

**TOWNSHIP THEATRE-MAKING AS A DEVELOPMENTAL TOOL FOR  
KHAYELITSHA YOUTH: AN APPLIED THEATRE STUDY FROM AN  
ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE.**

**Ongezwa Mbele**

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**PLAGIARISM DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the theatre making process of a youth theatre group in Khayelitsha called Qina n Divas. It considers why and how this theatre making process is a youth development tool within the ambit of applied theatre. The study is partly driven by my memories and experiences of growing up in a township, as well as applied theatre aims, which are to use theatre to address social issues and honor the participants' ways of using theatre to address their issues.

I examine how the Qina n Divas young people, who are growing up in an environment that challenges their development, use theatre making as a way of reviewing and revaluing their lives. I identify and examine the various systems that influence the youth's lives and that limit their use of theatre as a liberation tool in that the theatre making is a rehearsal of their issues rather than becoming a means of interrogating the issues.

As I am immersed in the township context I also reflect on my involvement and how I unintentionally became part of the problem, which limits the youth's development. My position of being an applied theatre practitioner and researcher is informed by my Xhosa cultural identity, my Zulu schooling and my English-speaking higher education, which also influenced my relationship with the youth. In the research process, the young people and I exchanged several theatre making methods. The theatre making explored themes of bullying, rape, environmental issues, parental love and abandonment, which revealed the youth's emotions and thoughts about these themes.

In spite of the above-mentioned limitations, I propose that theatre making allows the youth to use their imaginations to construct their identity in a partly secure space and to journey beyond the township to the Cape Town suburbs. The theatre practice induces a sense of hope amongst the youth and allows them to voice the issues that matter to them.

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This dissertation is a tribute to the life of Lwandokazi Jama

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with introducing the background of the author, Qina n Divas Youth Arts Organisation and my initial meeting with the members of the organisation in Khayelitsha township. I then state my research inquiry, which is informed by aspects already raised. The chapter ends with a discussion of the methodology with which I develop this dissertation.

### **Background of the author**

I am a black, South African female from a Xhosa-speaking family. Since I was brought up in Kwamashu, a Durban township,<sup>1</sup> my first language is Zulu. At school I learnt Zulu and English, so my mother tongue, Xhosa, lagged somewhat behind.

If there has been one phase in my development in which I have felt most confused, vulnerable and overwhelmed, it was in my teenage years. My parents did their utmost to send me to good and expensive schools with their little income and sheltered me from visible development hurdles that threaten township youth, such as the misuse of alcohol, drugs and becoming pregnant as a teenager. During my teenage years, whether or not I had even thought about partaking in substance abuse or casual sex, my parents attempted to combat any chance of this by persistently introducing discipline, in the form of routines, as well as threatening to take away my privileges, such as going on holiday trips to Cape Town and the Eastern Cape. Since I had developed a passion for travelling to discover the traces of my Xhosa identity, which seemed more apparent to me in Cape Town and the Eastern Cape, abiding by my parents' wishes became the best option at that point. As a young person, I was disturbed by how quickly some of my female peers had fallen into motherhood with no preparation for this role, due to what seemed to be such innocent encounters with boys.

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<sup>1</sup> "The term township refers to a „black“ residential area created by the segregationist policies of the former South African government (Japha & Hertzog, 1995, p. ). Although there are numerous kinds of dwellings in townships (one-roomed houses, larger houses, shacks, backyard shacks, flats), townships are generally characterised by small dwellings, densely packed within the community. Previously „white“ residential areas and middle-class areas are referred to as suburbs, while „coloured“ and „Indian“ areas are, somewhat derogatorily, simply called „areas“. In colloquial terms a township is often referred to as *ikasi*." (Swartz 2007:iv)



During this stage of my life, I also developed a passion for reading novels especially romantic novels, watching soapies with my grandmother and acting on stage. The passion for being on stage meant that I had rehearsals after school and so most of my time was spent at school. On the other side, the obsession with romantic novels meant that I spent my Saturdays at the Durban city library. When I reflect back, I realise that I partook in these pursuits because I was filled with the fear of losing my privileges, of becoming a teenage mom. Therefore I developed a way of avoiding this trap and yet adventuring through reading novels and assuming different character roles in my high school plays.

My township developmental background marks the entry point into my master's fieldwork project with Qina n Divas youth from Khayelitsha township, which is fuelled partly by the attempt to highlight and investigate the experience of young people growing up in the township and articulate, through theatre, the township youth's development process and challenges that they encounter.

### **Introduction to the youth**

This need to highlight and unpack township young people's development started with a series of meetings and a failed field work project. The first meeting was with Mluleki Sam in Khayelitsha on the September 2012. The aim for this meeting was to ask Sam to refer me to a Khayelitsha youth theatre group to work with for my Master's fieldwork project. My supervisor Gay Morris had referred me to him, as he is a renowned cultural activist and worker in Khayelitsha, in contact with numerous theatre groups. In our meeting, I did not articulate my research focus very clearly, as at that time I was still trying to figure out the intricacies of my supposed project. Sam introduced me to one of his theatre primary school projects at Sosebenza Sonke Primary, as a means of understanding his theatre work. After spending one day as an observer of the Sosebenza Sonke learners' rehearsal process, I realized that primary school learners were not the young people I was interested in working with and therefore I made a decision to search in another part of Khayelitsha for a theatre group. After two months of failed attempts to integrate myself into Khayelitsha and develop a fieldwork project with a theatre group called Africa Jam, I called Sam again, this time with precision, and articulated my desperation to find young people within the age group of 15-21 to be participants in my fieldwork project. Furthermore, I asked him to notify me if ever there was a platform on which to meet diverse groups

of Khayelitsha young people involved in theatre. Sam then gave me Abhuti's contact number. I called Abhuti and we decided to meet on the 8th of December 2012 at my aunt's house in Khayelitsha.<sup>2</sup> When we met, I interviewed Abhuti about his organisation called Qina n Divas Youth Arts Organisation (hereinafter referred to as Qina n Divas) and informed him about myself. Abhuti told me that he founded and registered the organization in 2009 as a non-profit organization, as a means of keeping the youth from trouble such as being participants in, or affected by violence, crime or becoming young parents. I requested to work with the group for my fieldwork project from January onwards for a period of three or four months. The request was welcomed and Abhuti took me on a tour of the group's theatre rehearsal space, which was a shipping container. According to Abhuti, the shipping container was a nursery during the day, and in the afternoon from 4pm the youth would meet in the container for rehearsals. After this encounter, Abhuti and I kept in contact through cellphone communication about plans for the project. With gratitude, I then informed Sam about the success of my meeting with Abhuti.

In the second week of January 2013, Sam invited me to a Masibambisane organisation workshop with Khayelitsha theatre youth groups. This workshop aimed to fulfill the organization's vision and mission, which is stated below.

The Masibambisane is the youth organization that opens opportunities for the young people who are interested in Art and Cultural Activities.

... Masibambisane's aims and objectives: are to use Theatre as the tool to deliver its educational programs and raise awareness on various social challenges such as Anti-Crime, Anti-Litter, Child abuse, Rape, Rehabilitation, Disability, HIV/AIDS and Cultural activities to build mutual respect among young people and other environmental issues together with physical challenged young people building inclusive communities (Masibambisane Youth Educational Drama Organization, 2012).

The organisation's manifesto offers a theoretical frame of the organisation and the workshop was an implementation of the theory. When I arrived at the workshop I realized Sam's aim for the workshop was to generate ideas for plays that would be

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, all members of Qina n Divas are referred to by a pseudonym, in place of their given name, so the reader is clear about when I am referring to a member of the group and not other persons in the community. The members of Qina n Divas wish to be cited in the study and appear by their real names in the Acknowledgements.

showcased at the Masibambisane festival. The workshop had various stakeholders such as a constable from Khayelitsha police station, several Khayelitsha youth theatre groups, Masibambisane theatre facilitators employed by Sam, and some parents of participating youth. The workshop started with a discussion led by the constable about young people's participation in crime and drug abuse. The constable and parents left after this discussion and the theatre groups broke away to brainstorm ideas for plays related to drugs and crime. These plays would be presented at the Masibambisane Festival, held at the Baxter Theatre Centre in Rondebosch, in April 2013. During the breakaway session, I met a few of the Qina n Divas members. I was led to believe that John was the leader, but this proved to be a misleading impression – of which more later. I took the youth's contacts details and negotiated our first meeting for late January 2013. This description of participating in a workshop in Khayelitsha leads me to describe Khayelitsha.

### **Khayelitsha and Qina n Divas**

Various researchers describe Khayelitsha within the ambit of their study. For instance, according to Ina Conradie and LisaThompson, Khayelitsha is one of numerous poor urban areas, or townships, in the Western Cape and it is also the biggest township, with inhabitants approximated at anywhere between 450 000 and 1.5 million. It is home to some of the foremost struggles and policies for the urban poor in South Africa (2011:44). Ndodana Nleya and LisaThompson state that Khayelitsha has shacks and houses made of bricks. The creation of this township stems from the apartheid era. Even though apartheid has been dismantled in South Africa, Khayelitsha is still ostracized, economically deprived and informed by the racial segregation that took place. They state that 2007/08 crime statistics reveal that it is ranked as one of the highest places for incidents of mugging, sexual assault and unlawful killing of one human by another (2009:52). These researchers indicate that Khayelitsha is an urban area with social plights. This disheartens me as someone who grew up in a township as it offers the place I call „home“ a bad name. It is a place in which I feel a sense of belonging and can easily understand the cultural practices without much effort as these are engrained in me. The township is part of my development trajectory. This township „branding“ does little to acknowledge other truths about the township. Townships like Khayelitsha also breed relationships. As a result of this, I was able to stay with my aunt in Khayelitsha during the fieldwork. This feeling of attachment to the township is complex in that the township is a place that

was created for the deprivation and marginalization of black people. Fiona Ross offers input about township shack dwellers, saying that people attempt to convince the authorities that township dwellers' value has little to do with the lack of housing and transportation, but is predominately about them not having the political or economic initiative and being immersed in social stratification (2010:11). Ross's statement encourages the reclaiming of the township space as a place of home and development, in that some people want to highlight, address and offer solutions to the township's problems. My meeting with Sam and staying in Khayelitsha highlighted these complex matters.

During my stay in Khayelitsha, walking in the streets became a constant feature of my everyday activity. Seen from within, I would agree with the above description of Khayelitsha. However my experience of Khayelitsha as a township community was enriched by my verbal interactions with people from the neighborhood, which contributed to my understanding. Mostly in the afternoons I encountered and observed young boys and girls in age-cognate groupings lingering on the streets or playing games. When I went to meet the Qina n Divas's group, I walked in the narrow spaces between the brick houses and the labyrinthine pathways between corrugated iron shanty houses that shelter Khayelitsha's residents. Businesses such as tuck shops, taverns, fruit and meat stalls are at times located in the midst of the houses and also surround the few shopping malls. Lansdowne road,<sup>3</sup> busy with taxis and buses that transport the locals to various Cape Town destinations, is one of the streets that I crossed. The formally built structures of primary, high and nursery schools are at times evident amongst the shanties and other formal housing sections in Khayelitsha. Some of the nurseries are housed in shipping containers. These institutions provide the supposed education for most Khayelitsha learners, whom I saw in their school uniforms on their way to and from school. Music from eclectic genres such as American rhythmic and blues, and South African ethnic gospel, forms a relentless background noise.

Violence and crime, as stated above is a constant threat. For instance, my cousin's three-year-old son heard the sound of a gun from the neighboring streets whilst playing outside. My cousin told me this with a sense of normalcy. From my conversations with the locals it seems that young males are mostly the perpetrators

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<sup>3</sup> Lansdowne road has recently been renamed Govan Mbeki Road as it goes through Khayelitsha, but many people still refer to it as Lansdowne Road. (City of Cape Town, 2012)

of criminal activities and there were a multitude of stories about crime and/or violence whilst I resided in Khayelitsha and worked with the Qina n Divas youth theatre group.

On a good attendance day Qina n Divas comprised thirty Xhosa-speaking youth, who understand English fairly well. (In my acknowledgements, all fourteen girls and fourteen boys who participated in Qina n Divas are named – with my respect and gratitude.) Most of the members are Khayelitsha high school learners. One learner attends a high school in the suburb of Claremont. Two older members have passed high school and cannot afford tertiary fees and are searching for jobs. There was also an extension of members, which was called the junior group. The junior group comprised of six primary school learners, two girls and four boys, with ages ranging from ten to thirteen years, whose attendance fluctuated even more than the youth group. A fluctuation in attendance was a constant feature with the senior group as well. On rare days the number of the youth that attended the workshops would increase with a visit from a friend of one of the members, or when old members dropped in or a new member considered joining.

When I began working with Qina n Divas youth, I assumed responsibility for facilitating the afternoon rehearsals and rapidly decided to meet with the junior group an hour before I met the seniors. However, regular meetings with the juniors did not last long, due to lack of attendance. When I saw the juniors playing on the streets, after a few attempts at calling them to come to workshops with not much response, I abandoned the effort since my preferred focus was on the senior group.

### **Statement of the problem and the research enquiry**

The senior group created theatre about their lived issues which are violence, xenophobia, teenage pregnancy and tuberculosis. At times, they aligned their scenes with a South African edutainment television series such as *Intersection*, purportedly as a means of educating themselves and their audience about these issues. These rehearsals of issue-based theatre were troubling in that they were largely an enactment of problems, which meant that the youth were reliving their harsh experiences in the theatre space without interrogating the issues. They simply re-enacted troubling scenarios. What was in question was the group member's understanding of the meaning of education and youth's purposes for partaking in this

kind of theatre. Did the youth know any theatre methods that would enable them to change their environment, even as they sheltered themselves in a theatre space?

Therefore, I feel compelled to enquire: in what ways is the theatre that is generated by the youth vital for the youth's development? Is the youth's theatre a means of moving forward, through looking back into the past, or through naming the current reality? Is the youth's theatre envisaging their future? Is there a possibility for the theatre to envisage their future? Is the future the youth's worry?

Not only did the youth create violent scenes, but they had also developed their own theatre aesthetic that I had to learn in order to work with them. Furthermore, not only were their performances for educational purposes but also for financial gain, so that members could go on a winter camp and sustain the group. With all these elements and complexities of the youth's theatre-making, how would one define the Khayelitsha youth's theatre aesthetic within the ambit of youth development? Thus, my research enquiry seeks to unpack township theatre-making as a tool for Khayelitsha youth's development.

Since the young people had a performance at the Baxter Theatre in Rondebosch as the culminating focus of my time with the group, so I am compelled to describe the Baxter Theatre to highlight the contradictions between the spaces that the young people of Khayelitsha frequented in the course of my fieldwork.

The home of progressive South African theatre and performance since 1977, and the cultural gateway to the University of Cape Town, the Baxter Theatre Centre is a vibrant, multi-cultural entertainment hub in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. Nestled under the striking Devil's Peak mountain and at the foot of the University of Cape Town, the Baxter boasts a world-class theatre and concert hall, as well as a studio stage, rehearsal rooms, offices, a restaurant and bars and an impressive, spacious foyer (Baxter, 2013).

