not a direct reaction to immediate racist violence, as it was in US Hip Hop, but more indirectly the legacy of the

³⁸ German original: „die zugleich unzweifelhaft Hip Hop ist.“

³⁹ German original: „HipHop fordert die Verarbeitung lokaler Erfahrung. [...] Es mag paradox wirken, aber das ‚Globale‘, das, was weltweit verbreitet ist, besteht darin, dass HipHop lokal zu sein hat.“

Ujamaa consciousness denouncing global racist disparities and injustices and the fact that a big part of Tanzanian economic resources is still not in the hands of Africans. This is why the issue of racism within Tanzanian Hip Hop was more on a theoretical level, whereas in US Hip Hop it was part of the daily struggle for survival. Because the African American experience of racism was always linked to violence. Racist oppression and segregation in the USA was always violently enforced and maintained, and was therefore a still echoing reality for members of the Hip Hop generation who grew up in the shattered ruins of Martin Luther King's dream. That is why members of the Hip Hop generation like Dead Prez pointed out that they had "a dream too".⁴⁰ But because Martin Luther King's nonviolent dream came to a violent end, the Hip Hop generation was "ready for combat, feeling like Geronimo Pratt"⁴¹, a legendary LA Black Panther leader who was imprisoned for 27 years on set-up charges before he was acquitted of all charges in 1997, joined other former Black Panthers in their Tanzanian exile and became a mentor and inspiration to the Tanzanian Hip Hop generation. On the "Rest in Uhuru [Swahili for freedom]" tribute collaboration⁴² after Geronimo Ji Jaga's death, famous Tanzanian Rapper JCB of Watengwa said: "We will build on what you started". What Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt started was a militant resistance against oppression exemplified by his famous attempt to defend the LA Black Panther office against the destruction by US authorities which culminated in a five-hour-long shoot out. (Everett 2010) Geronimo Pratt was also the godfather of world famous Rapper Tupac Shakur (better known as 2Pac). Tupac Shakur's mother Afeni Shakur was a leading Black Panther in New York and one of the imprisoned "Panthers 21" or "New York 21" while she was pregnant with him, wherefore 2Pac always emphasized that he was already in prison even before he was born (in Lazin 2003). Considering that the probably best known Rapper of all times, 2pac, was the son of a leading Black Panther, we can imagine the immediacy which racism and violence had for the US American Hip Hop generation.

In contrast to that, the history of independent Tanzania, which shaped the Tanzanian Hip Hop generation, was a very peaceful one, apart from the conflict with Uganda in the late 1970s. The violent militancy of the Black Power generation in defense against the violent racist oppression was manipulated and turned against the black population itself through illegal attempts by the FBI Counter Intelligence Program during the gang generation which succeeded the Black Power generation. An emancipating, liberating and empowering

⁴⁰ Dead Prez' song „I have a dream too“ on the “Revolutionary But Gangsta” album.

⁴¹ A line from Dead Prez' song “I have a dream too”.

⁴² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UWUbK2nmS0> [15.09.2013]

militancy, following Malcolm X's dictum of "by any means necessary"⁴³, was turned into a self-destructive gang violence. When Hip Hop reached Tanzania in the 1980s it was in the middle of its transition from the culture focused New York Hip Hop to the gang violence reflecting Los Angeles Gangsta Rap. Blackgzas (pronounced Black Jesus) from the legendary Ukooflani Mau Mau, Dandora, Nairobi based Hip Hop collective, explained to me that it was this Gangsta trend at that time which was the main reason why Hip Hop was mistaken for just another western influence and banned by the Tanzanian authorities: "The people who were doing Hip Hop and the people who brought Hip Hop to the lime light, when it started now becoming big [in the US], were now Gangstas. And no parents wanted to see their kids going there. So from a parent point of view he [Nyerere] had to do that [ban Hip Hop]. Because even Hip Hop in the States itself was banned."⁴⁴ Because many of the privileged youths who brought Hip Hop to Tanzania followed this dominant Gangsta trend of US Hip Hop at that time and even attempted to copy it. But since Tanzanian youths did not have any direct relation to gang violence, because there was no comparable analog in their own everyday realities, the Gangsta trend was soon rejected as being not authentic, one of the most important criteria for Hip Hop: "That is not keeping it real! We don't afford Lexus, we don't afford using guns. In Tanzania we [are a] peace country", Haas (in Remes 1999: 11) quotes an anonymous Tanzanian Rapper, who thereby expressed a very wide consensus. Many Rappers emphasize the importance of peace within the Tanzanian society and distance themselves not only from a violent Gangsta concept but also from the whole idea that Rap is something foreign, something American, expressing the violent realities of US-American society and therefore being an unfitting tool for expressing the more peaceful realities of Tanzanian society. Members of the Tanzanian Rap group Jungle Crewz Posse (in MusicInDevelopment.com 2011) put it this way: "Rap is not coming from abroad ... we are not talking gun. If you showed me a gun it would be hard for me to tell you which is the trigger. I know gun in movie pictures, we are talking things that we know and see and understand." It is important to note that the reasons given for rejecting gun-lyrics and violent topics are usually not that gun-lyrics and violent Gangsta Rap are per se bad, but merely that it would be fake to talk about it in Tanzania when it does not exist within Tanzanian realities. This means the rejection of violent Gangsta Rap is usually not a moral statement but due to the importance of reality within Hip Hop. JCB from Watengwa explained this to me in very similar terms: "I don't have gun, how can I talk about gun? We talk about something we have,

⁴³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4DlfeQ7cyk> [6.5.2013]

⁴⁴ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, on 26.09.2012.

we don't talk about gun, we are talking about the life in the streets, of poor people.”⁴⁵ By this localization of the content, or by using Hip Hop to express local realities and contents relevant to Tanzanian youths, “Tanzanian Hip-Hop practitioners began to reject dominant themes within American Hip-Hop discourse such as the objectification of women, as it was seen as conflicting with prevalent Islamic ideas. They also, to an extent, began to disassociate themselves with prevalent American themes such as violence, opting instead to focus only on issues that were relevant to them” (MusicInDevelopment.com 2011).

But rejecting the violence which is often associated with Gangsta Rap does not mean that Tanzanian Rappers reject the underlying idea of the Gangsta per se. As I already discussed in the 3.3. and 4.3. sections of this thesis, Gangsta has much more of an empowering than a destructive meaning to the Hip Hop generation, and that is why the “power of the *Gangsta*, his self-empowerment, looks quite fascinating” (Raab 2006: 90, my own translation⁴⁶) to many Tanzanian Rappers as well. The key to understand how an apparently negative image has come to signify something very positive lies in understanding US Gangsta Rap as “reality rap in its truest form”, like Gangsta Rap pioneer Ice T (in Spierer 1997) put it, because Gangsta Rap initially just meant picturing the gang-realities in which young Rappers found themselves especially in Los Angeles. This means that Gangsta Rap was originally called Gangsta Rap because it was talking *about* Gangsta realities, and not because those who are making Gangsta Rap are necessarily real gangsters themselves. This is how Gangsta became dissociated from promoting gangsters and gang violence. Like Gangsta Rap was just reality Rap about gang realities, those who lived and survived in these harsh Gangsta realities were then becoming known as Gangstas, even if they were no gangsters or gang members themselves. So when a Tanzanian Rapper talks positively about Gangsta Rap, or even calls his own music Gangsta Rap and himself and his associates Gangstas, most likely he or she just means reality Rap. This is not just a transformation that has only taken place in Tanzanian Hip Hop, as one might think now, but has always been part of US Gangsta Rap as well. Many Tanzanian Hip Hop artists of this generation grew up listening to US Gangsta superstars like 2Pac and the Notorious Biggie Smalls, who already took the Gangsta image unto themselves for positive and self-empowering reasons. Daz Naledge (pronounced Knowledge), the head-producer of the legendary Arusha Hip Hop formation Watengwa, told me in a personal interview that he was heavily inspired and influenced by “people like Biggie Smalls. He is still Gangsta but you

⁴⁵ Personal interview with JCB at his home in Arusha on 28.09.2012.

⁴⁶ German original: „Die Power des *Gangsta*, seine Selbstermächtigung, wirkt durchaus faszinierend.“

get the stories inside, like how it is.”⁴⁷ “How it is” means reality, and Gangsta Rap therefore means reality Rap. That is why “Watengwa does Gangsta Rap. [But] we don’t take Gangsta Rap like gangsters. To us Gangsta Rap is something like the [neighbor]hood [= ghetto] music. The one in which you hear people saying the truth is like this, or like this. [It is] something positive.”⁴⁸ JCB, founding member of Watengwa, agreed that “sometimes it’s Gangsta, like you know it’s ghetto. [Because] we are talking ghetto, we are talking street shit, you know. What happens in the streets. Reality.”⁴⁹ And because Tanzanian realities are not the same as realities in South Central Los Angeles, Tanzanian Gangsta/Reality Rap cannot be the same as well. But in Tanzanian Hip Hop within the so called third world and the oppression under the capitalist world system, youths could easily identify themselves with the emancipating and self-empowering aspects of the Gangsta concept while rejecting the illegal and violent aspects.

Older literature on the topic, which I have also used in previous essays, often suggested that in order to avoid misunderstandings, the positive aspects of the Gangsta concept were introduced into Tanzanian Hip Hop as the *Msela* concept, instead of calling it Gangsta as well. Pieter Remes (1999: 16), for example, described the concept of the *Msela* as city-smart instead of violent, because “there are no gangsta rappers here who deal drugs and engage in drive-by shootings, but only city smart youth with a positive message for their peers.” While he is certainly right that within Tanzanian Hip Hop there is no place for drug dealing or drive-by shootings, he misunderstood the Gangsta concept by just accepting the US mainstream media’s definition of what Gangsta and Gangsta Rap is. If we equate Gangsta Rap with actual violence and crime, then Remes is right that there is no Gangsta Rap in Tanzania. But as we have seen, Gangsta Rap within the US American and especially the Tanzanian Hip Hop scene has come to mean something very different, and most of those within the Hip Hop movement are aware of this difference, or quick to explain it to others, so that the renaming into *Msela* is no longer necessary, if it ever was. At least today’s Hip Hop artists to whom I have talked in Tanzania use the word Gangsta in a very reflective way and were somehow unfamiliar with substituting it with *Msela*. *Msela* is apparently no longer part of the Tanzanian Hip Hop vocabulary, and I could not verify if it ever really was. This (keyword: vocabulary) brings us to the second aspect of US Hip Hop which had to be adapted to Tanzanian realities so that Tanzanian youths could identify with it: language.

⁴⁷ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

⁴⁸ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

⁴⁹ Personal interview with JCB at his home in Arusha on 28.09.2012.

5.2.2. Language

As we have seen, Tanzanian Hip Hop had to express Tanzanian realities in order to be an attractive and useful tool for the empowerment of young people in Tanzania. But Tanzanian Hip Hop could not authentically express Tanzanian realities in a foreign language, English. It would have not only been considered unauthentic but it would have also been inaccessible to the vast majority of Tanzanian youths who were not fluent in English. Dar es Salaam Rapper Philly Techniques explained to me that this was the reason why he did not come into Hip Hop until there were some “Tanzanian Hip Hop artists. Because by then I couldn’t understand the English, and that was the big problem. Because I could hear maybe the songs of Snoop Dogg and say this is a good beat and he raps good, but I didn’t understand the language that he used. So I didn’t get the knowledge, I didn’t get the message from there.”⁵⁰ Because the English lyrics of US Hip Hop were only accessible through higher education, “English Rap had an elitist touch. Swahili Rap, on the other hand, served as social commentary that could be understood by the entire society” (Raab 2006: 58, my own translation⁵¹).

