Engaging with the ‘soil and soul’

of a community:

Rethinking development, healing and transformation in South Africa

by

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Declaration

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Bloemfontein
1 February 2016
I dedicate this study to the community members, practitioners, co-facilitators, colleagues and officials who have shared their worlds and stories with me.

In the process I have discovered much of myself, our country and being human.

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### References
Abstract

This study was inspired by my community development praxis over the past 25 years in South Africa. Critical losses, hardship, oppression and frustrated dreams over generations left our country fragile. These wounds remained largely unprocessed in the democratic dispensation (since 1994) as poor policy decisions/implementation and disillusionment added to the complex layers of woundedness. Is the field of community development deliberately seeking to engage with this complexity – with what I call the ‘soil and soul’ of our communities? The main aim of this study was thus:

To investigate if and how mainstream community development can engage with the complexity of woundedness in our communities; and to search for key elements of a healing approach that mainstream community development practitioners/workers can implement.

The research methodology was qualitative, within a hermeneutic-phenomenological framework. Two case studies were used in the thematic secondary analysis. Both were community development initiatives that had engaged with woundedness.

I started the study by looking for the meaning of the word development and traced it back to the Latin root *velo*: to veil, cover up or conceal. De-velo/de-development is thus a process of un-veiling and uncovering. Conversely, modern dictionaries explain development as: growth, expansion, increase, teach, change, modify, complicate or amend.

The modern meaning seems to dominate mainstream community development practice globally and in South Africa (especially the dominant state-led programmes): one-dimensional plans and seductive projects focus on the economic, compensation for losses (such as land reform), service delivery and welfare/grants. The low survival and success rate of these further compounds the woundedness. It thus appears as if in-depth engagement is consequential and not deliberate.

Theories on communal wounding highlight comprehensive and multiple losses suffered during violent subjugation and colonisation. The more dangerous legacy, however, is the internalisation of the messages of oppression: inferiority/superiority in the oppressed/oppressor. The result is a loss of the authentic self and destructive life strategies. The battle for healing is essentially a battle for the authentic self. This requires increased consciousness and an active fight against oppression in all its cunning forms and manifestations. This goes back to the original meaning of development: a process of un-veiling.

A healing approach needs to heed certain caveats: expert facilitation is required, embedded in a high level of self-knowledge; the manifestations of wounding impact on projects and cannot be glossed over (for example the courage to risk and face failure); the process hinges on reflection and mirroring, which can benefit from an outsider view; leaders and managers are equally wounded and need to be included in healing work; attachment to unconscious material can sabotage change; and racism and
oppression need to be addressed deliberately through anti-bias work.

Eight key elements for a communal healing approach were distilled: (1) the need for a guiding storyline; (2) the importance of the personal-in-the-group; (3) the principle of start-with-self; (4) an empathetic desire to un-veil the true self (of all participating); (5) balancing the fear to fail and the need to risk; (6) making the journey easy for all, thus respectful facilitation; (7) embracing difficult moments, chaos and nothingness; and (8) trusting/allowing participants to find their own authentic being – and ultimate liberation.

My main conclusion is that it is possible for mainstream community development to engage with the complexity of woundedness in communities. However, some vital aspects have to be in place: an understanding of the manifestations of wounding and how the healing process unfolds; and facilitators who are sufficiently prepared to do this work. This assumes effective mentoring. Healing work does not require special programmes: it can be integrated into mainstream projects. These then provide the material for the unfolding storyline and the context in which new insights can be practised.

Further research may be needed regarding: the design of a mentoring system; the link between woundedness and programme design and potential; systems for reflection and reflexivity; technical issues (training, assessment, replicability and sustainability); and cross-barrier work to fight racism and other forms of oppression.

**Key words:**
Community development; communal wounding; communal healing; critical consciousness; authentic self; internalised oppression; anti-bias work; outsider/witness; personal-in-group context; Community Development Workers Programme; Department of Social Development; South Africa.
Opsomming

Die studie is deur my werk in gemeenskapsontwikkeling in Suid-Afrika oor die afgelope 25 jaar geïnspireer. Kritiese verliese, ontbering, onderdrukking en verydelde drome oor geslagte heen het ons gemeenskap broos gelaat. Hierdie wonde is nie gedurende die demokratiese era (sedert 1994) verwerk nie. Inteendeel, swak beleidsbesluite/implementering en ontgogeling het nuwe lae tot die komplekse verwonding gevoeg. Poog die veld van gemeenskapsontwikkeling om doelbewus met hierdie kompleksiteit om te gaan – met wat ek die ‘grond en siel’ van die gemeenskap noem? Die hoofdoel van hierdie studie was dus:

Om te ondersoek of en hoe hoofstroom-gemeenskapsontwikkeling met die kompleksiteit van verwonding in ons gemeenskappe kan omgaan. ’n Verdere doel was om kernelemente van ’n helingsbenadering te identifiseer, wat deur hoofstroom-gemeenskapswerkers geïmplementeer kan word.