This description of the Baxter Theatre reveals that the platform of the festival provides young people with an opportunity to travel from Khayelitsha to a place of economic privilege.. What impact does this have on the young people's development? What does the transition from rehearsing in a shipping container to performing on a professional theatre stage do to the young people's performance?

This thesis seeks to unpack these South African contradictions within youth development and applied theatre.

The University of Cape Town (UCT), as stated, is situated in Rondebosch, which is my place of study that informs my student researcher / middle class status, and which also informed my research position in the fieldwork. Unlike the youth, the festival is not my gateway to UCT, but my pursuit of applied theatre practice was a gateway to my Khayelitsha fieldwork. To fulfil this journey, I embarked on methods of ethnography and participatory research.

### **Ethnography**

The approach to this study has been ethnographic for three reasons. Firstly, I did not have the means of transporting myself in the afternoon from Khayelitsha back to Rondebosch, so staying for three days in a week with my cousin in Khayelitsha for the duration of the project was the feasible solution. Secondly, having experienced the challenges of retaining a theatre group, it became apparent to me that I had to immerse myself in Khayelitsha in order to fulfill the attempt, not only of retaining a group, but understanding about living in Khayelitsha. Lastly, as a novice applied theatre practitioner who is concerned with ethical considerations, and after reading applied theatre literature in order to become aware of ethical issues that might have reverberations within the project, the research design pointed me to an ethnographic approach to the study.

According to Willis and Trondman ethnography is an interdisciplinary research methodology, which encompasses observation and transcribing the proceedings of the fieldwork. It also requires the researcher to immerse herself in domestic systems of continued and communal interaction with the people involved in the specific study, and write about the interactions in a respectful manner. Furthermore, it is an embodied experience, which requires a sense of awareness (2000:5-6). This definition in itself is filled with complexities. Firstly, the ethnographer arrives in the participants' world as an outsider (or insider), with her own understanding of the world and must somehow form an interaction or relationship with the participants that will enable the ethnographer to understand the participants' world. In this interaction the participants also have the opportunity to learn about the ethnographer's world, but only from the ethnographer's point of view. Secondly, the stakes are raised for

the ethnographer as there is a demand for substantial outcomes, and for the participants -- as the study requires the participants somehow to be specimens to the researcher. An ethnographic study also somehow assumes that, within an indicated time frame, the ethnographer will be able to grasp the participants' world. This state of being immersed in a world that is possibly unfamiliar has the possibility to challenge the form of the study. Formulating the meaning of the participants' endeavors can confuse the researcher. However, at the same time it has the possibility of teaching the researcher other ways of being, through being immersed in an unfamiliar context. Thirdly, the notion of telling people's stories with respect implies that there is concern about the ethics of the method of research. Ridout states the word ethics comes from the Greek word ethos, which means character. Thus, ethics questions the person's moral character in relation to other humans. Ethics means how a person behaves in relation to other people (Ridout 2009:10). Ethics is therefore concerned with creating a system of conduct, which everyone agrees upon during the research process. Agreement amongst people demands that people enter into negotiations through dialogue. If ethical conduct suggests a focus on a unison, or consensus, decision making amongst people, then ethics is also indirectly concerned with dialogue between individuals. Dialogue of this nature is not only a resource for gathering information for the sake of retrieving data for the study, but forming relationships with people in order understand the data, formulate knowledge, and represent the people with dignity and respect.. The interdisciplinary nature of the approach not only endorses the complex form, but also indicates the flexibility within the method, which is driven by knowledge creation that values and considers people's voices.

### **Participatory research**

The method of conducting my research was participatory research, which is:

Striving to end the monopoly of the written word, participatory research has traditionally incorporated alternative methods including photography, radio, poetry, music, myths, drawing, sculpture, puppets, and popular theatre, as meeting spaces for cultural exchange. Drawing on an affective logic involving sentiment and emotions rather than purely scientific logic, the group process ceases to convey isolated opinions as with surveys or interviews – becoming instead a springboard for collective reasoning. The knowledge produced is socially heard, legitimized and added to the people's collective knowledge, empowering them to solve their own problems (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). For Salazar (1991), participatory research is more than just a research



method; it is “an egalitarian philosophy of life designed to break unjust or exploitative power relations and to achieve a more satisfactory kind of society” (p. 62). (Conrad 2004: 15).

Conrad’s description of participatory research appeals or compliments the methodology of ethnography. However, this method is not informed by ethnography in that a researcher can still conduct methods of participation without being immersed in the research participants’ world.

The ethnographic approach to the field work project allowed me to participate in theatre making with the youth and also to have conversations with some of them on our way home from theatre making. During our conversations, I learnt a lot about the youth as individuals and formed relationships with them. The theatre making process became an exchange of theatre aesthetics, during which, at times, the youth and I struggled to understand each other’s ways of theatre making. This exchange highlights Conrad’s statements about cultural exchange. My communication with the youth also happened via mobile messaging, because I sent them reminders about rehearsal times and this messaging developed into a space for sharing and encouraging each other about our theatre making process. I conducted myself to a certain extent as the youth’s elder. The youth referred to me as *Sisi Ongezwa*, which in Xhosa is a term of respect for a close female elder. I also had conversations with Sam, some of youth’s parents, the nursery school owner, Sosebenza Primary school acquaintances and various Khayelitsha residents. Consequently, my research inquiry is rooted in these experiences.

### **Data Collection**

The data that I collected largely comes from my fieldwork journal, in which I attempted to record the happenings of the day. It must be noted that I was challenged to express myself coherently in the journal, so it is of average standard. Some of the data I collected through observations in situ. I also transcribed my interview with Abhuti the group leader and collected some of the youth’s writing and documents that I received in the Masibambisane workshop. I video recorded two of the youth’s performances, which were a paid performance for someone’s birthday and the Masibambisane festival performance.

A month after my fieldwork was over, I undertook a reflection process with the youth. However, because I did not do this immediately after the fieldwork meant that many

of the group were no longer around. New members, who had subsequently joined, thus reflected on the generic impact of theatre, rather than on the fieldwork experience. Thus the reflection process was not done consistently and in depth.

I attempted a research report to summarize the events of the fieldwork project. As a result of writing the report I formulated the hypothesis for my research problem. Even though I was not consistent in the documenting of the data, my presence in the field made me aware of the various systems that young people are immersed in and their efforts to use theatre in the attempt to flee the streets of Khayelitsha and be good individuals. This is the reason I pursue this enquiry with conviction, vulnerability and the need to tell Qina n Divas" complex development story, of which I became a part.

### **How this study proceeds?**

This chapter has served to introduce my approach, Qina n Divas Youth Arts Organisation, my research inquiry and selection of a methodology. Chapter 2 introduces the conceptual framework of my enquiry. The concepts of youth development and ecological systems theory, especially moral ecology, contextualize youth development within a South African context. The links between ecological systems and aspects of applied theatre practice, especially metaxis, are clarified. Chapter three surveys South African theatre"s history in light of township theatre and examines elements of South African theatre which characterise township theatre. These elements also reveal the youth"s attempts to achieve self-development. In Chapter four the analysis of my fieldwork in light of my conceptual framing begins, with a focus on rehearsal processes. Chapter five examines the performances and selected playmaking processes of Qina n Divas, with reference to my research questions. I conclude by drawing tentative conclusions arising from my analysis.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter introduces the conceptual framework of my enquiry. I discuss ecological systems within youth development and moral ecology from a sociological perspective, as well as the South African National youth policy, in order to contextualize youth development within a South African context. I then introduce applied theatre theory, highlighting the influences of Paulo Freire's pedagogy and Augusto Boal's theory of metaxis as ways of analyzing the township youth's reality and the township theatre aesthetic. Lastly, I identify the links between ecological systems, applied theatre practice, metaxis, and moral ecology, as channels for township youth development.

### **Youth Development**

It is essential to formulate an understanding of the study of youth development for the sake of this dissertation. According to psychology theorists Urie Bronfenbrenner and Pamela Morris, youth development falls within in the human development terrain, which is a prevalent study in psychology. These theorists" propose that human development is a process, which is influenced by the ecology of the process at specific times and this is called ecological systems theory (1998:993). Stephen Hamilton, Mary Hamilton and Karen Pittman define youth development in relation to ecological systems theory by stating that it is a normal lifetime process, whereby a young individual develops in order to understand and perform in his or her surrounding conditions. There are key people that can induce the process of development within the surrounding conditions. These people can stimulate difficulties or encourage youth development within the physical and communal environment (2004: 1). The people can be peers, teachers etc. If youth development is part of human development, then this conceptual field becomes a vehicle with which to unpack the hypothesis that theatre is a developmental tool for township youth, in that the theatre environment and practice can potentially contribute to township youth's development.

Since the context is one of the key elements in youth development, it is necessary to draw upon knowledge about the township context in relation to the township youth. Sharlene Swartz (2007), in her study of Cape Town's township youth, unpacks the

township context in relation to Bronfenbrenner and Morris's ecological systems theory. Sharlene Swartz analyses the contexts that play a role in township youth's development as comprising of six systems. These are the macrosystem, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, chronosystem and endosystem and they encompass the varied influences on young people of various people and prevailing cultures.

The macrosystem consists of the prevailing cultural beliefs and systems of ideals and ideas of a society. Township youth find themselves immersed in a political context of neoliberalism and the moral regeneration movement, intense Xhosa culture, Christian and/or traditional religious practices, and systematic injustice that is gendered and racialized. The communal culture is on the one hand supportive of community life and on the other hand a culture of brutality, corruption, with little access to human rights (Swartz 2007:27-28).

The microsystem is the nearest context for a person such as home, school, local streets, neighbourhood community, church, and relationships formed in these contexts with people such as parents, teachers, gangs, religious groupings, friends, romantic and sexual partners (Swartz 2007:28).

The mesosystem refers to the relations between microsystems that the youth are part of (Swartz 2007:28). However, in the context of Khayelitsha township there is minimal connection between microsystems. For example, there is little or no connection between the street, home and school. This means that the individuals that are in the microsystems do not share much information with each other about their contexts, which has the potential to lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding between individuals and perpetuate problems rather than solutions.

The exosystem is the institutions and customs that the youth are not part of but are indirectly affected by. In the township environment, this includes law enforcement standards, local government policies, nationwide funds, wellbeing, communal and conveyance facilities, media regulation and how the media impacts the community (Swartz 2007:28).

The chronosystem refers to changes that occur to a human being over time within a certain context. Thus when the chronosystem is considered in relation to township youth it does not only refer to the inevitable changes of puberty, but also to the subtle influences of tribalism, colonialism, apartheid, and growing up in an emerging democracy (Swartz 2007:30).

The endosystem is the young person developing with his or her intellectual capability, emotional qualities, and environmentally relevant principles (Swartz 2007:27). The endosystem, which unpacks the young individual's development within their environment, can be seen as the common ground between Bronfenbrenner and Morris, Hamilton, Hamilton and Pittman, and Swartz's views of ecological systems theory. The fact that Swartz's approach to her study is not through a psychology lens but a sociology lens allows one to identify that youth development is an interdisciplinary study. It suggests the possibility of viewing youth development from the perspective of applied theatre.

Swartz's concerns about the township youth indirectly grapple with youth development in that her concerns are with the youth's moral ecology. The term Moral Ecology implies that the township youth's formation of morality not only rests on the individual's decisions or even the encouragement from family, friends, school and community, but also on circumstances related to morality indirectly affecting the youth, as well as the effects of the various systems on each other (2007:29). Swartz anchors the analysis of township's youth development by considering moral ecology as one of the key challenges to the youth's development.

Swartz reiterates that the concept of moral ecology accounts for the youth's moral development within various contexts that affect their capacity for moral comprehension, the formation of right and wrong, and the procedure of making moral choices of a person. She derives moral ecology from ecological systems and social representation theory. Ecological systems theory reveals that moral formation is influenced by one's moral environment, and sometimes excludes one's decisions. Social representation theory introduces how young individuals perceive and portray themselves (Swartz 2007:32-33). Swartz's theory becomes relevant to my study as I want to highlight that the youth, through theatre making or acting, represent their environment and they reveal how the environment shapes their development. Please note social representation theory is not the focus of my study, but it is essential to

mention, because it touches on human beings „acting“ in a certain way or representing a social space.

The element of morality is also a meeting point between Hamilton, Hamilton, Pittman and Swartz. However, for these theorists the approach to the discussion on morality varies. Hamilton, Hamilton and Pittman highlight five human characteristics that encourage the youth development process. The five qualities are competence, character, connections, confidence and contribution (2004:26). They state that youth development is not a goal but a process, even though these five qualities can be attainable as goals in order to promote youth development. Competence consists of the ability and awareness that allows an individual more efficiently to comprehend and perform in the environment. This characteristic allows an individual to achieve what he or she wants, given that the peripheral situations are encouraging, or that the youth have become accustomed to their situation sufficiently to achieve as much as permissible. Connections are the social associations, especially with grown-ups, but also with peers and younger children. Confidence is the individual's belief that he or she may be successful. This quality allows the individual to perform and accumulate competence and character in testing situations. Contribution is when an individual uses these other qualities not only to engage with self, but also to engage and give to others. Character is what allows the person to aim to do what is just, correct and good (2004:6).

These five qualities align with the notion of the endosystem, whereby the young person is an individual that is capable of having the above-mentioned qualities. Hamilton, Hamilton and Pittman attribute morality to the individual whereas Swartz attributes the moral formation of the township young person to their macrosystem and various microsystems. The South African *National youth policy* refers to the young person as „individual or individuals or groups“ (2009). Even with this awareness of the young individual's qualities it is apparent that Swartz and South African policy emphasize that the individual is part of a group who is shaped by the context, even more in the township context.

Swartz states that the historical, political and economic contexts of the township, the exosystems and chronosystems, have irrefutable moral repercussions for township youth. When South Africa had abundant conflicts of dispossession and subjugation, young people grew up with violence that was normalized, and which was in

opposition to people of power. This power was immoral and affected people deeply. In local townships, families were torn apart because of migrant employment, exile and imprisonment. Young people's political engagement meant that they developed self-sufficiency and agency from an early age. Young people formed resistance groups and at times their behavior transformed into extreme violence and was further toughened by delinquency (Swartz 2007:112). The inherent levels of violence and crime are detrimental for township youth's development. Furthermore, Swartz states that while the youth profess to believe in both God and traditional practices, the majority does not regularly attend church or consult traditional healers. As a moral environment, township communities are not places where moral decisions are autonomous, personal or private. Neighbours know each other, communicate regarding young people's behaviour and are a source of public sanction and communal help. Young people's street culture, while vibrant, is limited by a lack of diversionary recreational opportunities (Swartz 2007:14 ). Thus the youth's moral development is pressurized and layered between a lack of resources and impoverishment. This account raises the question if recreational opportunities were available for the youth how would this impact their moral formation and development?

