

**Development, Belonging and Change:**  
**A study of a community theatre-for-development initiative**  
**in Kwazulu-Natal.**

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*‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.’*

(a human being is a human being because of others)

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to address issues related to community change within the field of Theatre-for-Development. It proposes and then investigates various ways in which a community may seek to retain a sense of collective ideology in the light of both positive and negative developmental change, as promulgated by agents outside their community.

Chapter One, *Introduction*, begins by introducing the reader both to the fieldwork project and the community, Khethani township, in which the masters degree fieldwork was undertaken. It was this fieldwork which prompted the research enquiry covered by this dissertation, to which the reader is introduced. It delineates the research methodologies of both the fieldwork project and this dissertation, and positions the writer in relation to this study.

The initial aim of the fieldwork project was to do a practical enquiry into the methods of workshop theatre and the development of a distinct theatre aesthetic that emerges from a community as a result of workshop theatre practices. Having completed the fieldwork project and having considered the results of the initial fieldwork aims a larger research enquiry developed as to the role of workshop theatre within the broader context of community development and this has now become the focus of this dissertation.

Chapter Two, *Community Development*, discusses the notion of development with regard to its growth as a method through which to negotiate change within a community. It examines how concepts of development have changed over the years from those proposing a top-down, hegemonic system of coercive change, based on the decisions made by authorities outside of the community, to development projects following a bottom-up approach to change that allows communities to negotiate the changes they feel are necessary for their community. The chapter

then goes on to explore the role of the outsider Theatre-for- Development practitioner in the light of the above mentioned bottom-up approach toward development.

Chapter Three, *Community Belonging*, explores the ways in which communities and, for the purpose of this dissertation, marginalised communities, seek to create a sense of belonging and collective identity in the light of estrangement and segregation. Two possible ways are suggested in which communities preserve a sense of belonging: collective memory and the notion of the politics of belonging: and these are discussed in the light of communal unity and cultural safeguarding.

Chapter Four, *Individual Change*, then investigates individual change in the light of a community's need to preserve a collective ideology and memory. It suggests the theatre event as a possible means through which to introduce developmental proposals to a community, without transforming the development project into a top-down, outsider driven initiative. It argues that one of the most successful ways in which to negotiate permanent and constructive developmental change is when community members are able to decide for themselves whether they want this change to happen or not.

Chapter Five, *My Experience with Khethani Residents*, then takes the above theoretical ideologies with regard to development, belonging and change, and reflects on them in the light of the Theatre-for-Development project in Khethani. It uses examples from the project as well as the author's own personal experiences during the course of the project, to investigate the developmental potential of the above- suggested proposals for community change in the light of the author's experience in the field.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Academic Background

My Masters degree in Applied Drama and Theatre Studies Fieldwork Project comprised of a six month theatre project where I worked with eight youths from the Khethani Township in the uKhahlamba district of Kwa-Zulu Natal. After a process of auditions and workshops the group self-selected its members and resulted in the formation of the Great Iron Drama Group. We met five days a week at the Winterton Stock Sale Yards and the group was trained in a multitude of fields that ranged from specific performance orientated expertise to computer and financial skills. We workshopped two major performances during these six months and performed them for various audiences.

The first performance, *Gender Play*, focused on gender issues within Khethani. Our motivation came from the women of Khethani and thus the issues raised in this performance centred around the sexual, physical, domestic and verbal abuse of women as well as focussing on the general issues of alcohol abuse and poverty within Khethani (Stockil:2007a). Our second major performance, *Peponjero*, focused on the issue of HIV/AIDS. The process which led to the workshopping and subsequent performance of *Peponjero* will be further explicated in this dissertation.

At the beginning of my six-month fieldwork project my initial academic enquiry, as stated in my research proposal, was as follows. How does a heterophilous theatre-for-development (which will now be referred to as TfD) practitioner, working within the larger field of community development, use the tools of theatre to discover ways of preserving group identity while at the

same time brokering social development within a community to facilitate changes in behaviour in order to adjust to shifting social environments (Stockil: 2007b).

When it came to designing a practical project that explored this research enquiry, I stated in my fieldwork proposal that I wanted to use workshop theatre as the means through which to explore the creation of a theatre aesthetic that reflects the community from which it emerges (Stockil:2007c). I sought to implement the methods of well known workshop theatre practitioners, both past and present, to develop individual performance styles.

## **Research Enquiry**

The process of creation and the subsequent performance of *Peponjero* endeavoured to reflect the current status of HIV/AIDS within Khethani, and to reflect the relationship between the physical manifestation of the disease and how it is positioned within the ideological consciousness of the township. The resulting construction of a theatrical world, which was established using the tools of workshop theatre, reflected an ideological world in which HIV/AIDS is not acknowledged within the social reality of the community. Walker, Reid and Cornell reflect that HIV/AIDS is ‘a profoundly social epidemic...few can question the influence of gender, poverty, violence and cultural norms...however, there is no single explanation for the HIV epidemic in South Africa’ (2004: 19). The apparent divisions between the physical reality of the virus in Khethani and how the group chose to represent HIV in *Peponjero* led me to consider HIV in a new light. It catalysed a process in which I realised that we needed to better understand HIV’s ideological positioning within the community before the group could begin to interrogate ways, through the frameworks of TfD, in which to improve and hopefully change the community’s outlook on HIV.

The question regarding HIV and its ideological relationship with the residents of Khethani, which arose from our theatrical work, has led me to examine TfD within the broader context of community development in this dissertation. The apparent tension between the real and the imagined realities of HIV clarified why there are so many problematic tensions between the acceptance and subsequent treatment of HIV/AIDS with regard to community development. My experiences with Great Iron likewise impelled us to explore richly metaphoric ways of investigating HIV/AIDS in the local community in the hopes of precipitating further engagement with the epidemic through a theatrical event. In so doing, the impetus towards a broad anthropological, sociological and psychological study of HIV and its relation to a community led me to examine TfD modes which can be used to increase awareness and to motivate change within a community.

My research enquiry thus examines community change from macro-level down to micro-level. It begins by examining the broad concept of community in regard to development. Thus Chapter Two, *Community Development*, seeks to enquire into the broad concept of community development and its purpose within communities. It explores TfD in full as one of the many ways in which development can be facilitated. In investigating the role of TfD within a community, I have also sought to reflect on the particular role of the TfD practitioner, and how the positioning of the practitioner within the community comes to influence the process of change in the community.

Chapter Three, *Community Belonging*, then looks more closely at this notion of community by addressing the ways in which a group of people create a sense of community-belonging, and how it impacts upon community members as well as people who are deemed not a part of this

community. I suggest two methods through which communities preserve a sense of identity and belonging. In order to create group unity, communities rely on both collective memory and an awareness of the politics of belonging to ensure that they retain the sense that they belong to a collective ideology. I seek to explore both these notions and to examine how these collective frameworks of belonging can sometimes be both helpful and detrimental to the process of community change and development.

Chapter Four, *Individual Change*, then focuses on the individual within a community, and explores ways through which a development project can suggest change in a community by working alongside community members to negotiate this change. I have chosen to look at the notion of individual change through an event, and in the instance of this dissertation, a theatrical event. Thus, it has been important to investigate the ways in which individual ideological change can then perhaps slowly begin to change the ideological perceptions within the community as a whole.

Chapter Five, *My Fieldwork Experience with Khethani Residents* then takes the above-mentioned chapters and the academic notions argued in them, and interrogates my fieldwork project in greater depth in the light of these notions. I have chosen specific practical examples that occurred during my work with the Great Iron Drama group and will reflect on these examples in the light of community development, community belonging and individual change.

## **Background of Author**

I grew up as the daughter of a white South African farmer in the uKhahlamba district very near to Khethani. I was educated in a local school in Winterton up to the age of 13 and spent much of

my formative years in and around the uKhahlamba area. Although I come from a 'white', English, farming background, I experienced many of the rituals, celebrations and daily activities linked to Zulu customs as a result of growing up on a farm which, at the time, housed roughly twenty Zulu families. I have been significantly influenced by my early experiences of the Zulu culture on our farm even though, to this day, I can only speak a very fundamental Zulu.

This close link to the community on our farm, coupled with my experience of doing volunteer high school English teaching in Khethani, is what led me to choose Khethani as the site of my project. Although, up to this point, I had had very little worthy social interaction within Khethani itself, I felt that I needed to know more about the community that exists a few kilometers from the farm on which I grew up.

Thus, my social positioning with regard to this project is an interesting one. Although I had a very good general sense of how a Zulu community functions, it was based on my experience of a Zulu community still living a fairly rural and agrarian lifestyle. I found Khethani to be far more Westernised and urbanised than the community in which I had grown up and so even though, in some respects, I knew more about the traditional, rural way of Zulu life I found I knew very little of how this culture is represented in a more urban, township setting.

Thus, my personal journey in this project will be highlighted in this dissertation, as many of my assumptions and previous experiences with regard to my perception of a Zulu community were challenged. I found that my general impression of what I deemed the Zulu culture to be was actually based purely on my memory of how I perceived the Zulu culture, and thus the very concept of culture has come to be a very variable term for me. Much like the group with whom I

worked, I found that my memories of the Zulu culture and subsequent expressions based on this memory were in fact only my own and, together with the group, I renegotiated and changed my perception of the Khethani community, based on the experiences that occurred to me as the facilitator of the Great Iron Drama Group.

## **Research Methodology**

A large portion of my research comes from my own observations of the project as well as the various interviews I conducted before, during and after the project with the members of the Great Iron Drama group and with individuals and organisations that, in some form or another, play a role within the social world of Khethani. The information I gleaned from interacting with various community members, as well as the theatrical processes from which our work developed, formed the basis of my research and is what prompted me to examine not only my own practical enquiry with regard to workshop theatre, but to further investigate the community from which our theatre aesthetic emerged.

The sources of my information come largely from my own documentation during the course of the project. My fieldwork journal chronicles the process leading up to the establishment of the project and includes interviews conducted with various people who were already working in Khethani in a developmental capacity. It includes interviews with Arthur Stockil, Dr Johan During, Sophie Cogley, Jennifer Braithwaite, Police Inspector Jila, Fisani Ntgoobo and Christopher Stockil. These individuals play various roles within Khethani, from social work to Church-based health care, and they were selected as interviewees whom I felt would be able to give me the most comprehensive idea as to development initiatives in Khethani as well as the progress of these initiatives (Stockil: 2007d).

My fieldwork journal also contains daily and weekly reports on the growth of the project as well as my own perceptions and ideas with regard to the processes involved in workshopping our various performances. Part of my observation also includes the comments, individual interviews and opinions expressed by the Great Iron Drama Group members with regard to the issues that our theatre chose to deal with, as well as how they responded to these issues through the workshop process, both as individuals and as a group (Stockil: 2007d). The members of Great Iron Drama Group all gave consent for their names to be used in this dissertation and for their comments to be documented.

I have utilised my rehearsal notes as a major source for this dissertation – alongside my fieldwork journal. The former are a daily schedule of the activities, exercises and rehearsals conducted during the project. They read much like lesson plans as each day had a clear objective as to what skills were to be developed and what workshop processes were to be explored. I thus structured each day around discussions, exercises and improvisations that would then form the practical motivation for play, skill acquisition, discussion and workshopping within our group (Stockil: 2007e).

My research proposal, developed in the course of my Masters Degree Coursework (prior to the six months I spent in Khethani from July to December 2007), formed the academic basis for my initial masters research seminar and outlines my personal research aims before I embarked on the fieldwork project. It focuses on the research I conducted regarding workshop theatre, and explores my hypothetical enquiry into workshop theatre and its potential for establishing a developmental relationship within a community (Stockil: 2007b).

My fieldwork proposal then takes my above-mentioned research proposal and suggests the community and type of project where this form of research could then be conducted. It includes an outline of the community in which I chose to work, Khethani, and is a documentation of the perceptions I had of the community before I began the project. These perceptions were formed, in part, by my own interaction with the community, as well as by the interviews I conducted prior to beginning the project (Stockil: 2007c).

My fieldwork report documents the progress of my fieldwork and examines the journey of the project in relation to my initial proposal. It documents the various phases of the project in terms of the development of a theatre aesthetic as well as the community issues which emerged as a result of our workshop process. It then explores the group's negotiation of these issues, through the medium of theatre, and illustrates how we chose to represent these issues to our audiences. The report also includes individual post-project discussions, conducted a month after the project ended, with six of the eight members of the group (Stockil: 2007a).

## **Background to Khethani Township**

Khethani Township is located in a farming district in the central Drakensberg, Kwa Zulu-Natal. Khethani is located next to the small village of Winterton. It is separated from Winterton by the Tugela river. This geographical separation serves as a fairly accurate symbol for the relationship between the 'black' and 'white' inhabitants in the area as two very diverse communities which exist side by side with very little worthy social interaction taking place between them, apart from church-run projects within the township.

Unemployment in Khethani has become an issue since the introduction of a legislated minimum wage, as the inhabitants of Khethani are unskilled workers and entire families rely on the farms, factories and businesses in the area for employment.