But the idea that Tanzanian Hip Hop needs to express Tanzanian realities in a Tanzanian language, Swahili, took some time to become widely accepted within the developing Hip Hop scene of the early days, because, as we have seen, the early Hip Hop scene in Tanzania was dominated by wealthier youths from the educated elite who understood and spoke English. Their initial imitation of US Hip Hop and rhyming in English was a natural and necessary first step approach to this new phenomenon called Hip Hop, because although “the use of English was difficult for many, particularly in trying to copy the rapid delivery of American rappers, the imitation process was crucial for Dar es Salaam youth to learn to ‚flow‘ over the music, find the beat of songs, and create a unique sound“ (Perullo 2007: 256). The process of “learning to flow” meant to write new lyrics to popular US Hip Hop beats, and soon the first Swahili lyrics appeared here and there. The Dar es Salaam Rapper Nikki Mbishi explained to me that “back in the days even Swahili artists, I mean the artists from Tanzania, used to rap in English and they used to change that. It was just the same vibe from America but they do some Swahili words to the same records made in the US.”⁵² These Swahili versions of famous US Hip Hop songs were the first Swahili Raps and testify to the step-by-step process which it took to create real Swahili Hip Hop. Most sources agree that Saleh J was the first Tanzanian Rapper who used Swahili lyrics. His Swahili version of Vanilla Ice’s hit “Ice Ice Baby” won

⁵⁰ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

⁵¹ German original: „Englischer Rap hatte einen elitären Einschlag. Swahili Rap dagegen diente als sozialer Kommentar, der von der ganzen Gesellschaft verstanden werden konnte.“

⁵² Personal interview with Nikki Mbishi in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

him the first big Tanzanian Hip Hop competition, Yo Rap Bonanza, in 1991. Therefore, it became the first Swahili Hip Hop hit, because although “[t]here are other young Tanzanians who claim to be originators of Swahili rap, [...] Saleh’s cassette was the first widely distributed and popular album of Tanzanian rap” (Remes 1999: 7). Actually, Saleh J only used the beat of “Ice Ice Baby” and tried to imitate the flow while his lyrics were not just the Swahili translation of the original, but already told about a more relevant topic for Tanzanian youths, that of HIV/Aids: “By taking this prominent social topic and weaving it into a popular song rapped partially in Swahili, Ajabry [Saleh J] allowed rap to function according to its original intention: to communicate verbally. Though Ajabry was not the first rapper to use Swahili or even the first to rap about a topical social issue, the popularity of his song and his skills as a lyricist created a significant turning point in Tanzanian rap” (Perullo 2007: 258). “Thereby, Saleh J gave HipHop in Tanzania maybe its most important impulse. With his Kiswahili-Raps began a phase for HipHop in Tanzania in which the Rappers took increasing distance from the original” (Raab 2006: 56, my own translation⁵³). This process of “‘Kiswacentrism’ was a form of active localization that took Hip-Hop as a global musical form and sensitised it, and reformulated it, to the musical and social localisms of Tanzania“ (MusicInDevelopment.com 2011). Uta Reuster-Jahn and Gabriel Hacke (2011: 4) suggested that Hip Hop probably would not have survived without this process of “Swahilization”, but it would have vanished just like those Rappers who opposed this localization more and more just disappeared: “Swahilization became a powerful trend from the time Saleh J released his Swahili version of Ice Ice Baby by Vanilla Ice in 1991. Although purist Hip-Hop pioneers tried to resist this development at first, they had to give in if they wanted to persist in the game.”

Even in 2012, when I did my last field research for this thesis, Saleh J was still remembered and respected for his important contribution to Tanzanian Hip Hop by current artists of whom many were much too young to remember, or not even born yet when Saleh J released his first Swahili Rap. But although he is well respected, at the same time many criticize him for not always being true to the origins of Hip Hop and its original elements. Nash MC, leading member of the Tamaduni Muzik Hip Hop crew from Temeke, Dar es Salaam, told me that “the one who started to rap in Swahili was Saleh J. But it wasn’t a pure Rap. You can’t call it Hip Hop, but he was our teacher, he was the first, he was the foundation

⁵³ German original: “Saleh J. gab HipHop in Tanzania damit seinen vielleicht wichtigsten Impuls. Mit seinen Kiswahili-Raps begann eine Phase des HipHop in Tanzania, in der die Rapper zunehmend Abstand vom Original nahmen.“

of Swahili Rap.”⁵⁴ This and similar statements show that although there is no question that “the foundation of Swahili Rap” will always be respected, even among those artists who came much later, still everybody will be measured by his or her loyalty to Hip Hop’s origins.

The process of *Kiswacentrism* or *Swahilization* describes not only the use of Swahili within Rap lyrics but the whole localization, in language and content, of Hip Hop in Tanzania: “With the advent of more widely intelligible lyrics, a community of rap aficionados started to form. The key to this social change was the localization of hip hop through the use of swahili, transforming hip hop from something American to something more Tanzanian” (Perullo 2007: 261). The use of Swahili within Rap lyrics led to yet another important development which distinguishes Tanzanian Hip Hop from its US-American counterpart and gave Swahili Rap its special character: Although youths were the foundation and life-blood of the new Hip Hop movement in Tanzania, unlike US Hip Hop, Swahili Rap did not stay a predominantly youth- or even counter-culture, but was there to address the whole Tanzanian society, because “Swahili Rap [...] served as social commentary that could be understood by the entire society” (Raab 2006: 58, my own translation⁵⁵). Thereby, Hip Hop has become a real social force within the Tanzanian society, which would have never been possible if it expressed foreign topics in a foreign language. That is why Klaus Raab wrote in 2006 (:52, my own translation⁵⁶) that “[t]oday it would be unthinkable to write Rap songs in English. I met no Radio-DJ who would play these songs.”

The Rappers with whom I talked started their careers long after Swahili lyrics were already reigning supreme within the Tanzanian Hip Hop scene. Nash MC from Dar es Salaam told me that he was rapping in Swahili from the very beginning, because his “brothers [before him] had already changed from rapping in English to Swahili.”⁵⁷ Likewise, Ray Teknohama, the producer of Tamaduni Muzik, told me that his “brothers were doing some English Hip Hop. But later on they started to rap their rhymes in Swahili.”⁵⁸ Blackgzas from the Ukooflani Mau Mau in Nairobi told me a similar story about Kenya: “Kalamashaka [the legendary Hip Hop trio which later founded Mau Mau and then merged into Ukooflani Mau Mau of whom I was able to meet its founding member Kamau on my earlier field trips] was from, let’s say, 1995. They inspired us and also inspired the whole of East Africa to be able to do music and

⁵⁴ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

⁵⁵ German original: „Swahili Rap [...] diente als sozialer Kommentar, der von der ganzen Gesellschaft verstanden werden konnte.“

⁵⁶ German original: „Heute [...] wäre es undenkbar, Rapsongs auf Englisch zu schreiben. Ich traf keinen Radio-DJ, der diese Songs spielen würde.“

⁵⁷ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

⁵⁸ Personal interview with Ray Teknohama in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

express themselves in Swahili, while everybody at that time was looking upon America and people couldn't express themselves in their own language. It was like an inferiority complex also.⁵⁹

Maybe because most of the current Rappers already started after Swahili had long won its competition against English lyrics, the attitude towards English lyrics is very relaxed today, and no longer as strict or tense as Klaus Raab had experienced it back in 2006. Especially through the success of Reggae bands and their collaborations with Hip Hop artists, it is not unusual to hear English lines or choruses in Swahili Hip Hop songs today.

5.3. The complex relationship between Hip Hop and Bongo Flava

Through the localization of content and language, a “US-American import” became something genuinely Tanzanian during the 1990s. The accomplished scholar of Tanzanian music, Alex Perullo (2007: 268), summarized this development and its important connection between content and language when he emphasized that “the overall progression of rap music in Dar es Salaam from 1984 until 1997 was a movement from vulgar and violent lyrics in English toward songs in Swahili that were socially meaningful.”

During this localization in the 1990s Hip Hop heavily influenced the emergence of a related musical art form in Dar es Salaam called Bongo Flava. “Bongo literally means ‘wisdom’ or ‘brains’ but is slang for ‘survival of the fittest’ or ‘doing anything to survive’” (Perullo 2011: 8). Bongo has come to mean Dar es Salaam as “the brain” of the nation, and because it takes a “Bongo mentality” to survive in the nation’s biggest city. But although originally “Dar es Salaam is called ‘Bongoland’”, “more recently [the term has been] applied to the country of Tanzania as a whole” (Perullo 2011: 8). Therefore, “Bongo music [is] essentially any music written and performed in Dar es Salaam” (Perullo 2011: 8), or sometimes even the whole of Tanzania, and Bongo Flava therefore simply means the musical flavor from Dar es Salaam or Tanzania. Although it was heavily influenced by Hip Hop and Rap, “Bongo flava is a broad category that includes many internationally popular genres of music, such as rap, ragga, zouk, and r&b” (Perullo 2011: 363).

But because Bongo Flava was so heavily influenced by localized Swahili Hip Hop, many authors made the assumption that the “new, localised form of hip hop became known as ‘Bongo Flava’” (Halliday 2011). Therefore, many confused the emergence of a new and different musical genre, which was undoubtedly triggered by the arrival of Hip Hop, with the

⁵⁹ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, on 26.09.2012.

localization (or *Swahilization*) of Hip Hop, claiming that in “the process of adoption HipHop was remade into Bongo Flava” and that the “local renaming from Tanzanian Hip Hop to Bongo Flava probably happened in 1996 or 1997” (Raab 2006: 72, 62, my own translation⁶⁰). Already from my very limited experiences within the Tanzanian Hip Hop scene it became apparent to me that this confusion probably came about through a bias for Bongo Flava’s perspective on the whole situation, because literally every Tanzanian Hip Hop artist I talked to told me that Bongo Flava, by the very definition of Hip Hop through its elements, cannot be Hip Hop. However, many Bongo Flava artists, and scholars who followed them, understand Bongo Flava as Hip Hop, and this is why many people confuse Bongo Flava with authentic Tanzanian Hip Hop, a misunderstanding that will not make you many friends in the Tanzanian Hip Hop scene. Scholars like Alex Perullo (2011: 363) have tried to discharge this misunderstanding by pointing out that “[m]any Tanzanian artists dislike the term bongo flava [...], seeing it as a commercialized form of pop music. These groups prefer the term hip-hop, which they argue is a more authentic term for their music.” Therefore, many “rappers have self-excluded themselves from the category ‚Bongo Flavour‘ on the grounds that hip-hop is supposedly still committed to telling the truth, thus respecting the original function of this style, while many songs in Bongo Flavour style just deal with entertainment issues“ (Suriano 2006: 3). To dispel the widespread myth that Bongo Flava is Tanzanian Hip Hop, also many Hip Hop artists themselves have addressed this issue bluntly and some even emphasize on the titles of their Youtube videos that this is “Swahili hiphop, not Bongo Flava”⁶¹.