Hamilton, Hamilton and Pittman potentially address this question by revealing that within the youth development process, there is room for a healthy and comprehensive development process and this is called optimal development. Optimal development provides a young person with the opportunity to live a physically well, fulfilling and prolific life as youth and later, as an adult, being able to live competently and participate in civil society. These theorists further state that young people can mould their own development and how they view their world through their decision-making. Decision-making can be indirectly and directly influenced by engagement with key people (2004:1). Thus, young peoples' decision-making has the possibility to resonate with the young person's strengthened ability to take responsibility for shaping his or her future, which then has the potential to encourage the young person towards optimal development. However, if the young person's decision-making is not susceptible to shaping a good future, then decision-making has the potential to be detrimental for optimal development. In the case of township youth, recreational opportunities have the possibility to encourage the youth to engage not only with decision making about what is right or wrong, but also

the ability to engage their physical and mental capacities in order to enhance their development, and question their moral stand point in order to understand, rather than accept, the entrenched moral codes. The ability for the youth to question is not proposed as a rebellious method but as means of engaging and learning from the so called challenges, not from a right or wrong binary. If these binaries are the youth's only option, then there is no room to explore what lies in between and beyond right and wrong. Thus, Hamilton, Hamilton and Pittman's hypothesis on optimal development presents the possibility that township youth development could be optimal, if it were not for the microsystems and macrosystems that they encounter.

Swartz's views about how the macrosystem impacts the township young people's lives become apparent in the 2009-2014 South African *National youth policy*. Not only does the policy become evidence for Swartz's views, but the policy also offers guidelines for optimizing South African youth development, which helps with formulating a contextual understanding of the element of youth development. The policy's rationale is "closing the identified gaps, addressing the challenges and recommending new measures to improve and accelerate implementation thereby making major strides in the development of young people by ensuring that they assume their rightful place in building a non-racial, non-sexist, prosperous and democratic South Africa" (*National youth policy* 2009:5). The policy builds on this rationale by stating that one of the values that underline youth development is "the promotion of moral and spiritual regeneration in line with the values of Ubuntu" (*National youth policy* 2009:10). It is good and well that the policy standards are set on fixing South Africa's segregated history, but danger can arise through focusing on the past and not addressing the present. Furthermore, the notion of morality is not the only idea that is presented in the national policy, which indicates that acquiring righteousness is not the only aim. It is evident within the policy that there is awareness that South African youth are encountering „challenges“, but the question is whether there is a thorough understanding of South African youth developmental problems and Swartz's 2007 study indicates that township youth's development may be in a crisis. It is a conundrum that the challenges to township youth's development, as identified by Swartz, is one of the factors that the policy regards as a value. Since the policy states that it seeks recommendations with regards to the progress of youth development it demonstrates that the policy is seeking development and awareness. Thus, Swartz' research can be viewed as a recommendation to the policy's aims for



developing South African township youth in that it interrogates and highlights the above mentioned challenges encountered by township youth. Furthermore, it encourages the recommendations that this paper makes concerning township youths' involvement in theatre as a means of development.

The policy states that anyone between the ages of 15 and 35 is considered a young person in South African, and defines youth development as "an intentional comprehensive approach that provides space, opportunities and support for young people to maximise their individual and collective creative energies for personal development as well as development of the broader society of which they are an integral part" (*National youth policy*, 2009:8). "Whilst emphasizing development of all youth it acknowledges the reality of limitation of resources and as a result prioritizes that efforts and intervention should give second chances to the most marginalized and excluded youth groups" (2009:13).

According to Hamilton, Hamilton and Pittman, in the 1990s, youth development emerged as a principle and practice for encouraging the developing ability of youth by key people, organizations and institutions within communities, in order to ensure that all youth reach their optimal level. The term „all youth“ highlights an inclusive and universal approach to youth development practice (2004:1). These American theorists' views on youth development can be discussed within the same frame as the South African policy, because both inform the reader about youth development as a practice and principle. The inclusivity of all youth makes it possible for one to understand the aims of the youth development, which then also makes it possible to identify the challenges that the youth could encounter within their context. However the principles, or policy, have the potential to be removed from the reality of the youth.

Hamilton, Hamilton and Pittman state that the principles and practices of youth development are intended to prevent and treat problems that may surface amongst youth in varied contexts. Youth development practice refers to the customs and mores in programmes, institutions and initiatives in which young people spend their time (2004:1). The treatment and prevention approach in this practice can be seen as nurturing the youth's decision-making skills. The South African *National youth policy* (2009-2014) speaks to the notion of treatment and prevention as the policy aims to address the youth challenges, which somehow is induced by their South

African history and, as Swartz mentions above, which is beyond the youth's control. The use of the words „prevention and treatment“ have the potential to suggest that this human development stage is infused with problems rather than complexities that need to be identified and rigorously engaged with, in order to ensure the youth's optimal development. The complexities of youth development process also can be seen, in the microsystems of various entities, which also have their own forms. For example, in the young person's school environment there is existence of peers and schoolteachers who have their own way of living and developing, the school rules and education department play a role in the young person's development.

These theorists, who describe and engage with the discourse of youth development, compel me to ask the following questions. Which human development process does not have problems? I wonder, if youth is seen as a stepping-stone in the process of developing into an adult and the evident complexities are accepted as indicators of the journey, how this approach would influence the discourse on youth development.

In the case of this study, township youth development draws upon the discourse of applied theatre to identity and unpack the complexities which hinder the development process of township young people.

### **Applied theatre**

The above discussion compels me to introduce the concept of applied theatre as a means of theoretically framing the theatre of township youth. Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston describe applied theatre as a wide-range of dramatic systems and artistic procedures that allow the partakers and spectators to engage with more than the traditional or ordinary theatre, but also with theatre that is relevant and receptive to the normal persons and their narratives, native place and urgencies. The artistic process usually, but not all the time, takes place in unceremonious settings or non-drama spaces or diverse physical and communal space (Prentki and Preston 2009:9). Helen Nicholson also confirms that “[t]he idea that applied theatre has the potential to address something beyond the form itself suggests applied drama is primarily concerned with developing new possibilities for everyday living rather than segregating theatre-going from other aspects of life” (2005:4). In order to unpack the definition that applied theatre has the potential to be an inclusive form of theatre, I

ask: what are the implications of applied theatre taking place in varied spaces and why or how did applied theatre emerge?

Nicholson highlights the fact that one of the inspirations of applied theatre is the Brazilian Marxist teacher Paulo Freire who inspired theatre director Augusto Boal (2005:9). The fact that Boal is influenced by Freire who is a teacher, indicates that applied theatre to an extent is a means of learning and questioning through the use of theatre. The learning is then pertinent to the applied theatre participants belonging to a specific community. Nicholson also articulates that the terms „applied drama“ and „applied theatre“ were popularized during the 1990s. They were favoured by academics, theatre practitioners and policy-makers as means of defining theatre practices that were found within non-conventional theatre establishments and mainly aimed at serving people, communities and societies. This theatre took diverse forms, such as theatre for development, prison theatre, community theatre, and theatre in health education (Nicholson 2005:2). Since applied theatre is multifaceted in order to foreground the nuances of the practice, it is imperative to revisit Freire’s and Boal’s ideas, which I will do later in this chapter.

The diversity within applied theatre practice manifests its accessibility and dynamic nature, which has the potential to be both limiting and freeing to achieving the relevant goals of a project. The political and artistic encounter within applied theatre can give rise to complexities, which the applied theatre participants and practitioners need to take into account as a means of understanding not only the practice but each other and their contexts. This notion of complexities and accessing varied environments or situations of the people refers to the meso and microsystemic interfaces. The applied theatre participants are immersed in various contexts; macro, micro and exosystems that influence their development. The use of applied theatre is a way that the participants and practitioner seek to understand the varied contexts and address the issues that are within these contexts. However, as highlighted by James Thompson, applied theatre is not a formulaic practice, whereby there is a guarantee that people’s issues will be addressed (2009). The applied theatre participants’ macrosystem, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and chronosystem can influence the outcomes of the applied theatre project. So if applied theatre is encountering these systems, would applied theatre itself be considered a system? The limitations within applied theatre can be due to

authoritarian practice. However, the consciousness of these limitations to an extent can be the beginning of freedom. If Freire comes from an educational background then how does his discussion on artistic or cultural forms fit within education? Even more importantly, how does Freire influence Boal?

Freire's concerns about education introduce problem-posing education as a method of allowing the learners and teacher to think, question and engage in a „dialogue“ in which new knowledge can be generated, rather than engaging in instructive forms of learning, in which the learner lacks the opportunity to explore or address problems within his or her environment. The development of critical awareness amongst the learners and teacher is a by-product of problem-posing education (1970:68).

This summary of Freire's concerns and proposals brings cultural forms into the account, in that the notions of problem posing education as a cultural norm has the ability to transform the learners, rather than oppress the learners within an oppressive cultural or artistic norm that is embedded in the learner's environment.

A practical example of Freire's hypothesis is seen in Boal's work in which he taught illiterate adults in Lima, Peru how to read and write. During his teaching he asked the adults to take photos of their environment. The photos communicated that the adults live in a poor environment (1979:120). Boal and the participants' understanding of the macrosystem, microsystems and exosystem formulated additional content for the applied theatre project besides the achieving of literacy. Hence, the exercise empowered the participants to have a voice about their socio-economic surroundings without grasping a pen or reading a book. Freire substantiates that the act of learners being able to read and comprehend the world enables them to read and write about their environment (2003:356). Therefore, the taking of photos is a metaphor for reading and writing as it made the participants articulate and identify problems about their environment, and at the same time, it helps the participants to realize the intentions of being able to write and read.

### **Theatre of the oppressed and metaxis**

In my examination of the trajectory of Boal's work on Theatre of the Oppressed, I notice that engaging with problem posing education through theatre, to a certain extent, led him to develop new ways of thinking about theatre strategies, such as metaxis. Metaxis is the theatre-making participants, or artists', ability to be fully

immersed in the theatre and real world concurrently (Boal 1995:43). This description of metaxis is significant in this study as I am trying to comprehend how youth use the non-realistic nature of theatre as a means of unpacking their environment and experiences. By indicating that the participants have the ability to recruit metaxis encourages me to propose that township theatre informs township's youth's development.

Boal constructs an understanding of metaxis within his theory of Theatre of the Oppressed (1979). Theatre of the Oppressed is theatre that aims to provide a safe space for the oppressed or oppressor to address their oppression issues, in that they are able to gain sensitivity and awareness through using Boalian theatre methods. Boal says that if the theatre participants that he works with are the oppressed, through theatre they start to engage consciously with the lived oppression (1995: 45). This is visible in the account about his work in Lima (1979). Thus, through engaging with theatre methods the participants start to explore elements of freedom. Boal calls this „aesthetic transubstantiation“ (1995:43).

Why are the artists or participants called the oppressed? Since individuals live in relation to each other, they naturally form social groups. Boal maintains that there are systems that are strategically put in place in order to elevate certain human beings at the expense of the other human beings. These systems can be institutionalized through education or social institutions. These systems can also be economic or political. Therefore, this distorts the living experience for people in that people don't have the ability to achieve optimal development of their own capacities. Thus, a theatre of the oppressed participant that lives in this distorted living experience in relation to others is oppressed (Boal 1979). It is important to note that the oppressors are in fact oppressed themselves as they support the system and are complicit in applying the system.

How does metaxis work? Various theatre practitioners have described metaxis on their own terms and according to their theatre experiences. Linds states one needs to start by reading and understanding the origins of Plato's work in order to understand metaxis. The reason he writes this is because Plato states that all spiritual happenings are found between humans and gods. Therefore, Linds alludes to the fact that metaxis is the middle abstract space that exists between people and gods. Linds anchors this by saying metaxis touches on the fact that the participants“

enlightenment develops through observation and interaction in the theatre context (2006:114-115).

Linds offers a breakdown of the metaxis phenomenon, into various theoretical frames. These are “the biology of cognition”, “systems approach” and “complexity theory”, “embodied perception”, and “the dance of possibility”. These theoretical frames help explain the participants’ interactions within and between the imagined world of theatre and the everyday world of real life (2006: 115). Biology cognition alludes to the fact that the participant is aware and informed, which further endorses problem-posing education as a means of learning and awareness. The systems approach and complexity theory not only touch on ecological systems theory and its ability to be multifaceted, but also speaks to the cultural forms such as applied theatre that are embedded within social structures.

What role does biology play in all of this? According to Linds, biology refers to the ability of the individual’s body to engage in non-verbal and verbal communication, which produces a narrative. The narrative then provides a platform on which meaning and comprehension of the world can be discovered and explored by the individual who is a participant or audience (2006:116). This resonates with Freire’s ideology in that in the teaching sphere learner and teacher, through engaging in dialogue, enter into an understanding of the content of the world and thereby meaning is created. Further, this supports Boal notion that theatre is created when the human being realizes that it has the ability to view “itself” when it is able to perceive itself (1995:13). However, this sounds impossible as metaxis does not only lie in the intersection between acting and „acting“ in „real“ life, but also participants exist within real and non-real worlds. However, according to Freire, by means of awareness and thinking of and through the complexity, people can develop liberating ways of living through the systematic complexities.

The meaning of the „biology of cognition“ can be best described as the thinking of living organisms. Linds presents to us thinking and choice, which is fundamental in the understanding of metaxis. In metaxis the theatre of the oppressed participant takes time to think and choose the issues she or he wants to explore and address in the process of theatre making. This is a cognitive activity. Therefore, human beings’ choices are determined by their thinking. According to Linds, the significance of humans is being able to make decisions about the relevant matters for them to

discuss amongst the issues that are presented. Therefore, the human being is able to make a choice about which part of their lives they want to engage with (2006:115-117). Lind's account resonates with Freire's influence on Boal.

Without stating that all theatre is theatre of the oppressed, metaxis is evident in the account of South African movement teacher Jennie Reznek. She states that whenever she is asked about her two years of experience of being a student at the *Ecole Jacques Lecoq*, engaging specifically in physical theatre, she says that it contributed to her self-awareness. The experience allowed her to be aware of her own past, surroundings and narratives. Thus her experience became the resource for her theatre making and teaching (2012:40). Whether or not Reznek overtly states that she encountered metaxis, her experience articulates this state of metaxis, which can be experienced when one engages with the real and non-real world simultaneously in theatrical activities.

Lind affirms Reznek's account by stating that there are systems that engender connections between people and their environment that encompass particular social spaces within them (mesosystems). Through these interconnections, meaning arises, resulting in a flow of energy. What makes this energy begin to flow is the decision-making that happens in the rehearsal space. Lind also states that through the embodiment of significant issues related to key life experiences that occur inside the rehearsal space, more perception is offered about the issues (2006:121).

Decision-making is an act referred to in youth development theory and moral ecology. Within both these theories, decision making contributes to the young person's development process. This can also be associated with Freire in that when one learns, thinks and makes, one's potential grows or evolves towards a better individual. Since moral ecology is concerned with the young people's decision-making, only fixating on doing right or wrong can be linked to Freire's notion of banking education. On the other hand, Theatre of the Oppressed, through the means of metaxis, promotes a liberated individual development process that is not bound by moral or didactic forms of learning. Metaxis offers the applied theatre participants an opportunity to review and evaluate their decisions, which are made within the context of their particular microsystems and macrosystems.