The social structure of Khethani is complicated. Zulu customs and traditions are largely patriarchal and the social roles within society are dominated by a male-oriented hegemony. This social structure, however, is going through a slow process of change, brought on primarily with the escalation of AIDS victims in the community (Ntgobo: 2007). Theorists argue that in order to understand the AIDS epidemic one needs to examine the social context and power dynamics that inform sexual behavior (Reid et al, 2004: 22). In interviews with Police Inspector Jila and with the resident social worker in the area, Fisani Ntgobo, I came to understand some of the cultural practices which are coming under fire because they directly fuel the increase of HIV contraction. Examples of these are discussed below.

Men are not faithful to one partner and the myth that sleeping with a virgin will cure one of the HI-virus means that there is an alarming rate of child and infant rape in the area (Jila: 2007).

Studies show that gender inequalities contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS and violence against women is a crucial factor in this as it is estimated that in South Africa one woman in six is in an abusive relationship (Reid et al, 2004: 17). People also either do not know how to use condoms or refuse to wear them. Lack of education means that people do not understand the biology of how HIV is transmitted and this lack of information, coupled with a strong reliance on *muti* [traditional medicine] from *Sangomas* [traditional healers], means people are receiving mixed messages as how to prevent the spread of HIV. Because people normally die of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses, the community is not prepared to admit that the deaths are directly linked to

HIV/AIDS. There is a great social taboo surrounding HIV and people are not prepared to be tested, let alone disclose their status. Thus, when someone dies people are far happier saying that their kin died of TB or pneumonia rather than admit that they had HIV/AIDS (Braithwaite: 2007).

Sophie Cogley, who is responsible for dispensing medical assistance in the Khethani community, stated that the nature of the traditional Zulu home environment is not beneficial to taking care of sick people. Poor sanitation and lack of medical facilities means that nursing someone dying of AIDS- related infections can be extremely difficult, and can lead to further contractions of the virus due to bodily fluid exposure (Cogley: 2007) .

Perhaps one of the most telling issues is that the community of Khethani has become weary of the HIV/AIDS message, as the government has not used the correct means to relay crucial information. Most of the HIV related campaigns are aimed at the urban youth and have little resonance with the elders of the township. This is problematic as it is the adults in the township who have a great deal of power when it comes to the behaviour of the adolescents (Cogley: 2007).

Other problematic myths have emerged from within the township and they are that either HIV does not exist, or that it is merely a Western construction aimed at controlling African communities, or that it was created by white people to kill black people (Stockil: 2007e). These myths have emerged because Khethani residents do not see their neighbouring white community suffering from HIV/AIDS as significantly as they are. This observation is accurate as there is a low incidence of HIV infection within the white community, but this is as a result of a different

lifestyle and regard for HIV. The person responsible for dispensing anti-retroviral medication in Khethani, Dr Johan During, commented at the Annual General Meeting of the Simunye Project (which is a project run in Khethani by the churches of Winterton) as to how difficult it is for Westernised doctors to get patients to take their anti-retroviral medication, because there is a distrust of the medication as a result of the various ill-informed opinions that seem to spread around the township (During: 2007).

This epidemic, coupled with some change in social behavior, has resulted in a shift in the social structure of Khethani which has altered the way families function. Arthur Stockil, an aid worker who works as a translator in Khethani in order to help people attain their identity documents (which are needed in order to become eligible for government grants), stated that many family breadwinners have died, leaving grandparents to cope with the raising of children on extremely small pensions. At the same time, young girls have discovered the Social welfare child grant system and are falling pregnant in order to access this money (A, Stockil: 2007).

A group of women in Khethani are being trained as Home-Based Care Givers, which means that some form of internally generated expertise is being spread within the community. The Simunye Project is encouraging a Christian lifestyle through education. With the high rates of unemployment, the men in the families have to seek employment away from home and so the women in the families are carrying an increasing amount of financial and social responsibility (Cogley: 2007).

Another issue within Khethani is the issue of leadership – Khethani has a mayor, but it also has a tribal chief, and so there are various levels of power play at hand between those who feel they

have a right to authority within the township governance. The church also plays a major role within the community as it heads up the Simunye Project. This project encourages a Christian lifestyle through education and development initiatives which negate many of the pre-existing beliefs and practices of the Zulu culture. The project has many subsidiary organisations which seek to ease some of the burdens being faced by residents in Khethani. This, too, has added a different sentiment to the township leadership structures as, although these various organisations do not seek to exercise any form of hegemonic control over the community, it has come to pass that Khethani is coming to rely more heavily on the goodwill of these church-run organisations than they are on their local government and leadership. As mentioned before, a group of women from Khethani have been trained by white nurses in the area as Home-Based Care Givers. The Mathew 25 Project helps people attain their ID's so that they will be able to receive pensions, and has a feeding scheme for parentless families. Four pre-primary schools have also recently been opened in Khethani to help to ease the burden of the Vulamehlu School which, until a year ago, was the only pre-primary school in Khethani. The NG Kerk runs a gardening scheme and runs the Church at Work programme which employs people to keep the main street of Winterton clean and maintained (During: 2007).

Power structures within families also serve as influences in the social structuring of Khethani. There are a few very powerful, well-established families in Khethani and these families reflect the traditional structuring of Zulu households. These families have large homesteads and the men have more than one wife, often several, and many children. In the main, these families are very patriarchal and faithful to traditional Zulu mores. Being a member of this type of family does come at a cost as everyone is expected to give whatever money they make directly back to the

family and often individual aspirations are quelled in order to keep family members fed, clothed and educated (Stockil: 2007d). Those who do not belong to these well-established families are seen as somewhat lesser citizens in Khethani. They are, however, far less tied to the traditional structuring of the larger families and have more leeway in terms of individual behaviour and freedom. They live in the newer part of Khethani, in two-room houses built by the government after Apartheid, but these areas are less established and are not like the large communal living areas of the older parts of Khethani.

Khethani was the ‘real world’ in which my ideas and experiments with the issues of development, belonging and change would first be tested as I set out to form the Great Iron Drama Group – which process is encapsulated in the following section.

## **The Great Iron Drama Group**

Here follows a summary of the three phases of my fieldwork project. The first section chronicles the beginnings of the group. Thereafter I examine our first production and the steps that led up to the creation and staging of the piece. The final section covers the creation and performances of our final play, *Peponjero*, which will be further discussed in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

My first objective when beginning this project was obviously to source people who would want to audition to become members of my group. They would need to be enthusiastic, attend regularly and work for little financial reward. The week-long audition process that served to

select the group became the first phase of the project. My major concern was how to go about running auditions with inexperienced performers in order to make a selection of the most suitable participants for the proposed theatre group. I designed a week long theatre workshop programme which was intended to foreground the candidates' potential for theatre, communicative and expressive skills, and enthusiasm and capacity to engage in discussion and enquiry through theatre. By the end of that week, from the forty-odd candidates who attended the first introductory meeting, about ten eager candidates remained and thereafter, within the next week, the weakest remaining candidates had resolved that this process was not for them: leaving four men, four women and myself (all between the ages of 18 and perhaps 35 ) who were all set upon creating a drama group. Two of the women, Khethiwe and Ncamsile are sisters, both in their mid twenties and they both work for the local post office: they were the only members of the group who were employed. They come from a large, well established family in the oldest part of Khethani. Manely is also in her mid twenties and lives with her mother, who is a domestic worker, in a two-room house. Xholi is a 22 year old, single mother, who lives by herself in a two-roomed house in the newer part of Khethani. She is supported by her mother who is a security guard. Lucky, at 18 was the youngest member of our group and is the only person who does not live in Khethani. He lives with his family of five in a one-roomed house in Winterton. Small was the eldest member of the group and I would judge him to be in his early thirties. He lived with his ill mother. Mzie and Sibonelo, who were both 25, also belong to two well-established, long-standing families in the older part of Khethani. While these are the personal statistics of the group, I must mention that the largest continuing 'gift' of this project was, what I deemed the members' extraordinary aptitude, and seemingly inherent capacity, for theatre. Their

abilities to create (and to reproduce when necessary) dramatic sketches, songs, dances and other pieces of performance was a delight – both to the group and their audiences as well as myself.

The Drama Group met in the small hall adjoining the Winterton Stock Sale Yard, the use of which was granted the project for its duration of six months by the Winterton Farmers' Association. The venue was a huge bonus. Located in the open strip of land that divides the town of Winterton from the township of Khethani, the cattle auction yard itself is reminiscent of an amphitheatre and allowed for performances to take place in the centre with raised seating (for the audience) surrounding it in a semi-circle. The project was funded by local churches in the area and by donations made after performances. Although I had approached the local municipality for funding six months before the beginning of the project and received an enthusiastic verbal response, in spite of repeated follow ups, no funding from that source actually transpired.

From mid-July 2007 we met every weekday afternoon at 14:00 hours for approximately two and a half hours. Attendance and tardiness were initially a problem but as we grew to trust each other and as the nature of the project grew, we became responsible for each other as we came to realise that the group couldn't function without all its members present.

Over the next month we set about establishing ourselves as a group by undertaking an extended warm-up including theatre exercises, which I led, and also creating a working ethos, a sense of discipline and an identity for ourselves. Especially at the beginning, whilst I led the exercises and proposed the overall programme, all decisions were taken by group consensus. One of our first

tasks was to agree upon the rules of the group. We also selected a name - The Great Iron Drama Group - and logo that would portray our strength and courage as a group. Because cattle are considered to be highly valuable and powerful within the Zulu culture and because the walls of the stock sale hall were covered with cattle horns, we chose cattle horns as a visual symbol for our group. Although most of our workshopping for our plays was done in a mixture of Zulu and English, both our plays were performed in Zulu.

Our next task was to devise our first performance. Initially we had decided that we wanted to do a play for schools that dealt with teenage pregnancy but the deeper we delved, by means of brainstorming, discussions, exercises and theatre games, the more we found that teenage pregnancy was linked to general issues regarding gender within the community, such as domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, alcohol abuse and sexual abuse. Thus we broadened our scope and created a very basic story structure in which each issue was depicted by means of a single scene. This comprised our first performance: a twenty minute *Gender Play*.

We decided not to take our performance to the schools as this was the period of school exams and we also did not want to be affiliated with any particular ideologies that the schools may already be promoting with regards to the issues depicted in our play – particularly because they were so contentious. Getting an audience of school girls proved to be much harder than we had anticipated and finally Great Iron members were pleading with homebound girls to come and watch – abandoning our plans for ‘a paying audience’. After the performance, Great Iron women members led group discussions with the audience of approximately thirty-five girls. This

audience had few problems identifying the issues and finding personal resonances, but suggestions of ways to deal with these issues were few and far between. Within the next few days we performed *Gender Play* twice more – first an open performance to which anyone in Khethani and Winterton was welcome and secondly to a group of domestic workers at their literacy graduation ceremony. At both performances the discussions produced significantly divergent responses that related to the audience demographic. Khethani women were quick to recognise and identify with the scenes of the play but were not forthcoming with suggestions for change. Whereas the Winterton residents declared themselves much less familiar with the world of the play and yet they had many suggested, alternative courses of action. After each performance the whole Drama group reflected upon both the performances and the audience responses in extended discussions which fed into the subsequent performance and the work in general.

The third stage of the project became more complex as I sought to hand over most of the devising of our next play to the cast. The result of this process was the creation of *Peponjero* and the play will be further discussed in this dissertation. The process leading up to the performance of *Peponjero* was far more intense as we had grown theatrically as a group. Part of our workshop process involved a weekend camp where we worked with choreographer Sibelo Ngema on the major movement scenes of the play. This weekend was hugely beneficial and resulted in the development of greater self discipline and accountability in group members.

We performed *Peponjero* for three audiences. The first performance was to a largely white audience at Winterton Primary School as part of a Drama Evening and we performed alongside the local children's drama group. The audience were very enthusiastic about the play and felt that it certainly helped them to understand the current relationship between HIV and its positioning within society. Invited by Professor Hazel Barnes, *Peponjero* was performed at the Hexagon Theatre, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, alongside a group from a local Pietermaritzburg township. As the latter group's presentation was also issue-based, our post-performance discussion centred on the theatrical choices that we made with regard to how we chose to stage the play. This too was beneficial as it encouraged the group members to reflect on the process of creating the play in a theatrical light and to then respond to questions posed to them in their capacity as artists. Our final performance was (appropriately) back in our own Winterton Stock Sale Yard for anyone in the district who wanted to attend. Again the performance was well received, particularly by people working for community development initiatives. Ten days later, as envisaged, the Great Iron Drama Group officially dissolved after five extremely engaging months of working together.

The experience with Great Iron was a rich one and, as a TfD practitioner just starting out, it provoked a myriad of questions. I shall explore some of these in this dissertation as I attempt to come to a more considered understanding of the challenging issues facing a TfD practitioner.