Also all the Hip Hop artists to whom I talked unanimously pointed out that Bongo Flava is not Hip Hop. First, there is the general assessment that Bongo Flava, by definition, cannot be Hip Hop because it is not founded upon the elements of Hip Hop, as Watengwa’s head-producer, Daz Naledge, pointed out: “Bongo Flava is commercial music, so it’s not Hip Hop music, it’s a dance music. There is no elements of Hip Hop.”⁶² Puffader Rhymes, a young upcoming artist from Arusha, also pointed out that technically spoken “Bongo Flava is not Hip Hop, because in Bongo Flava they mix from different kinds of music.”⁶³ But beyond that general assessment, there obviously is some critique involved, namely that Bongo Flava is a commercialized music for dancing. Many Hip Hop artists view Bongo Flava’s big success with suspicion and associate it with commercialization and sell-out. But this does not mean that Tanzanian Hip Hop artists do not seek commercial success also, but they shun

⁶⁰ German original: „Im Prozess der Aneignung wurde HipHop umgearbeitet und zu Bongo Flava.“ „Die lokale Umbenennung vom tanzanischen HipHop in Bongo Flava war wahrscheinlich 1996 oder 1997 erfolgt.“

⁶¹ For example: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNzJld_3wKM [27.05.2013]

⁶² Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

⁶³ Personal Interview with Puffader Rhymes in Arusha, Tanzania, on 19.09.2012.

compromising socio-politically conscious contents to reach this commercial success, something for which they criticize Bongo Flava. That is why to them Bongo Flava's success does not mean that Hip Hop is successful in Tanzania, because these are two different genres of music. Nikki Mbishi spoke for many when he told me that he does not "see the development in Bongo Flava industry as the development of Hip Hop. [Because] Hip Hop is far away from that kind of music."⁶⁴ The critique that Bongo Flava is mainly just dance music is intertwined with the critique that it is a sell-out, compromising sociopolitical messages for commercially appealing dance entertainment. Part of this critique is that Bongo Flava does not only compromise sociopolitical messages but even substitutes them with materialistic images borrowed from US mainstream Hip Hop (often criticized as Bling-Bling Hip Hop; Bling-Bling means expensive jewelries and therefore stands for a luxurious lifestyle), that do not reflect the daily realities of most Tanzanians, which is a main criteria for real Hip Hop, as we have seen. The accusation that Bongo Flava is not expressing the true realities in which most Tanzanians find themselves constitutes the main critique of Hip Hop artists against Bongo Flava. JCB from Watengwa explained how the different points of criticism (the commercialization, substituting the elements of Hip Hop for dance music and expressing a fake reality) are connected: "Bongo Flava is bling and Hip Hop is life. I'm talking about life, I'm not talking about I have big chains, I drive fresh cars. In Bongo Flava you talk stuff like that. [...] It's too much fake. Even their beats. Their beats are very soft, they make beats to shake their ass. They don't make beats to think how life it is. [...] It's a sell out."⁶⁵ Philly Techniques from Dar es Salaam agreed that "in Tanzanian Hip Hop there are some artists who are fake, who are not real in their music, in their Hip Hop. They are out of the boundaries of Hip Hop, out of the elements of Hip Hop. Those are fake, those are not really in Hip Hop. They just make their lyrics to tell people how they live with their girls, how they drive their cars, or something like that. They don't speak the truth. [...] There's no message. They just want to make money."⁶⁶ Nikki Mbishi explained to me that this is because Bongo Flava artists "are just mimicking [US mainstream Hip Hop and lifestyle], they are just imitating the worst in life. Just like: [popular US-American R&B- and Pop-star] Chris Brown is doing like this, ok let me bleach my hair like Chris Brown. It doesn't bring you any important thing, to bleach your hair, having a lot of tattoos on your body, while your parents and your family back home are just suffering. So it doesn't make any sense."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Personal interview with Nikki Mbishi in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

⁶⁵ Personal interview with JCB at his home in Arusha on 28.09.2012.

⁶⁶ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

⁶⁷ Personal interview with Nikki Mbishi in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

But at the end of the day it is not always so easy to distinguish Bongo Flava from Hip Hop because some artists might have some songs in which they stay true to the origins of Hip Hop while in others they do Bongo Flava. Different Hip Hop artists also have different opinions about certain commercially successful artists, some will tell you that a certain artist is purely Bongo Flava and therefore fake, while others say that the same artist is a true Hip Hop artist. Mama C, the elder mentor within Tanzanian Hip Hop to which many young artists look up to, therefore came to the more reasonable conclusion that “when we start categorizing then it gets difficult for sometimes it overlaps. [...] You can have a message in Bongo Flava, I guess.”⁶⁸

Agreeing with Mama C that often there are no clear-cut borders between Hip Hop and Bongo Flava, because sometimes it overlaps, I have decided to judge so-called real Hip Hop by its content rather than by how people want to call it. This means that in my thesis I will treat anything as Hip Hop that conforms to the criteria by which US Hip Hop pioneers and Tanzanian Hip Hop artists define Hip Hop, even if it is called Bongo Flava (mainly by some academic scholars). I mainly do this to be able to use academic sources which obviously describe Hip Hop while they call it Bongo Flava, for reasons of misunderstanding that I already explained. Furthermore, the reasons for some scholars to confuse Bongo Flava with Hip Hop do not only lie in misunderstanding but sometimes simply in timing, because although “[i]nitially very much modeled on US-HipHop, Bongo Flava now encompasses a great variety of musical styles” (Englert 2008: 74), which means that what is called Bongo Flava has changed over time, wherefore some scholars have called Bongo Flava what really was Hip Hop.

Beyond that I still acknowledge the emergence of Bongo Flava as another empowerment achievement of Hip Hop, even if Bongo Flava itself is not Hip Hop. Because although Bongo Flava is often criticized for departing from what Hip Hop is supposed to be, its emergence was undoubtedly inspired and triggered by Hip Hop, and so was the role it plays for youth empowerment, “even though this role might not always consist in contributing songs with an outright socio-political message. Rather Bongo Flava contributes in the form of conveying self-consciousness to young people” (Englert 2008: 91).

So my point in distinguishing Bongo Flava from Hip Hop is more to accept a “technical fact” than to pass a qualitative judgment. The fact that Bongo Flava does not fit the original definition of Hip Hop does not diminish Bongo Flava itself or its empowering aspects which it certainly has and which were obviously inspired by Hip Hop’s influence. Moreover, the fact

⁶⁸ Personal interview with Mama C at the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC) in Imbaseni Village, Arusha, Tanzania, on 24.09.2012.

that many Hip Hop artists criticize certain aspects of Bongo Flava does not mean that they reject Bongo Flava all together and that there is a kind of war between Hip Hop and Bongo Flava artists. It simply means that they want to be respected for what they are doing, and if they emphasize so strongly that what they do is Hip Hop and not Bongo Flava this should be respected. But again, to say that Bongo Flava is not Hip Hop does not mean that it has no empowering impacts. It certainly has and my argument is that Bongo Flava's empowering aspects were inspired by Hip Hop and therefore I understand Bongo Flava's empowerment as a result of Hip Hop's empowerment and that is why I have used literature on Bongo Flava accordingly throughout this thesis.

6. Empowerment through Tanzanian Hip Hop

The following chapter constitutes the culmination of my research about empowerment through Hip Hop in Tanzania, the focus of this diploma thesis. I have already come a long way from outlining the methods which I have used, introducing the theories which have guided me and giving the reader an overview about what this Hip Hop actually is of which this whole thesis is constantly talking about. This long way was essentially necessary to reach the goal of the following chapter: understanding why and how Hip Hop has become a tool of empowerment for young people in Tanzania.

The aim of this chapter is to bring all the different streams from the preceding chapters together and focus entirely on the empowerment aspect of Tanzanian Hip Hop. As I have already pointed out previously, the difficulty remains in the lack of any compulsory empowerment definitions. If there was one compulsory definition it would be rather easy to simply analyze the main aspects of Tanzanian Hip Hop and then see how they fit into that definition. Although such a compulsory definition does not exist, I still have to define what I mean when I talk about empowerment in this thesis, and as I already explained previously, I will substitute a compulsory empowerment definition, which does not exist, with the “agreement” Constance Yowell and Edmund Gordon (1996: 23) mentioned in their article on youth empowerment:

[E]mpowerment theorists agree that the processes of empowerment include the following aspects: [1] **mastery and control over one’s life**, [2] the **mobilization of resources to achieve one’s goals**, and [3] a **critical understanding of one’s sociopolitical context**. (my own emphasis and numbers)

I have pointed out this “agreement” at this point again and emphasized its three main aspects that constitute empowerment because I will structure this final culminating chapter exactly along these three aspects of empowerment. I will do this mainly for the reason of simplicity to give the reader a simple overview which is easy to follow and to look up again whenever needed.

6.1. “Know yourself.”⁶⁹

- Mastery and control over one’s life

Mastery and control over one’s life basically means to be the master of your own life, to be in control over your own life – an aspect which is obviously important to a culture which emerged out of a history of slavery, oppression and the resistance against this oppression. Because Hip Hop emerged out of this resistance against oppression it heavily builds on the influences of its predecessors, mainly the Black Power Movement, as I have already explained in the preceding chapters. For remembrance I will again quote Assata Shakur, a legend of the Black Power Movement, and KRS One, one of the pioneers of Hip Hop, to highlight how their understanding of freedom and empowerment is very similar and connected to the idea of mastery and control over one’s life. Assata Shakur’s “message to the Hip Hop generation is that freedom is the ‘right to be yourself, to be who you are, to be who you wanna be, to do what you wanna do’” (in Alridge 2005: 231). Hip Hop pioneers like KRS One (in Dagbovie 2005: 299) were heavily influenced by such ideas from the Black Power Movement and therefore emphasized that “[w]e, as a Hip Hop people, must re-create ourselves. True freedom for us Hiphoppas is to create and live a lifestyle that uniquely empowers us ... True freedom is self-creation.”

I will therefore argue that mastery and control over one’s life was not only the initial motivation for the emergence of Hip Hop as part of the struggle against oppression in the US, but that it is also a key to understand how and why Hip Hop empowers young people in Tanzania.

Although mastery and control over one’s life obviously includes the mobilization of resources to achieve one’s goals and a critical understanding of one’s sociopolitical context, these two aspects will be investigated separately. Therefore mastery and control over one’s life will be analyzed here more on a mental level which constitutes the foundation for the following two aspects. In other words, mastery and control over one’s life means here empowerment through self-definition, self-esteem and self-confidence.

The struggle for self-definition, self-esteem and self-confidence is a struggle for identity which has motivated youth movements throughout the world. Because young people are usually not the political or economic protagonists within society, they are often stereotyped and labeled by the older generation which is traditionally in power. This is also true for Tanzania where a wide generation gap is undeniable, because “the young majority in Tanzania has found itself in a situation of subordination vis-à-vis the political establishment

⁶⁹ Personal interview with Ray Teknohama in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

which predominantly consists of members of the elder generation” (Englert 2008: 72). New and seemingly foreign musical expressions like Hip Hop and Reggae were therefore fitting opportunities for young people to break through their traditional marginalization because Hip Hop and Reggae, both in content and style, respect African traditions and are therefore also accepted by many of the elder generation: “What Tanzanian youth’s appropriation of reggae and, more importantly, rap has produced is a voice for the youth and young adults. Because of their age and their limited economic and social status (and despite their numerical size), they have no political voice. Rap, which is straightforward (*moja kwa moja*) and frank, provides them with a platform to speak (*jukwaa la kuongea*), a method to deliver a message, and a medium to participate in the social debate about what being Tanzanian means and where Tanzania is heading” (Remes 1999: 21). Therefore, the issues of having a voice and identity are not separated from each other, but rather having a voice defines your identity within society and changes the identity of youths within society tremendously from previous perceptions. That is why Swahili Hip Hop “is not only a channel of expression of the young generation but actually serves as a medium for the creation of a youthful identity which translates into a greater visibility and *voiceability* of youth in public discourses” (Englert 2008: 76). Thereby “HipHop allows underprivileged youths, who are traditionally denied a voice because of their low standing in terms of age as well as class, to take over a role normally reserved to the elders and well-educated: that of teaching people how to change their lives“ (Englert 2003: 91).

But how do young Tanzanians, especially in the Hip Hop scene, define their own role in society and “what being Tanzanian means”? Many Tanzanian youths, especially in the Hip Hop scene, understand themselves, through the legacy of *Ujamaa* and Pan-Africanism, as black people with a natural transnational connection to black people everywhere in Africa and throughout the African Diaspora. Beyond that many feel a sense of solidarity (following Walter Rodney 1990:25) with all those who are defined as “black” by the “white” power structure, even if they are not African or of direct African descent. Therefore, “Rastafarian ideas provide a strong, but not exclusive, point of identification“ (Remes 1999: 14) for many, because they also emphasize the above quoted conviction that if you are black then you are African, no matter where you come from. Both Hip Hop’s and Reggae’s popularity among Tanzanian youths on the one hand presupposed and on the other hand reinforced this transnational black solidarity, consciousness and identity. This made it easy for Tanzanian youths to identify with Hip Hop and Reggae legends like Tupac Shakur and Bob Marley. Michael Wanguhu (in Chang 2007: 64), the director of *Hip-Hop Colony*, a 2007 documentary

about Hip Hop in Kenya, described “Hip-hop in Africa” as the “new Pan-Africanism”. The identity of African Hip Hoppers is therefore also a Pan-African identity, which can also be traced back to *Ujamaa* ideas about the one, original, pre-colonial African society.