In theatre of the oppressed the presence of the joker also facilitates the participants' decision-making. According to Linds, the joker is the arbitrator that permits an environment of metaxis in order for participants' narratives to be transmitted from the real world into the creative space (2006: 123). Thus, the interaction between the joker and the participants in the theatre making, which shifts from participation to observation to intervention, represents a strategic technique that facilitates metaxis. In Freirian terms, the joker can be seen as the teacher that engages in problem posing education with the learner. In youth development terms, the joker can be seen as the young person's parent or peer or teacher that induces thinking and awareness and decision making that is liberating for young the person's development.

Ecological systems, moral ecology, applied theatre and metaxis seem interconnected by their mission, which is the interdependence of the microsystems, macrosystems, exosystems and chronosystem, having the ability to liberate or suppress the endosystem and affect the endosystem's development. The multifaceted and process nature of these theories, when applied, have the potential to produce unpredictable outcomes. Understanding of the abovementioned theories is an entry point and foundation to discussion about township theatre practice as a microsystem that encompasses applied theatre practice, metaxis, moral ecology and youth development opportunities.



## CHAPTER THREE: TOWNSHIP THEATRE SYSTEMS

This chapter describes South African theatre's history and characteristics in relation to township theatre. This is an attempt to identify how South African theatre elements inform the characteristics of township theatre. Furthermore, using metaxis as a conceptual tool, I identify how theatre, made by the youth of Qina n Divas, reveals the youth's attempts to achieve self-development and their developmental challenges.

### South African theatre

It is essential to describe South African theatre as the terrain within which to identify the characteristics of township theatre and the systems that inform the youth's development. Jennie Reznek states that the trajectory of South African theatre moved from and between 1) conventional or profit driven theatre, which has many trends in common with colonial performance, towards 2) theatre that was used to protest against the apartheid regime. 3) A transformation amongst theatre artists saw them move from engaging with „conventional“ or profit driven theatre to engaging with theatre situated in informal settings. 4) The use of physicality emerged as a key means of communication on stage. 5) Theatre performance increasingly used workshopping, or improvisation and drew upon inherent traditional forms and oral customs as a form of style (2012:64). Reznek's description reveals that South African theatre is a microsystem interdependent and interwoven with the South African macrosystem and exosystems. The chronosystem also influences the progression and transformation of South African theatre. This indicates that South African theatre forms, such as township theatre, need be discussed within a consideration of South Africa's history as well as the present.

Point 1 reveals that South Africa's colonial history, its exosystem, impinges upon the theatre microsystem. Point 2 highlights the fact that South African theatre consists of applied theatre and theatre of the oppressed elements, in that protest theatre attempts to address South Africa's social injustice, thereby making theatre relevant within the macrosystem, exosystem and microsystem. This is further evidence of the concept of metaxis, in that theatre making is revisiting and examining the reality of the injustices of apartheid in a theatre space. Point 3 resonates with the

chronosystem, whereby time partly informs the change or progression of South African theatre. This point also emphasises that South African theatre consists of elements of applied theatre and theatre of the oppressed, as it uses unconventional theatre spaces. I am not reducing the definition of applied theatre merely to that theatre which is happening in unconventional spaces, but I am identifying an element that can make South African theatre be considered applied theatre. Point 4 speaks to the endosystem's ability to use the body to make theatre and aligns itself with the theatre of the oppressed in that the concept of the spectator also recruits the body to engage in dramatic action that addresses systematic injustices or instigates communication (Boal 1979:155). The endosystematic use of physicality on stage is a theatre resource that is a cost-effective form of making theatre. This can affect the economic status of theatre. Cost effective forms of theatre can be useful in combating expenditure when considering South Africa's socio-economic challenges. Point 5 also invokes the notion of metaxis in that improvisation requires the performer to draw upon various lived experiences, such as lived cultural practices, which are the endosystem's reality.

Reznek's account articulates that South African theatre is a microsystem that intersects with the macrosystem, endosystem, chronosystem and exosystem. This systemic interdependence foregrounds and introduces township theatre as part of the system. Metaxis enables the discussion of the meeting points of these systems that permeate applied theatre, township theatre and the youth's development. This comprehension of South African theatre compels me to introduce the specific features of township theatre that affect township youth's development.

### **Township theatre transforming lives**

Gay Morris (2000) anchors and expands on Reznek's point 3, 4 and 5 in the ambit of township theatre.

Township dwellers enjoy performing and watching theatre, along with singing, dancing, storytelling, praising, making and speaking poetry, as well as participating in a host of cultural performances such as traditional healer or coming of age ceremonies, and marriage or funeral church services and celebrations. This local repertoire of cultural practices and traditions predisposes township dwellers to performing and spectating. Unsurprisingly then, theatre-making, practising and performing are pervasively and actively pursued in the townships, the lack of venues and almost entire lack of resources notwithstanding.

Township theatre-makers are also informed and inspired specifically by theatre going. Watching and sometimes participating in theatre has led them to believe that theatre is life changing. Particularly in contexts of deprivation, doing theatre has the potential to engender agency. (Morris 2013:7)

Morris' account reveals that township theatre consists of features of theatre of the oppressed and applied theatre and is concerned with transforming lives through addressing social injustice. The applied theatre feature in township theatre is that it is theatre made by marginalised people. In saying this, I am not claiming that all township theatre is applied theatre or all applied theatre is for marginalised people, but merely identifying the systemic nature of township theatre, which consists of applied theatre and theatre of the oppressed notions. Even though the aim of this study is not to define township theatre, but to identify and unpack the characteristics of it in relation to youth development, I need to identify and examine the intersections between township theatre, theatre of the oppressed and applied theatre.

The belief that township theatre fosters the capacity for transformation articulates metaxis in that the theatre participants believe that they are able to re-visit their lives and transform their lives through participating in theatre. What is it about township theatre that makes township theatre participants think that theatre has the ability to transform lives? Is it because protest theatre attempts to dismantle the apartheid system through liberating the oppressed and oppressor's lives? Or is this belief brought about by the reality of being immersed in township theatre in that one is able to do and make choices that one would not make in real life? Although these questions may not produce concrete answers, they are imperative to ask in order to dissect and understand the parameters of a theatre that takes place in a township and its potential to facilitate the youth's development.

### **The politics of the township and the space for theatre**

Morris's above-mentioned account of the theatre makers' challenge of acquiring rehearsal and performance space implies that theatre making is intersecting with the macrosystem, which in turn is affected by the socio-economic status (exosystem) of the township community. This systemic impact on the theatre space resembles how space is conceived of in applied theatre and theatre of the oppressed. This then makes the existence of metaxis inevitable in the township theatre space as it draws

upon the lived reality of the challenge to create a theatre space in an unconventional setting for theatre. Theatre making can be subjected to the chosen non- theatre space's requirements or rules. This is a constant feature in applied theatre.

In the case of applied theatre, the project's context is inevitably embedded with local politics (macrosystem), which can potentially influence the nature of the theatre project. According to Thompson (2009:32), in documenting his work in a Sri Lankan rehabilitation camp and the subsequent massacre of some of the ex-soldiers, he presents the dilemma of the applied theatre practitioners as an ethical intercession between groups and the prevailing political issues that take place in Sri Lanka. While he says these concerns should not be ignored, the focus of his research enquiry in *Performance Affects* is to assess the predicament of the relationship between the public and private in applied theatre that takes the local politics into account, because the applied theatre project is driven by the public sector. Hence, for example in the case of the massacre, the theatre project with the young soldiers is the private space, influenced by the public sector, which then, Thompson suspects, indirectly precipitated the massacre (2009:23-34). Nicholson concurs that it is contradictory that applied drama often happens in the private space in order to protect the vulnerable participants. However, the private space is not fully protected from the public space (2005:16).

The fact that the local politics of the applied theatre participants' community happens in the vicinity of the applied theatre project makes it essential that the practitioner or joker and participants acknowledge the local politics infiltrating the space.

Thompson's reflection about his project highlights that knowing about the macrosystem and exosystem can be informed and developed during the theatre process; and preconceived notions of local politics may evolve, depending on the chronosystem.

This complex situation in relation to theatre space induces the following questions; in what ways does this real space, which is temporarily a theatre space, inform the participants' theatre process? Who owns the space? What are protocols of the space? How does the theatre space, which has dual capacity, facilitate and incubate the relationship between the youth and applied theatre practitioner for the sake of the youth's development?

The view that social theatre is simply a matter of taking theatre to sites that have no theatre or where theatre has been disrupted or destroyed needs to be challenged by the argument that the practice of social theatre is a complex process of interdisciplinary performance. From the performance studies perspective, „non theatre“ venues are in fact sites of multiple performances. (Thompson and Schechner, 2004:13).

Thompson and Schechner’s account brings me to the revelation that the township theatre space is not only the incubation for metaxis, but revisits and examines the macrosystem, exosystem and microsystem, which can unravel or induce the township youth’s endosystem’s) development, or being. This unravelling and induction involves the youth’s cultural formation and understanding of the self.

### **Township theatre is influenced by traditional performance forms**

Morris’s statement that township theatre is infused with traditional performance forms resonates with Reznek’s point 5. On the other hand, Mandla Mbothwe states that his experience with young Khayelitsha theatre makers draws upon Ben Okri’s notion of aligning dreams with storytelling as an African customary practice (2010:248).

Mbothwe affirms Morris in that township theatre imports the reality of traditional and cultural practice into theatre. Mbothwe makes a conscious choice to use forms of cultural expression in theatre, whereas it appears that Morris’s account does not emphasise the choice of the use of cultural practices, which might occur with or without awareness. These theorists’ accounts reveal that metaxis is evident in that the macrosystems of traditional cultural performance practices are consciously or unconsciously transported into the theatre making.

How can theatre, which is influenced by cultural practices, affect the endosystem?

Cultural action is always a systematic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structure, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it. As a form of deliberate and systematic action, all cultural action has its theory which determines its ends and thereby defines its methods. Cultural action either serves domination (consciously or unconsciously) or it serves the liberation of men. As these dialectically opposed types of cultural action operate in and upon the social structure, they create dialectical relations of permanence and change. (Freire 1970:180)

Freire’s statement suggests that township youth may be liberated from the exosystem and macrosystems that I have introduced in the previous chapter. The liberation is in the fact that the youth affirm their cultural practices through theatre making, which has the ability to contribute to their cultural identity. This identity

formation is a by-product of optimal youth development, which suggests that, despite the challenges that the youth face, they are however engaging with activities that react to or revolt against these challenges. Nonetheless, Freire's account acknowledges that at times cultural practices can encourage systemic injustice. For instance, in the case of township youth, they are engrossed in communal culture as well as a culture of brutality and corruption with little access to human rights. If theatre making subscribes to a culture of brutality, it can potentially perpetuate systemic injustice, which can stifle the youth's optimal development.

Thompson writes that storytelling within the parameters of theatre can be a complex and dangerous act, especially if used as a healing method. The storytelling can be diminished to just an act of telling a story of trauma, rather than acknowledging, understanding and respecting the cultural methods of a group (2009: 63-65).

Thompson's statement expands on the dangers of importing cultural norms into the theatre space, such as storytelling. The presence of storytelling in theatre making can be a rehearsal of the traumatic, which can perpetuate the youth's lived traumatic experience. However, the use of storytelling as a healing method can be successful, if carefully guided and facilitated. The presence of a joker in theatre of oppressed, and the applied theatre practitioner in applied theatre, should facilitate or offer guidance. However the presence of a joker or applied theatre practitioner does not always guarantee healing or liberation for theatre participants, as the complexity of systemic injustice can penetrate the theatre system and the theatre system can also penetrate systemic injustice. This is evident in Thompson's reflection about the Sri Lankan youth who died in the process of partaking in the applied theatre project, which was facilitated by Thompson. The systemic complexities of the applied theatre project did not enable the rehabilitation of the Sri Lankan former young soldiers. Thompson's reflections highlight the possibilities of contesting issues when bringing storytelling into the township theatre space in the cause of the youth's development.

Thompson also implies that the presence or use of cultural practices in theatre can be disrespectful towards lived cultural practices, if they are not used with due consideration for what the requirements of this practice are. Furthermore, how and when should such practices be drawn upon? For instance, when a lived cultural practice that takes place in a private space is presented in the public theatre space, it can be disrespectful to the endosystem's culture.

Since township theatre has elements of applied theatre, this compels me to note that the belief that township theatre can transform lives has limitations, due to its systemic nature. Therefore, the notion that theatre is a youth development tool for township youth might have its limitations and it is important to acknowledge and unpack these limitations in order to understand the systems of township youth development.

### **Embodied learning**

Reznek highlights that the bodies of the youth – the „endosystem“ - is a place for personal stories that are informed by the macrosystem and exosystem, which can be multifaceted (2012: 16- 7). When considering Reznek, Morris, and Mbothwe’s accounts in relation to Freire and Thompson, it is essential to ask the following questions in the case of this study. Whose stories are the youth telling? How do the youth’s physically embodied experiences inform their personal stories? Why are they telling these stories? Whom are the youth telling their stories to? And finally, how does the storytelling influence the youth’s development? Furthermore considering Freire’s notion that cultural practices are also identity forming and can contribute to learning and liberation of the oppressed, this statement is framed within township youth’s theatre making. How and what are the youth learning? How is this learning influencing the youth’s development?

What seems to be apparent in the case of the members of Qina n Divas is that theatre may allow the endosystem to examine, learn and explore, or manifest, the microsystem and macrosystem with a potential to free or limit the youth’s development.

Already imbued with the all-pervading performance-based cultural repertoire of the townships, theatre-makers pass on what they have learnt in theatre training programmes or short courses to their group members in rehearsals and workshops. In effect, archival knowledge is circulated, recycled and integrated into the repertoire of the theatre groups, generating new syncretic practices. Cultural capital within the groups resides in what one knows about theatre and how successfully one can inspire or guide others. Those who have learning transmit it to others, thereby assuming the mantle of authority (Morris 2013:8-9).

Morris's account frames township theatre making as learning that happens through a sharing of theatre knowledge. The communal aspect of the learning can be attributed to the township theatre makers' communal cultural practice. This implies that the presence of metaxis in township theatre is not only present in the theatre making, but also in the operations of theatre making. The fact that theatre knowledge is passed from endosystem to endosystem implies that township theatre form is evolving through being passed from one person to another. This is because each endosystem is individual and has its own capacity for learning and sharing knowledge.

During a conversation with South African playwright Fatima Dike at the 2014 Grahamstown National Arts festival (6 July), she remarked that the influence of the individualistic culture from the global north threatens the existence of communal culture in South Africa. Dike's comment alludes to the youth who participate in theatre practice in the township and thereby preserve their communal cultural identity. This is the youth's conscious and unconscious, or „subtle“, revolutionary act. Even though the learning is shared amongst township theatre makers, nevertheless it does have an individualistic perspective. John Kani highlighted this in the course of his speech at the 2014 Zabalaza Theatre Festival awards evening (Baxter Theatre 14<sup>th</sup> March). He stated that it is well and good that the youth participate in group activities; however they need to be individually active and dedicated members of the group. In his speech he made an example of himself as a youngster who grew up in a Port Elizabeth township and was part of a theatre company, and yet he had to remember that he is an individual and also to think about himself and his development.