## CHAPTER TWO: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### **Locating Theatre for Development within the broader context of Community Development.**

The use of the term 'development' has altered drastically over the past century. Its origin stems from the post World War II opinion that it was the responsibility of First and Second World countries and organisations to instruct people living in the Third World as how to improve their living standards (Kleymeyer, 1999:ix). These early development initiatives and projects were generally administered in a top-down approach where private enterprises and state regimes decided which problems were to be addressed in communities and they then subsequently designed and defined, through their programmes, the solutions to these problems (Kleymeyer, 1999:6). This approach to development generally failed as it was imposed from above, or relied on the input of outsiders in order to create change within very culturally specific communities. Slowly these opinions changed as theorists came to realise, through their interaction with communities and from the feedback that they received from these communities, that they needed to be aware of culture and its fundamental connection with community identity (at a micro level) and nationhood (at a macro level). Thus, development initiatives during the 1950's and 1960's began to tackle development in an inclusive process that used the techniques of qualitative and structural change as a means to improve the quality of the community members lives, by assisting them in increasing control over their own environments (Epskamp, 2006:23). The 1970's heralded the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), whose aims were to decentralise the responsibilities of the national government by creating smaller administrative units. These SAP's hoped to guarantee sustainable development by decentralizing and outsourcing public services, thus creating, at a macro level, a shift from supervision to

monitoring, from control to coaching (Epskamp: 24). All of these endeavors, however, had economic growth as their core concern, as their primary aim was to alleviate poverty.

Gradually, due to the influence of anthropology and a revised attitude towards culture, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and universities began to stress the need to involve the beneficiaries of these development programmes as the primary stakeholders in the planning and management of their own development initiatives (Epskamp, 2006:24). Thus, a more participatory, bottom-up development model came to be utilized, which is ‘typically characterised by a unique perspective on problems and solutions, one grounded in the cultural traditions of people in the lower strata of society’ (Kleymeyer, 1999:5).

The notion of ‘culture’ was at the forefront of this shift from a dictatorial to a more democratic stance towards development. In the 1950’s culture was seen as a factor of resistance – ‘an obstacle to be overcome by any possible means if one wished to reap the fruits of modernity’ (Epskamp, 2006:29). This view has slowly shifted, as development now aims at connecting identity issues to the resistance of cultural imperialism. Communities are now encouraged to find a place for their own inherent cultural knowledge within the constantly altering state of the world (Sillitoe, 2002:2). Phillip Sillitoe comments that ‘in allowing local populations to inform the development process with their own knowledge and aspirations, we open up the prospect ultimately of a redefinition of the meaning of development itself and its aims’ (2002:11).

From the 1990’s onwards culture became considered as a ‘life support system’ that helps people to deal with the challenges of their daily lives, and provides groups with the mechanisms of self-regulation that help them to react to sudden changes in their social and physical environment

(Epskamp, 2006:29). Thus, participatory development initiatives came to challenge the more conventional approaches toward problem-solving as community-centered projects came to use a practical dialogic form of intervention, whose aims were to develop solutions by accepting and appreciating the contribution of all parties involved (Epskamp, 2006:25). Paulo Freire reflects on what he terms the 'banking concept of education' and his notion considers the concept that communities should not become the repositories of a top-down approach to education and development. He argues that 'the more completely they (communities) accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them' (Freire, 1970:71). He argues that the oppressed should have the opportunity to recover their lost humanity, and one does this by creating development initiatives and education schemes that allow for communities to participate in the process of their own development (Freire, 1970:44). These participatory methods have been introduced to various sectors – education, culture, health and agriculture and their general aims were to involve participants in all aspects of planning, managing and problem solving (Epskamp, 2006:26).

Current development initiatives use both conventional and participatory methods as a means to educate and mobilise communities. Although conventional methods use a top-down approach, there is far more awareness from outside practitioners working in communities as to the significance of culture and ethnic heritage. These changes in approach have resulted in far more successful projects, as governments are slowly coming to recognise the importance of culture and thus, from a nationalist perspective down to smaller independent development initiatives, people are far more aware of anthropological ideologies regarding culture and community.

At the same time practitioners working in theatre that focused on social change came to recognise the need to connect community theatre work to other grassroots development initiatives. Thus, meeting points were forged between these two fields that resulted in the emergence of TfD. Kees Epskamp defines TfD as a practical form of social analysis that has to find ways to connect its micropractices at the local level with the macro agendas that directly impact upon the lives of the participants in those practices (Epskamp, 2006:xvi). Thus, TfD has become a means by which communities are able to discuss a national problem, HIV/AIDS for example, and show how this problem affects their specific community. They are then encouraged to try to find solutions to this global problem that are specific to their particular culture, in order to come up with solutions that will be sustainable and plausible within the context of their community.

A large influence in the growth of TfD was the work of Augusto Boal in the 1970's. He developed a pedagogy of popular/community theatre that aimed at preparing participants, through theatre, for dealing with social problems and issues that may arise within their communities (Boal, 1979:6). His notions regarding theatre then spread and, slowly, other theatre initiatives came to view theatre as a creative and safe place from which communities, often marginalised and disadvantaged, could seek to find practical solutions to their individual and collective problems. His work was greatly influenced by the theories of Bertolt Brecht and his alienation techniques, which served to distance audience members from the characters so that they would not succumb to the imagined effect of the conventional narrative (Harding, 2002:5). Thus many TfD practitioners have come to 'embrace the logic of a Freireian-Boalian paradigm

of direct fictionalising and dramatising which lead ideally to action in real life' (Harding, 2002:5).

Over the years, various terms have been used to describe and name the process of community, or development-oriented, theatre and this has proved to be problematic. The Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam suggests that a less objectionable name for this terminological problem would be to refer to all participatory forms of performing arts and applied theatre as Participatory Theatre. All these forms have certain common features which include the following: the performances or workshops aim at an exchange of ideas between the actors/facilitators and the audience; the context of the performance is directly related to the living environment of the targeted audience; the themes interwoven in the storylines of the performances are problem-oriented and of direct relevance to the community, and during or after the performance the audience is motivated to interact in a direct manner with the actors/facilitators (Epskamp, 2006:11).

The basic tenant of TfD is based on the premise that people learn best when the way in which they learn is somehow active and pleasurable (Laws, 1998:43). It has been the aim of TfD to identify the different methods of learning that will be best suited to the community in which this learning takes place. Zakes Mda argues that 'people must be active participants in the creation of theatre...with the objective of turning theatre into a much more effective medium of adult education' (1993:9). Thus, depending on the community one is working with, one will use the performance modes most familiar to the community as a means to access vital discoveries and revelations. For example, if one were working in a community where orality is the prevailing mode and many are illiterate, one would want to use the inherent oratory skills of the community

to catalyse learning. Thus, TfD does not have a fixed aesthetic of performance – it alters according to the community in which it is used. Sometimes, depending on the nature of the performance, or the nature of the development work undertaken, it is process driven and sometimes it is product driven. Thus, sometimes a project's success lies in the learning and development that happens during the process leading up to the performance. Each project, depending on the needs of those involved, should have its own specific goals and outcomes because it has been designed with the help of the community. It aims at empowering members of the targeted communities to become proactive agents of their own development.

### **Inside and Out - The examination of the role of an outside practitioner within a community.**

Zakes Mda's book When People Play People (1993) investigates the role of Theatre-for-Development in creating modes of communication. It centres on communication models and the influence of culture on these models. In the book, he seeks to provide a practical application that will help TfD development practitioners to 'design programmes that will be more effective in their communication aspects' (Mda, 1993:5). One of the features in Mda's book is the notion of the role of the catalyst. For the purpose of this dissertation, I have chosen to reflect on some of his ideas and to look at how crucial his concept of the catalyst is when examining one's role as a TfD practitioner, and one's ideological positioning in relation to the community in which one works. When one enters into a community in the capacity of a TfD practitioner in which one is to work, there are several factors which may help or impede the process. If one is serving as a catalyst through which communities will cultivate and express their ideas regarding development and social change, there are certain factors which one needs to be aware of.

Mda argues that a catalyst is most often an outsider, working in a community, who brings with them a higher, greater level of social consciousness, based on their education (Mda, 1993:19). He goes on to discuss the role of the catalyst within a community (and for the purpose of this dissertation, the catalyst's role within a TfD initiative), remarking on how the catalyst's positioning as an outsider comes to affect the nature of the performance and its message. He argues that if a catalyst is too different from the community in which s/he works, then the communication between the catalyst and the community will be ineffective. At the same time, however, he acknowledges that the catalyst does need some form of outside knowledge in order for assumptions to be challenged and for new forms of knowledge to be introduced into the community. His term for identifying this concept are the homophily and heterophily principle, which, on the most basic level, indicate the degree to which the catalyst is either a part of the world of the community or is outside of it. 'Homophily denotes the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact through messages have similarities in such attributes as beliefs, values, education and ideological outlook determined by class position. Heterophily denotes the degree to which individuals differ in these attributes' (Mda, 1993:85).

The homophily principle suggests that, given a choice, people tend to interact with others most like themselves (1993:85). Mda argues that there are 'degrees of homophily' (1993:86) as no two people will ever be exactly alike. In light of TfD, however, I would argue that the catalyst needs to be somewhat different from the community in which they are working so that s/he can bring in with them certain skills that will be of use to the community, and may serve the community in developing new and beneficial modes of communication and interaction that will be to the betterment of the community.

Just as it is less beneficial for a TfD practitioner to be too similar to the community in which they work, it is an equal hindrance if the practitioner is too different. This can cause problems when negotiating developmental change in a community, as the degree to which a practitioner is heterophilous may lead to ideological and communication problems. Mda argues that a practitioner should aim for 'optimal heterophily', where a practitioner understands the culture and ideologies of a community, but where they also have skills that could help to improve communication models and the resolution of developmental issues (Mda, 1993:86). The first attribute that a catalyst must have is that they must pass knowledge on to those that they have worked with, so that the performers can continue to work once the catalyst has gone. This is done by raising the consciousness of the audience and by imparting theatrical skills. The second characteristic of a catalyst is that they must be open-minded towards individuals' ideas and must not limit the group to his/her own opinions. Mda's next observation is that catalysts either tend to be inhibited by their ideologies and say less, or they tailor their statements to fit their own beliefs. (1993:20).

As already stated, it is vital that the TfD practitioner understands the cultural context of the community in which s/he is working. It is crucial that TfD practitioners enter into a community with a bottom-up approach in mind, where they use their theatrical skills to create a forum in which communities are able to communicate and develop in a manner that reflects a true consideration for culture and developmental needs. Even though the practitioner is considered an outsider, the objectives and subsequent success of the community project rely heavily on an awareness of culture, memory and belonging. Just as individual memory and experience shapes the individual, so too do communities grow and alter through the course of collected experiences

and transformation. This then leads one into the next section of this thesis, which deals with the notion of belonging and what this term of ‘belonging’ means to communities, specifically marginalized ones.

### CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNITY BELONGING

*“The English word “belonging” is a fortuitous compound of “being” and “longing”’ (Hedetof and Hjort, 2008:ix).*

The purpose of this chapter is to examine ‘community’ as a place of shared belonging and then to examine its subsequent relationship to the world which surrounds it, with a view to understanding the connection between memory, belonging and community. Throughout the world, particular communities, ethnicities, cultures and races have become marginalised or ‘othered’ by national, and sometimes even global, movements or systems. As a result of this marginalisation, communities (and here I use the word ‘community’ to describe any group of people who share a collective sense of culture, religion and ethnicity) will often find common ground in their particular cultural heritage as a means to mobilise and reinforce a sense of identity and belonging

Often, however, this cultural heritage can come under scrutiny by hegemonic power structures who seek to alter the essence of a community. These structures either enforce change onto a community or they navigate their authority in a manner which leaves a community with no choice but to change. There are several ways through which hegemonic structures seek to change. I suggest two possible ways in which this may happen, the first being the actual geographical displacement of communities where they are physically separated from their homes and the tactile artefacts of these places of shared belonging. The second is more ambiguous as it refers to globally transmitted systems that may manipulate communities into changing and altering their cultures in order to comply with dominant ideologies.

Not all change, however, is bad and in some instances communities welcome new systems and technologies that will alter the ethos of their community for the better. Communities often feel that in order for their particular cultures to survive they will have to accommodate some of the influences of modernity and globalisation. There are certain practices in cultures that no longer have a place or a use within a community, and so, more modern influences will be of service to the community. One may argue that a certain degree of coercion may be part of what leads communities to alter their cultures, but ultimately it is their choice, in this case, to modify their cultures in order to accommodate changing trends.

For the purpose of this chapter and in the light of this dissertation, I have chosen to focus on the factors where communities are forced unwillingly to alter their cultures, as it is my primary interest to investigate how communities build ways of surviving culturally, through the use of memory, in a world where their cultural heritage is no longer effortlessly at home.

## **Collective Memory**

*'It is a matter for wonder: the moment that is here and gone, that was nothing before and nothing after, returns like a spectre to trouble the quiet of a later moment'* (Birth, 2006:169).