Die navorsingsmetodiek was kwalitatief, binne ’n hermeneuties-fenomenologiese raamwerk. Twee gevallestudies is vir tematiese sekondêre ontleding gebruik. Beide was gemeenskapsontwikkeling-projekte wat met verwonding gewerk het.

Ek het die ondersoek begin deur die oorsprong van die woord *development* na te vors. Dit kom van die Latynse woord *velo*: versluier, toemaak of bedek. *De-velo / de-development* is die proses om te ontsluiier, oop te maak – of, soos dit in die Afrikaans gebruik word: ont-wikkel (uit dit waarin dit toegewikkel is/was). Daarenteen word *development* in moderne woordeboeke beskryf as: groei, uitbrei, vermeerder, leer, aanpas en kompliseer.

Die moderne betekenis blyk te oorheers - in hoofstroom-gemeenskapsontwikkeling, globaal en in Suid-Afrika (veral in die oorehersende staatsprogramme): een-dimensionele planne en verleidelike projekte fokus op die ekonomiese, vergoeding vir verliese (soos grondhervorming), dienslewering en welsyn (byvoorbeeld toelae). Die bedroewende oorlewingsslakke en sukses van hierdie projekte verdiep die verwonding. Dit wil dus voorkom of in-diepte bemoeienis toevallig is en nie as noodsaak gesien word nie.

Teorieë oor die verwonding van gemeenskappe bekleemtoon omvattende verliese deur gewelddadige onderdrukking en kolonisasie. Die gevaarlike nalatenskap is egter die internalisering van die boodskap van onderdrukking: minderwaardigheid en meerderwaardigheid van die onderdrukte en onderdrukker. Die gevolg is ’n verlies aan die ware self en gepaardgaande destruktiewe strategieë. Die stryd vir heling is dus ’n stryd om die ware self. Dit verg verhoogde bewusyn en ’n aktiewe geveg teen onderdrukking in al sy geslepte vorme en uitdrukkings. Dit bring ons terug by die oorspronklike betekenis van die konsep ontwikkeling: ’n proses van ontsluiiering.

’n Helingsbenadering moet die volgende in ag neem: ekspert fasilitering is nodig, ondersteun deur ’n
hoë vlak van self-kennis; die manifestasies van verwonding beïnvloed projekte en kan nie geïgnoreer word nie (byvoorbeeld die moed om te waag en mislukking in die oog te kyk); die proses hang van refleksie en weerspieëling af, wat kan baat by die teenwoordigheid van ‘n buitestander; leiers en bestuurders is net so verwond en moet ook in helingswerk ingesluit word; verknoegtheid aan onbewuste materiaal kan verandering saboteer; en rassisme en ander vorms van onderdrukking moet deur doelbewuste programme aangespreek word.

Agt kernelemente van ‘n gemeenskaplike helingsbenadering is geïdentifiseer: (1) die noodsaak van ‘n storielyn wat die proses rig; (2) die belangrikheid om met die persoonlike-in-die-groep te werk; (3) die beginsel van begin-met-jouself; (4) ‘n empatiese begeerte om die ware self (van almal betrokke) te ont-sluiër; (5) die balansering van die vrees om te faal en die noodsaak om te waag; (6) om die reis vir almal maklik te maak (respekvolle fasilitering); (7) om moeilike momente, chaos en die niks te omhels; en (8) om deelnemers te vertrou en toe te laat om hul ware self te vind – die uiteindelike bevryding.