“Learning through drama, I maintained, begins both passively and actively in the feelings and imagination. Feelings and imagination inform the personal world which one creates as a metaphor for reality” (Henry 2000:54). Mallika Henry suggests that the passing down of theatre happens deliberately, which means that it is not passive learning. Township theatre requires the endosystem to engage in making choices about the dramatic action of the story that is explored, which may be about cultural or township identity, or about self and liberation. In summary, the learning in township theatre is not only learning that targets the content or the individual, but also the ways of making theatre, as well as interaction or communication within a



group in a non-theatre space that has its own demands. Learning happens in a number of ways with theatre being the driving force.

According to Freire (1970) there are two processes of learning, which are problem-posing and banking education. Problem-posing education is learning that allows the learner and teacher to engage in a learning process, which enables them to enter into a dialogue about the content of the learning. Banking education is when the teacher feeds the learners with answers, or the content of the learning, and thus limits the learners' acquisition and discovery of knowledge. Burton states that Young (2000) says that drama is a voyage for adolescents to travel into the abstract world of learning and exploration (2002:64). Burton speaks to the possibility of metaxis, which has the potential to enable learning that is freed from the teacher's agenda and driven by the young person's process of understanding his or her world. Theatre has the possibility to induce problem-posing education. What is it about theatre that can induce problem-posing education within the township theatre context?

Reznek's self-aware reflections about her theatre teaching reveal that there is a possibility that South African theatre can encourage learning that produces self-awareness within the endosystem. However, this possibility can differ for each South African microsystem because of the varied theatre methods.

Township theatre as I experienced it at the Ikhwezi Festival, continuously engaged questions of identity and values. The plays themselves provoked reflection on these issues. Township theatre groups are active in developing works reflective of their needs and concerns. By far the most common way of creating the plays is collective, via group discussion, collaboration and improvisation. (Morris 2007:169)

Morris's account indicates that township theatre has elements of applied theatre or protest theatre as it address issues of the township. If the plays are an indication of the youth's reflection about their needs, they become an extension of what the youth want to communicate amongst themselves. On the other hand, Morris's statement about the Ikhwezi festival raises questions about township theatre performances within festival systems. Why does this festival take place? Who operates this township theatre festival and in which spaces does this festival occur? How does the politics of this space impact the performance and the youth's reflection,

improvisation, skills acquisition and development? I am not going to interrogate the Ikhwezi festival; however, I think my analysis of my case study needs to take these questions into consideration.

“Improvising develops emotional intelligence and negotiating skills and the ability to translate ideas into a new context through narrative and action” (Henry 2000:45-46). What happens when the youth embody learning about their environment and cultural identity in their theatre? Morris states that there are leaders of the group, who can be equated to teachers, who pass down skills. Whether this passing down of skills is banking or of a problem-posing kind is not stated by Morris. The passing down of skills implies that the structure of learning is banking education. However, this passing on of skills can be viewed as problem-posing education because when a skill is mastered by a young person, it is informed by that youth’s personal ability and own way of understanding. Similarly, when the audience watches the performance, there is a passing of knowledge through storytelling, which will be received by the audience.

The danger exists that the content of such theatre may easily fall into a didactic mode of learning if matters are not interrogated and questioned. However, if improvisation is the technique that is used, it has the potential to enable the young person re-examine and re-think personal experience and knowledge. The youth’s township theatre can be seen as an extension or negation of learning that happens in the classroom and a moral or didactic infiltration in their development.

Reznek’s description of South African theatre reveals the systematic nature of South African theatre and its effect on township theatre. Morris and Mbothwe’s accounts support Reznek and unpack township theatre’s abilities and limitations, through metaxis, to be a youth development tool. Township theatre, with all its systematic complexity, is the terrain for the youth’s learning, hope and cultural identity. The above exploration of the limitations and possibilities of township theatre beckons me to introduce my field work project and its systemic complexities, which allows me to discuss township youth’s development as, not only at risk, but as a means of hope for their future and development in spite of the challenges they face.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF THE REHEARSAL PROCESS**

This chapter begins the analysis of my fieldwork, focussing on rehearsal processes and skills building. The analysis aims to grapple with the hypothesis of this paper in light of the theoretical frames set out in chapters 2 and 3. In the light of youth development, I examine the intersection of the young people's real world with the metaphoric world of theatre.

### **Entry into Khayelitsha and the Masimbambisane Workshop**

In chapter one, I state that Abhuti says that they formed Qina n Divas as means of staying away from trouble that erupts in the street. This motivation of creating a theatre group affirms Morris's statement that young township theatre makers consider theatre to have a transformative capacity for them. However, the fact that Abhuti states that the harsh environment drives the youth into theatre making is evidence that the youth believe that theatre also provides a safe space, which shelters the youth from the brutality that they have encountered, or anticipate encountering, in the Khayelitsha streets.

Sam's workshop initiative also attempts to support Qina n Divas and other Khayelitsha groups in addressing their issues. This support is evident in Masimbambisane's manifesto (stated in chapter 1). The presence of parents and police at the workshop reveals that some adults in Khayelitsha support the youth's engagement with theatre. However, it is one thing to be supportive of the youth, but it is another to be actively involved in the youth's upbringing on a regular basis. A workshop is unlikely to provide consistent communication with the youth or induce the youth's development. This workshop introduced me to applied theatre work in the township as well as local politics on youth development, and revealed that the youth's identity is constructed from the perspective that they are trouble makers, not young people who are taking risks in their lives and making mistakes in order to learn. The workshop had elements of a top-down approach, in that the policewoman spoke about her experience of being part of a police force that catches the young criminals of Khayelitsha.

During the workshop, I attempted to ask questions and hear what the youth had to say about their experience as young people. However, I felt I also added to the didactic style of the discussion, which did not allow the youth to explore their

answers and learn in the process. The presence of the policewoman during the workshop became an exosystemic representation of the law. This (law) exosystem was attempting to intervene in the youth's learning process (endosystem) in the presence of the parents. Although the law attempts to foster youth development, it falls into the pattern of wanting to combat the youth as a problem. The workshop reveals that the policewoman's, parent's and Sam's intention to have a discussion about the young people's drug usage dwindles into the police woman being asked questions about how she catches criminals. It implies that the police are there to warn young people before they go to jail. Their development trajectory is envisaged as one of imprisonment. And to say that this claim is farfetched would be telling an incomplete story of what township youth go through.

However, the attempt of the exosystem and endosystem to connect through communication, even if it is overly didactic, counters Swartz's claim that there is minimal connection between the systems (mesosystem) that encompass the youth. Is this fragile mesosystem more evident in theatre in the townships, thus contributing to youth development? Abhuti and Sam's efforts to engage in theatre making as a means of combating destructive behaviour is, to an extent, an example of the local moral ecology. The youth and Sam are concerned with doing what is right, or fixing a problem of young people partaking in destructive behaviour, which indicates an awareness of the systemic injustice that exists in their environment. There is no problem in making theatre, which seeks to do right. However, if the goal of theatre making is to perform the righteousness, rather than using performance to investigate problems and explore solutions, then the theatre will not address the complex issues experienced by the youth in the township. Sam and Abhuti's efforts imply that doing what is right is easily achieved if you have information from the police and you form theatre groups that remove young people from the dangerous influences of the Khayelitsha streets. The question of doing what is right is understood on a theoretical level, or as an ambition, rather than investigating why it is so hard for the youth to achieve on a practical level.

Nevertheless, Sam holding a workshop and Abhuti forming Qina n Divas demonstrates that the microsystems in the youth's context influence the youth's decisions. The youth do not have the luxury simply to explore their ideas and dreams without pressure from their environment. Their systemic circumstances encourage

the youth to engage in attempts to be responsible individuals and create the shelter of a theatre group. The fact that the youth are aware that their street environment can be partly detrimental to their development reveals an element of optimal youth development. However, outside the shipping container the usual occurrences of Khayelitsha will take place, which can mean that the dangers that the youth are sheltering themselves from can permeate into the theatre space and making. Sam's workshop does however indicate that youth development intersects with the goals of applied theatre.

Applied theatre and youth development also intersects with my presence and contribution in the workshop and meeting with Abhuti. My input into the workshop and conversation with Abhuti can be framed within the concept of youth development in that my presence to some extent affects the young people's development in terms of hearing what they say from a moral perspective. My input to an extent unintentionally encouraged the didactic nature of the proceedings. My involvement highlights Freire's point about how one can unconsciously or consciously perpetuate the norm or oppression. In the discourse of applied theatre, this illustrates Thompson reflection about the dangers of the applied theatre practitioner's involvement with local politics (2009).

This discussion on applied theatre's implication in this workshop prompts me to problematize related issues, such as applied theatre organisation and cultural activism. The problem is that Masibambisane, as an applied theatre organisation, attributes its vision and mission to preventing and treating all the so-called township social ills such as crime etc. I, as an applied theatre practitioner, also subscribe to this intention during the workshop. The township young people are associated with the branding of being people that do crime and drugs. What happens to that township young person that does not do crime and is interested in other matters? The police woman that comes to „fix“ the young people fails to reveal truths about the policing of young people. The intentions, visions and missions to do well are clear, but what we do not acknowledge is that we are part of the problem, although we make the young people seem like the problem. This „we“ refers to the applied theatre practitioner (me), who comes into the field wanting to address issues, Masibambisane Organisation, police woman and parents. What if all applied theatre projects or organisations stated that „We are part of the problem“ in order to address

the issue? This discussion highlights my argument that the terms „prevention and treatment of problems“ in youth development, has the potential to problematize township youth development without considering that this development stage is, at times, one of hectic transition to adulthood. Becoming an adult is a journey of discovery and mishap.

### **My introductory workshop with Qina n Divas**

My work with the youth began with a week’s introductory workshop that I led, during which I understood that John, not Abhuti, was the group leader. The theatre exercise that guided this introductory process was called „Diary of your day“, in which I asked the youth to create images and improvise their daily activities, such as going to school, spending time with friends, partaking in domestic chores, standing on the streets and assuming the tasks of running the house while their parents were at work. By this means I retrieved information about the youth’s theatre methods, which were mainly improvisatory. The youth have an understanding of theatrical conventions, such as using space and audience interaction. At the beginning and end of each meeting they stand in a circle, hold hands and pray. I discovered within this week that the youth are very talented individuals. At the end, the youth and I engaged in a conversation about their expectations of the fieldwork project. The youth informed me that they hoped to travel through theatre and learn about theatre. In addition, I also asked the youth about their concerns, which they said were the following: being pregnant at young age; respecting and maintaining the Xhosa cultural way of dating as a preventative measure against teenage pregnancy and fatherhood; being scared of contracting HIV; hanging around with the wrong friends and becoming a drunkard; doing drugs; being scared of gangsters because they don’t want to become gangsters or smoke too much; being scared of disappointing parents. This information and experience enabled me to plan a field work project that encompassed theatre methods that were relevant to the youth and informed by the protocols of applied theatre. After the workshop I met Ntombifikile Nzungu, the crèche owner and the youth at the shipping container. Nzungu required the youth and me to clean and paint the shipping container. At times, she also asked me to assist with teaching the small children. Our assistance and doing chores was a form of payment for using the container.

In chapter one, I recalled my own concerns about growing up in the township; particularly being pregnant at a young age. Now I discover that the Qina n Divas youth have the same fear. In spite of these youth and I growing up in different townships and times, our adolescent development process is permeated with the fear that once one falls pregnant, life will have a bad outcome. It seems that time is frozen when I identify this similarity in our concerns. This fear implies that neither these youth, nor I as a teenager, have a concrete understanding of teenage pregnancy as a challenge to development, but rather as a forbidden act that teenagers must fear and avoid. This fear is attributed to females, rather than the males. Do the boys not fear impregnating girls? What happens to the girls that fall pregnant? If there is awareness of the „threat“ of pregnancy, what precautions are taken to prevent this threat? Is theatre an effective teenage pregnancy prevention tool for the girls? Such teenage gender issues crop up, even though the fieldwork project did not reveal concrete evidence of these issues, but the discourse of youth development is one that highlights that boys and girls can have different development processes, due to their varied sexes and genders.

Overall the young people’s concerns are informed by their views of themselves and those of their peers. Youth development highlights this point. And Qina n Divas articulated this „immediate“ danger that they have observed and experienced. The assumption that a cultural dating method, which according to the youth meant that young couples do not display their affection in front of elders, is a way of showing the elders respect. This is a conundrum, because young people are interested in showing their respect, but not engaging in a dialogue with the adults about ways of dating that will prevent them falling pregnant. The young people can still do the inevitable, but in hiding, so there is nothing about this cultural method of dating that prevents pregnancy. There is nothing wrong with showing respect, but respect that is merely for show does not serve the youth’s learning process. In terms of youth development, understanding the meaning of respect and seeking ways to avoid getting pregnant does not only depend on the youth, but also on those within the microsystems that contribute to the youth’s development.

The youth’s view of themselves is affected by people’s perception of them. Their concerns circumscribe their behaviour and hence their possible futures. This justifies my location of this study within the ambit of youth development, as the youth

are apprehensive about their future. They also express who they want to become in relation to the people with whom they interact within their environment. This element of the youth's concerns emphasises the applicability of the discourse of youth development and also a limitation of my study, which does not encompass the input of the youth's parents and teachers, so we will never know what the latter actually think. Through the youth's characterisation of the people they interact with, the youth are seen solely from their own perspective and not from the perspective of these other people. Nonetheless, my study highlights how the youth's concerns emerge in the theatre space and facilitate the youth's development.

Even though the youth are part of Qina n Divas and reside in Khayelitsha, they are still individuals who belong to different families. This speaks to my paying attention to the endosystem. I recall Kani's speech during the *Zabalaza* festival when he advised the youth to remember that they are individuals. The youth individually committed to the group and brought their various experiences, emotions and characteristics to the theatre making. The fact that the youth pray before and after the rehearsal is evidence of the macrosystem of the youth's Christian beliefs existing in the theatre space. I never investigated the significance of the prayer, but it shows that the youth feel the need for this identity and practice to exist in the theatre space. I shall also never know whether the youth prayed with a sense of awareness, or routinely. This speaks to Freire's concerns in that cultural practice can be done with consciousness or lack of consciousness, which contributes to forming one's identity. To assume that because the youth pray they are engaging with a moral compass is not necessarily valid. My observation is that, equally importantly, prayer was a suitable ritual to begin and end their sessions in the shipping container.

### **The shipping container as a theatre space**

The youth's use of a shipping container emulates the spatial challenges in Khayelitsha BM section. Once again, the impact of macrosystem, chronosystem, microsystem and exosystem are felt in the youth's theatre. Even after twenty years of dismantling the apartheid system, the youth are still immersed in the systemic injustice of not having sufficient space for theatre practice. Even though the South Africa constitution no longer embraces racial segregation and systemic injustice, the South African government has not managed to erase circumstances caused by the past political regime. It has been said that South Africa's democracy is in its



adolescent stage. This metaphor seeks to justify the failure to provide support mechanisms for young people, like providing them with space, But the metaphor is hard to believe when one observes that South Africa has managed to showcase events such as the 2010 soccer World Cup and has built stadiums, and some black people like me have acquired a tertiary education and are able to reflect about their systemic oppression. Which young persons in South Africa get to be free and what are the stakes for acquiring this freedom?