The concept of memory introduces one to the first section of this chapter which examines the ways in which communities try to redefine their sense of 'home' in the face of the above-mentioned methods of estrangement. Many communities do this through fostering collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992:38). Because, for many communities, their original 'homes' have either been destroyed, altered, taken over or they have been forced to leave, in the light of losing

their geographical homes, they need to collectively find another sense of 'home' – one which does not rely upon the physical manifestation of place and time. Thus, a somewhat precarious construction of memory may come to serve as a way for a community to protect its heritage by collectively reconstructing a sense of 'home' through shared remembrances.

Zakes Mda comments that 'memory is vital to identity. Memory loss leads to a loss of identity, because who we are is fundamentally linked to memory' (1993:280). There are not many unifiers as powerful as a shared memory. All human beings can attest to the sense of well-being and belonging that one gets from sharing the same experience as someone else, and the subsequent joy one has in being able to reflect on that memory in future times. It is an intrinsic link to our past, a shared past, and it also helps to define one's identity in the present. Without memory, we would be unable to learn and to grow as individuals and so, too, without collective memory we would not be able to grow as a collection of people. To a certain extent collective memory is what links individuals closer to some than to others, because when one shares memories with others, one automatically shares the world from which this memory stems.

One may question how collective memory can be linked to the notion of belonging. The nature of the relationship between these two ideas is a complex one. Often the biggest crisis in a human being's life is when the individual comes to recognise that (s)he is not entirely sure as to what has helped to shape the person s/he is today. An example of this would be Mwenya Kabwe's work, *U nyamo alunampumlo* (the foot has no nose), which reflects this notion as she traces her heritage across the globe, never quite able to locate it within a specific place, within a specific set of memories that relate to an actual place and context (Thamm: 2008). A sense of collective memory is vital in claiming a past as one's individual memories become anchored in a much

larger world of memory and, although these memories may differ from one individual to another, they nevertheless share a common culture and heritage.

‘... memory must be analysed as a social process – individuals do not inhabit isolated worlds but live socially, commemorate the past and actively make sense of the world through processes of social communication’ (Devine-Wright, 2003:10).

Cairns and Roe believe that it is important to study the relationship between memories and conflict in order to discover the potential that this connection has for helping to resolve conflicts (Cairns and Roe, 2003:4). Devine-Wright argues that memory is socially constructed and reconstructed, and is directly related to a community’s sense of identity in a present context (2003:11). Thus, one can only make sense of one’s present if one has a sense of the socio-historical world from which one has emerged, and one does this by constructing a collective memory with the people who most echo one’s own perceptions of both the past and the present. The term ‘collective memory’ signifies ‘the transmission of shared experience that has been retained by a group’ (Kearney, 1999:101) and where memory refers to spheres of personal experience, collective memory ‘presupposes a principle of cohesion of singular personal memories within an overarching whole’ (Kearney: 101). Emile Durkheim stresses the importance of environment, in that he feels that it helps in communicating and symbolising memories from the past. He states that social memories are crucial in preserving group cohesion (Durkheim in Devine-Wright: 2003:11). Schwartz reflects that ‘memory can be analysed in terms of continuities in one’s perception of the past across time, and the way these perceptions are maintained in the face of social change’ (Schwartz in Devine-Wright: 11). He supports the

view that communities are engaged in an ongoing dialectical relation between the past and the present (Schwartz in Devine-Wright: 11).

The construction of memory is tenuous in that it extends over time and place and thus reconstructs events into moments that rely heavily on imagination in order to be remembered. Barbara Adam suggests that we live in a multiplicity of times, where time becomes a constant exchange between 'our' time and 'other' time (Adam, 1995:6), and this is the space in which collective memory is found – between the events of now and the collective memories of what has happened before. Annie Phizacklea and Sallie Westwood consider remembering as 'a special time' (2000:6) in that forms of remembering encourage people to think of home which provides them with a sense of belonging (2000:6).

The act of remembering, and how we choose to remember things, greatly influences social recollection in that it 'it selects and distorts the past in the service of present political interests' (Devine-Wright, 2003:14). Cairns argues that when one specifically examines the creation of memory by a marginalised or 'othered' group of people, one comes to identify the trait of victimisation (Cairns and Roe, 2003: 7). Thus, their social memories are about the victimisation of the group by persons/entities outside of the group, which results in the construction of boundaries between 'us' and 'them', and the sense of group cohesion in the light of outside persecution (Devine-Wright:14).

There are various particular ways in which memory is used by communities, ranging from the use of myth as a representation of certain moral values and social systems, to more concrete historical memories based on actual events (Devine-Wright: 19). 'In referring to the past in order to legitimise the present, myths assume that the past has a force in the present and that the past is

accorded a high status of its own' (Devine-Wright: 21). Because the nature of memory is so variant and is based on concepts that are scattered over a continuum of reality, the most important aspect to consider in the light of this idea is that beliefs about the past can be constructed and mobilised to serve current socio-political forces – forces which can be used to either unify or separate people.

### **The Politics of Belonging.**

Throughout history, cultural conflicts have resulted in communities becoming displaced or divided. Often the result of such conflicts is that communities have been forcibly moved from the locales which they consider to be their home. There are various issues that currently feed into such conflicts' as the history of mankind is shaped by the conflicts in which one dominant form of belonging tries to silence other forms of belonging. The results of such conflicts for marginalised communities is the loss or alteration of a geographical home, which then spurs a reactionary ideological construct that tries to redefine 'home' and capture its essence, through memory, of what was lost through conflict. The term for this notion of belonging and its relation to social activities is referred to by theorists as the 'politics of belonging' (Nyamnjoh, 2005:1). The nature of the politics of belonging is 'to explore how a sense of belonging is forged in relation to national identities as well as a search for belonging and sense of identity in communities and how the meaning of "home" becomes stretched over time and space' (Phizacklea and Westwood, 2000:2). An instance of this would be Khethani township. The area of Khethani was dubbed an 'emergency camp' during the apartheid years Because Khethani was located in what was deemed 'a white area', the government sought to move the residents to the Kwa-Zulu area of Emmaus which was one of the areas set aside by the government for black

resettlement. The residents of Khethani hotly contested this as they were members of the Amahlube tribe, and if they were moved to the Emmaus area they would then be forced to live under Amangwe tribal rule. Luckily, by 1989 the entire Kwa-Zulu homelands system was failing and so more land was bought surrounding the existing Khethani area and the government built more houses for the residents of Khethani (P, Stockil: 2009). It is easy to understand the local solidarity that arose from that threat of forced removal. It mobilised the community as they sought to protect their local heritage and homes against the threat of outside interference.

The next form of unwilling community change is globalisation and globally transmitted ideologies which, to a large extent, have resulted in the fracturing and transformation of communities; either by excluding them from dominant global machinations because they are seen to be too divergent from the governing discourse, or by transforming cultures in an attempt to assimilate them into a more globalised lifestyle and way of thinking. This form of cultural change is less easy to identify as it is linked to systems and forces such as capitalism, consumerism, westernisation, technology and advertising. Its mode of separation is one of isolation through alienation. Although not as apparent as other forms of segregation, it is insidious, as it promotes the betterment of those who embrace progress but severely hampers those who do not. Many communities, in response to this estrangement, have placed more importance on the local in response to this as a means to evoke a return to their own particular way of living.

The onset of globalisation and trans-nationalism has resulted in a contradictory reaction from many communities across the world, particularly marginalised communities. These communities have been required to alter their lifestyles and cultures in order to accommodate global trends,

trends which often negate or undermine the social practices of a community. But whilst globalisation can superficially be conceptualised as a movement in which boundaries are broken because everyone is encouraged to become part of 'the global village'; in real terms this global village only exists for those with the means to be a part of it – those who are financially, technologically and geographically able to treat the entire world as their locus of belonging. For the rest of the world the global village is a construct of exclusion, as many want to be a part of this world but are unable to because, ultimately, they lack the means through which to function successfully as able players on the global scene. In response to this estrangement, communities counteract this segregation by reclaiming their sense of a 'village' by using their own tools of 'othering' to exclude those whom they feel do not belong to their particular idea of home. Thus, globalisation has had, in some communities, a contrary effect in that it has led to a return to local or regional heritage.

As a result of autochthonous policies promoted by political and economic leaders, many communities no longer seek a sense of solidarity and harmony with their neighbours, particularly if their neighbours are culturally, ethnically or racially different to them. It seems that a reverse ideology has been shaped in response to globalisation – the influx of new people, concepts and consumer ideals has resulted in communities making a stand against foreign invasion, specifically when it comes to matters such as culture and identity. This need to protect one's community from outsiders may result in the exclusion of strangers. Confrontations across the world have arisen from the intercultural conflict between those who feel they 'belong' and those who are deemed as outside threats. A very recent example of this would be the xenophobic attacks that took place in many townships across South Africa. South African citizens felt that immigrants, some illegal, were coming into the country and stealing their jobs, homes and were

heightening the crime in their areas (<http://6000.co.za/2008/05/19/south-africas-xenophobic-attacks/>). These sentiments soon spread across the country and resulted in violence, death and a massive flux of immigrants fleeing their homes, either to return to their native countries or to seek safety in places of refuge.

The notion of 'home' becomes the essential foreground in a community's quest to reclaim an identity that provides them with a sense of history, culture and belonging. 'Home', whether it be real or fictive, becomes an ideological space in which a community is able to affirm its particular cultural norms and principles. Culture thus becomes a very important key in reclaiming one's own individual identity within a group identity. A community, by collectively claiming a specific culture as their own, and by holding onto the practices, rituals and ideologies that are specific to it, sets up the boundaries between those who do or do not belong to this culture. In categorising those who are deemed (culturally) worthy to share this constructed notion of home, communities ensure that, regardless of the changes that may be occurring within their region, they are able to maintain, even if only ideologically, a shared space of belonging that excludes those who do not share the same dream of 'home'. Thus 'home' is a form of remembering that encourages people to think of their constructed places of belonging in the shared practice of collective memory.

Charles David Kleymeyer reflects that 'nowadays people are resorting to their ethnicity in many parts of the world as a sort of civil rights movement to achieve the equality of treatment that has been denied them in the name of modernisation or development' (1999:xiv). He further suggests that throughout history people have been trying to adjust to change while preserving their own specific cultural identity. People intrinsically prefer to integrate themselves into society on their own terms and, although they accept their ethnic identity, they will often not accept the material

and social conditions to which they are subjected (Kleymeyer, 1999:xiv). It is in fact often the case that ethnic identity may grow in importance if individuals are feeling discriminated against. 'People do not cling to their cultures to use them simply as interethnic strategies. They do so in order to make sense of the world so that in turn they will have a sense of themselves (1999:3)'. Maurice Halbwachs reflects on this notion and relates it to belonging to a family saying, 'no matter how we enter a family...we find ourselves to be a part of a group where our position is determined not by our personal feelings but by rules and customs independent of us that existed before us (1992:57)'. It is through the norms and values of the group that we belong to that we make sense of who we are as individuals and come to learn what expectations the group has of us.

Annie Phizacklea and Sallie Westwood look at the politics of belonging from a different perspective, commenting that not only is the notion of 'belonging' used by marginalised communities, but it is of equal importance to those who are fortunately positioned in a contemporary, globalised world, as they have built around themselves what they refer to as 'legal fortresses' as a way to keep the dreaded 'other' out (2000:1). Although for the purpose of this dissertation I have chosen to focus on the methods through which marginalised communities create a sense of belonging, I do acknowledge that it is not only 'othered' communities who use a collective sense of home in order to establish a group identity. Theorists make vital observations on belonging and its relation to othering by looking from two perspectives – the perspective of those who, on a global level, are seen to belong, and those who are marginalised because they have been 'othered' by dominant world ideologies. The practice of belonging is of equal importance to both groups because it either maintains a power system, or it serves as a way to empower communities who have been marginalised.

Basile Ndjio comments that in order ‘to retain control over the wealth of their neighbourhood local inhabitants can cast the other, who is considered a dangerous allochthon, in the role of the villainous sorcerer who prospers at their expense’ (2006: 85). This emergent image of the ‘demonised other’ (Phizacklea and Westwood, 2000:1) indicates how communities have sought to justify marginalising, or being marginalised, by classifying the other as something intrinsically different, and thus dangerous, from themselves. When differences between peoples are regarded as fundamental, then they become a means through which to judge, and more importantly, to alienate individuals. Violence often occurs as a result of such extreme segregation as groups use the differences of others to incite fear and intimidation amongst themselves. Thus, our history books are littered with the often devastating results of what happens when a group of people use their imaginations to create an enemy from those who are considered to be different from them. The Holocaust in Germany is a prime example of this attitude, and the results of a survey taken in 1995 reflect the remnants of ethnic othering of Germans toward Jews - ‘it is left very clear that Jews are not “ordinary Germans”. Jews are foreign and different’ (Schneider, 2002:14). Abebe Zegeye comments that ‘the notion of historically or ethnically fixed identities is a powerful concept because it expresses a desire for the “absence of politics”. Instead of negotiating political aims and goals within a confusing variety of dissenting voices, there is the allure of claiming one’s birthright based on ancestry, tradition or territorial precedence’ (2005:2). Today, however, it cannot be denied that othering is sometimes subtle and this is where belonging becomes a hugely political matter, in that economies and countries are swayed by alliances and contracts – often made by those who will side with those they feel most connected to culturally, politically or religiously.