My hoofgevolgtrekking is dat dit vir hoofstroom-gemeenskapsontwikkeling moontlik is om met die kompleksiteit van verwonding in ons gemeenskappe te werk. Sekere essensiële aspekte moet egter in plek wees: ‘n begrip van hoe verwonding manifesteer en hoe die helingsproses verloop; en fasiliteerders voldoende voorbereid om hierdie werk te doen. Dit veronderstel doeltreffende leiding (mentors). Helingswerk vereis nie spesiale programme nie: dit kan in hoofstroomprojekte geïntegreer word. Laasgenoemde verskaf die inhoud vir die ontvouing van die storielyn en ok die konteks waarinne nuwe insigte toegepas kan word.

Verdere navorsing is nodig aangaande: die ontwerp van ‘n mentorsisteem; die verband tussen verwonding en programontwerp/-potensiaal; sisteme vir besinning (refleksie); tegniese kwessies (opleiding, waardebepaling, replisering en volhoubaarheid) en werk met rassisme en ander vorme van onderdrukking oor grense heen.
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>Community Development Practitioner/s</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDW</td>
<td>Community Development Worker/s</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDWP</td>
<td>Community Development Workers Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>COGTA</td>
<td>Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPSL</td>
<td>Department of Public Service and Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSD</td>
<td>Department of Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTI</td>
<td>Department of Trade and Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Growth Employment and Redistribution</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISRDP</td>
<td>Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme</td>
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<td>LED</td>
<td>Local Economic Development</td>
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<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Development Plan</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NPO</td>
<td>Non-profit Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<td>RSA</td>
<td>Republic of South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>SASSA</td>
<td>South African Social Security Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>URP</td>
<td>Urban Renewal Programme</td>
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1 Introduction: Journeys of un-veiling and discovery

In every age, men have set out on pilgrimages, on spiritual journeys, on personal quests. Driven by pain, drawn by longing, lifted by hope, singly and in groups they come in search of relief, enlightenment, peace, power, joy or they know not what (Kopp, 1990: 1)

1.1 De-velo: un-veiling and discovery

While working with an isolated community in rural South Africa, an elderly leader asked me one day: “Is development ever going to go to the white people too?”

This question started to haunt me. Does he see ‘development’ as a thing that can be taken around and handed out to the ‘underdeveloped’ - by the grace of the ‘developed’? Is there a stigma attached to the idea of development: it never ‘goes to’ white people - no matter how poor, illiterate or ‘un-developed’ they might be? On the other hand, this man and his neighbours, by virtue of their colour, remain perpetual candidates for development – no matter how ‘developed’ they are.

For years, this man and his community got firsthand experience of how the business of ‘development’ works. They were hit by wave after wave of socio-economic projects, research and environmental studies, consultants’ enthusiasm, draft development plans, tourism schemes and restorative justice activists. Hardly has one expert left before the next arrives to resolve the conflict left by the previous or to rescue a newly failed plan. Not only has the experience of development done little for this community’s quality of life; they somehow came to the conclusion that they are to be blamed for the failure of these efforts. Relationships with self, leadership and nature have become heartbreakingly fragile. Development has left deep scars.

I was one in this stream of outsiders, arriving there in the name of development and the remark by this leader compelled me to look for another way to understand ‘development’. I traced the root of the word back to the Latin verb velo, which means to veil, cover, cover up, enfold, wrap, envelop, hide, conceal and clothe in. Develo is the verb for un-doing the above: un-veil, uncover, unfurl and so forth (Online Etymology Dictionary; Thefreedictionary.com). The Afrikaans ont-wikkeling also refers to a process of taking something out of whatever it has been swaddled/swathed in. In modern dictionaries, however, development is explained as: growth, expansion, advance, increase, maturity, teach, change, modify, complicate, acquire, amend, ensue or start. Only a few explanations hint towards the original meaning, such as explicate and transpire (Synonym.com).

Imagining development as a process of un-veiling and enfolding resulted in a journey of reflection on my own practice and assumptions over many years as community development practitioner. Was I
taking around this ‘thing’ development to *increase* and *complicate*, or even worse, to *amend* others to be acceptably ‘developed’? Have I been sensitive and gentle to still uncovered scars and wounds, not only those left by a terrible history of hardship, oppression and deprivation, but also by the betrayal and seduction of development? Have I added new wounds? Above all, are we equipped and is it possible, in the name of community development, to embark on a journey or quest to un-veil mysteries, dreams, riddles and treasures that can help us to mend the many broken dreams and relationships in our communities?

A desire to find answers to these questions became the inspiration for this study.