Systemic circumstances infringe on the youth's initiative of engaging in an activity that they deem assists them in combating an environment that impedes their development. In spite of all this, the youth are dynamic and creative and engage with their imaginations. In youth development terms, this indicates optimal development. However, the circumstance of the youth's environment challenges the ability for optimal development, even when the youth have the capacity to imagine themselves as having a theatre space. The Khayelitsha young people's ability to have a choice and voice is essential for an applied theatre project and optimal development. However, as much as this is good for their development, who is listening to the young people's voice?

At this point, the youth's negotiation with Nzungu to use the nursery space allows the youth to practice their negotiation skills. Nzungu contributes to teaching the youth a means of survival and holding them accountable in their usage of the space. Nzungu's assistance demonstrates that young people's development is encouraged and facilitated by the involvement of various parties. The irony of Nzungu's nursery space, which is a place that attempts early childhood development, is that it also becomes the place for youth development. They use the place to play through theatre making, whereas Nzungu uses the space to babysit the babies, but does not provide them with the opportunity to play. It became apparent to me that the young people are seeking to play in this „theatre space“ in order to grow and understand their issues.

### **My multiple positions in the fieldwork**

When I worked with the youth, personal development not only happened for the youth, but also for me as a researcher and individual, as I built a relationship with the

youth. In the youth development frame, I contributed to the youth's development by facilitating their theatre process within the months that I worked with them.

The youth and my relationship started with the youth teaching me their theatre making methods and techniques. This evolved into me being identified by the youth as their elder sister in which they referred to me as *sisi* Ongezwa. *Sisi* Ongezwa highlights that the metaxis facilitates our relationship in that I was not only a researcher, but also as a person that the youth could recognize: we share a cultural practice of addressing people who are slightly older in a certain manner. In youth development terms, I became a member of the Khayelitsha community and part of the youth's development beyond the theatre space. My ethnographic approach highlights my involvement with the Khayelitsha community, and it strengthened within the chronosystem of time. The youth and my relationship was coloured by me speaking predominantly in IsiZulu and English and the youth predominantly speaking Xhosa, interspersed with English. We journeyed into the theatre making sensitive to these realities of our relationship.

The complexity of this research was that my main role was to be an applied theatre practitioner, which meant that I was to facilitate an applied theatre project with the youth. Nevertheless, at times the demands of being *sisi* Ongezwa became more prevalent, and at other times, being a Qina n Divas member came to the fore to the point that I would forget the role of being an applied theatre practitioner. Therefore the fieldwork project moved beyond being a three months project, to acquiring friends and an understanding of the youth's plight with regard to their development: not only through theatre lenses, but through interaction and engagement that took place beyond the theatre space, with cell phone communication, walking in the Khayelitsha streets, home visits to explain to parents about their children's involvement in Qina n Divas, and attempts to assist the group with writing letters requesting sponsorship for the group.

### **Attendance and endosystem**

The list of young people grew in the course of the field work. Their individual attendance of practice sessions fluctuated. Some excused their absence, whilst others would simply not report and would be seen on the streets of Khayelitsha. This highlights that they are individuals, not a group as such. Each individual would make

a choice whether or not to attend. Would it be too judgemental to say that those whom I saw on the streets had been swallowed by the streets of Khayelitsha? But not the individuals that attempted to participate in theatre to preserve them from danger and temptation on the streets.

However, I noticed that the youth's attendance would increase if they were working towards a performance. The youth had the potential to be goal orientated and resilient in that they would take up the challenges that came up in the theatre making, such as constructing characters for absent actors, knowing that a performance is the end result. Fluctuating attendance meant that in rehearsals various individuals would play the same group of roles. The contradiction of the youth's ability to be goal orientated and inconsistent in their attendance demonstrates that for these young people optimal development is not a sustained project. The development orientation, both of the young people and of some related stakeholders, is not consistent. Similarly, categorizing this applied theatre research as a youth development project is also inconsistent. At times, this shortcoming gnaws at me, both as *Sisi Ongezwa* and as an applied theatre practitioner. Nevertheless, I can only hope that this dissertation contributes to knowledge on township young people's development.

Having highlighted the youth's reasons for participating in theatre, the situation and context in which they participate and who supports their participation, I am beckoned towards analysing the theatre making process itself, in order to understand, through metaxis, how theatre might be important to the youth's development.

The youth and I met after school from Monday to Wednesday for theatre making sessions. On each day the prayer would be the starting point, followed by a warm up session. The physical warm-up session involved running on the spot and imagining that we were running past various places in Khayelitsha. Whoever led the warm-ups would call out the names of these places. This running was done to the beat of the drum played by any member of the group.

Thereafter I conducted breathing, focus, trust or any other exercise that led into the day's improvisation, which would explore material for the Masimbambisane showcase, because I had mentioned to Sam that I would like my field work final performance to be part of the festival. .

## Improvisation reveals problem issues within the microsystems

The improvisations were framed within TV talk shows, school, or the streets and houses of Khayelitsha.

Even though I knew that the youth had to include the theme of drugs for the festival, I did not want us to adopt a didactic approach when exploring the theme, as had occurred at the workshop.

During the TV talk show the youth assumed various characters of diverse ages. Initially I took on the role of the talk show hostess in the improvisation, to establish the scene. Having welcomed the Khayelitsha dwellers and informed them that „we are here to “talk about living” in Khayelitsha“, Zukile and Lwandle instantly partnered up to play drunken characters. Whereas Bandile played an older, wise man who reprimands young people for not respecting their parents and starts blaming the Somalians and *Amakwerekwere* for taking the local people’s jobs.<sup>4</sup> When I realized that Bandile had stolen the spotlight of the performance, in order to give other people a chance, I asked Bandile to take over as the talk show host. The other young people, playing various Khayelitsha community members including an old woman, kept telling the drunkards to keep quiet and to listen to the talk show host. After this I asked the youth to write down the themes that they think were raised in the improvisation. They wrote down that the themes were xenophobia, gangsters, bullying, and teenage pregnancy. I then informed the youth that we could explore one of these themes for the Masibambisane festival performance. Bandile said that the theme for the festival was drugs and that we should explore the narration of a girl, rather than a man, taking drugs (TIK).<sup>5</sup> Bandile also pointed out that they wanted to create a performance that would enable Qina n Divas to retain the trophy that they had won from their 2012 performance at the festival. Even though I told Bandile that the narrative of drugs could exist alongside another theme that we chose to explore, and that the play need not stick to a prescribed narrative, I also feared that Qina n Divas might not win the trophy if the performance was not up to their standard, which I had yet to discover.

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Amakwerekwere’ is a derogatory term, used mainly by black South Africans, to stigmatize people from other African countries who have settled in South Africa and who now often reside in township communities.

<sup>5</sup> Tik is Crystal meth, an illegal substance, the active ingredient of which is methamphetamine plus various commonly available household substances (Swartz 2007: vi)

The improvised TV talk show revealed other perspectives on the youth's concerns about living in Khayelitsha. The issues that were foregrounded were those the youth encountered. For instance, the issue of *AmaSomalia* (people of Somali descent), *amakhubala* (gangsters) and bullying, were new concerns that the youth had not mentioned the day I had asked them about their concerns. Metaxis is apparent in this improvisation in that when the young people became other characters they engaged with the views of other Khayelitsha dwellers who contribute indirectly to their development. The community characters enabled them to reflect on other people's views: to encounter and interact with the people in their community in a fictional world. Discussion can happen with less judgment and relieve the young people from the pressure of disappointing their elders, which they had expressed as a concern. This encourages me to believe that youth development is prompted by the presence of community members. However, the danger of these improvised characters is that they seem very surface and didn't explore or present possible alternative narratives for these characters. The danger of a single narrative is that it limits one's possibilities and other people's perceptions of one (Chimamanda A, 2009). The use of theatre-making allows the youth to present the views of older and younger community members, which implies that the youth are aware of the views of others in Khayelitsha, but the TV frame didn't encourage the youth to engage with these characters in a deeper manner, which possibly could have revealed the young people's understandings and emotions with regard to their community members.

The TV talk show revealed that the youth, who are being oppressed by the system, to a certain extent have also learnt to oppress people. The youth called people from other African countries by derogatory names with such normality. This „normalised oppression“ affects how they view people who seem or are deemed not to be part of their community. Youth development is steeped in recycled and inherited oppression. In this regard the system is not only failing the youth in actively eradicating internalised oppression, but, whether or not they are aware, they fail themselves. This supports Freire's point that the oppressed can also be the oppressor. On the other hand, the applied theatre project at this moment fails to enlighten the youth about their oppressive nature. As an applied theatre practitioner was it my place to question the youth with regard to what they had said? I am not too sure, but I am inclined to think that, just as Thompson found himself in a predicament as an applied theatre practitioner, in this fieldwork I too was faced with the

predicament of applied theatre as a practice that addresses social injustice to a limited extent. I sometimes wonder if I should have told the youth that they were being oppressive towards people from the other African countries or, as someone from the township, had I also embraced this oppressive behaviour towards people from the other African countries? In the fieldwork, I would voice to the youth my vulnerability and disapproval of the rehearsal of violence and rape. This was partly because I perceived this as an immediate danger, compared to the use of derogatory terms. This valuing or rating of oppression is a complex act and once again, this highlights that I am part of the problem. Even though I no longer stay in the township my applied theatre practitioner's position and the writing of this thesis is an attempt to reveal the forces at play with regard to young people's development in the township. This thesis also highlights that, to a certain extent, whether it is through writing or theatre, our task as township young people is to rid ourselves of these oppressions. However, theatre, writing or awareness alone, seems not to be the remedy to the existence of oppression.

The debate between Bandile and me about the theme of the festival made it clear that the group wanted to construct the narrative of our performance through a verbal discussion before engaging with the narrative through theatre making. On the other hand I wanted to explore the narrative through theatre making in order to allow more creative and unplanned moments, which can influence the theatre-making in enriching ways. The youth's motivation was to deliver a message that is aligned with the festival theme and so to ensure that they win the festival competition once more. These differences educated us all and allowed us to enter into negotiation with each other's theatre making methods. In effect, we affirmed Reznek's point about South Africa's multiple and diverse ways of theatre making and its evolution.

Moreover, the groups' motivation to pin down the narrative for their performance is associated with youth development in that a prescribed narrative can be conflated with having a clear objective for their performance. This can encourage the youth to develop a focus and clarity in their theatre making and this is part and parcel of a productive development process.

The youth's approach seeks to do what is right, rather than taking a risk to explore. In doing this, the youth are engaging with the mandate of South African *National Youth Policy* and youth development in terms of Hamilton and Hamilton. The youth's

reality, evident in their theatre making (through metaxis) might prove a danger to the youth's development in that it might have the ability to stifle the youth's theatre making and hence their development. The *National Youth Policy* is also prescriptive; it doesn't interrogate what is promoted. In the policy the assumption is that the youth are a problem to be „fixed“. Therefore, the National Youth Policy with the promotion of moral regeneration is evident as an exosystem. The intentions of moral regeneration are worthwhile in a country like South Africa, which is attempting to heal the past, however the implementation and promotion of this doesn't meet the reality of the youth. The festival, having a top-down approach which advocates that youth engage in and with development in a prescribed way, promotes and fails to question the National Youth Policy and genuinely engage with the realities of the youth. The youth's acceptance of the status quo also indicates a limitation in the youth's awareness of the problems or issues that they encounter in their development process.

The youth's pursuit of competition not only boosts their confidence in their capacity to produce a performance of winning standard, but also allows them to engage and evaluate their value amongst their peers who also participate in the festival. This competition is happening in the potentially safe space of a theatre and performance festival.

Even though the youth and I had come up with these themes for the play, I continued to attempt to remove the youth from rehearsing this culture of brutality. As an ethnographic researcher of Xhosa identity, I was drawn to investigate the young people's identity and gender issues, so I attempted exercises that I hoped would assist my investigation. The first exercise was to get the youth to create images about the meaning of their names. I had suggested that some of Xhosa names inform about one's gender, but, counter to my presumption; Zukile said that he is not sure if his name informs his gender as a boy. And when Zintle attempted to make an image, her body language did not seem convinced by the exercise, to the point that she said that she didn't want to repeat previous images.

My other attempt was to ask the young girls to perform songs or scenes of *Intonjane*, a Xhosa girl's initiation ritual. However, Nozipho said that she and the other girls were uncomfortable to perform anything related to this ritual as it is usually done in a hidden place behind curtains. This encounter brought the cultural nature of applied

theatre to the fore and challenged my research method. Not only does it raise questions about the ethics of my research, but also my position as a researcher. In my need to pursue my investigation, and presuming that I know the girls' culture since I partly share a culture with them, Nozipho's discomfort challenged my presumption by revealing another perspective and informing me about cultural identity that is secret. The youth have respect for their culture and are able to communicate their discomfort when asked to reveal private matters of their culture. This experience reminds me of Thompson's warning of the dangers of importing cultural practices into performance, which I mention in chapter 3. However, in this case the youth, unlike Thompson, are not concerned about the trauma that can be evoked from the performance, but preserving knowledge about initiation ritual, which is not supposed to be public information.

The conundrum with initiation ceremonies is the fact that only certain people have access to this knowledge, and yet all in the community are at liberty to talk and even enact rape. And anyone is permitted to have an opinion about women who have been raped and are portrayed on South African television. One of the boys, when he was directing a rape scene, said to the girl: „Please show more conviction about your sadness at being raped, just like in that TV series *Intersection*'. My objection lies in the fact that it is permitted to make plays about rape, but it is not permitted to engage with the rituals that are supposed to help us grow and move from youth to adulthood. This means that not all of the macrosystem of cultural practices can be used in the microsystem of theatre, but being re-traumatized by a rape is permitted. I am not shutting down the stories about rape, but in this case the stories of rape became a display that had the potential to promote and glorify the act of rape rather, than forbid it as a violent act, despite the fact that the youth's intention was to forbid the act of rape.

### **Bullying is the heart of the matter**

After my enlightenment about Xhosa initiation rituals, I asked the youth to improvise scenes on how they want to be perceived and how they believe people perceive them. The scenes that the youth presented were about bullying occurring in the classroom and streets. At this point, I don't question what the youth have created, because once again I am overwhelmed by the dynamic nature of my lesson plans for the youth, and the youth seemed comfortable enacting bullying scenes. With the



benefit of hindsight, I reflect that what the youth produced was nothing particularly new, nonetheless they engaged with the task to the best of their ability. It was up to me as an applied theatre practitioner, or teacher in Freirian terms, to unpack the perceptions that the participants had given to me in their improvised scenes. Such moments are when the potential for revolutionary learning appear. Unfortunately, in this case I failed to seize the moment.