Whatever identity Tanzanian youths define and choose for themselves, the importance lies in the ability which Hip Hop gives them to define and choose their own identities and to negotiate and self-represent them within the wider society. By understanding “the relationship between power and representation” (McCorkel/Rodriquez 2009: 357), Hip Hop gives Tanzanian youths an agency over their own identities, which are usually labeled and represented by outsiders, and thus lays the foundation for the mastery and control over their own lives: “The power of those identities is demonstrated in the agency of Tanzanian youth to contest and shape realities and dominant social opinion over which they have traditional had little participation in. Perhaps this is most important. In this way, Bongo Flava can be seen to provide Tanzanian youth with a participatory and agentic democratic experience for their often politically and economically marginalised existence” (MusicInDevelopment.com 2011; Weiss 2002).

The role of Hip Hop as a mouthpiece for the underprivileged and marginalized youths does not only consist in voicing socio-political criticism but already begins with expressing their own realities and identities to other parts of society and also to each other, because “Tanzanian youth have turned HipHop music into a critical medium of social empowerment that enabled them to create a sense of community with other urban youth, and voice their ideas and opinions to a broad listening public” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 43). This shows that “HipHop, even when it served as party background music in the early days, is to be understood politically. The visualization and reinterpretation of the socially marginalized happens through the self-positioning in ghettos, which moves young men, especially African Americans, from the margins to the center of attention” (Raab 2006: 24, my own translation⁷⁰). This discursive revaluation which happened in US Hip Hop was so powerful that many young Tanzanians gain a sense of pride in also calling their humble dwellings ghettos even if it does not fit the definition of a ghetto. But by self-positioning themselves as inhabitants of a ghetto they associate themselves with revaluating themes within US Hip Hop which put those at the bottom at the top. Thus the ghetto, for example, is a place of poverty and misery, caused by oppression and exploitation, but this is exactly what makes its

⁷⁰ German original: „HipHop [ist], selbst wenn seine Musik in den Anfangstagen vor allem als Partyuntermalung diente, politisch zu verstehen. Die Sichtbarmachung und Umdeutung des gesellschaftlich Marginalisierten geschieht durch die Selbstverortung in Ghettos, das junge Männer, vor allem African Americans, vom Rande ins Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit rückt.“

inhabitants to be proud of surviving “against all odds”⁷¹. A widespread discursive strategy within Hip Hop is therefore to initially describe these odds in a very detailed way to make the overcoming of these odds seem even more glorious. The following is an example by the Dar es Salaam Rap-crew *Big Dog Posse* from their song *Majobless* (unemployed):

I woke up on the cardboard on the mat
That’s my bed in my ruined Ghetto
I am unemployed and a junky

The song starts off with the description of the miserable odds they are facing in their “ghetto” to explain how difficult the overcoming of these odds really is:

If you hit me, I strike back
without any police report
I go through and score the goal
I take over their fans [...]
We have a hit!

(my own translation into English from Roch/Hacke’s 2006: 12f German translation⁷²)

The harsh conditions in which they find themselves in their “ghetto” also implicitly serve to justify their harsh methods to overcome them: if you hit me, I strike back. This is where Tanzanian youths found much inspiration in US American Gangsta Rap in which the oppressed “underdogs”, deprived of their human dignity by unfair poverty, take back self-esteem and pride *by any means necessary*. Because the tougher the ghetto, the tougher those who overcome it, this discursive strategy often turns into the boasting of the Gangsta, or the *Msela/Masela* (plural) as it is sometimes called in Swahili: “In its details the critique of the poverty of the ‘ghetto’, of the crime and drug addiction is at the same time the self-presentation as real *Masela*. Through the detailed description of one’s own living space and its stylization as ghetto, the critique about the circumstances can be accompanied by boasting about being the coolest, hardest and most criminal rapper, and thereby matching their ideal of

⁷¹ A popular expression within Hip Hop similar to „from rags to riches“, popularized by 2Pac’s song of the same title.

⁷² German original translation: „Ich bin aufgewacht vom Karton auf der Matte / Das ist mein Bett in meinem ruinierten Ghetto / Ich bin arbeitslos und ein Junky / Schlägst du mich, schlage ich zurück / ohne dass es einen Polizeibericht geben wird / Ich gehe hindurch, schieße das Tor / Ich übernehme ihre Fans [...] / Wir haben einen Hit!“

the Afro-American Gangsta” (Roch/Hacke 2006: 13, my own translation⁷³). Here we encounter again the empowering, politically and socially critical character of Gangsta Rap and the “power of the Gangsta” who appears “quite fascinating through his self-empowerment” (Raab 2006: 90, my own translation⁷⁴): “This is how a [...] self-representation as Gangsta can be at the same time the thematization of the social situation and its problems” (Roch/Hacke 2006: 20, my own translation⁷⁵). This connection between the criticism of the miserable conditions in the “ghetto” and the self-empowering overcoming of these conditions becomes also clear in the song *Mselá* by the Rap-crew *Clouds* (translated in Remes 1999: 17f):

If you want to know my name
Ask me, *msela*, I will explain it to you, understand it
I’ve got friends with talents
Let’s make plans with speed, to find jobs [...]
Mselá, I beat the metal, understand it [...]
Let’s make urgent plans
One day, yes, *msela*, I will spring up [...]
We’ll see each other on the streets, at home it’s poor [...]
I look for money, shillings, to build a foundation
Things aren’t easy these days
But if you play the fool, you’ll go to sleep hungry
A thousand and one nights, this *msela* has got money

Like in US-American Gangsta Rap the *Mselá* appears similar to a character from a thousand and one nights fairytale who rises *against all odds from rags to riches*. Bringing the true situation of many young people in Tanzania who are living a life of poverty to the attention of the nation and exposing this situation as something that was not created by their own fault but that they are forced to live and survive in, also redefines the identity of young people within the wider society. Therefore even boasting Gangsta or party (flava) “songs can still be political as they run counter to the role of youth as demanded by the established part of

⁷³ German original: „Im Detail ist die Kritik an der Armut des ‚Ghettos‘, an der Kriminalität und der Drogensucht gleichzeitig die Selbstdarstellung als wirkliche *Masela*. Durch die detaillierte Beschreibung des eigenen Lebensraums und seiner Stilisierung zum Ghetto, kann die Kritik an den Verhältnissen einhergehen mit der Prahlerei, der coolste, härteste und kriminellste Rapper zu sein und damit ihrem Ideal des afroamerikanischen Gangsta zu entsprechen.“

⁷⁴ German original: „Power des *Gangsta*“, „seine Selbstermächtigung [...] durchaus faszinierend“

⁷⁵ German original: „So kann eine [...] Selbstdarstellung als Gangsta gleichzeitig die Thematisierung der gesellschaftlichen Situation und ihrer Probleme sein.“

society” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 56). For young people to speak up on certain issues was something unheard of, as Blackgzas from Ukooflani Mau Mau and the Warriors explained to me: “Our parents didn’t really understand, and the older generation who had the sources of making things better, they didn’t understand the music, because it was something new. So they saw this as *uhuni* [hooliganism]. Because it was not possible for young people to speak up of what they see or saying [criticizing] something which is wrong. It was empowerment. Before that it was not there. We had only to sing happy songs like traditional happy songs but there was not this releasing of your anger, of the frustration that you see.”⁷⁶

It is this mental empowerment that leads to a physical empowerment, as Mama C from the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC) in Arusha explained to me: “I think the mission [of Hip Hop] is to spread truth and high self-esteem. Because with high self-esteem you have a sense of empowerment. And when you have a sense of empowerment you gonna try to be free in your mind, and you gonna try to spread this whole quest for freedom among anybody that you know.”⁷⁷ Here we encounter the connection between empowerment and freedom from yet another former Black Panther, and like empowerment also development starts mentally and then manifests physically: “And if you going to have mental development, this of course is one of the elements of Hip Hop, to build up your knowledge, you gonna start studying about history. And when you start studying about history that’s gonna open up other doors. It’s like a burst of energy, when you connect to one part it’s just gonna start spreading. It’s all connected. Even thinking of your health. People gonna know more about eating right and not being on drugs and all that. And helping the brothers and sisters who are on drugs to try to get off. Again it’s that social responsibility.”⁷⁸ So mental empowerment, freedom and development starts with a knowledge of self which brings a higher self-esteem without which nothing can be accomplished: “When you know your environment, you know yourself, you know your culture, then you can know how to develop your culture, you can know how to develop yourself, because you know yourself. Be aware of what is around you, because it’s very easy to work something which you know.”⁷⁹

All in all it can be said that Tanzanian Hip Hop “has helped to shape a generational identity of those Tanzanians who grew up in the era of liberalization and multi-party politics. More importantly, this youthful musical genre has helped to increase the visibility and *voiceability* of youth in the Tanzanian public and thus at least indirectly encouraged the

⁷⁶ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

⁷⁷ Personal interview with Mama C at the UAACC in Arusha, Tanzania, 24.09.2012.

⁷⁸ Personal interview with Mama C at the UAACC in Arusha, Tanzania, 24.09.2012.

⁷⁹ Personal interview with Ray Teknohama in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

political participation of youth in political discourses” (Englert 2008: 71). The self-creation, self-definition and having their own agencies over their own identities has created a self-consciousness among youths which translates into a self-confidence and self-esteem which in turn gives them the power to take over the mastery and control over their own lives: “The role it [Hip Hop] plays [for the empowerment of young people] is major, because you find that most youths don’t know how to express themselves. And when we express in Hip Hop what we see, the community learns, and from the learning comes self-confidence.”⁸⁰ In the following we will see how this mental empowerment through Hip Hop enables Tanzanian youths to mobilize resources to achieve their goals and gives them a critical understanding of their sociopolitical context.

6.2. “It’s a self-employment thing.”⁸¹

- The mobilization of resources to achieve one’s goals

“We need knowledge, more knowledge, and that’s it. Because I believe that someone who can think in his own mind first can create a thing on his own way. So the development and the empowerment of the young people maybe can build a big thing if they come and think for themselves.”⁸² The idea of Hip Hop is to create mental empowerment through knowledge which then translates into a physical empowerment, or in other words into the mobilization of resources to achieve one’s goals: “With that [mental empowerment through Hip Hop] it’s gonna spill over into other branches of a person’s life, even being an entrepreneur and thinking of the most creative things that you can to make a living. And not necessarily having a 9 to 5 [job]. And then with that, that also builds your sense of community, because you gonna be with other brothers and sisters who have the same idea to be entrepreneurs.”⁸³ As we have seen in the section about the history of US Hip Hop, pioneers like KRS-One expanded the elements of Hip Hop to include entrepreneurialism: “One of the elements of Hip Hop is entrepreneurialism. When you say entrepreneurship it’s just to use your knowledge. So we need to learn to employ ourselves, not to wait for the employment from the public and government sectors. [...] So we teach people to be entrepreneurs of Hip Hop. I believe that a Hip Hop artist is also an entrepreneur.”⁸⁴ Also Daz Naledge, producer of Watengwa, is convinced that Hip Hop “is a self-employment thing.”⁸⁵ That is why he and some other Hip

⁸⁰ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

⁸¹ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

⁸² Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

⁸³ Personal interview with Mama C at the UAACC in Arusha, Tanzania, 24.09.2012.