Since this study is deeply embedded in my practice as a community development practitioner in South Africa, I start with a short description of my own experiences and dilemmas over the past two and a half decades. The scope is then widened to look at the South African context since the dawn of democracy in 1994, with specific reference to how our government and our communities are dealing with the wounds inherited from a long history of oppression and hardship. Looking at this picture, one has to ask if community development is managing to step into the breach, since by its very nature it is so intimately involved with our vulnerable communities. The contextual overview informs the problem statement. After briefly outlining the study, the chapter closes with a short discussion of how I understand the concept ‘community development’.

### 1.2 The context and motivation for this study

This study is mainly inspired by my own experiences in the community development field, but also by the context within which I have done this work. This context is South Africa, a country battling with its transformation after centuries of oppression and inequality. This section comprises an introduction into my journey in the field, an overview of how South Africa is dealing with its transition and a brief summary of statistics regarding our social health.

#### 1.2.1 My journeys as community development worker in South Africa

Between 1990 and 2015 I gained an insight into the nature of community development in South Africa as I worked in various capacities with numerous communities, organisations and government departments in several parts of the country. I now discuss three of these journeys.

##### 1.2.1.1 Families, trapped in negative labels

My first exposure to community development was in the field of early childhood development in informal settlements and on farms in the Free State province of South Africa. I was intuitively uncomfortable with the demands we make on parents to be ‘good parents’. For these parents, who already feel inadequate and guilty because they hardly manage to feed and clothe their children, our well-intended suggestions about ‘things you can do with/for your child’ merely confirm the fear that
they are failing as parents. Should we not consider that these parents’ lives and self-images as black people in apartheid South Africa were shaped by mainly negative forces and that they carry heavy labels and stereotyping, resulting from oppression and deprivation? These have been perpetuated and compounded over generations and internalised as personal failures. I became convinced that we alienate three-year old children from their parents through our careless and often self-indulgent interventions.

Subsequently, I designed and piloted programmes where the children were reached through the parents/families, by working directly with the latter. We sought a way to break the cycle of suggestion and failure, by creating awareness of parents’ own childhoods, missed opportunities, broken relationships and untrue/unfair labels. The next step was to move into action, by defining and practising new attitudes and behaviour on personal level, with the support of the rest of the group. The topic of ‘how to raise a child’ was not touched upon directly – avoiding any chance of evoking feelings that parents had been failing their children.

Each week’s sessions with groups of families were developed or ‘cooked’ (as we called it) on a weekly basis. The ‘ingredients’ of this cooking were a complex mixture of parents’ responses from the previous session/s; the reaction of the facilitators as their own shadows were triggered by the stories told, their own life experiences (they were drawn from the same communities); evaluation of methodology used; and my own reflections as mentor and also the only white person in the programme. I was both outsider and witness from the oppressor’s side, but also intimate insider as team member and somebody who grew up in the area.

All of us, families, facilitators and I embarked simultaneously on a quest for consciousness and healing. Consequently, it was a highly complex venture, holding numerous processes concurrently.

We did not manage to keep this afloat. The process was deemed too slow and subtle to be cost-effective or replicable. How does one verify the value of a mother who now has a twinkle in her eye? What indicators prove that children are growing up in a gentler atmosphere? How do you ‘go to scale’ and write a manual for a journey of un-veiling?

1.2.1.2 State-initiated community development
From 2006 to 2008, I participated in an evaluation process of projects by the National Department of Social Development, initiated as part of a presidential programme in 21 nodal districts. This involved qualitative research on district and provincial level, followed by a support phase and a final evaluation.

I was struck by the damage done through funded projects driven by pre-determined objectives. Community development workers seemed under-prepared for the difficult task of churning out income-generating projects and cooperatives to meet set targets. The evaluation found that most of these workers lacked technical knowledge to support the range of projects (which included vegetable
growing, chicken farming, beadwork, bakeries, sewing and more) and the financial skills to facilitate the establishment of profitable businesses.

Physical results were scant: a bunch of spinach, three heads of cabbage and a pig to show for an investment of R1.5 million. A group of grannies was in trouble because they were supposed to make a profit with a few chickens and sewing in a desolated area with no market. Project members were defeated by their ‘flagship’ chicken project in a semi-desert area. It was a sorry sight: barely alive chickens pecking about amidst the dead ones. Project members could not tell when last a chicken was slaughtered in their state-of-the-art abattoir.