To conclude, I use the words of one of the first theorists in the study of memory and belonging, Maurice Halbwachs, ‘...collective frameworks are the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society’ (1992:40). We use our memories as structures through which we view and make sense of the present, both as individuals and as groups. They are not only mere recollections of the past, but serve as cultural navigators for the present. It is through collective memory that one has a sense of who one is and where one belongs. I would argue that one of the principle ways in which to negotiate a change in the ideology of a community is through a renegotiation of the past. One would do this to enable individuals to reconsider the collective frameworks of their past, which may be hampering their personal development in the present. These ideas are further pursued in Chapter Five, which is a case study of the Khethani Theatre Project.

## CHAPTER FOUR: INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

This chapter seeks to bring the previous two chapter's discussions of community development and belonging together, by asking the question - how does an outside TfD practitioner facilitate theatrical work in a community where a special need has been identified (for example, HIV/AIDS awareness, care, treatment and prevention), while acknowledging the importance of the community's specific cultural identity and situation? This raises ethical issues because, although a need for change may have been identified from outside the community, we need to question the ethical grounds on which an outside catalyst assumes the right to provoke change within a community. How can the theatre event most safely be used in order for fixed ideologies to be challenged while still respecting culture and identity? Two philosophers, Alain Badiou and Paul Ricoeur, offer vital insight into the concept of ethics and change, and both comment on the notion of 'truth' and its link to change. This chapter will discuss each theorist's view, offering a philosophical grounding from which to use their ideologies within the context of TfD.

Amanda Stuart Fisher, in her symposium 'Developing an ethics of practice in applied theatre: Badiou and fidelity to the truth of the event', offers a link to the application of philosopher Alain Badiou's work with regards to the field of TfD (2005). Her writing addresses the notion of change as possibly provoked by a theatrical event and explores the delicate process of suggesting new truths to a community without necessarily, and most often unsuccessfully, enforcing a set of truths; a set of truths that are not borne of an individual's own choice to change but are rather merely indoctrinated under what many would consider to be 'universal truths'. Fisher, as an applied theatre scholar, has chosen to use Badiou's concept of the 'event', and has applied its

generic ideology and placed it within the context of the 'theatrical event'. The nature of this theatrical event then needs to be reflected on in the light of its capacity to create change. The theatrical event is 'someone doing something ostentatiously enough to be distinguished from everyday life' (Sauter, 2002:11), and it involves someone who does something that is different from everyday life, and someone who sees and recognises this difference (Sauter, 2002:11). It can thus offer an imaginative alternative to a current situation, where actors can show a different way of being without necessarily forcing the audience to change.

There is a moment, an event, in which a new truth emerges and it is 'our task as potential ethical subjects to enable the truth process to emerge and then be faithful to it' (Fisher, 2005:249). One comes to recognise the capacity that TfD has to allow for a given, established situation to be challenged by an event that will offer a new truth. 'Theatre becomes theatre by being an event, in which two partners engage in a playful relationship' (Sauter, 2002:11). This relationship is three fold in that it begins with the interaction between the facilitator and the actors in creating the performance, and this encounter is then shared and communicated, through the actors, to the audience. The offering of an alternative is at the very core of TfD, showing, through performance, how one can practically bring about change and negotiate the transition from one truth to another. I would argue that the nature of TfD, at its best, simply offers a space to explore options and the audience can choose whether they want the new truths of the event to influence the current reality of their situation

The theatre event is largely defined by its position in the theatrical, cultural and social world at large; in other words, the situation in which it takes place. 'The focus of interest becomes the

cultural and social contexts that generate the event, intervene in it, tamper with it, and may even ultimately suppress it, transform it or allow the event to survive in time' (Postlewait, 2002:31).

The audience uses the images given to them by the performers to produce their own interpretations, even if the latter are somewhat different to the initial impulses from which these signs were generated through the actors. 'It will be clear that, although the performers dominate the theatrical communication on the basis of their preparation, the most important results occur on the side of the spectators, who complete the total process by producing images in their own way, although based on (and more or less bound by) the theatrical sign systems' (Van Maanen, 2004:248).

Van Maanen comments that one should not define a theatrical event as something happening, but rather as a situation in which players and spectators meet and then something can happen. It is more a meeting place of divergent images that are the result of a theatrical happening (2004:248). The event is dialogic in that it requires both parties to become active communicators, which produces what Luhmann refers to as an aesthetic communication that can generate intensities of experience which in themselves remain incommunicable (Luhmann, 1995:82). Van Maanen reflects that 'a theatrical event creates a temporary new situation from and within reality' (2002:241).

One of the central tenets of the theatrical event and its relation to Tfd is the fact that it can be used to actively encourage audiences to be involved through participatory processes which are 'aimed at re-constructing the experience of the spectators, engaging them physically in the dramatic action and thus reinforcing the transformative potential' (Jackson and Lev-Aladgem,

2002:207). Linda Streit asks if theatre can bring about change, and responds by commenting that a dramatic presentation can work to undermine a society's tradition and offer a site in which to explore new and alternative structures and behavioral patterns (Streit, 2002:327). Audiences are invited into the event at times and are called upon, through processes such as Augusto Boal's forum theatre, to discover new alternatives within the safe space of theatre.

The power of Applied Theatre lies in its ability to facilitate the emergence of a truth process – through participatory process and critical explorations of both the self and communal identity – we can encounter new expressions and new truths rather than debating or discussing pre-existing perspectives (Fisher, 2005:249).

Because theatre is perceived as a place of 'playing', people will feel, much as they did as children, that their play is harmless in that it only occurs within the context of the event. However, one result of this playing is that the audience may suggest ways to change a situation which they will have experienced through play. Play provides the opportunity for a different way of relating to problems or situations, and audiences are left with the choice either to use their theatrical experience within the reality of their situation, or to keep their new experience locked within the playful world of theatre. It is obviously the hope of TfD that audiences do incorporate their experience of the theatrical event into their reality, but the choice lies purely with the individuals and the community. Obviously, this is the aspiration of TfD, as often individuals are aware that a change needs to happen but are disempowered to make it happen. Thus, an individual will make a choice, but this choice will not necessarily be well received by the community in which they live. As mentioned before, change happens at different times for different people and, ultimately, it is the task of TfD to simply offer alternatives, in the hope that perhaps those with the power to negotiate change will do so.

It is with these notions regarding the theatre event in mind that I now reflect on the Tfd practitioner's ethical considerations when facilitating a theatrical event within a community. Amanda Stuart Fisher comments on the role of the theatre practitioner and the processes leading up to the theatrical event. She states that it is the facilitator's task to generate an encounter that enables the truth process of a community to emerge, both in the creation and in the performance of the event (2005:249). But how does a Tfd practitioner do this? Here she relates to Badiou's concept of 'the experience of ethical consistency' (Badiou in Fisher, 2005:249). Badiou suggests a series of processes that aim at being faithful to the truth of the event, in this case the theatrical event, without allowing the facilitator to become influenced only by their own particular set of ethics and beliefs (2005:249). This philosophy reflects one similar to that of Mda's concept of the catalyst. Badiou suggests that the facilitator be governed by an absolute commitment to the relative truth of the theatrical event, and not be driven by self-interest and, in so doing, engage only with that which emerges through and from the event. One does this by practising what Badiou refers to as 'disinterested interest' (Fisher, 2005:249), where one's state of being is present but, in respect of one's own interests, one remains suspended or disinterested. Fisher responds to this notion by acknowledging that Applied Theatre practitioners cannot always be in a state of disinterested interest as this is not the nature of our work, but one can 'be in a constant critique of what our "interests" presuppose' (2005:249).

As argued in Chapter Three, *Community Belonging*, where one acknowledges that collective memory plays a large role in creating the sense of belonging, identity and ideology in a community, it is vital that one considers this argument in the light of the theatre event and community change. Paul Ricoeur, in his essay *Memory and Forgetting*, identifies the

difficulties regarding the ethics of memory. He proposes that memory is not only a kind of knowledge, but also a relation to the past in the form of action (Ricoeur, 1999:5). Without memory, we could not gain the knowledge which makes sense of the now in relation to the past. But Ricoeur suggests that memory also serves as a kind of action, because in remembering we are exercising our memory. This opens up a far greater reach for the concept of memory, as it advocates that we do not hold memory as a solid, given form of knowledge but we rather use memory as an exercise, and this suggests that memory becomes a tool in making meaning and, in so doing, results in both the use and abuse of memory (1999:5). Nietzsche suggests one treat memory with a 'kind of suspiciousness' (in Kearney, 1999:6). His sentiments reflect what Ricoeur proposes in terms of understanding memory as constructs, in which forgetting and fabrication are as much a part of remembering as are solid facts. Thus, the concept of 'truth' becomes a relative term with regard to memory, and ultimately to being, because, if memory can be used as a changeable tool that can modify as the individual alters, how is an individual ever going to be able to defend his/her present notion of 'truth', if all truth is relative to the memory on which it has been constructed?

This relativism with regard to 'truth' heralds a paradigm shift in terms of the way one views all major notions regarding human beings and their endless endeavor to create a system where generalised human rights govern social behavior. Badiou, in his work regarding ethics, states that one should not regard ethics as "universalised concepts of good" (Badiou in Fisher, 2005:248), where clearly defined generic notions of what we should or shouldn't do in any given situation guide our behaviour. He feels that the only ethics one may espouse is the 'ethics of engagement' (Fleishman: 2008), where one only hopes to make things better through the practical action of

offering alternatives. Thus, we will only hold on to what we consider to be ‘universal truths’ for as long as they serve us. For example, many white South Africans have altered their ethics over the past twenty years in order to accommodate a new truth that resulted from the end of Apartheid and the introduction of democratic governance. Whereas, in the past, many white South Africans held on to the opinion that they were a superior minority group in the country, in the post-apartheid period they have had to change their ideas of White supremacy in order to accept a new ‘truth’ – the truth that all people are equal, regardless of race, and are entitled to equal rights and opportunities. The espousal of a new set of circumstances obviously happens at different times for different people, and many white South Africans still cling to their former notions of ‘truth’, and have as yet to accept the change that the new political dispensation catalyses. To a large extent, Badiou’s argument for an ethics of engagement has revolutionised my perception of truth, and I think it can be usefully linked to notions of memory as developed above. He suggests that human beings will change their perceptions as soon as a more promising alternative is offered to them, just as they will change the state of their memories to adjust to a new suggestion of truth. Many white South Africans have chosen to forget the atrocities that occurred during the Apartheid years, possibly because this suits them. It is far easier to forget something than deal with the consequences of disturbing memories. Here one is reminded of Ricoeur’s notion of memory and forgetting, where he argues that ‘we enchain, abandon and resume several histories’ in the act of constantly redefining one’s past in the present (1998:186).

Badiou speaks of the truth process (Badiou in Fisher, 2005:248) where a particular event, whether it be a political rally, a conversation or a piece of theatre, can offer a new alternative to someone’s pre-existing ‘truth’. It is then one’s ‘commitment and fidelity to that which is

disclosed by the circumstances of a particular event...that helps to encounter an emerging truth that can ultimately force us towards an ethical confrontation or choice : the recognition of the truth of an event compels us to decide a new way of being' (Fisher, 2005:248). Badiou seeks the disclosure of the truth of a situation, as opposed to some generalised concept of human rights, since every situation one encounters confronts one with a different way to react. For example, cannibalism is something severely frowned upon by most cultures but there have been situations in human history where, for example, survivors of a plane crash were forced to eat the bodies of those who had already died as a means to survive. In an ordinary situation these people would be considered the most dangerous and psychotically ill of individuals, but in the context of their particular situation society is able to accept their choice of behavior. Thus, Badiou places a great deal of emphasis on situation. Fisher explains,

Rather than seeking to try to find an absolute, predetermined definition of what this 'truth' might be, we should instead focus on how we experience it in each of the particular, concrete situations we encounter. It is therefore our recognition of the human in the situation that enables us to see the truth of a situation (Fisher, 2005:249).

At the heart of the theatrical event lies a dichotomy of responses. In watching and sometimes participating in a theatrical event one is always aware that it is not real, that the very nature of theatre involves some form of fantasy. At the same time, however, because one is able to give oneself permission to follow the 'make believe' nature of the theatrical event, one may find that one allows oneself to respond more openly to the truths that emerge from the performance. The theatrical event, as opposed to other events, allows one enough distance from which to view the event without ever feeling directly confronted or threatened. Thus, it is with an open mind that facilitators and actors must approach the theatre event. Rather than allowing the audience to exit the performance space with preconceived notions of their situation (prior to the theatre event)

still in place, it is preferable if they are able to experience the theatrical event and see if this experience sheds light on their current situation.