⁸⁴ Personal interview with Nikki Mbishi in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

⁸⁵ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

Hop veterans from Arusha founded SUA (Saving Underground Artists) as a registered NGO to teach young artists how to be successful in the music industry without compromising sociopolitical contents, because “seriously, you have to give back”, as he says. He explained to me that “SUA is the movement for the underground artists. It’s a stage that we created for artists, training them, giving them the best materials they need. Like this is 16 bars [the way to write Rap lyrics], this is the style to rap, the beat starts here and the chorus like this. Hip Hop is like this and this and this and this, the whole elements is this and this. That’s what we do in SUA. We bring these workshops for the artists. So we mentally train them, not just musically but even about social agendas, things like drugs, HIV and malaria.”⁸⁶ SUA is the embodiment of the idea that knowledge is power and translates into material development and thereby functions as a multiplier: “That’s why we have this segment called Edutainment. So when you *edutain* the artists then they go and *edutain* the mass.” And SUA is not just limited to the Hip Hop community, but they are also “going to schools, giving seminars.”⁸⁷ Even though being still kind of new, SUA is one of the biggest things that is going on in Tanzanian Hip Hop at the moment, so that even artists like Nash MC from Dar es Salaam go to Arusha to support SUA, and even an accomplished artist like JCB says: “I am SUA first of all.” He explained to me: “SUA is to save the underground, underground is the young people. So SUA is about to help young people to come up, SUA is just like a school.”⁸⁸ When you see hundreds of youths gather regularly at Watengwa Headquarters in Kijenge Juu, Arusha, to test their skills on the microphones while the rest of the crowd supports them in the audience, others show their skills on the turntables and yet others “bomb” graffitis in the background, then you understand that SUA is not just one of the biggest things in Tanzanian Hip Hop right now, but it does not need to shy comparison with the highest developments in Hip Hop anywhere in the world today. SUA is not only saving underground artists, but it is one of the forces that keep real Hip Hop, dedicated to the original elements, alive on this planet.

But SUA did not start out of nowhere. Most of the Hip Hop artists who are now veterans in Arusha got their own SUA-like education at the United African Alliance Community Center, founded by former Black Panthers in Imbaseni Village, Arusha, when they were youths themselves, and former Black Panther Mama C is an important supporter of SUA today. The Black Panther influence and its Black Power messages are so present among Tanzanian Hip Hop youths that even Dar es Salaam Rapper Nikki Mbishi, on the “Punchlinez” track of his “Sauti ya Jogoo” album, said that “of course we are Panthers”.

⁸⁶ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

⁸⁷ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

⁸⁸ Personal interview with JCB at his home in Arusha on 28.09.2012.

Mama C explained to me how it all started: “The youths would come out [to the UAACC in Imbaseni] and that’s when I started really getting into working with the youths around Hip Hop. We had HIV/Aids workshops, and workshops on how to keep Hip Hop relevant to the community.”⁸⁹ Those youths who were educated and inspired at the UAACC carried on these ideas within the SUA, and so it has turned into a multiplication factor par excellence. Mama C explained to me that the connection between the Black Panther’s community work back in the 1960s and the UAACC is “that sense of community responsibility. And you see that same sense of community responsibility in, say like, SUA. The fact that they feel like we need to educate the community, we need to provide some kind of platform for upcoming artists, we need to mentor them, it’s the same, it’s really not different to me. They don’t necessarily have in their platform that we need to defend ourselves from the police or whatever like we did as Panthers, but everything else is just about the same or very similar: social responsibility.”⁹⁰

Like in the early days of Hip Hop in the USA, self-organized community initiatives like SUA were and still are the only chances to get into the music business. All the artists and producers that I have interviewed are self-taught or were introduced by friends and colleagues, none of them had the means for formal musical education. If you do not have access to formal musical education, you do not know anybody in the business who could teach you and you do not live near initiatives like SUA, “[o]ne last source of music learning is from phonograms, radio and television. Although musicians in all genres use these media, rap raga, and r&b use them predominantly. Phonograms, radio and television act as instructional tapes that give prospective artists in these genres lessons on the delivery, flow and style of these imported musics” (Perullo 2011: 164). In the meantime the internet, especially Youtube, joined these media and not only artists but also producers use a mixture of all these media to substitute the lack of formal music education, as Daz Naledge told me: “I didn’t learn it in school but from other producers. I do my thing, I check it on Youtube, and things like that, on the internet.”⁹¹ But even if you manage to become an artist through one or more of these possibilities, it is still a struggle because “this industry of Hip Hop in Tanzania is not the fastest growing industry. We still need to create a solid base for Hip Hop before we can think of material development.”⁹² None of the artists whom I interviewed got rich through their music and most of them are already happy if they can survive without needing any additional

⁸⁹ Personal interview with Mama C at the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC) in Imbaseni Village, Arusha, Tanzania, on 24.09.2012.

⁹⁰ Personal interview with Mama C at the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC) in Imbaseni Village, Arusha, Tanzania, on 24.09.2012.

⁹¹ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

⁹² Personal interview with Nikki Mbishi in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

jobs: “We get profits, but it’s not much. It’s just that you can pay the rent, you can eat, you can give some to your mother or to your father.”⁹³ Ray Teknohama, producer for Tamaduni Muzik in Dar es Salaam, told me: “I used to have a job but for now I’m just working as a producer. I can survive but it’s a struggle.”⁹⁴ Blackgzas also told me: “I survive from it. Though it’s not an easy road. Sometimes I had to do these casual jobs because sometimes it’s even hard recording even one song.” But still he emphasized: “At this moment as I speak I don’t even have a coin in my pocket, but I’m happy because I’m living my dream.”⁹⁵ Because at the end of the day “we don’t do it for the money, we do it first for the Hip Hop. So the money comes later.”⁹⁶

In order to survive most solo artists support each other in camps that usually form around their “ghettos”: “A camp is a community of artists who share similar worldviews, musical aspirations, and class connections. [...] Each of the camps offers a means for artists to quickly and easily establish an identity for themselves” (Perullo 2011: 118). Mau Mau was such a camp in the famous Dandora ghetto in Nairobi, Ukooflani was another one in Mombasa, together they formed Ukooflani Mau Mau. Watengwa is such a camp in Arusha and is operating SUA now. The Warriors from the East have become such a camp for young Reggae, Dancehall, Ragga and also some Rap artists. In Dar es Salaam I interviewed artists of a rather new camp called Tamaduni Muzik. “Tamaduni is a Swahili word, it’s a Tanzanian word, Tamaduni means culture. Because we say Hip Hop is a culture, it’s an African culture.”⁹⁷ At the same time “Tamaduni is an independent label. [...] Everything is independent, from the beat making to the industry. We make our own CDs, we print our own covers, we distribute by ourselves. [...] We are not in that business with big companies, we just work independent.”⁹⁸ Nash MC, who seems to be a founding force behind Tamaduni Muzik, a walking library of Hip Hop history and a rallying point for younger artists, told me that successful and famous “artists like Professor J depend on some Asian producers, they depend on them to print and everything, they just leave and wait for their big amount of money. But me, I print for myself. I print, I pay, and I do everything.” He has big plans for Tamaduni Muzik: “My dream is to have a Hip Hop store, to have all our CDs there, to have all our T-Shirts there, and to have a big screen so when people come in the evening we put some documentaries there for example about the history of graffiti art.” But until there it is a

⁹³ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

⁹⁴ Personal interview with Ray Teknohama in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

⁹⁵ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

⁹⁶ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

⁹⁷ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

⁹⁸ Personal interview with Ray Teknohama in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

long way and like the other artists whom I interviewed he knows that “we need to have companies in order to promote and sponsor us. It is hard to distribute yourself.”⁹⁹

All the artists I have interviewed, even big artists like JCB, still distribute and sell their own and each other’s CDs on the streets or in clubs. Additional income comes from concerts where they also sell their CDs. Producers work differently, while Ray Teknohama, producer for Tamaduni Muzik in Dar es Salaam, does not get any shares from concerts but only from CD sales, Daz Naledge, producer for Watengwa in Arusha, told me: “The income comes from shows, not from the CDs. [...] We have signed contracts with like JCB. I get some parts from each show. And I have some other crews that I’m managing, so I also get some parts from their shows. And then there are just random artists who just come to the studio and just pay for a track and they are done. [...] But if we get the copyright then CDs will work fine for people.” Until then “the shows are the real income.” Thereby he expressed the universal conviction among artists and producers alike that Hip Hop “can be an employment for many young people if the government gives [us] the power like copy rights, because that’s the thing which pushes everybody down.”¹⁰⁰

Copy rights and the lacking support from the government to enforce copy rights was a big issue to all the artists I talked to. If Tanzanian artists want to sell their music, basically they have two options: either they sell it by themselves in the streets or they make a contract with some distributors who then sell it for them. But “[a]ttaining a contract with local distributors, however, is rather difficult since musicians need to have already convinced radio presenters, listeners, and others that their music is popular and worth selling” (Perullo 2011: 283). Unlike most western countries where musicians get paid royalties if the radio plays their music, in Tanzania “you have to pay DJs or the presenters to play your song [on the radio]. And that’s very strange.”¹⁰¹ This practice is known as “payola, meaning that radio employees are paid to guarantee a certain amount of on-air radio time for an artist’s songs” (Perullo 2011: 233). Convincing radio presenters therefore means bribing them, which most young and unknown artists cannot afford. Only already successful artists like “Professor Jay, who do not use payola, continue to attain radio airplay due to their popularity and visibility in the local music economy” (Perullo 2011: 236). This brings upcoming artists into a dilemma, because in order to be an interesting musician for local distributors you already need to have a presence on the radio, which you cannot afford if your music is not widely distributed. Comprehending that this is a vicious cycle in which the small artists will always be on the losing end, small

⁹⁹ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

¹⁰⁰ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

¹⁰¹ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

artists empower themselves by supporting each other in camps like Tamaduni Muzik and thereby avoid dependency on both the radio and distributors. Nash MC of Tamaduni Muzik proudly explained to me that unlike big artists like Professor Jay they do not depend on Asian distributors for marketing and distribution, because they do everything by themselves, or not even on the radio, because “I wasn’t born by the radio, I was born by my mom.”¹⁰²

This kind of self-organization is an empowering alternative to the dependency on distributors, and getting a contract with a distributor is therefore not even a desired option for many upcoming artists any more. That development is also nurtured by a very widespread distrust against distributors (at least) among Hip Hop artists, which has its roots as far back as in the Arab slave trade, because the “most successful distributors in Dar es Salaam [...] are almost all Asian Tanzanians. They hold a monopoly on the distribution of music in the country” (Perullo 2011: 284). This monopoly reflects longstanding relationships of inequality and exploitation of the African population, reinforced by British colonialism, which has enabled Asians to hold key positions all over the Tanzanian economy until this very day. Hip Hop, which has articulated black self-determination and independence since its beginnings, naturally has a problem with the perceived exploitation of African music by non-African business people. Artists all over East Africa share such notions that the “Indian takes advantage of the musicians before the musician realizes it” (Kenyan musician Fadhili William in Perullo 2011: 290). Taking advantage of artists does not only mean through biased *contracts* (a pun often used), but rumors of outright theft and piracy are widespread. (Perullo 2011: 301) The suspicion against Asian distributors is also fuelled by the fact that they are perceived, unlike producers who usually form a strong bond with artists, as a distinct group working for their distinct group interests and not for the artists. Another reason for suspicion is that the Asian-controlled distribution industry is simply too vast, too complex and too encapsulated in itself for artists to keep some measure of overview. Many distributors use this advantage against the artists and sell parts of the music or even trade them on to other distributors without the artists even knowing anything about it.