There was scant evidence of reflective analysis on any level (project, district or provincial) that could be fed into new thinking, systems or practice. Reports were aimed at providing statistical information and being filed. How could policy, strategic or skills deficiencies be recognised without a structured reflective and analytical process from project to provincial levels? As a result, there was no way to know why projects struggled and what the real impact of each venture was. Apart from the fact that efficiency was compromised, this left project members and officials with no alternative but to feel that they have failed personally.

I have not noted awareness of the potential damage or that negative experiences of the past could compromise current ability and confidence. Yet, there was ample proof if one would care to look: the despairing looks in the eyes of project members and district officials talking about the failure of the project; the feeble efforts to ‘explain’, to blame the weather or each other; and the conflict that has torn them apart. I asked one group what they did when the latest disaster struck: “We put our hands over our mouths”. What else could they do?

1.2.1.3 The Richtersveld’s ‘poisoned soil’

Another experience that shaped my praxis was with the Richtersveld community in the north-western tip of the Northern Cape Province.

The Richtersveld community claimed reparation for the loss of income due to the mining of diamonds in their ancestral land by the state-owned company Alexkor since 1928. When the claim was awarded in 2007, funding was set aside for the design of a development plan. I became involved in 2009. My first task was to identify issues that could impact on development in this community and the findings of this research informed the planning process.
I perceived it as critical that the community participated in this process to become conscious of self, relationships and behaviour. After spending some time interacting with the community, I presented my tentative observations through public workshops – as a starting point for deeper exploration. I used the metaphor of a Richtersveld plant with/without flowers for this process. On the level of the roots (soil) we looked at the psychological results of a history of struggle, isolation and betrayal. The nature of relationships, communication and trust were linked to the main stem. The branches symbolised the basic requirements for development to take place: governance, assets, policies, systems, and so forth. Flowers indicated positive accomplishments or ‘development’ (of which hardly any could be identified).

We used cards for each aspect and in a highly emotional process the community worked for months on this plant - adding, rejecting and moving cards around as understanding grew in richness and complexity.

The ‘soil’ elicited the strongest feelings since it required facing own labels and shadows: dependency, stubbornness, mistrust, apathy and many more. The community was deeply upset by the emerging picture: “Look at our soil! It is so poisoned - nothing will ever grow here! How did it get like this?” “It is no wonder that we never see flowers here. The development plans always start with the flowers - in such soil!” The leaders admitted that they were not aware of so much pain in their community.
We struggled to move beyond the roots: all intuitively understood that this is where action would have to start. And indeed, the first two (out of five) objectives of the plan eventually addressed issues of the soil, trust and communication.

There was deep regret that “we had not done this work before and while we were fighting for this land claim ...” This deserves elucidation. For 13 years, their legal teams fought for reparation that would make each of the approximately 3000 community members an instant millionaire. At the same time, consultants worked enthusiastically to get part of the area declared a World Heritage Site. This community was seduced into action and participation, united by utopian dreams of prosperity, international fame and instant wealth. Enormous expectations were created. Is it possible that during all these processes, driven by streams of experts and land activists, their ‘soil and soul’ –the complex legacy of a history of losses, hopes and woundedness - have never been noted? Was there no reflection on what the real damage was that needed repairing/reparation? Did nobody consider if the fragile ‘soil’ of this community could afford another failure (or success, would the claim be awarded!)?

Then reality struck: instead of millions of rand, the claim brought them an almost incomprehensible settlement with uncertain promises of compensation (shares in the mine and dividends on growth of

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1 The total claim amounted to R2 577 814 014.00 and there are 3000 members in this community (Land Claims Court of South Africa, 2007: 2).
investments). The community was split into two. Undecided land ownership prevented the final declaration of the Heritage Site. The leadership was overwhelmed by the technical demands, unmanageable expectations and assets slowly turning into liabilities. Conflict, fomented by external opportunism (after all, we talk about diamonds here), ripped the community apart. These battles went to court and to the media until all governance systems were suspended by a court order.

Since then heads are hanging in the Richtersveld. New poison was added to their ‘soil’: “Everybody is laughing at us.” “We mess up all the chances we get!” “Nothing will ever grow here.” Each new round of consultants, developers and failed plans erodes trust in their own ability and in that of outsiders. Obsolete survival strategies and paralysing projections are compounded, relationships (with self, others and nature) are under pressure and the hope that anything is even worth trying, is dying: the ‘soil’ will forever remain poisoned.