But I ask them to freeze their images, and Nokwanele to sell a newspaper at the Site C taxi rank reporting the bullying scenes, which adds a variation and development to the scenes that the youth have created. The bullying scenes did not contain as much aggression as had been displayed in previous improvised scenes we had attempted. However, as much as I was receptive to the youth's scenes, I still don't understand how bullying scenes are the answer to the question of how the youth wants to be perceived. Are the youth crying out that they are being bullied? Or are the youth the bullies? Is bullying a problem to the extent that the youth perceive themselves as this problem? Is it their way of 'taming' their uncertainties by being able to name them, and hopefully sort them out. And if it's a cry for help, what is wrong with that? I asked the youth to create a newspaper selling scene not only to distance the youth from the bullying scenes, but to explore a newspaper or media perspective. In such scene making, it is all too easy to enact violent confrontation and to counter violence with violence. This speaks to the Reznek point about the performer's embodied experience (endosystem), which has the ability to tell stories that he or she has experienced. Furthermore, how is traumatic experience embodied? This importation of the bullying experience can be attributed not only to the endosystem's embodiment of trauma, but also to the capacity of metaxis to transport the youth's experience into the theatre space.

Creation of the metaphoric classroom and streets environment reveals the extent to which the youth are shaped by the circumstances of their environment. Theatre allows the youth to investigate their experience and tell stories that are of importance to them. If these stories and experiences are questioned and taken forward in order to promote the youth's thinking, decision making, identity, and reviewing the challenges they encounter in their development process, they can assist with the youth's development. Nonetheless, the lack of my ability to question the youth about the bullying scenes was driven by the agency, which the youth have to create, rather

than because the youth and I entered into a dialogue at this point in the process of our theatre making. My experience at the initial workshop had taught me that, if questioning was involved, the youth and I would get lost in translation. I also suspect that my English instructions or tendency to offer didactic or prescriptive scenes or solution would be another possibility. The youth's creation of the bullying scenes potentially combatted the didactic nature of theatre making, but also allowed the realities of language differences and my novice applied theatre practitioner experience to come into play in the theatre making: even though my position was not to prevent or perpetuate trauma, but to engage with the discomfort and potential for learning that arise in the theatre making. The limitations of the chronosystem of time and the lack of finding alternative ways for working with the youth did not allow me to engineer the theatre making in order to prevent the youth repeating what they already know: rehearsing their environment.

What followed were further improvised scenes tackling the theme of bullying in various settings and with various characters. These settings were the school's playground, the principal's office, the streets and taxi rank of Khayelitsha and the TV newsroom. We did not finalise scenes each day. Rather these scenes would have a series of failures and revisiting of our failures. For each scene, the youth would choose the necessary characters and I would give scenarios that would be tackled in the scenes. For instance, the principal office scene would showcase the principal meeting with the parents to discuss the bullying that is taking place in the school. Zintle decided to play the character of the principal. The playground scene showcased the games that learners play in the school grounds during lunch time, such as soccer. Luthando, on the other hand, decided to act as one of the boys who would be smoking weed and getting high during lunch break. Luthando barely contributes to the verbal conversation that happens, but he easily contributes to deciding what needs to happen in a scene. Even though I found it disturbing that he enjoys playing characters that engage in substance abuse, I didn't stop him. The buildup to the playground scene is the two smoking boys stealing sweets from the seller. Ithina plays the sweet and fruit seller that has a conversation with one of the people about the bullying. For the TV news report scene, I asked the youth to create a television frame with their bodies. Nozipho volunteers to be the news reporter and reports in Xhosa about the bullying that is taking place at the school. In revisiting this scene, Nozipho directs. I observe that Nozipho is engaged with the theme of bullying

and acting with ease, rather than with the discomfort that she had shown when singing songs of *Intonjane* or exploring the identity of Xhosa names.

After these scene creations, I asked the youth to free write about bullying. I tell them that they can write from their character's perspective or themselves. I also inform that they can write in IsiXhosa or English.

Sindi, Ovile, Bantu and Nozipho wrote their reflections from a personal perspective. The free writing allows them to share their feelings and what they consider bullying to be. Sindi reveals two perspectives about bullying, which is that the parents don't send their children to school in order to be bullied by people. Her second perspective is that bullies must ask for food, rather than bullying people to give their food. This reveals one of the reasons that bullying takes place. Sindi's reflections indicate that she does not expect the act of bullying to exist in an educational space and even the parents don't expect this to happen. I have learnt numerous times that the youth perceive parental authority as an integral part of their lives. If parents and principals are portrayed as people of authority this indicates that they are viewed as the ones who have all the right answers and this concurs with banking education. I am not opposing authority but, if authorities do not instigate a sharing of knowledge and are non-authoritarian in their engagement with the youth, then to imagine that youth development consists of free thinking and growth is impossible. Sindi further highlights that the educational space incubates bullies, rather than learners who are keen to learn. Ovile defines the act of bullying as taking people's food. He considers bullying in relation to the hunger and social injustice that the youth at times face. Ovile's definition highlights that bullying is like violence that infiltrates the school space, so even if they flee the streets, violence can exist in the classroom setting. Nozipho shares a personal account of her experience in being bullied. She says that when they were given homework in class, some of her classmates demanded that she write their homework for them. The act of doing homework is an individual effort, which requires discipline. Nozipho considers dropping out of school, because of bullying. Bullying is the heart of the problem, because it has the potential to infringe on her human right to receive an education. She also feels helpless because she does not consider seeking help, but rather considers leaving school. The bullies, by demanding that she does their homework, to an extent steal her thoughts, learning efforts and understanding. Bantu shares that bullying makes him unhappy, but also

compares it with being a gangster. This comparison is essential as it shows that the school environment breeds street gangsters in the form of bullies, highlighting the connection between the classroom and streets. This is how the mesosystem is sustained in Khayelitsha. He says that people that bully don't value other people and they are the most dangerous people. Bantu makes the choice to articulate his emotions about bullying. If we were to equate bullying to systemic injustice, the latter also has the potential to become an emotional and personal matter.

These reflections indicate that bullying is something that the youth have experienced and feeling strongly about and it highlights the reason the youth chose the topic of bullying for their improvised scenes. The youth's individuality is also revealed in their different perceptions of bullying and in how they approach the reflective writing. The writing proves that the youth know that they have a right to a non-violent educational space and it sheds some light onto the fact that the young people want to be perceived as people who are concerned about bullying. The reflection also highlights the existences of metaxis in the youth's theatre making, which enables them to revisit and form opinions about school bullying. This reflection exercise at this point in the research gives an indication of the interface between youth's feelings and thoughts.

The theatre making that revolves around the bullying reveals that the youth are able to take initiative and decisions to enact the characters that they feel that they are able to enact, or which they think are relevant to the scenes. This experience of scene making reveals that theatre making contains the possibility for problem solving education, in that the youth came up with the subject matter of bullying. Furthermore, they also contributed to the scene making with their knowledge about and ability to enact the characters and scenarios that occur in the settings we explored. Theatre making allows the youth to reflect on the classroom (microsystem) issue of bullying. Metaxis offers us the understanding that the issue of bullying is the youth's reality. The writing reflection gives the youth a voice that enables them to reflect on bullying without someone telling them how they should go about it. The challenges that the youth and I experienced from theatre making not only teach us resilience, but also make us face the realities of our theatre making abilities. The system of theatre making then facilitates the youth's development by providing a metaphoric space, whereby the youth can revisit and review the microsystems within the macrosystem.

The theatre making also intersects with youth development by providing an opportunity for the youth to engage with their imagination and bodies (endosystem).

## CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCES

This chapter provides an analysis of the performances done by youth. Here I discuss how the youth's performances reveal the various systems that inform their development. I also discuss how inserting the stimulus of the play, *Have you Seen Zandile* (Mhlope 2002), into their theatre making process reveals new capacities in the group. I conclude by discussing how hope makes the youth continue with their lives and development, even as they come to terms with the tragedy of losing a group member.

### Theatre making for a Goodwood birthday party

During the theatre making process, Abhuti and Sipho informed me that the youth had been commissioned to perform at a famous actress's mother's birthday for R500. My role as an applied theatre practitioner shifted into me being an observer, as required by Abhuti. The attendance at rehearsals increased and I met new members and people whom I had met at the Masimbambisane workshop. This was the stage at which the leadership of John faded because the group were in conflict with John for stealing the group's money.<sup>6</sup>

The youth's play for the birthday celebrations was a montage of life in a village in the Eastern Cape, according to Sipho, the director of the play and drummer for the performance. The play had a dance performance, which the youth called contemporary, involving the girls and one boy. To my observation, the dance moves were a fusion of Xhosa traditional dancing and other dance moves that engaged the whole body. Sipho, who is „*ikwala*“, which is the term for a man who has come out of Xhosa initiation school, introduced stick fighting in one of the scenes. According to Sipho, stick fighting is a normal practice amongst the villagers during „*imigidi*“, a cultural occasion. In my experience stick fighting is one of the many ritualistic elements, which is showcased on the celebratory occasion of „*amakwala*“ (initiands) returning from the initiation school. In this performance the stick fighting scene involves the boys, and Sipho tells the boys that their fighting needs to emulate the reality of fighting. In rehearsal the stick fighting lacks control amongst some of the

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<sup>6</sup> I never entertained the youth's stories about John as I was scared to lose momentum on the current project, so I would say that what I learnt about John was hearsay.

fighting boys and becomes real instead of being an imitation. I stop observing this scene making and tell the boys not to hurt each other and explain to them my objections to violence. Siphso seemed to listen to me, but at times ignores my request. Siphso's ideas of stick fighting seemed to be immediately derived from his experience of initiation into Xhosa manhood. This subtle showcasing of stick fighting indicates, through metaxis, that some initiation activities can be brought into the theatre space without disregard for the private nature of the rituals. This counters my experience with the girls.

Bandile and Luthando play a scene of drunken males. Luthando has perfected the drunken male character, which reveals that he has observed drunken males or has experience in drunkenness. The youth's ability to tell these stories about men who drink and fight, to an extent, reveals their perceptions of elements of masculinity. Such perceptions affect the boy's development and reveal, without verbal confession, that the boy's concerns are with trying to be strong in their circumstances.

The dance and scenes are performed to the rhythm of the drum or songs. The lyrics refer to a celebration of some sort or are apartheid liberation songs. For instance, the one Xhosa song, which was sung by Lwandle after the boy's victory in the stick fighting, tells of how the man works for his girlfriend or wife and feeds and takes care of their children. This song is familiar to me from my cousin's wedding. The lyrics of the songs reveal the perception that men are the providers for their girlfriends or wives, which indicate that women are seen as dependent upon men. It is possibly unfair to gather such knowledge from just a song, but the lyrics of the songs and the way that males are portrayed by the youth makes this analysis possible.

The youth's capacity to dance and sing well illustrates that the youth have training in this regard and that they are able to learn and work in a group. Even though the youth are talented they still work hard on sharpening their talents. The final dress rehearsal of the show happened on a Friday in the container. This served as a teaching forum to new members in that some of the group observed and gave the performers feedback about their performance. By giving each other feedback they become experts in their craft and also make evident the possibility of learning within this informal space that encourages their optimal development. On Saturday, I met

the youth at Goodwood and watched them co-ordinate each other and negotiate the new space of a hall.

As concluded by Morris (2013) it becomes apparent that the youth draw upon their experience of traditional cultural performative practices in making a theatrical performance. These experiences or influences are drawn from everyday life in the Eastern Cape, initiation rituals, traditional and liberation songs, as well as what they have seen on television. This affirms Mbothwe (2010), Morris and Reznek's (2012) verdict that South African theatre is infused with cultural practices that encourage and promote the youth's Xhosa and South African cultural identity, and which concurs with Freire's notion that cultural awareness amongst human beings is engagement with their liberation (2009). However, the youth's pursuit of liberation is unsustainable, as the trajectory of systemic injustice is infused in their everyday existence. The youth's situation becomes an example of Freire's oppressive discourse in that the lack of dialogue and problem-posing education exacerbates the legacy of oppression. Nonetheless the youth also inform the South Africa theatre making trajectory when one looks at theatre making as a cultural commodity. In their development the youth are contributors to shaping South African theatre. The youth, with or without awareness, redefine themselves as a youth that is marginalised, but innovating and seeking ways to free themselves from oppression.

The youth's innovation also allows them to engage with business skills and practical business education, as they profit from their performance. Abhuti negotiates with the lady who organized the party, which indicates that people from around the community attempt to utilise and support the youth's theatre initiative.

When the youth arrived in the Goodwood they had to rethink their performance for the community hall where the party was held. Goodwood is more affluent than the Khayelitsha and this visit to Goodwood becomes a prime example of the contradictions that beset the youth's development. I will never know whether the youth question or accept these contradictions. It is apparent that the youth's theatre making provides them with opportunities that the streets of Khayelitsha would not provide. However, the youth do not interact with young people from Goodwood, who may well be of a different class and race to them. Therefore, they barely get to experience growing up in a diverse South Africa, and it highlights the youth's



marginalisation and South Africa's stagnation with regard to addressing racial and class problems.

### **Discipline as a solution**

After the youth performed at Goodwood, we attempt to carry on with the bullying scene making. But because one of the group members left in the middle of the session the youth had a meeting to re-evaluate their behaviour. The elder boys and I were positioned as the elders, or leaders of the group, who must inform discipline within the group. To change from the elder position, I asked the youth to inform each other how they would like to work in the group. One asked me to hit them in order for them to have discipline. I responded that I don't believe in beating people up in order for them to have discipline, and that I believe that they must come to the drama classes because they want to come to the classes, but not because there is fear of force instilled in them. What I would attempt to do is challenge them through theatre-making. We agreed on this point.

As Aviwe, one of the leaders, walks me home through the darkening streets, he informs me that John has stolen the group's money and he asks me for advice. The best advice I could give to Aviwe was that he must go and speak to the police about this matter. Many of our walks through the streets had become the space for our not-so-pressured reflection talks. Unintentionally, this became a way of reclaiming the streets that have driven the youth into theatre making. The reality of the youth wanting to become „good individuals“ by being „fixed“ surfaced at this point in the field work. This notion of being „fixed“ through being beaten is entrenched in their understanding of how to „solve“ their behavioural problems. This reveals that the youth's development is side-lined and challenged by the need for a point of arrival, when actually development is a process, which is induced by making mistakes and learning. This stage in the fieldwork is critical in that it became clear that the youth are aware that the theatre is beneficial for them. At this point I too became aware that my position with the youth was of someone who could offer them advice in a decision making process.

### **The contribution of text to township theatre making**

After this emotional encounter with the youth, I consulted my supervisor about my fear of unethically inducing trauma amongst the youth by encouraging violence. My

supervisor advised me to try introducing the youth to a play, *Have you seen Zandile* by Gcina Mhlophe (2002), instead of the youth using their own narratives in the theatre making.