Sometimes communities will be unaware of their current situations because, as with all realities, one is led to believe that it is the only possible way of understanding the reality in which one lives. It is the task of the facilitator and actors to question this reality, and the memories on which this reality is based, by offering other ways of being that could prove more beneficial to the audience. In challenging pre-existing situations that have been fashioned by a particular selection of memories and relative truths, one calls into being the notion that each human being may be able to exercise the capacity to change their situation if they can envision alternatives that might allow them, in their very specific situation, to live better lives. I shall be discussing the implications of these ideas further with reference to my own experience with the Great Iron Drama Group in the ensuing chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: MY FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE WITH KHETHANI RESIDENTS

This chapter seeks to draw one the above chapters of *Community Development*, *Community Belonging* and *Individual Change* and to make connections between the theoretical ideas expressed in the chapters with the workshopped material and theatre that was created in the Khethani community during my fieldwork project. I have chosen specific examples of workshop processes; discussions and ideas that emerged over the course of the project which I feel practically illustrate the theoretical notions that have been discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four.

The chapter begins by examining the community of Khethani in the light of my arguments towards community development and addresses the various developmental and communal issues which influenced and motivated our work as a group. It considers the notion of development within the township and examines ways in which development initiatives over the years have come to influence the way the Great Iron Drama Group came to perceive the development initiative that we created together.

The second section of this chapter, *Belonging*, examines the particular ideological identity of the township as constructed through the use of collective memory. It speculates about possible memories and historical significances that may have influenced the construction of Khethani's current identity and it goes on to examine what happens to a theatre practitioner when one does not share the same memories and experiences with the community with whom one is working. Here my experience as a heterophilous facilitator is explored by investigating my responses to being an outsider, of having a first hand experience of how it felt to be cast as the other through

the politics of belonging, and how this outsider status came to help the developmental aims of the project.

The last section of this chapter, *Change*, examines the changes that occurred with regard to my ideologies as a result of the theatre event. It reflects my own journey as a Tfd practitioner and considers the possibility of individual change through the theatre event as experienced by myself through the course of the project. It seeks to investigate my opinions, ideologies and beliefs before the project and reflects how the luminal space in which our theatre was created came to challenge my assumptions. It considers how the theatre event can serve to create a bridge between pre-existing notions and the new realities and ideas that are made evident through the theatre event.

## **Development**

Our work of creating and workshopping productions followed closely the tenets of Theatre-for-Development. One of my major aims from the beginning was that the group was to regulate itself and provide the rules that governed all our behaviour, including my own. In following on from philosophies of other Tfd initiatives, I wanted to be a heterophilous facilitator who merely sets up the structures through which the group could create their own objectives, goals and projects. In using participatory theatre methods, my aim was to involve each member of the group in the process of workshopping, ensuring that each individual voice was heard in the facilitation, workshopping, rehearsal and performance of the work (Stockil: 2007c). (My role as a heterophilous director will be explored in the section of this chapter that deals with belonging.)

One of our major concerns was to create a forum in which the ideas of the group could be exchanged with the audience in a shared medium of communication. We did this by creating theatre that was of relevance to the community and that expressed some of the social issues and concerns of the community and, in doing so, opened up a space in which these issues could then be discussed by both actors and audiences alike (Stockil: 2007d). In our first workshopped performance, *Gender Play*, the girls of Great Iron led group discussions after the performances, with the audience members, in which questions were asked and where audience members were simply encouraged to reflect on what they saw during the performance and, in so doing, were able to reflect on how they felt about the representation of the issues on stage, and to suggest how these issues could be dealt with in the future. Obviously, these discussions did not start an immediate ideological revolution, but they did provoke some thought and debate and were hopefully a means through which people were given a forum to discuss previously silenced issues (Stockil: 2007d).

As already discussed, our theatre was grounded in the experiences of the group members and thus, the performances came to reflect many of the shared experiences of what it is like being a member of the Khethani community. Our theatre did not seek to solve the issues highlighted in performances but they were problem-oriented and of relevance to the social world of Khethani, and sought rather to ask questions and also to stimulate discussions within the group itself and then, later, with the audiences who came to watch the performances. In many cases, it was the discussions, which came about as a result of the process of our workshopping a play, that were the most vital and beneficial. Our discussions regarding HIV/AIDS and how we wanted it to be portrayed in *Peponjero*, for example, created a forum in which we could all safely discuss our

opinions regarding the virus and how we perceived it to be positioned within the community.

This was beneficial as we were able not only to hear the opinions of others, but also explore how these opinions came to be formed through the media, the government, education and the group members' interaction with family members, as well as within the broader community (Stockil: 2007d).

In developing a performance aesthetic and performance tradition, we learnt to negotiate ways of interacting and listening to each other in order for our work to be honest and representative of all opinions. This, at times, proved to be cumbersome and frustrating, because the issues with which our performances dealt were significant to the group, and each group member felt differently about them. This meant that negotiation between group members had to take place in order to reach consensus as to how we wanted the issues portrayed in the performance. Through this negotiation, modes of communication and discipline emerged which were a result of our concerted effort to create theatre in a democratic and open forum. This was perhaps more of a success than the work itself. Thus, for example, the men in the group, in workshoping our play about women's issues, came to a far better understanding of the issues that women in Khethani face, through the discussions they had with the women in the group. At the same time, it was extremely beneficial for the women to be able to voice their opinions and not be suppressed by the rigid communication barriers that normally impede their expression of personal opinions (Stockil: 2007d). Thus, I would argue that our work was more process than product driven, as it was in the moments of rehearsal where the real ethos of development emerged, as the group found ways in which to express their concerns and fears in an atmosphere of respect and upliftment, and that negotiated new ways of perceiving and thus dealing with problems.

In creating this project, I chose to conduct and facilitate our work using the tenets of TfD as a guide. Because I was working in a community and had defined the personal aim of being an optimally heterophilous practitioner with certain developmental goals in mind – which became clearer to me as our project grew - I realised that, in order for our project to be both a success for myself, from an academic vantage, and of benefit to the community in which I was working, I would have to follow the rules of TfD that would ensure that the needs of both parties would be met (Stockil: 2007a).

The following exercise, which I will describe in brief, was created during the period of workshopping our second performance, *Peponjero*. It will be discussed in the light of my proposed arguments regarding development and, in particular TfD, pursued in Chapter 2.

After a discussion prompted by various comments made about the validity of colonization and a general misunderstanding of how colonial influences have shaped South Africa, I designed an exercise that I hoped would illustrate practically to the group how South Africa has changed, and is constantly changing, in order to fit in with First World structures.

I used the machine exercise as the means through which to explore the concept of colonisation. I had two people create a bread 'machine'. Khethiwe was mixing the dough, Ncamsile was putting it in an oven. I then had Small enter into the machine space and alter the relationship of the two people making the bread. I told him that he had to somehow change the roles of the bread makers. He did this by making the bread makers swap their roles - the person mixing the dough was now putting it in the oven. I then had Lucky come into the space and take half the bread loaves away. Following on from this, Mzie then told the two bread makers to work faster and

create more bread. Lastly, I had Sibonelo, Xholi and Manely join the machine, offering to help (Stockil: 2007d).

After we had completed the exercise, I had the group reflect on how they had felt during the exercise – what they thought had worked in helping to make the bread and what had not worked. I then asked them to look at the exercise from the perspective that the original way of making bread represented South Africa before it was colonised. I was careful not to create the impression that South Africa was perfect in the time of pre-colonisation, but what I wanted to suggest was that there was a system at work that existed before the Europeans arrived. After much discussion, we then suggested that the actions performed by the various members of the group during the exercise could represent the various groups of people who came to colonise and develop South Africa (Stockil: 2007d). The first person who changed the way the machine worked was identified by the group as a representation of the European missionaries in South Africa (Stockil: 2007d). The second person who came in and took some of the bread was identified as both the Voortrekkers and the British, who came in and seized the land and resources of local inhabitants (Stockil: 2007e). The next person represented the industrialization and westernization of South Africa (Stockil: 2007e). The last three people were then seen as various organisations, whether governmental or private, who are concerned with helping South African communities today (Stockil: 2007e).

The above exercise dealt with the changing role of development within South Africa and, in part, in Khethani itself. The group could identify very clearly the shifts in hegemonies and power structures during the exercise, with very little prompting from me as a facilitator. Although they had not experienced some of the earlier systems of governance in South Africa, they were able to

recognise them partly because of their collective memory of these systems. It was interesting to note that the group's understanding of the term 'colonisation' became far more apparent when the practical implications of what was initially a vague term for the group were demonstrated in a simple, practical illustration (Stockil:2007d). The group responded very positively to this exercise as, suddenly, the notions of development and community change were depicted in a manner which they could understand and identify with, in relation to their own heritage and memories.

The exercise sought to illustrate the changing role of development and how it was used as a means to retain control over indigenous communities in South Africa. Although one may argue that some of the earlier interventions, such as the missionary work in South Africa were done with worthy, if somewhat misguided, intentions, the implicitly top-down approach to development (as promoted by missionaries and both British and Afrikaner imperialism) severely hampered any real chance for communities to develop in a manner that allowed for self-governance and communal empowerment. The huge leap from the rigid control and Calvinist doctrines of apartheid to a complete democracy in 1994 had a major impact on communities like Khethani, which impact, I would argue, was perhaps not as positive as people would have hoped it to be. To have lived under rigid hegemonic structures for as long as rural 'black' South Africans have, has sometimes resulted in what I would term a 'frustrated submissiveness' (Stockil: 2007d). Although during the apartheid years people were thwarted by the conditions under which they were forced to live, most had never known an alternative and had never lived without the limitation of a racist ideology. With the onset of change in governance in South Africa in 1994 came the undertaking to alter the incongruities between 'black' and 'white' South

Africans' living standards through a major shift from 'White' hegemony to democracy. It has, however, taken a long time for the effects of national legislation to trickle down into the lower strata of society. People were expecting change to happen far more quickly than it did, impeded at every step by mismanagement at local levels and dishonesty at a national level, which has left many people as poor and disadvantaged as they were in the old South Africa, but still waiting expectantly for the national promises for change to begin to have an impact on their daily lives (Stockil: 2007d).

The bread machine exercise sought to explore the above changes in social structure by looking at the practical implications of national legislation and its effect on a specific community and, in the case of this project, Khethani township. It also sought to illustrate how all of these modes of development still prevail within communities today. The exercise was not necessarily strictly accurate chronologically but, for the purpose of structuring it, I chose to layer the development of change in a way that created an understanding of how development initiatives have widened and progressed over the years. The group, however, were able to identify, for example, how missionary-oriented work still goes on in their township, and here they used the example of the Simunye Project. Thus, the exercise was used to explore modes of development rather than the history of development, although it did help to clarify the various foreign influences which aided in changing South Africa with the arrival of various colonial and global influences (Stockil:2007e). Our discussion, in the light of the bread exercise, led us to consider different modes of community structuring and change; from top-down hegemonic governance to multicultural and global ideologies, all of which influence the way a community perceives itself and thus functions as a collective of people (Stockil:2007d).

Amongst the members of Great Iron, the response to our project, as well as other developmental projects in Khethani, was twofold. Some members of the group were extremely grateful for the project, stating that they could never do such endeavours by themselves as their efforts would be frowned upon and perhaps even sabotaged by jealous members of their community (Stockil:2007a). Khethiwe at one point even commented that, in reference to community development initiatives in Khethani, the difference between black and white South Africans is that 'white people care' (Stockil:2007e). This is not a testament to implicitly uncharitable qualities of black South Africans but, I would argue, is rather a reflection of how, although the politics have changed, some people's investment in ideas of power and authority are still caught in a pre-1994 (i.e. Apartheid era) mindset, whereby things are divided between black and white South Africans. Other members of the group, Mzie particularly, had major reservations about the role that 'white' people have in his community. In our discussion, after exploring the bread machine exercise, he commented (and to a large extent I concur with this view) that the arrival of white European colonisers in Southern Africa heralded a change within indigenous tribes that was autocratic and lacked any real concern for the colonised subject (Stockil:2007e).