The plans and dreams resulting from our ‘Richtersveld flower’ process have joined their predecessors in an abandoned drawer: there is no governance structure left to implement it. Sporadic contact with members of this community indicates that our venture with the Richtersveld flower offered this community an opportunity to look at themselves without shame, humiliation or pressure. It has brought a yearning for un-poisoned ‘soil’ and a metaphor to express it: “We will have to clean up our soil, get rid of this poison and work in a lot of compost, so that we can move on and see flowers here.”

These experiences evoke questions about our ability to work gently and appropriately with the psyche of our communities. We focus on the technical, where counting and measuring reign supreme. We seduce communities to participate in even the most unrealistic plans and raise unmanageable expectations – and when all falls apart, we leave. Who has to deal with the wounds that we thus inflict?

These journeys have taken place within the broader context of the ‘New South Africa’, in which we are trying to come to terms with our troubled past and present. This context is now explored.

1.2.2 South Africa: a wounded society in transition

South Africa approached its first democratic election on 27 April 1994 with anticipation, excitement and relief: civil war was avoided and democracy became a reality. But it was a deeply divided and seriously wounded society that emerged not only from the whirlpool of states of emergency and violence of the 1980s, but from centuries of ambiguous relationships, oppression, deprivation and discrimination. During his inauguration speech on 10 May 1994, Nelson Mandela referred to our experience of “extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long” and stated that the “time for the healing of the wounds has come” (RSA: The Presidency, 1994).

The new democratic government immediately started with efforts to create a new society and to wipe
out all traces of our unfortunate past. Much hope was placed on guiding documents (constitution), legislation, policies of redress (land redistribution and affirmative action), institutions (Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Constitutional Court) and master plans (Reconstruction and Development Programme, Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme and the latest of these: the National Development Plan: Vision for 2030). Millions of rand were spent on increased access to services and opportunities (for example housing, electricity, running water, basic education and primary health) and to avert abject poverty through social support grants and job safety nets for the unemployed. Even though problems are experienced regarding most of these (quantity, quality, access and maintenance), the psychological value of the “spectacular” achievements of the first decade of democracy cannot be overestimated: success and a legitimate majority-led state can break down centuries of racial stereotypes and affirm “the citizenship of the newly enfranchised” (Ndebele, 2010). Woods talks about “pleasure in agency” associated with self-determination, autonomy, self-esteem, efficacy, and pride resulting from “the successful assertion of intention” (in Odendaal, 2013: 3).

How much progress have we made over the past 20 years to bring about the healing that Mandela referred to? To find answers on this question, I firstly turned to the rafts of policy, planning, strategic and diagnostic documents of the government and the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). Thereafter, I listened to the voices of a few prominent South African analysts and thinkers. Finally, I looked at the state of our social health through the lens of statistical information.

1.2.2.1 The official position: engagement with woundedness and healing

How is woundedness described by the government and the ruling party? Direct references are few and an understanding has basically to be deduced from descriptions of our oppressive history. It is acknowledged that not only those brutalised by the police are victims of apartheid. It is the millions forcibly removed to “barren lands, denied decent education, forced to carry passes and suffer the indignity of racial discrimination daily” that still carry the “psychological cost of apartheid” (RSA: NPC, 2011b: 7, 11-12). The National Planning Commission (NPC) warns that the long-lasting effects of the various racial policies should not be underestimated. Apartheid gave rise to systems (migrant labour and homelands), which “destroyed conventional family life, causing complex social problems that persist today” (RSA: NPC, 2011b: 7).

What does a healed community, liberated from these scars, look like? For the ANC the main content of the National Democratic Revolution is the “liberation of Africans in particular and Blacks in general from political and socio-economic bondage” (ANC, 2007b: Point 39). At the same time, there is the