To prevent these illegal practices and protect artists’ interests the “1999 Copyright Act emerged from the pressure of musicians, as well as international organizations”, but “[e]ven royalty payments by the Copyright Society of Tanzania (COSOTA) are minimal compared to the losses incurred through contemporary forms of piracy” (Perullo 2011: 285f). The Tanzanian Government let piracy grow so far out of hand during the 1990s that it has become such a complex problem that “there is nothing that can be done to stop the illegal sale of the

¹⁰² Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

cassettes” (Perullo 2011: 308), and when the Tanzanian music industry and economy got more and more digitalized in the 2000s “[m]any argue that, since around 2007, piracy has actually become more problematic despite the efforts to enforce copyright legislation” (Perullo 2011: 286). The suspicion therefore grows that the whole system is already so corrupted that the authorities do not even try to protect artists’ copy rights but participate in their exploitation, because “[d]istributors retain the exclusive right to sell an artist’s music and have no responsibility to prove that royalty payments reflect the actual number of albums sold” and “in some ways copyright law has only strengthened and legitimized the economic power of distributors in the sale of sound recordings” (Perullo 2011: 324). That is why Nash MC explained to me that “COSOTA stands for our copy rights. But they don’t do it at all. They are just like a thief too. They don’t stand for us, they stand for their own best.”¹⁰³

Therefore many Tanzanian artists demand better and better enforced copy right laws and more support from the government and criticize that “the government of Tanzania they don’t support us”, so that even a big artist like JCB told me that “I sell [my album] myself. [...] My album is 10.000 Tsh. So I meet people in the club and I sell on the streets.” From an artist’s point of view he can only come to the conclusion that “the Tanzanian system is fucked up.” To really be able to work like an artist is supposed to work “we need a industry. So when my album comes out I take it to the industry and the industry is gonna sell it all over Tanzania. And I get my money.”¹⁰⁴ Philly Techniques from Tamaduni Muzik in Dar es Salaam agrees that “the biggest problem here in Tanzania for Hip Hop artists is that there is no support in Hip Hop. There is no big support in Hip Hop from the government. [...] If we could have bigger support from our government, I’m sure we will succeed.” His explanation for the lack of support from the government is widely shared amongst artists: “The main reason why the government does not support us is because sometimes we say many things about the government. Because if the government is doing wrong, Hip Hop artists are the ones to tell them. So they don’t accept that. That’s why they don’t support us.”¹⁰⁵ Because Hip Hop has always been “considered a voice for the oppressed, and a provocation to those in power” (Chang 2007: 63), those in power were never quick to support it. That’s why many US American Hip Hop artists have turned producers and business people themselves and have founded their own labels and Hip Hop empires. They are role models for Tanzanian artists and their dreams and aspirations as well. That is why many Tanzanian artists emphasize the culturally and economically beneficial sides of Hip Hop for the country in order to attract

¹⁰³ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

¹⁰⁴ Personal interview with JCB at his home in Arusha on 28.09.2012.

¹⁰⁵ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

potential investors, because “the people with wealth need to consider Hip Hop as something artistically crucial and important. And basically Hip Hop can also create a lot of job opportunities. And they need to invest in Hip Hop. Don’t take Hip Hop as ‘ok, this is just a street music’.”¹⁰⁶ Therefore, they try to make the government understand the benefits of Hip Hop because “the government doesn’t really understand Hip Hop. [...] Like JCB said, ‘yeah, we really smoke weed but we are not mentally disturbed or something like that’. Because what we are doing is big. We were just in the hood and now we are leaving to France to represent Tanzanian Hip Hop.”¹⁰⁷

All in all, the artists and producers I talked to all agreed that Hip Hop is an opportunity for young Tanzanians to self-employ themselves, to be able to survive by doing their music and living a self-determined life, and thereby to empower themselves materially. Although they wished to get more support from the government to build up a Hip Hop industry which can alleviate and empower the life of more and more youths, they are not willing to sit by idly waiting for that support to come. They are already creating the foundations of such a Hip Hop industry step by step by having their own producers, running their own studios, making and printing their own CDs, and creating networks to expand these activities all by themselves. Moreover, Hip Hop does not only involve music but a wide range of income generating activities that benefit not only musicians: “Self-employment [comes] first so that people can take charge of themselves. People making T-shirts, people making pictures, we have artists who are drawing. And most of the time it’s outside of the system.”¹⁰⁸ To be as much independent of “the system” as possible is how young people create their own empowerment. Because if “the system” is not able or willing to offer you a job, create your own job: “We don’t have jobs around, but people have the power to create jobs themselves. That is what we are trying to do, and we are still doing.”¹⁰⁹ The fact that the government is either not able or not willing to supply the youths with sufficient job opportunities is not something that only Hip Hop recognizes but is something that has drawn many youths into criminal ways to survive. Although there are certainly also legitimate reasons for the lack of job opportunities that go beyond the power of the Tanzanian government, which involve international disparities and inequalities, Hip Hop youths blame the government for a substantial part of it. Therefore, Hip Hop is trying to give the youths an alternative to illegal means of survival: “The government is just doing this business. They don’t care for us. They don’t do nothing.

¹⁰⁶ Personal interview with Nikki Mbishi in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

¹⁰⁷ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

¹⁰⁸ Personal interview with Mbithi wa Muluu in Nairobi, Kenya, 01.10.2012.

¹⁰⁹ Personal interview with Mbithi wa Muluu in Nairobi, Kenya, 01.10.2012.

So what we do? I got to find my own bread in my own way. But you got to find your own bread by truthful means, not robbing, don't break the law."¹¹⁰

Although many of the artists and producers I talked to told me that they can survive from their music, and reassured me that there are many more too, it is still a struggle and not a way to get quick money and success. There are "some Hip Hop artists in Tanzania that make money from their music. For example Fid Q, JCB from Watengwa, Chindo from Watengwa, Professor J who used to make money from Hip Hop. But most of them, from 100% just 10% are making money from their music. But 90% don't make money from their music."¹¹¹ That is why the artists I talked to did not entertain any illusions about getting rich or being superstars, but that is not a big problem because, as already mentioned, "we don't do it for the money, we do it first for the Hip Hop. So the money comes later."¹¹² They know that Hip Hop is a struggle, and they deliberately chose this struggle because they love it. For many it would be easy to sell-out to appeal to a more commercial market. That does not mean that Hip Hop artists do not seek commercial success, of course, but it means that they are not willing to compromise their messages in order to achieve this commercial success because then it would not be real Hip Hop any more, it would be a superficial ego-trip, in Hip Hop words it would be bling-bling: "If I start to sing about bling-bling, I'm gonna get money, straight [immediately]. Because it's what they want in Dar [es Salaam]. But I don't want. I wanna stay real. I wanna keep it real. And that 'real' makes me feel good."¹¹³ Why this "keeping it real" is more important than material success and how it is connected to a critical understanding of one's sociopolitical context we will see in the final part.

6.3. "That's Hip Hop, to educate."¹¹⁴

- A critical understanding of one's sociopolitical context

To my understanding that I have gained through my literature research on the history of US Hip Hop and my field research on Tanzanian Hip Hop, a critical understanding of one's sociopolitical context is what Hip Hop is really all about. That does not mean that the two other aspects of Hip Hop empowerment, mastery and control over one's life and the mobilization of resources to achieve one's goals, are less important, but these two aspects are built on a critical understanding of one's sociopolitical context. That is because "real" Hip Hop is all about message and teaching, and these messages and teachings are about the

¹¹⁰ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

¹¹¹ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

¹¹² Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

¹¹³ Personal interview with JCB at his home in Arusha on 28.09.2012.

¹¹⁴ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

sociopolitical context to gain greater understanding: “The mission of Hip Hop, the main purpose is to teach people.”¹¹⁵ That is why Knowledge is the fifth element of Hip Hop, knowledge which you have to gain as an MC before you can spread it among the audience: “As an MC, for instance, you write something about your country, and that’s how Hip Hop is, you speak about the things that happen around you, that’s what Hip Hop. So you must have knowledge so you can explain something to the people, and the people must understand what you are saying in your rhymes. That’s why we say you must have knowledge. It’s the message that you have, that’s knowledge. You must take time. Maybe you are speaking of bad leadership in African countries. [If] it just takes a few minutes to write your things without doing some research, that’s fake. You must do some research and you must have many information about the things that you want to speak to the people, to teach them. That’s how they can understand what you have and they can understand your message. That’s why we say knowledge is the fifth element of Hip Hop.”¹¹⁶

It is a widespread phenomenon among musical genres which developed among the oppressed and outcast segments of society to become a news media from a bottom-up perspective which is challenging the established mainstream media and their influence on society. This notion of music as an alternative source to mainstream knowledge is very strongly associated especially with Reggae, which had a profound influence on Hip Hop also in Tanzania and Kenya, “because originally even Hip Hop came from Reggae, and Reggae came from Rasta.”¹¹⁷ Many Tanzanian (and Kenyan) Hip Hop artists told me that they “heard Reggae before Hip Hop. I fell in love with Hip Hop, but I grew up with Reggae. Reggae was always around.”¹¹⁸ Through pioneers like Bob Marley, Roots Reggae was always considered the poor people’s newspaper telling them about the other half that has never been told by the corporate media and the mainstream education system: “Reggae music is news. It’s news about your own self, your own history, things that they wouldn’t teach you in school.”¹¹⁹ This was a great inspiration to the Hip Hop generation. The US American Hip Hop duo Dead Prez, for example, picked up the issue in their song “They Schools”, which is a critique of the US American racist education system, where they spoke for many in the Hip Hop world when they emphasized: “I got my diploma from a school called records.” This educational aspect of Hip Hop greatly resonated with Tanzanian youths who often have no chance to advance beyond primary education. T-shirts with the logo *Chuo Kikuu cha Hip Hop* (University of Hip

¹¹⁵ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

¹¹⁶ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

¹¹⁷ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

¹¹⁸ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

¹¹⁹ Bob Marley interview: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xu2JStDpcmY> [11.08.2013]

Hop) are popular among Tanzanian Hip Hop youths. But also those who enjoy the benefits of formal university education, like for example Philly Techniques, emphasize the importance of Hip Hop as an alternative medium of news and education. In Tanzania, where most people have no access to higher education and depend vastly on mainstream media and political propaganda to learn about their country and the world, Hip Hop poses a real challenge to this media monopoly and even reaches those that mainstream media rarely reaches and thereby contributes to the education of the masses: “We got people who don’t listen to radio, they don’t watch TV, they don’t know anything. But they come to our free concerts”, Nash MC told me enthusiastically. Finding himself in the position of an educator, he has “to spread a message and to reach the society, the speechless people. We need to reach them. In Tanzania we got many problems. We got people who can’t even get a meal. We got street children. We got leaders who are doing some bad shit to our country. They just stealing some money, they just killing some people, they just do everything they want. And they say we got peace in Tanzania. But we are not in peace. We don’t live in peace, we got no justice here. So I have to talk about all of this. All of this attracted me, involved me to be a part of Hip Hop. But I got my own way to say it. I can’t come and write: ‘You kill some people, government what are you doing?’ I can’t say that. But I can round it in my lyrics, but I still talk that.”¹²⁰

One reason why Tanzanian Hip Hop artists “round” their lyrics to convey political criticism implicitly rather than explicitly, is because “songs which contained criticism of the ruling party and the political situation in Tanzania risked not getting airplay and the musicians risked becoming the target of some ‘accident’” (Englert 2008: 88). But another important reason is “to engage in social critique without committing the error of claiming moral superiority” (Stroeken 2005: 490). To be respected and taken seriously as a Rap artist, and thereby having the possibility to act as an educator, it is highly important not to preach down on people with a raised forefinger. Sociopolitical messages, therefore, have to be packaged and presented to the audience in a way they can accept them. Koen Stroeken (2005: 490) called this “Immunizing Strategies”, because these strategies immunize artists against the suspicion of claiming moral superiority. He thinks that the Gangsta/Msela images are such immunizing strategies: “Tanzanian rappers, [he argues], immunize themselves against the suspicion or moralism (and thus keep their streetwise status) by attributing the criticized practices to survival needs they share too.” One of the best known examples of this was “Mr II (2 Proud), Bongo Flava’s first superstar” (Englert 2003: 75). Mr II / 2 Proud, nowadays better known as Sugu, ”(meaning ’chronic’) is one of the veterans of Bongo Flava, or Swahili