Our discussion of the development of South Africa led the group to discuss the current problem of HIV, and its relation to social change in Africa and South Africa in particular. Some group members went as far as saying that they did not think HIV exists at all and that it's the 'white man's problem' (Stockil: 2007d). Mzie said that he had heard that it had been created by 'white' people to control 'black' people (Stockil: 2007e). This then led me to ask the group if we had all had HIV tests and only three of the nine of us had been tested (Stockil: 2007d). The majority of

the group acknowledged that HIV is a legitimate disease but it was the few, such as Mzie, who inspired us to focus on HIV and its relation to social change for our next performance, because there are many people in Khethani who share his sentiments (Stockil: 2007d). The trenchancy of his argument and its popular currency is supported by local research in the field of HIV/AIDS. Reid, Walker and Cornell report that ‘unsurprisingly in apartheid South Africa, racial and political attitudes strongly influenced people attitudes to AIDS. Some blacks argued that whites had deliberately spread the disease and that promotion of condom use was a racist device to curb the growth of the African population’ (2004: 13)

The irony regarding Mzie, however, was that, although he was wary of white people because throughout the history of South Africa they have been the oppressors who undermined and controlled the community to which he belongs, he was possibly the most responsive and inspired by works by white people such as Korina Lemmer and her HIV art exhibition (Stockil: 2007d). Lemmer is a white Afrikaans woman who works within the Khethani community to better the lives of women living and dealing with HIV/AIDS. The exposure to her work changed Mzie’s perceptions and allowed us to re-evaluate our regard for development and its somewhat shifting role within a community. We came to realise that, depending on the context and the involvement of the community, development initiatives can sometimes be positive, sometimes negative and sometimes both.

## **Belonging**

The second section of this case study deals with the notion of belonging and, specifically, my role as a catalyst within the group. I have chosen the following workshopping process of our

second play, *Peponjero*, from which to start my discussion on belonging. The following is a report in my journal written after our first week of workshopping the play *Peponjero*.

My role in the creation of our second play has altered drastically from our first play. It seems that the entire group knows the world of our imaginary village that we created through various workshopping exercises far more than I do, and so I often ask them questions about the village and they all respond with exactly the same sentiments as each other. They are all adamant that the village be run by men and that the women are subservient to the men. When I question this, even the women (who I consider to be headstrong and far more powerful than the men) are resolute that this is the way their community should function. Thus, I have become somewhat of an outsider to the world of the play, often playing the devil's advocate by questioning why they are making certain choices.

Regardless of how hard I have tried to alienate the world of our imaginary village from the reality of the group, they continue to embed the world with their own personal feelings, opinions and cultural behaviours. I realise that despite my initial attempts to alienate the group from a personal narrative, they are resolute in their collective creation of a world that mirrors the ideology of their community; thus, I have allowed them complete ownership of the story (Stockil: 2007d).

The world which the group chose to represent was based on their perception and memories of how Zulu communities existed pre-colonisation. The geographical location of the play was based on the image of a rural, agrarian village in the mountains that is secluded from the rest of the

world and that very rarely receives any strangers in its midst. The social world of the play is as follows. The men can have more than one wife and the women have to be subservient to the men. The women also must wear traditional clothes and, when communicating with the men, they have to look down when they speak. All decisions made regarding the community are made by the King of the village and his advisors. The healer is the main source of information from the ancestors, as well as the person one goes to in order to be healed. People from outside the village are not allowed to marry someone in the village. Large emphasis was also placed on culture and a respect for culture, as well as a need to preserve this culture in the face of change (Stockil: 2007e).

We worked on the creation of this play for a month and a half. Often various discussions would surface as we delved deeper into the world of the play and the collective consciousness of the group. My major objective was to use the metaphor of this village as a symbol for the consciousness of my group. My next step was to then question what would happen to this community, this collective consciousness, when something entirely foreign entered into it. The thing that entered did not have to be entirely bad or good, it could be both. I wanted to see how the group would respond to this new presence. This foreign thing came in the form of Francoise, who was a traveler who happened to stumble across the village. It was interesting to note that Mzie chose the name 'Francoise' as he said he wanted it to be as European and as 'white' as possible (Stockil: 2007e). This was perhaps a subconscious steering back to his opinion that it had been the arrival of white people that has led to what he perceives to be the major problems currently taking place in Africa. Her arrival results in a multitude of things going wrong in the community. Contrary to social customs and warnings from the healer, the King marries

Francoise and her arrival results in floods, disease and the death of many villagers. The girl's arrival is not entirely bad however; she suggests new ways of farming that would result in far more crops and livestock, and she suggests new forms of sanitation in the community that would help to alleviate the outbreak of disease. For the group, the initial idea was that this foreigner brought a disease (like HIV) into their community. The more we worked, however, the more it became evident that perhaps the disease was not entirely her fault and so, although she encountered a number of community taboos, ultimately she saves the King from dying (Stockil: 2007d). We thus came to understand the multidimensionality of HIV – that there is no-one who is entirely to blame, and that factors both inside and outside a community aid in the spread of the virus.

For all the members of Great Iron, Khethani has been the only place they have ever lived. Many of their ancestors came from isolated rural areas and moved closer to Winterton to seek employment. If one were to look even further back in history, one would note that the group are all descendents of Shaka Zulu's powerful nation which was established in pre-colonial Kwa-Zulu – a fact of which all the group members are extremely proud (Stockil: 2007d). It was this powerful link to the pre-colonial past that emerged through the workshop process of our second performance, which has led me to examine the notion of collective memory in the group, and how this relates directly to a sense of belonging and community.

My initial aim in workshopping our second play was to establish a fantasy community based firmly on Bertolt Brecht's techniques of alienation and historicisation, in order to move away from the representations of Khethani, and to create a world that was new and exciting and that explored other ways of being and interacting with people. It was my hope that in allowing

creative freedom, the group could create a world in which the possibility for social change was heightened by the sense that they were not constrained by their particular community's rigid social hierarchies and expectations. In many ways, however, the opposite occurred.

Regardless of my interrogation as to their choices, the group seemed determined to represent a world that resembled the way they perceive the Zulu culture (Stockil: 2007d). Some group members in fact knew less than me about their own culture and had to be taught how to dance, interact and socialise in the traditional Zulu way, because they had not grown up in families where those traditional Zulu behaviours are still practiced (Stockil:2007d).

The Zulu culture which the group chose to represent was based on the popular memory the group had of how Zulu society must have been in the time of Shaka Zulu. This era, for many Zulu people, is seen as the zenith of their culture, a time when the Zulu nation was revered and respected by other peoples in Southern Africa (Stockil: 2007d). (Thus it was not surprising that the social milieu of that time would seek to be reinterpreted within the social frameworks of the present.) The group chose to redefine their sense of home, even if this home no longer exists geographically or (to an extent) socially. They chose to represent their heritage in a collective re-interpretation of the past which was linked undeniably to the notions of memory and identity. In doing so, they were able to select elements of the past that served as clear distinctions from their present society (Stockil: 2007d). It was fascinating to watch individual group members often willingly forgoing their own personal philosophies in order to remain faithful to the collective memory of the group. Khethiwe, for example, one of the most powerful members of the group, who very rarely allowed the men in the group to over-ride her personal opinions, was the one who suggested that the woman in their imaginary village be subservient to men (Stockil: 2007e).

This reiterated the fact that in the act of seeking to belong to a memory, which is greater than the mere remembrances of individual consciousness, an individual will renegotiate and alter his/her personal notions to comply with the collective memory of the group. This made me realise how often I will undermine my own memories of an event, a person or a place, to ensure that I 'remember' things the way most other people are choosing to remember them (Stockil: 2007d). I would, however, suggest that this is somewhat dangerous as it means that Zulu women, for example, are encouraged to remember a social positioning that is not necessarily beneficial to them and, because they do not want to be perceived as disparate, they will acquiesce as a means to ensure that they continue to belong to their particular group, even if this is to their detriment.

The notion of belonging then brought my own role within the group to the fore. As already stated, I sought to create a facilitation style that reflected Mda's notion of optimal heterophily (Stockil: 2007c). I acknowledged that although I knew a fair deal about Khethani and the social world in which the group members lived, I had never been a part of this world and all of my perceptions were based on the premise that I was an outsider; a somewhat informed outsider, but an outsider nevertheless. Thus, my role as a catalyst was to bring in my outsider knowledge of theatre skills and experience, and to pair this with the life experiences of the group in order to create socially conscious, yet at the same time, theatrically effective performances.

It then became increasingly interesting for me to observe the process that evolved during our workshopping of *Peponjero*. In choosing to create a play based on a collective memory which I did not share with the group, I was excluded from helping in the decision-making regarding the social structuring of the invented village (Stockil: 2007d). I was the observer, the outsider, and this gave me a favourable vantage from which to direct the performance. Because the group had

such a clear sense of how their village functioned socially, and they all collectively agreed on the rules that governed the village, I was able to question many of the current beliefs linked to Khethani and the greater Zulu culture, simply as a means to understand the social world of their village. This then allowed me to question and challenge why certain behaviours and rules exist within this culture. I was able, for example, to question why men have to be the head of a community and why women, and not men, have their virginity tested, and why women have to be subservient to men (Stockil: 2007d). The means through which to question all these notions came in the form of the character Françoise, who enters into the village and challenges all of its rules and designated hierarchical roles. In many cases, the group were unable to explain why these rules were as they were, and why they still clung to these archaic notions of culture in a social world where they are obviously not as effective as they used to be (Stockil: 2007e).

I wanted to discover, along with the group, what happens when changes are suggested to a community. Some of these changes may not be of benefit to the community, but some of them may be vital to the continuing survival of the community and their culture. Many communities have problems dealing with change and progress, and one should not force them into altering age-old customs and traditions. It is my belief, however, that it is many of these age-old customs and beliefs that have led to the rapid decline in social order and to the devastating growth of AIDS-related deaths in Khethani. The need to remain as faithful to the Zulu culture as possible in a time when Zulu people are no longer able to live the traditional Zulu lifestyle, has led to the formation of a hybrid culture in which communities try to be both tribal while at the same time allowing for Western influences to change their culture. Reid, Walker and Cornell argue that ‘earlier cultures are being reinvented in modern South Africa and traditional culture today bears

little relation to culture 150 years ago' (2004: 64). I am of the opinion that it is the hegemonic structures within the Zulu culture that use elements of both the Zulu and Western cultures as a means to control and reaffirm systems of power that are detrimental to the community (Stockil: 2007d). Judging by the current sexual behavioural patterns and accountability concerns within Khethani, it is of no surprise to me that Kwa-Zulu Natal has the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world. (<http://gateway.nlm.nih.gov/MeetingAbstracts/ma?f=102242534.html>).

My next observation in regard to the politics of belonging and how the sense of being a part of a larger community gives an individual an identity within a collective group, led me to the realisation that not only was I, as an outsider, being excluded from being a part of the group, but that HIV/AIDS too does not belong within the collective memory of the community, and thus it does not belong in the current ideological world of Khethani. One frequently hears of AIDS-related deaths, but it is seldom that these deaths are openly linked to HIV/AIDS (During: 2007). People in Khethani die of tuberculosis, pneumonia, bewitching, curses, stomach problems and so on, but very rarely from HIV. The reasons for this aversion to being tested, disclosing one's status and then discussing the consequences of what it means to live and die with the virus, are extremely complicated and I do not plan to discuss them in too much detail, as it is a multifaceted field. I would, however, like to suggest that, in the light of what I came to learn through the project, HIV does not belong within the collective memory and consciousness of Khethani. From the outset the battle with HIV/AIDS has been as much a battle of ideas as of health care and disease prevention (Reid et al, 2004: 7). Because of the controversial debates surrounding it, which challenge its very existence, and because one cannot physically identify the exact physical symptoms of the virus, it is very difficult to provide a fixed identity for this

virus. Add to this the various political debates at a national level about the link between HIV and AIDS, and various political faux pas (such as a much respected Zulu politician, Jacob Zuma, commenting that having a shower after sleeping with an HIV-positive person will prevent the spread of the virus), and one can understand the confusion which stems from the ideology regarding HIV/AIDS (Stockil: 2007d).

The general lack of formal education in Khethani also adds to a very problematic understanding of the general biological principles of the virus (During: 2007). For many who have never received a formal education it would be difficult to understand how HIV is physically spread. Thus, HIV/AIDS is difficult to understand on various levels, the more so because it lacks the general characteristics that are related to diseases such as tuberculosis. It is far easier to alienate HIV from the social world of Khethani than to have to deal with its silent and obscure killing.

Although, as discussed above, there were some problematic concerns for myself, as a heterophilous facilitator, in relation to what was revealed through our workshop process in regard to HIV and the ideological social structuring of our make believe village, I have to acknowledge the success that this process had for the group (Stockil: 2007d). A tangible sense of pride and ownership developed through the workshop process, and this was made evident in the performance of *Peponjero*. This was because the group was able to construct a theatrical world where they were able to represent the mythical qualities of their ethnic past in a manner which both respected and celebrated their culture. We were able to negotiate a way in which issues were dealt with inside this imaginary community without ever laying blame on specific behaviours, practices or beliefs, thus highlighting the multidimensionality of HIV and the issues related to social change within Khethani (Stockil: 2007a). The open forum through which we

discussed all aspects of the workshop process meant that we were able to steer away from the generic facts about HIV/AIDS, and rather delve into the group's individual and collective beliefs about the virus. In doing so, an ethos of truth, respect and open-mindedness developed as each of us had to reassess our own responses to HIV in the light of how we, as a group, chose to reflect it on stage. Thus, we developed our own sense of belonging; a sense based on the premise that, in order to belong, one has to be honest with the group and, in doing so, develop a tolerance and acceptance of differences in group opinion and belief (Stockil: 2007a).