This play is about a teenage girl named Zandile, who is raised by her grandmother in Durban. She gets kidnapped by her mother, who stays in the Eastern Cape. Her mom is married to a man who is not Zandile's father. The reason her mom kidnaps Zandile is because she wants to groom her for marriage, so she can be like her. Zandile is not happy about her mom's plans and she misses her grandmother. In spite of all this, Zandile becomes friends with Lindiwe. Zandile and Lindiwe spend most of their time talking about the maturational changes that they are encountering. Zandile also spends time writing letters to her grandmother. Eventually, Zandile manages to escape from her mom's captivity to go back to her grandmother. When she arrives in Durban, she is told that her grandmother has passed away. (Mbele: *Precis*, March 2012)

I introduce the youth to the subject matter of *Have you seen Zandile* by asking them to create images of people in the Eastern Cape, Durban and various cities in South Africa. In addition, I ask them to create a physical theatre motif based upon Abandonment and Love, which are core themes of the play. After this, I read the précis of the play (above), which I had written in Zulu, Xhosa and English. Then I asked the youth to say whatever comes to mind about what I had read to them. Thando says that it is Zandile's fault she got kidnapped. Sindi tries to intervene on Thando but I stop her because I don't want confrontation. Since, I am on guard against violence or confrontation I potentially stifle the process of talking. On the other hand, Nozipho says that Zandile is angry at being left by her mother at a young age. Abhuti relates to the love of a grandmother, as his grandmother raised him. He also makes a generalization that grandmothers are caring and loving individuals to their grandchildren. Abhuti raised an important issue about theatre making, in that it can make you relate to your own experience or highlight important characteristics of significant people in your life. These youth's diverse points of view once again reveal their ability to be individuals whom bring their own perceptions and abilities into the theatre making space, which offer the chance for them to grow by hearing other people's views and sharing of knowledge. Portraying characters in the play allow them to be spectators, who start to interrogate the lived experiences of the

characters. As an applied theatre practitioner I too am learning from the youth's opinions and deepening my knowledge about their play.

In the next sessions, I gave the youth a series of scenarios of the play's scenes. The scenarios were written in IsiXhosa and English. I asked them to improvise these scenes with their chosen partner. Due to the lack of equal gender roles in the play, I asked the youth to play any gender that is required in the scenario. The reality of this meant that the boys played female roles. I then gave the youth time to rehearse the scenes in their groups. After this, I demarcated a stage area in the container and put clothing materials and hats, which indicated the characters that the person will be playing on stage. The youth then presented each scene to the others.

For instance, Siphoh and Nozipho present scene one, which is about Zandile and her imaginary friend Bongih and her interaction with Mrs Dlamini her school teacher. Siphoh and Nozipho decide to make Bongih not imaginary, but a real character. The scene revolves around the conversation of these two friends. Siphoh decides to wear the material as hair to demonstrate the character of Zandile and he also accentuates the female character of Zandile, by bending and waving his hand. This character induces laughter amongst the audience, because he is slightly camp, and it raises the stakes of the performance. Nozipho as Bongih responds to all the action that Siphoh does in this scene, such as laughter, hugs and clapping of hands. The conversation between Zandile and Bongih is overpowered by the characterization by Siphoh, which steals the spotlight.

These scenes shows that the youth understand fun and companionship and, if they are not occupied by their issues, theatre can make them imagine and relive the fun in friendship. Siphoh's ability to steal the spotlight indicates his eagerness to be the best, even though it unintentionally belittles Nozipho's acting. The youth get to transform who they are perceived to be, or think they are, through this, which then indicates the possibilities of transformation in youth development that also consists of fun and companionship. The companionship allows them support and challenge each other, which contributes to their development.

Aviwe and Luthando present scene three, which shows Zandile's life with Gogo. Aviwe pulls off the character of *umakhulu* by wrapping the material around his waist and sitting on the floor with his legs placed on the side. He sings a Xhosa song and

calls Zandile with affectionate Xhosa names such as *riri*, *ntombi*. Aviwe, as Makhulu, beckons Zandile to lie with her as she sings. Aviwe's characterization of *makhulu* shows tenderness, performed by this strong, masculine boy. Luthando takes the risk of being the „Zandile“, and as much as he is hesitant, I know this is a challenge, because Luthando usually finds it easy to play drunk and thug characters. Nevertheless he sticks to the task. Aviwe's ability to sing affectionate songs contradicts the idea that boys only need to fight and appear strong. The youth's optimal development lies in the possibility to imagine themselves differently but such opportunities are challenged by the urgent need merely to survive in the township context. The introduction of text gives the youth the opportunity to play characters that are not their usual choices - such as thugs. The youth's ability to commit to the world of the play and sustain their acting demonstrates that, like any young persons, if they are given a chance they can engage with environments that demand that they value themselves and become goal orientated.

Ithina and Vuyo do Scene Twelve, which explores Zandile delivering a praise poem in front of her teacher Mr. Hlatshwayo. Vuyo is supposed to be the teacher however, he leaves Ithina alone on stage. Ithina gets irritated with Vuyo. I tell her to carry on with the scene. She picks up her energy and delivers the most wonderful and heartfelt Xhosa praise poem for the imagined teacher. Ithina conjures the beauty and metaphors of Xhosa praise poetry that is thought up on the spot. She reveals the ability to perform the metaphoric aspect of the Xhosa language, whilst I teach that even if your fellow actor lets you down on stage you have to carry on. This scene allows me to see the potential Ithina possesses, as I had never heard her deliver a poem. Vuyo also acknowledge his fear of acting, which shows his truthfulness in the process. Fear is the one emotion that exists in the youth's concerns and also existed when I was growing up and it has the potential to hinder your development and exploration of life and being. Fear depletes your capacity to explore various life opportunities. However, I do hope that Vuyo will one day be encouraged by his peers towards acting and thus gain confidence.

The use of text avoided the youth's impulse to perform individual righteousness and prevents them from making theatre that simply demonstrates „easy fixes“ to social issues. At this point, I realized that the work produced by the young people affirms their capacities as human beings, which demonstrates that township theatre can be

proposed as a tool for youth development. The challenges, successes and confusions that took place in our theatre making led to the creation of a play. The youth took ownership of their stories and „Zandile“s story“. They used their life experiences as resources in creating the play, which means that township theatre allows the youth to review and revalue their lives and development. They do this by using theatre to attempt to make the various systems, in which they are immersed, connect with each other because, as stated by Swartz, in township life there is little mesosystem. Theatre is a revolutionary tool that attempts to change this situation.

The youth and I decided to take the production of „Have you seen Zandile?“ to the festival. This decision was contested by Siphos. One rehearsal day I walked into the container and found him and a few others rehearsing a rape scene. Siphos and I walk home trying to convince each other about the production that we wanted to take to the festival. Eventually, I managed to get the young people to rehearse the production of „Have you seen Zandile?“ The rehearsal process was the youth and I integrating the bullying scenes, the dancing and singing that the youth had performed within the past months, into the „Have you seen Zandile?“ story. For instance, the school scene in „Have you seen Zandile“ was integrated with the school playground scene which showcased the bullying and the woman that sold chips to the learners. The taxi rank newspaper scene was developed into a TV news scene, which showcased the news reader informing us about Zandile“s kidnapping. The integrating of these scenes became a group effort.

### **Another performance opportunity intervenes**

In the midst of this rehearsal process, the youth received an invitation to perform some of their songs so they began rehearsals for this event as well. During this rehearsal process the youth introduced me to Xhosa songs that told stories of social plights and other human encounters. It is at this point that I would learn how to sing with the youth. The youth induced my Xhosa identity with these songs. Some of them reminded me of my visits to the Eastern Cape and made me aware of a part of my cultural identity that I had lost.

This time around I did not go with the youth to their performance, which was on Saturday. On the Sunday morning, I received a call from Abhuti informing me that, on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> of April, Lwandle got hit by a taxi on Landsdowne Rd and had

passed away. It is at this point in the research that I would understand the youth's reality of fearing the streets. The irony about the streets of Khayelitsha is that they are pathways to the youth's homes, a place of communal activity, but also a place of fear and tragedy.

### **Masibambisane festival performance and Lwandle's send off**

Whilst attending prayer meetings at Lwandle's place, the youth continued with the rehearsal process of the play. This encompassed altering scenes, making mistakes, communication breakdowns, fun and confrontational moments amongst group members, exchange of theatre making techniques between the group and me, whilst making theatre that consists of social commentary about youth in a South African environment. In our individual and group capacities, we attempted to understand that part of development includes death, which is beyond our control. It is in the process of development that the youth and I become visionaries of the stories we want to tell. Similarly, we start to visualize our future. It is in this process that the capacity for youth development exists.

The youth and I caught a taxi from Khayelitsha to the Baxter Theatre. This was the second day of the festival. I attended the first day of the festival, which consisted of performances from Primary School learners. The performances were facilitated by young facilitators that were commissioned by Sam. I attended Masibambisane Festival planning meetings with them and Sam, as they planned the logistics of the festival and gave feedback about their rehearsal processes. The children performed dances and plays. The audience consisted of school teachers and school children who were energetic and verbally responsive. The second day encompassed various theatre youth groups and featured a group from Mitchells Plain, a „coloured township“ near Khayelitsha, who brought parents and other adult community members to watch. The groups predominately performed dance and choral music, and plays about gangsters and rape. The festival also showcased speeches from a teacher from Alexander Sinton High School in Athlone, a woman from Mitchells Plain, and two young people from a collective called *Imbizo Yamadoda* [men's gathering for dialogue]. The speeches encouraged and supported the youth and affirmed their efforts. They mentioned integration between Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain, and a platform to discuss men's issues by men. These speeches still seem didactic, but they also reveal that adults and parents are concerned about the young.

Qina n Divas" performance of „Have you seen Zandile" encompassed a cast of fifteen youth and no set. This started with the character of *umakhulu* appearing from the audience, searching and calling for Zandile, whilst interacting with the audience as neighbours. The youth made a choice to predominantly wear black bottoms and white school T-shirts, but Sipho wore a wig, which he found backstage, in his character as a bully. Aviwe, portraying Zandile"s teacher, also made the choice to appear from the audience to tell the learners to go back to class. The play goes on to other scenes until Zandile comes back to the community to look for *Makhulu*. A woman community member informs her that *Makhulu* passed away. Zandile tells the community about her abduction. The community members are distraught in the face of Zandile"s news. One begins to sing a song and then Abhuti remarks that, while the law fails to protect our children what are the males doing about it? After this, the youth played the drum, sung and performed one of their group dances.

Abhuti"s question of the law that fails to protect children can be equated to the systems that at times fail the youth as they develop into adulthood. The resolution for the community to attack the person that kidnapped Zandile indicates that violence can be considered as an instant solution to the problems that the youth face. I say this with hesitation, although bullying, rape and xenophobia are portrayed as the solution to many problems. Far from being a solution, such acts violate human rights and perpetuate oppression.

The youth"s choices on stage demonstrated that they had immersed themselves in play making, all of them playing their characters with conviction. They transformed a play, which they had rehearsed in a small space into one for a large proscenium arch stage. It is essential to note that two days before the performance, I became an observer of the rehearsal process because the youth had their own ideas and ways of rehearsing that they wanted to explore. It is within this and other performances that the „dance of possibility" of the youth"s development exists. With each rehearsal and performance process I am enlightened by the capability and potential of the youth and get a glimpse of how elders, with their words and wisdom, encourage and inform the youth that they are aware of their struggles. I also became aware that theatre and even a festival is insufficient to combat the systems that fail the youth.

After the festival, we went back to Khayelitsha to Lwandle"s home. Lwandle"s family and other community members stood on the street in front of Lwandle"s house to

deliver the ritual sendoff of Lwandle's body to Ngcobo in the Eastern Cape. Qina n Divas was called upon to perform for the people. Under the leadership of Siphon, we sang songs that Lwandle had led during the singing rehearsal. Siphon comforted the member of the group with such gentleness. It is in this possibility that I see young school boys and girls doing their duty in spite of their grief. Performing in the streets is not only a way of reclaiming the streets, which the youth fear, but it is also due to the lack of space to accommodate community members who had come to the ceremony. Lwandle's corpse was in a taxi's trailer. As the taxi prepared to embark on the journey, Lwandle's sister called us to sing and dance in front of it. In that instant, we became participants and observers of death. The irony is that the taxi that transported her body to her resting place resembled the transport that took her life.

Lwandle's death affirms Abhuti's point about the streets of Khayelitsha being dangerous for young people. Like Thompson in Sri Lanka (2009), I seem to have been faced with a critical manifestation of the youth's context of violence and brutality, which only goes to show that applied theatre has its limitations in resolving people's issues.

The youth walked me home after, and on our way, we danced and sang on the streets. Rustom Bharucha maintains that the actuality of someone's death is beyond performance (Great Texts / Big Questions lecture series, GIPCA, 2 October 2014). Although the dancing and singing didn't change the situation, it provided us with an embodied mourning process. Once again, the youth and I used our bodies to address the pain and confusion of the loss of Lwandle.

## **Conclusion**

Unlike Reznick, who uses movement to unlock embodied trauma, I have had to write about losing Lwandle as a way of amplifying the youth's voice - those who attempt to achieve optimal development. My trauma has been induced by a sense of guilt that I should actually have stopped Lwandle from leaving the theatre sessions. This affirms the limits of applied theatre. Applied theatre can address issues, but it will not stop Lwandle dying or Sri Lankan soldiers dying (Thompson 2009). Even with these limitations, however, through applied theatre practice I became aware of the vitality and fragility of young people in the township. Instead of branding these young people as suffering from a deficit of morality, it's essential to listen to them. I still ask myself



if I listened and understood Abhuti when he told me about the dangers of the streets, or did I simply pursue an applied theatre project?

Swartz concludes that township youth are partly oppressed by the microsystems and macrosystems and her research highlights the complexities of the systems that the youth have to grow up in (2007, 27-28). bell hooks states that optimism appears from those locations of striving, in which she has observed humans transforming their lives and the surroundings (2003: xiv). In the field of youth development studies the youth's hopes are conjured as their means of developing optimally. The difficulty is that the development process is not only dependent on hope, but also on various entities caught within systems, which I have explicated in Chapter 2. Chapters 4 and 5 elucidate the intricacies of how the youth's theatre making engages with the systems within their environment. Theatre making offers them perspective and is a rehearsal of the issues that impact their development. The reality of losing a fellow member intersects with the theatre making and development. Despite this, the youth demonstrate hope in their development, because they resorted to prayer and comforting Lwandle's family and even performed at her send off. When I lost hope they informed me it was Lwandle's time (chronosystem) to go and we must accept her death. Hope is like theatre, which makes the youth escape their reality and encourages them to carry on with their lives in the hope that the future will be better. Hope alone is insufficient, because it does not guarantee that one of them will not die in the streets of Khayelitsha. Hope does not guarantee that they will have sufficient and efficient theatre space. It also does not guarantee sustained engagement with an applied theatre project that would help with their development.

Without sensationalizing the youth, it is their courage that I learnt from them. It is the courage to imagine a world of plays and shelter themselves in a theatre space. It is the courage to hope in tough times. It is the courage to allow theatre to voice out their issues. It is this courage that conjures the opportunity for optimal development in township context. It is the courage to exist in a marginalized context, but still hope. There is no harm in the youth hoping, unlike their environment, which seems to undermine hope. My fear is that one day I will receive a call from one of the youth informing me that another member of the group has passed away. I do hope this will not happen, but the fear doesn't leave me. I also know that the young people will develop, but the question is who will they grow up to be in South Africa? Will their

environment dictate their future or will the theatre give them hope enough to enable them to overcome the challenges of their environment in their transition into adulthood?

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