¹²⁰ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

HipHop” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 46) and represents a border-case being one of the most successful Tanzanian Hip Hop artists, and thus often referred to as Bongo Flava, and still widely respected as a real Hip Hop artist among other Hip Hop artists: “Sugu did not sell out. His music has always been positive and conscious. He did not sell out. The media sold out.”¹²¹ He did not sell out, but he used *immunizing strategies* which enabled him to stay real and become commercially successful at the same time. Sugu was “[o]ne of the earliest as well as the most popular artists to use rap as social commentary. [...] Mr II is explicit in his criticism of Tanzania’s political class [...] by calling many Tanzanian politicians liars. [...] Mr II vocalises a frustration about Tanzanian politics with which many Tanzanians identify” (Halliday 2011). At the same time “II Proud represents [the voice] of the *msela*” (Remes 1999: 18), because while “Mr II became a role model for many young Tanzanian rappers, the probably biggest idol for most, including Mr II himself, remained Tupac Amaru Shakur, the American [Gangsta] rapper who got shot in 1996“ (Englert 2003: 77). In his song “Ni Wapi Tunakwenda?” (Were are we heading?) Sugu voices his sociopolitical critique from the perspective (or like Stroeken would say: through the immunizing strategies) of a Msela (translated in Remes 1999: 18):

I’ve finished school, I don’t have a fixed place
 I’m left and ask myself, what work will I do
 There isn’t any work in any company
 It would be better if farming was improved
 But farm inputs are being sold dearly today
 Only the children of those at the top
 Get jobs that are better than those of their parents
 This isn’t right, to them it’s okay
 And now I report, I’m looking for a passport
 I want to travel in a fantastic way
 I’ll get anywhere, even South Africa
 I’m tired of home, I’m always getting harassed
 The police are hunting me, I look dirty
 Because I don’t have no job or because of my clothes

¹²¹ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

Here again, as it is an often used strategy in Gangsta Rap, Sugu combined the description of the poverty in which many youths are forced to exist with a critique of those who are responsible for this poverty: He wants to work but there is no work for stigmatized youths from the ghetto, and all the good jobs are only for upper-class kids with family connections to businesses and politics anyway, and because he does not get any job he is trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty and is marginalized and harassed. By mentioning that “it would be better if farming was improved, but farm inputs are being sold dearly today” he makes a clear reference to *Ujamaa* ideas of his role model Julius Nyerere, after whom he even called himself the “Nyerere of Rap” because he admires him as a “powerful person whose statements are being heeded” (Sugu in Remes 1999: 19). Tanzania’s (and back then Tanganyika’s) first president and “father of the nation” Julius Nyerere and his ideas of so-called African Socialism (*Ujamaa*) are still widely respected among Tanzanians today, maybe because it is basically still the same party that rules the country, and even Hip Hop artists “appreciate Nyerere because he was the one who used to teach us.”¹²² That is why Nyerere was and still is widely known as *Mwalimu* (teacher). Rappers like Sugu, who also regard themselves as teachers of society, stand in the tradition of Nyerere who did not shy away from criticizing society if the situation demanded it: „He raps about loving his country but does not shy away from criticizing it“ (Remes 1999: 18). Sugu’s critique testifies to a deep understanding of the historical, social and political interrelations of the Tanzanian status quo, and is therefore anything but the unreflective bickering of a good-for-nothing, as which Gangsta/Msela Rap is often misunderstood by society.

Together with Dr. Levy Sugu released the song “Kura Yangu” (My Vote) as a critical commentary on the 2005 elections. The lyrics were a warning to the politicians: “I don’t give you ‘yes’ if your commitment is ‘no’”, and an explicit message to the voters: “The corrupt politicians, we have to punish them.” Besides that it echoed one of the main lamentations of artists and the Hip Hop community: “We musicians don’t succeed because we lack copy right.” (translated in Reuster-Jahn 2008: 47). With these and similar lyrics Sugu proved that he stays true to the message of real Hip Hop because he “views HipHop as a means of delivering social and political messages” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 49). The song both made the voice of the voiceless being heard around the country at the most critical time, the election period, and “urges Tanzanians to take democracy seriously” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 48) at the same time. That’s why the song became so successful that it posed a threat to certain political forces: “We told nothing but the truth and the message went down well. However, when the

¹²² Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

people in power saw that it started becoming more famous, it suddenly disappeared from the air” (Sugu in Reuster-Jahn 2008: 48). Sugu was only one of many Hip Hop artists who commented on the 2005 elections and in doing so “the artists used the elections for negotiating their image and role in society with the aims to become recognized more widely”, because their “songs centering on the elections reflect the artists’ political awareness and their role perception as educators of society” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 62, 66). Some artists did not only comment on the elections but openly supported certain parties and politicians and 17 Hip Hop and Bongo Flava artists even went for President Kikwete’s campaign on tour, and “the cooperation [between CCM and artists in 2005] was not limited to the well-known Bongo Flava crews but also sought by those who can be viewed as representatives of the ‘underprivileged’ youth – a group which is often expected to show the most critical consciousness” (Englert 2008: 81). This cooperation between musicians and political parties has a long tradition and is due to “the close relationship between popular culture and the nation in Tanzania, which is rooted in the cultural politics of the *Ujamaa* era” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 67), although it was a novelty that such youthful musical genres such as Hip Hop and Bongo Flava filled this important space. Again Hip Hop artists found themselves in the tradition of *Ujamaa* and Nyerere, and it was this “expressed positive, even affectionate relation with the nation [that] probably facilitated the communication with the citizens” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 67). This “positive, even affectionate relation with the nation” is an important difference between Tanzanian and US-American Hip Hop which inherited the image of a counterculture from the Black Power Movement’s rejection of the US American political system. That is why Tanzanian “Rappers are suit leaders of social and political tilts, but looking at the future of Tanzania, they also show themselves always concerned and are therefore to be seen more as critical discussion participants than as opponents of the state” (Raab 2006: 143, my own translation¹²³). In contrast to the widespread perception of US Hip Hop as counterculture, “Tanzanian youths in general, and Bongo Flava artists in particular, cannot be said to take an oppositional position per se towards the political establishment” (Englert 2008: 76). They do not reject the government, but they “want change. I want the government to become better. I like my country, I like Tanzania, I like my people.”¹²⁴ That is why “even politicians know the contribution of Hip Hop. When it comes to their campaigns they use to take some Hip Hop artists to influence people to know the significance of voting,

¹²³ German original: „Rapper sind Klageführer sozialer und politischer Schieflagen, doch sie zeigen sich, mit Blick auf die Zukunft Tanzanias, auch immer besorgt und sind so eher als kritische Diskussionsteilnehmer zu betrachten denn als Opponenten des Staates.“

¹²⁴ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

not to lose a vote, not to destroy, to damage your vote, to stop violence during campaigns. So at least they see and they view Hip Hop as another medium that can be used by them to control the crowd and the majority. But I don't think that they consider Hip Hop in their normal life, but they just consider Hip Hop when they need it."¹²⁵ Understanding the power and influence Hip Hop can have through being associated with politicians and their parties, Daz Naledge explained to me that this was just "the way it runs here in Tanzania. The president had a big crew of artists. And if you go to these rallies the president comes very late but people are always there because the artists are there. So even the artists go there with their message. So music can change everything."¹²⁶ That is why these kinds of cooperation are widespread, widely respected within the Hip Hop community and usually not frowned upon: "I think there is no problem [in working together with politicians]. The only thing is the self-awareness. You can change them when you are in them. But you can't change them from outside. [...] We are one family."¹²⁷ The perception that all of Tanzania is one family, which most Hip Hop artists share, negates any sentiments of Hip Hop as a counterculture and includes the understanding that "a politician is just a person, just a simple person, he is just like me and you. If I come and talk to you or you hear something good you will tell it to your brother or your friend, just something like that. And by that it will create something like a platform, this is something that can make a way for this young generation."¹²⁸

The fact that politicians cooperate with Hip Hop artists for political reasons conveys the message to the society that even if they are youths, their voice should be heeded. But it also legitimizes those of their messages which are not in favor of the politicians: "The Rappers of *Kwanza Unit*, for example, criticize the government party CCM, but at the same time cooperate with it. The one does not exclude the other" (Raab 2006: 140, my own translation¹²⁹). To further legitimize their critique of the status quo, they implicitly and explicitly build their critique on *Ujamaa* values and sentiments and associate themselves with Nyerere, because "Rap songs voice the perception in Tanzania that corruption spread widely after the present post-socialist generation took over from Nyerere" (Stroeken 2005: 501). This strategy of legitimizing the critique of the youths by referring to Nyerere and *Ujamaa* is very widespread among Tanzanian Hip Hop artists like Sugu who even called himself the Nyerere of Rap: "Sometimes to maybe change things you have to put something like that, reference

¹²⁵ Personal interview with Nikki Mbishi in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

¹²⁶ Personal Interview with Daz Naledge in his Arusha home on 19.09.2012.

¹²⁷ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

¹²⁸ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

¹²⁹ German original: „Die Rapper von Kwanza Unit zum Beispiel kritisieren die Regierungspartei CCM, kooperieren aber zugleich mit ihr. Das eine schließt das andere nicht aus.“

from Nyerere. You can show people you are reading something. You are not just yapping some stuff.”¹³⁰ But although „many artists, even the ‚toughest‘ ones, celebrate the figure of the late Nyerere, and consider him a role-model“ (Suriano 2006: 13), „the ‚new generation‘ seeks no return to Nyerere’s days when music choirs were to stimulate a national culture according to official policy“ (Stroeken 2005: 497).

Even before Sugu became a member of the Tanzanian parliament in 2010, he had made way for other critical Rappers like “Prof. Jay, who has probably taken over his role as the leading rapper with very socially committed texts“ (Englert 2003: 75). In his hit song *Ndiyo, Mzee!* (Yes, Sir!) Professor Jay carried on Sugu’s combination of criticizing the post-socialist parent generation responsible for the status quo while contrasting it to the preceding *Ujamaa* generation: „It associates corruption with middle-aged elders, situated in the parental generation. The grandparents eking out a living in the village are cherished as being of Nyerere’s generation“ (Stroeken 2005: 495). The story line makes fun of typical election campaigns and caricatures an archetypal politician who engages himself in self-praise and false promises to catch votes. The masses cheer him on by shouting *Ndiyo, Mzee! / Yes, Sir!*, “until he is exposed by a rap singer” (translated in Stroeken 2005:495):

I believe I was brought to save this generation.

I am a politician blessed by God. [...]

I want to change Tanzania to become like Europe.

The first thing I will do is to eradicate poverty.

Pupils should do a practical on the moon.

At the hospitals I will dispense medicine like sand.

And I will open an account for every new-born.

In exposing these *politricks*, “the rapper combines the figures of street kid and prophet, recalling the trickster or troubadour” (Stroeken 2005: 496), because as a youth he is traditionally in no position to pose such direct criticism within the Tanzanian society: „The people say ‚Yes sir‘ during the rallies so as to avoid trouble, but privately say such politicians are liars and therefore unfit. In clear contrast, the young rapper incarnates the upcoming generation, which emerges from hiding and speaks up to confront the people with what they are doing“ (Stroeken 2005: 497).