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2 Key strategic documents reviewed include: the Constitution, the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the New Growth Plan, the documents of the National Planning Commission, the National Development Plan and various Strategic Plans and Frameworks. Documents of the ruling party (the ANC) consulted include consecutive Strategies and Tactics policy discussion documents and election manifestos (ANC, 1994; ANC, 2007a; ANC, 2007b; ANC, 2012b; ANC, 2014; RSA, 1996; RSA: Department of Economic Development, 2010; RSA: NPC, 2011a, RSA: NPC, 2011b; RSA: NPC, 2011c; RSA: The Presidency, 2006; RSA: The Presidency, 2009).
responsibility of “liberating the white community from the false ideology of racial superiority and the insecurity attached to oppressing others” (ANC, 2007b: Point 39). As “oppression was embedded in the economic, social, religious, cultural, family and other relations in all communities, its eradication cannot be an assumed consequence of democracy” (ANC, 2007b: Point 40). All manifestations and consequences of patriarchy need to be eliminated, including: “the feminisation of poverty”, physical and psychological abuse, the undermining of self-confidence, all forms of exclusion, racism, exploitation and intolerance (ANC, 2007b: Points 40, 214). The NPC adds: reduced poverty and inequality, involving communities, mutual respect, inclusiveness, cohesion and adherence to the constitutional imperative that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it”, which excludes the “paradigm of entitlement” (RSA: NPC, 2011c: 25, 5). In an ideal society we will find “healthy lifestyles, moral integrity and role models, informed by human compassion, generosity, incorruptibility and accountability” (ANC, 2007b: Point 213). The need for nation building, cohesion and a caring community is mentioned in a number of documents. In summary: the wounded deserve “a democratic South Africa that reverses the effects of apartheid” (RSA: NPC, 2011b: 12).

How is such a society to be created? Most documents do not offer practical answers or strategies, but instead make vague commitments such as ‘encourage’ (positive aspects), ‘fight against’ (the undesirable) and ‘mobilise’ the nation (ANC, 2007b: Points 213 and 214). The Nation building diagnostic states that the country “must continue with measures to heal the wounds of the past” (RSA, NPC, 2011b: 3), without elaborating on the nature of these existing ‘measures’. The National Development Plan gets closest to practical suggestions, even though these seem to lack strategies for in-depth intervention: a Bill of Responsibility; a pledge based on the Constitution’s preamble to be used in school assemblies; and measures to advance women’s rights, employment equity and redress (RSA: NPC, 2011c: 26).

Many of the documents I have reviewed open with a synopsis of the wrongs of the past, followed by a summary of accomplishments and plans by the democratic government/ANC – and then provide detail on the backlogs, disappointments, mistakes and lack of progress. As the Diagnostic overview observes: there is “a significant gap between the aspirations set out in official policy and what happens on the ground” (RSA: NPC, 2011a: 22). Concerns listed include: low education standards, poor economic growth, the lack of an entrepreneurial spirit, and low productivity. The land redistribution programme does not meet projections and redress measures are resulting in tension and division (RSA: NPC, 2011b:15, 16; RSA: The Presidency, 2006: 95). On policy level, the Department of Social Development acknowledges that its social services have not been appropriate or developmental: dependency was created through its programmes. Its ‘medical model’ of diagnosis and treatment resulted in people/communities becoming ‘a passive recipient of services” (RSA: DSD, 2011: 12).

There is an acknowledgement of the difficulty to balance a “market-based economic system premised
on cut-throat competition” and individual self-advancement/excellence with a caring society, collective development and social equity (RSA: The Presidency, 2006: 94, 95). There is also tension between unity and redress, especially since the latter tends to generate conflict in the absence of stable public services, high education standards and a strong economy (RSA: NPC, 2011b: 13, 16).

What struck me as significant is that no direct link is made between the abovementioned disappointments and the impairment of capacity due to the psychological scars from the past: a wounded nation might actually struggle to implement policies and plans. The only reference alluding to this dilemma comes from the National Development Plan, when it concedes that a “growing economy on its own will assist but not reverse the effects of apartheid” (RSA: NPC, 2011b:16). Yet, when solutions are sought, the main agenda point remains the economic and government plans and strategies are almost exclusively steeped in the economic. The New Growth Path states that “there is growing consensus that creating decent work, reducing inequality and defeating poverty can only happen through a new growth path founded on a restructuring of the South African economy” (RSA: Department of Economic Development, 2010: 1).

It thus seems as if the assumption is made that social cohesion, healing and unity are prevented by insufficient economic growth and restorative justice. There is no evidence in these documents that the problem could also be approached from the other direction: without healing and cohesion, efforts to stimulate economic growth, job creation, entrepreneurship and equity might be limited.