## **Change**

It is extremely difficult to qualify and quantify human change with any real measure of accuracy. How does one gauge change in other individuals, especially when this change involves a change in consciousness? One may argue that one finds the evidence of change in how the behavior of the individual alters. Thus, one negotiates the evidence of change by seeing how the behavioural change in an individual mirrors the cognitive changes within his/her consciousness. One of the principle aims of the TfD practitioner is to facilitate theatrical events in which a suggestion for change is proposed, where the individual is given the choice as to whether they want to change or not (Stockil: 2007a). This was one of my primary aims, and this philosophy of individual choice is suspended in a theatrical moment that is, in itself, difficult to quantify. Thus, one must rest in the fact that one is offering alternatives and new ways of being, without ever necessarily knowing if these suggestions are brought to fruition. Obviously, in some cases dramatic, visible changes occur as a result of the change that TfD suggests. In the case of my work in Khethani, the issues that we dealt with were highly complex and multidimensional, and thus, the changes

that our theatre proposed were orientated on the premise that the actors and audience members alike had the opportunity to reflect on how these issues affected them personally.

With the above notion to consider, in the light of this thesis and the theatre project in Khethani, I have sought to principally reflect on my own personal change that occurred during the course of the project. I feel it would be inaccurate and unethical to try to deliberate the extent to which I feel the project influenced and changed both the members of the group and the community with whom they interacted. There have, however, been certain changes that have occurred in the lives of the group members since the project's conclusion and these I will discuss once I have reflected on my own process of change.

I entered into this process extremely wary and mindful of how my own positioning within the community was going to influence the work that The Great Iron Drama Group were going to produce (Stockil: 2007c). As already stated, I was not entirely an outsider to the community of Khethani. Having grown up in the area and having had various family members directly involved in the development of Khethani, I was acutely aware of how my positioning as a 'white' farmer's daughter could perhaps be detrimental, or be considered as an advantage in the process of facilitating this project. It never actually occurred to me that it would be neither. This is perhaps because I consciously chose to practice being the outside heterophilous facilitator, and I tried to ensure that who I was as an individual, and how I felt about the issues that we dealt with, did not colour the way in which we workshopped and performed our theatre. During the process of this project, there were several issues dealt with that I feel greatly altered both my perception of Khethani and, to a large extent, how I felt about myself. Sometimes the changes that happened to my perceptions regarding certain issues were entirely my own, and at other times we as a group

all came to recognise how our work came to broaden our perception of these issues, thus allowing us the space in which to change ( if we wanted to) (Stockil: 2007a).

Perhaps the greatest change in my own perception was regarding the ideas I had about HIV (Stockil: 2007a). For me, HIV has always been a very simple concept, a non-negotiable biological fact. Having been exposed to white South Africans living with HIV from my early teens, it was never a case of my perception being that it is ‘a black disease’ (Stockil: 2008), as is the case with many people – especially those of European descent. HIV is a very real virus, and one which had significantly influenced my development as an individual. One can then imagine my frustration in being part of a group where some of the individuals did not agree with my opinions regarding HIV. I had to be extremely careful (in my role as a heterophilous facilitator) that I did not allow my own opinions on the issue to influence the creation of *Peponjero*. This was by far my largest challenge during the project, as I really had to practice what Fisher refers to as ‘disinterested interest’, where one must allow for the truth process of the community to emerge while making a conscious choice to detach oneself and to not allow one’s own views to be reflected in the work (Fisher, 2005: 249).

When the very existence of HIV came into question, as precipitated by Mzie’s comments about the reality of the virus, I had to make a concerted effort to allow for his truth process to emerge so that we, as a group, could interrogate his views and see, through the process of workshopping and discussion, whether we found some validity to his claim that HIV does not exist, and his further claims that if it does exist it has been created by ‘white’ people as a means through which to control ‘black’ people (Stockil: 2007e). In talking with him and hearing his view, and in trying to be as open-minded as possible, I found my view on HIV expanding to accommodate the

experience and opinion of Mzie's with regard to HIV. One could see how his opinion regarding HIV has developed. When one lives in a black South African community where very little worthy social interaction with white people takes place, and the only interaction that does take place is a top-down interaction between various aid and charity organisations, one can see how this can result in a feeling that the 'white' community (and in this case the people of Winterton) are problem-free, and that they use HIV as a means to control the 'black' community (the people of Khethani). Add to this the fact that 'white' people do not seem to be dying from the virus and one can get a general sense of why Mzie felt that HIV as a disease does not exist, because it is seemingly selective about who it affects (Stockil:2007d).

The second major shift I experienced with regard to my perception of Khethani occurred when we explored the idea of gender within the group and the community at large. Because Khethani is run by patriarchal systems of governance, I was under the impression that all the men in the group would fit into my stereotypical image of a young black Zulu man. To be more specific, I thought that they would be far more empowered and domineering, and that they would completely overshadow the women. This, however, was not so. When it came to discussions regarding the ideologies that we hoped to instill in our performances, it was more often than not the women who would lead the discussion and make the final decisions regarding the content of the performances. This, to a large extent, perhaps reflects the types of personalities we had in the group, in that the women were generally more outspoken and communicative, but even so, I was surprised by the amount of decision-making power the women in the group had. There were, however, times when my initial presumptions were correct. For instance, when it came to cleaning the venue in which we worked, the women always immediately began sweeping and

cleaning whereas the men refused to help. When I insisted that they helped, they did a very ineffective job and stopped after approximately five minutes (Stockil: 2007d). What I found most interesting was that, for the men, it was the physical signs of dominance and gender supremacy that they were most aware of (refusing to make snacks to be sold at performances, for example), whereas the women actually dominated them entirely when it came to the major aspects of our group's behavior, such as decision-making, the creation of rules and deciding on where the group was headed in terms of performance-related issues.

Coupled with this notion of gender dominance is an issue that worked hand-in-hand with the power relations, and this was the authority that someone earning money in the group had. Even though men traditionally are more powerful in Khethani, there is another factor which has as much influence over power relations within the community. Two of the women, Khethiwe and Ncamisile, had jobs in the local post office. They approached me at the beginning of the project, asking if I could make the daily meeting times of the group at the same time as their lunch break, so that they could become members of the group. I agreed and thus, although I had initially stated that I wanted to be working with unemployed people, I was impressed with the women's dedication and was willing to accommodate them (Stockil: 2007a). Although there were obviously various other factors at play, I did observe that, even though these two women had very different personalities and approaches to leadership, both the women commanded respect from the other group members and I accredit at least some of this respect to the fact that they both had jobs, a valuable commodity in Khethani. A few weeks into the project the group made some interesting observations with regards to status and employment in Khethani. Mzic's following thoughts catalyzed the discussion as documented in my journal,

‘Mzie bought up an interesting point. He said that people who have jobs are automatically respected, so even those younger than him are respected more because they generate an income. He was saying that his family is having a party for his dead grandfather and he is being made to do everything while everyone sits around doing nothing, because they have so-called jobs. Mzie commented that having somewhere to go at 2 o’clock (our meeting time) has been a great relief for him because he can point to his watch and leave, regardless of what everyone wants him to do’ (Stockil: 2007d).

The dynamic between income and status has certainly altered the way in which I perceived the social structure of Khethani. Thus, my initial perception regarding power relations changed over the course of the project as I came to see how disempowered the men were in their community, because they did not have jobs. At times, I felt as if they used the project as a platform from which to reassert some notion of dominance, in refusing to clean the floor for example, but I now see this as a means to find some area of their lives where they could use their positioning in terms of gender as a means to reaffirm their worth.

Perhaps the most important individual change that occurred to me during this project was when I was able to make peace with my ‘whiteness’ and the inherent guilt I felt as a privileged white South African. Although I have not entirely disregarded how my positioning as a white South African has profoundly affected the kind of person I have become, in terms of the liberties afforded to me and my ancestors because of being ‘white’, I have come to realise that that my guilt and self-resentment are my own burdens, and that other people do not judge me simply because of my skin colour. At no stage did the group ever need me to justify the faults of the past, nor did they place blame on me. This perhaps reflects my own extreme sense of guilt more than anything else, and this project enabled me to face my guilt head-on and to find that it existed mainly in my head, and not within the consciousness of the other group members. This change was significant and was the greatest form of individual consciousness change that I went through as a result of this project (Stockil: 2007a).

As already stated, it would be impossible for me to assess the changes that occurred to other group members during the project, without having any of my own views influence my opinion. I will, however, document the responses that the group had to our post project discussion, conducted a month after the end of the project. This discussion revealed that all the group members felt that they had undergone various ideological changes during the process of creating theatre with each other. Some of the most common observations were that they all felt that they had grown in confidence, and that the communication skills developed during the project have helped them to talk and negotiate in a manner that is disciplined and ordered (Stockil: 2007a). They also expressed a great appreciation for the friendships they had forged over the six months. They felt that the project challenged their assumptions about each other and many of the stereotypes that they approached the project with in regards to other group members. They all expressed a sense of achievement and pride in the work they had created, and were amazed at how much they were able to accomplish in such a short time (Stockil: 2007a). I am not sure how the actual content of our work has influenced their lives or to what extent; whether Mzie, for example, has come to see HIV in a new light. The important factor one needs to remember about change through a theatrical event, however, is that its power relies on an individual's recognition of a new suggested truth and, although this is not made apparent to other people, it does not mean that ideological change has not occurred.

Three of the group members decided to continue their studies and these were dreams that they expressed during a session with Chrissy Jeske (a volunteer for the Youth Empowerment Business Organisation) (Stockil: 2007d). One may not be sure whether the project motivated them to fulfill their dreams, but one cannot deny that it did not. Small, someone whose former

choices with regard to lifestyle proved to be extremely trying at times, came to a far more healthy outlook in relation to both his regard for his own life and to the lives of those around him. After noting his absence at our post-project discussion, I discovered that he had moved to Durban to work with his uncle in the taxi business. Xholiswa was able to do a month-long course through the Arts and Culture Department that trained her to be a theatre facilitator. She completed the course and now has the skills to begin her own project if she wants to. Khethiwe and Ncamsile both received promotions at the post office, and Lucky is looking into applying to universities (Stockil: 2007a).

## CONCLUSION

I began this project with one very clear aim for myself – to try and follow Mda's philosophy of optimal heterophily as a TfD practitioner. I aimed to facilitate a project in which my skills as a theatre practitioner could be used by a community to create theatre that represented the ideology of the community with regard to culture, communication and development. I was acutely aware of my own social positioning within the group and thus endeavored not to allow my own impulses and responses to issues to hamper the group's own opinions regarding their community. This works well in theory, but it took time for me to discover ways in which I could delve into the ideological workings of the community, through the Great Iron Drama Group, in order to create TfD that would be of relevance and import to the Khethani community.

I learnt, through the project, that a way to interrogate a community's current social milieu is to identify how the community came to be the way it is through the use of collective memory. In order to understand the community, I had to determine what it means to belong to this community, what the collective memories are that hold the community together and, in doing so, I had to discover what it was to be an outsider, to be someone who is not able to partake in the process of collective remembering. The power which these collective memories had, in both unifying Khethani while at the same time limiting individuals, led me to question the effects of collective memory and the continuing power it has to replicate customs, behaviours and beliefs that can sometimes be harmful to the community and individuals in the community.

Having made this ideological discovery through workshopping *Peponjero*, the problem which I then faced is how one negotiates ways to change the thinking of a community that is not dictatorial and authoritarian? It is extremely difficult to not want to intervene when opinions

expressed by group members are different from one's own. I came to realise that the power for change did not come from me, that it was not my responsibility. I had to remind myself that I had chosen the role of the heterophilous practitioner, and that the group was merely using my theatre-making skills as a means to negotiate and broker their own individual changes, within the context of Khethani. In creating the structure of a workshop process through which the group was encouraged to speak their individual truths about HIV/AIDS, I came to a far better understanding of both HIV/AIDS and how it relates to the social world of Khethani itself.

The workshop process of *Peponjero* opened up spaces in which group members (including myself) were able, through the make-believe effect of the theatrical event, to entertain, reflect on and sometimes incorporate new and differing ideologies into our set 'truths' regarding HIV. I would argue that most of our significant change during this project happened during the process of creating *Peponjero*, as our final performance piece mirrored only a few of the major ideological shifts that each of us underwent in the creation of the play. In ensuring that I did not sway the ideological representation of HIV in our play, I discovered that, when one allows others the space in which to express divergent ideas, one can only better one's own understanding of an issue. In creating a theatrical world where nothing is wrong or right but simply is, one comes to understand the complexity of community and how challenging it can be to interrogate age-old customs, memories and beliefs. In offering alternatives to the sometimes daunting current ideological realities, it is important for individuals to be provided with the safety of a make-believe world through which to confront reality, and to decide whether they want the truths that the theatrical event suggests to influence the way they are in the real world.

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