¹³⁰ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

This is the main purpose of Hip Hop's primary teaching mission: to help people to gain an understanding of their sociopolitical context in order to be able to lead a self-determined life without being manipulated too easily. And for this "people must have knowledge. They should know what they decide. They should know what to choose. Because if you have two oranges there, you should know which one is sweet by looking at it. We don't need our government to manipulate us, we need to have knowledge. Then if your country or if your government is doing something that you don't need, just speak. Don't allow your government to manipulate you or to control you."¹³¹ And if both oranges do not appeal to you, if none of the political choices offered to you suit you, you need to have the knowledge and empowerment to create alternatives. The rejection of mainstream party politics is a widespread notion within Hip Hop inspired by Roots Reggae's preference for spiritual and humanitarian values: "My life is not based on government or politics, I don't like it, I don't follow it, I just pass it away from me, far from me, because I don't believe in it. I just believe in equality, I just believe in togetherness, partnership, and stuff like that. I believe in the people's power, and not politics, parties, and the leadership."¹³² But the rejection of mainstream party politics does not mean that Tanzanian Rappers have no messages with political content, because "Bongo Flava has a political impact in the sense that it motivates young people from all levels of Tanzanian society to use their creativities in trying to make their living, thereby working as a source of a self-confidence and empowerment" (Englert 2008: 77). Therefore, it is a question of definition, as Blackgzas explained to me: "First it [our rapping] was to make everybody aware of the history, because the history is what brings us to where we are now. It was more political at that time because we were young and we saw that this was not our fault, the way people lived. And so the message was trying to make a voice to the government and to people of high ranks in the society. To make things become better. Actually *they* called it political, but it's not political. It is the truth which is the foundation of everything. Reality!"¹³³

Because of the underrepresentation of youths in politics and their lack of official power within society, Rappers tend to focus at the "grassroots", meaning the individuals, in their mission for development: "The main purpose of Hip Hop is to preach and teach. So by teaching people you bring them development, because people will change. Maybe there is bad leadership, a leadership which makes poverty in our country, so by teaching how should the

¹³¹ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

¹³² Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

¹³³ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

government be, that will bring the development.”¹³⁴ This strategy aims at influencing voters, and the important role Hip Hop and Bongo Flava plays during election campaigns has shown that Rappers have become a real influence which even politicians have to acknowledge. Another strategy is to mentally empower people to build up their own alternatives by connecting and cooperating without depending on party politics: “It’s my job to find people who are still sleeping, who don’t know what’s going on, they don’t know development and empowerment, they don’t know anything. We need to reach that kind of people. I need to talk to them and to explain to them: ‘Man, you need to do this and this and this. I see you and I know you can do this, and me, I can do this, if we connect.’”¹³⁵ The idea of creating political alternatives on street-level is as old as Hip Hop itself and even goes beyond that as far back as the Black Power Movement of the 1960s. Also in Tanzania, one of the first Rap crews, Kwanza Unit (First Unit), created their own draft of a more youthful „Kwanzania“: „Here, then, we see Bongo Flava assuming a much larger and socially significant role in the construction of Tanzanian youth identity. ‘Kwanzania’ as a community is constructed through the socially cohesive bonds that are presented by musical commonality produced by Bongo Flava. [...] As the binding force of a ‘nation’, Bongo Flava moves beyond a musical text per se, to a participatory model through which common culture, values, and goals are derived” (MusicInDevelopment.com 2011). But teaching people to create their own alternatives to stand on their own feet does not necessarily mean that they should not cooperate with politicians and the government, but on the contrary, makes a real cooperation in terms of partnership at eye level between people and government even possible in the first place: “I think first the development shall be that even the leaders will have an open way of working with the artists, and also with the community. We want to work together. We want them to accept what we are doing.”¹³⁶

But Tanzanian Hip Hop has also “helped to generate new possibilities of political participation via the formal, ‘traditional’ channels of politics” as was exemplified by Amina Chifupa, who was a former broadcaster for Clouds FM and very popular in the Bongo Flava scene, and at “the age of 24 [she] was the youngest member of the Tanzanian parliament ever” (Englert 2008: 83). She was the personification of the *kizazi kipya* (the new generation), which finds its main expression through Hip Hop, demanding its say in the shaping of Tanzanian present and future realities, and therefore “it was not just a coincidence that she was a radio presenter and promoter of Bongo Flava musicians before she joined parliament”

¹³⁴ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

¹³⁵ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

¹³⁶ Personal interview with Blackgzas at the Warriors Camp in Arusha, Tanzania, 26.09.2012.

(Englert 2008: 85). After she picked up the youths' fight against the drugs trade and stepped on some powerful toes among her own parliamentarian colleagues, she was found dead in 2007. Although her death was declared natural, it was a message that was well understood among young artists that "the political climate in Tanzania did not allow for criticism which was too open – a fact which also contributed to a decline of Bongo Flava songs which are critical of political practices in the country in a direct way" (Englert 2008: 88). But it became clear that Hip Hop kicked off a tide that could not be stopped so easily when with Sugu, one of the most critical and successful Tanzanian Hip Hop artists, another representative of the *kizazi kipya* was elected member of parliament in 2010.

7. Conclusion

Over the course of about 500 years of African exploitation *at home and abroad*, African cultural influences have reached the western hemisphere through the transatlantic slave trade, were kept alive, fused and reassembled by Africans in the Diaspora, and brought forth many of the great cultural highlights of the 20th century and beyond. One of these was the emergence of a youthful counterculture in the Housing Projects of the South Bronx in New York City in the early 1970s, which came to be known as Hip Hop. Just about a decade later this Hip Hop has come back home to the African continent, closing a circle that started about 500 years earlier. This transnational closing of the circle was only possible because Hip Hop itself was a cultural phenomenon not limited by the national boundaries of the USA. Through transnational theories we have seen that what is transnational within transnational theories is culture, and through the insights from Hip Hop protagonists we have seen that Hip Hop, from the very beginning, was conceived as such a culture by those who shaped it. That is why youths of the second and third generations after independence in African countries like Tanzania were enthusiastic about this new Hip Hop because “sometimes I heard [US-American Hip Hoppers like] Talib Kweli say something about Tanzania, and I was like hey, Talib Kweli talks about Tanzania! Africa! And they say they came from here.” Therefore they understood that “Hip Hop started in the US but it’s all us. [...] Hip Hop is all us, me, you, and the artists, we are all Hip Hop. So it’s just like other things which God creates. God creates trees, trees come from his own way. I got a computer, we don’t produce this in Tanzania, it comes from other countries. So it’s just like that [with Hip Hop].”¹³⁷

This Hip Hop that reached Tanzania in the 1980s had emerged in the USA as an empowering force for young African Americans. That sense of empowerment that Hip Hop was able to convey to its participants on diverse mental and physical levels was its main attraction for Tanzanian youths who understood Hip Hop’s possibilities for the achievement of their mental and physical empowerment. That is why Tanzanian Hip Hop “artists have tried from the beginning in the 1990s to achieve two goals. On the one hand they provided the youth with a medium to make their voices heard – their complaints, their criticism, their life experience, their problems, their needs and their desires [= a mental empowerment]. On the other hand they viewed Bongo Flava [and Hip Hop] music as a way to achieve a better life and recognition for themselves [= physical empowerment]” (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 67).

In this thesis I have outlined the history of US-American as well as Tanzanian Hip Hop and attempted to answer my research question: if, why and how Tanzanian youths have

¹³⁷ Personal interview with Nash MC in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 16.09.2012.

used Hip Hop for their empowerment. This was a three-step question. Admittedly, the “if-question” was just a door opener, of course. I have come to the realization in this thesis that Hip Hop, in some way or another, is always empowering, and this understanding that Hip Hop is empowerment was, of course, the reason for Tanzanian youths to use it for their own empowerment. These two questions, which were easy to answer, were just prerequisites to get to the actual research question: how Tanzanian youths use Hip Hop for their empowerment.

To answer this question I followed Constance Yowell and Edmund Gordon’s (1996: 23) attempt to split empowerment in its mental, material and sociopolitical aspects and to deal with each of them rather separately.

On the mental plane Hip Hop has given Tanzanian youths an agency over their own identities within society and a voice to self-represent those identities and to express themselves. Here I was profoundly guided by the insights of cultural studies about the connection between culture, identity and power.

On the material plane Hip Hop has become a self-employment opportunity for many and is providing a survival for a lot of youths. The main concern that most artists addressed towards me, and that is why it is important to me to mention it again, is the lack of copy-rights and government support with which Hip Hop could employ many more youths and thus fight poverty effectively. This emphasis on the need for government support might seem like contradicting the self-reliance part of empowerment theories. However, those artists calling for more government support, like the enforcement of copy rights, did not voice any concerns about possible strings attached to this government support which could make them dependent. The reason for this might lie in the implication that the government would have to change anyway before it would ever agree to supporting Hip Hop – a change for which Hip Hop is advocating. Another reason might simply be that the Tanzanian Hip Hop community had not yet to deal with such a situation and therefore it may underestimate the risks involved.

To me the sociopolitical aspect became especially obvious. It even seems that the two first aspects, self-consciousness which translates into a self-confidence and material well-being, are just prerequisites to enable Hip Hop’s “main purpose [which] is to teach people”¹³⁸ about what is going on in the sociopolitical contexts they are living in.

Admittedly, some aspects of Hip Hop as youth empowerment need to be investigated in a more detailed way in the future, especially its gender dimension. Although there are more and more female Rap artists, of whom I met some, I was not able to get the opportunity to interview any one of them, except for Mama C who is an elder and not a youth. She was the

¹³⁸ Personal interview with Philly Techniques in Dar es Salaam on 16.09.2012.

only one who explicitly expressed her concern to me that “sisters need to step up!”, because she “would really like to urge sisters to have more of a voice. It’s really unbalanced. And it shouldn’t be that Hip Hop is just like a male thing.”¹³⁹ If Hip Hop has changed the roles of young women in Tanzanian society and how it thereby has empowered them remains an important question for future researchers.

I have titled, introduced and modeled this diploma thesis starting with the expression *Sauti ya Jogoo* because Hip Hop in Tanzania understands itself as the voice of a cock waking the people up to empower themselves. It is therefore only fitting to conclude this thesis with a statement of Nikki Mbishi, the young Rap artist whose album title “Sauti ya Jogoo” inspired me a lot. In it he again summarizes some of the main aspects of Hip Hop youth empowerment and draws a concluding balance:

“The government is too much corrupt and I believe the government is too much of political shit. The president promised the people to provide them with more than one million job opportunities, but still yet people are suffering. I say that on ‘Sauti ya Jogoo’, *Sauti ya Jogoo* is the voice of the cock. I tell them *Jogoo* is just like someone who is reminding the people of their responsibilities, you need to wake up, you need to do your thing, you need to stand alone, you need to be self-reliable. You need some self-reliance for your own sake and your own prosperity, for your own life, for your own vision. And for that case we find that we are successful.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Personal interview with Mama C at the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC) in Imbaseni Village, Arusha, Tanzania, on 24.09.2012.

¹⁴⁰ Personal interview with Nikki Mbishi in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 16.09.2012.

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Abstract

Today, Hip Hop is an omnipresent influence among young Tanzanians. This diploma thesis investigates Hip Hop's empowering characteristics by tracing back its emergence in New York in the 1970s, following its arrival in Tanzania in the 1980s and shedding light on its development since then to answer the research question: if, why and how Tanzanian youths use Hip Hop for their empowerment.

Gathering information through literature research, text analysis, participant observation and qualitative interviews, and using transnational theories, cultural studies and empowerment theories to make sense of the gathered information, this diploma thesis argues that empowerment is an integral aspect of Hip Hop and explains how Tanzanian youths use Hip Hop for their mental and physical empowerment.

Hip Hop ist heute ein allgegenwertiger Einfluss unter tansanischen Jugendlichen. Diese Diplomarbeit beleuchtet Hip Hops empowernde Eigenschaften indem sie seine Entstehung ins New York der 1970er Jahre zurückverfolgt, seiner Ankunft in Tansania in den 1980er Jahren folgt und Licht auf seine bisherige Entwicklung wirft, um die Forschungsfrage – ob, warum und wie tansanische Jugendliche Hip Hop für ihr Empowerment verwenden – zu beantworten.

Indem diese Diplomarbeit ihre Informationen durch Literaturrecherche, Textanalysen, teilnehmende Beobachtung und qualitative Interviews sammelt und transnationale Theorien, Cultural Studies und Empowerment Theorien verwendet um die gesammelten Informationen zu verstehen, argumentiert sie, dass Empowerment ein wesentlicher Aspekt von Hip Hop ist und erläutert, wie tansanische Jugendliche Hip Hop für ihr geistiges und physisches Empowerment einsetzen.

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