There is thus vague acknowledgement of wounding, with idealistic descriptions of what an ideal nation should look like, but suggestions for action, practical programmes and strategies to address the wounding are virtually absent. This leaves the impression that these issues are drifting in the realm of ‘have-to-say’ and vague wish-lists. What is the opinion of the scholars and analysts on this? I then turned to a growing discourse on the direction into which South Africa is moving.

1.2.2.2 The voice of civil society: concerns about our health

The long-term success of our transition depends on its people – and we are a diverse society, motivated by often conflicting expectations, fears and dreams. It could not be expected that the transition would be smooth or that there would be much tolerance with mistakes, setbacks and frustrations. But there appears to be growing concern that we have not made progress and that we are actually starting to slide backwards as far as healing is concerned. What are the reasons for this and what impact does our inability to deal better with the wounds of the past have on our still frail communal psyche? Answers to these questions are complex and tentative. It is not within the scope of this brief introduction to attempt an in-depth analysis, but a few arguments are highlighted.

According to a number of scholars, political analysts and politicians, a fundamental problem is that we have underestimated the complexity and depth of our collective trauma (Biko, 2013: 89-96; Friedman, 2014; Jansen, 2011: 3-6; Malala, 2012; Mdyogolo, 2012; Munusamy, 2012; Villa-Vicencio, 2007).
Villa-Vicencio is positive about the ANC strategic document titled the “RDP of the soul”\(^3\) as it points to a “new-found sense of urgency that the ruling party and the government are beginning to show in relation to the soul of the nation” (2007: 151). However, he fears that the complex nature of the South African soul is not fully grasped: it is a “soul of striving and strife, impacted by brutality, oppression, resistance, dominance, liberation, greed, globalisation – and a hankering to be different” (Villa-Vicencio, 2007: 152). Neither is he convinced about the political will to put the ethical values into practice (Villa-Vicencio, 2007: 152). This under-estimation can in different ways be linked to what we prefer to prioritise, our basking in the ‘miracle of 1994’ and complacency in the achievements of the liberation struggle.

One could ask if the emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness did not result in a “kind of optimism that is built on denial and the avoidance of that which is difficult about our postapartheid condition” (Matshiqi, 2014). Has forgiveness started to “trump justice and in so doing serve to merely bandage a festering wound” (Thamm, 2014b)? Has the demand for compromise resulted in “peaceful nonreconciliation” (Matshiqi, 2014)? Did the almost exclusive focus (especially during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process) on those brutalised by the police and security forces prevented us from taking care of the millions who were forced to bear the everyday indignities of life in an apartheid country?

In addition, there is concern that we have stagnated in the ‘miracle’ and got trapped in a spirit of heroism, self-congratulation and exceptionalism (Mbembe, 2012; Ndebele, 2009; Ramphela, 2012). While perceiving ourselves as extraordinary, our ability to reflect honestly and free of sentimentalism and blame or to plan realistically and creatively has become impaired. A tendency has developed to settle for superficial assessments and justify current efforts through comparisons with those of the corrupt apartheid system (Holborn, 2012; Masango, 2012b; Mosala, 2013; Motlanthe, 2012).

In the process, the full crisis has become obscured. Policy and strategic documents do not seem to go beyond oblique references to ‘the wounds of the past’ and lack in-depth analysis of what the woundedness entail or which practical approaches towards healing are needed. The result is a perception that government programmes/plans “lack substance beneath the jargon” (Pithouse, 2012), look like ‘wish lists’ (Chikulo, 2003) and do not challenge or alter “the underlying patterns of development” (Everatt, Marais & Dube, 2010: 247). The developmental agenda started to suffer as choices are made between critical aspects instead of reconciling them. This can be seen in the dichotomising of social and economic transformation, while their interdependency should ideally have been embraced (Cole, 2009: 8; Edigheji, 2007: 15). Similarly, tension is growing between quality and transformation – often forcing us into choices between different forms of failure. Concerns about our education system, where choices are apparently made between the national pass rate, the standard

\(^3\) Reconstruction and Development Programme
of education and retention, can serve as an example (Berkowitz, 2013; Biko, 2013: 181; Dlanga, 2012; Matshiqi, 2012; Metcalfe, Orkin & Glennie, 2012). What are the psychological consequences of a generation trapped in a choice between these different forms of failure? The reality is clear from the statistics: according to SA Statistics, the percentage of young (25-34 years old) black African professional, managerial and technical workers has dropped by 2% between 1996 and 2016. This leaves the current generation less skilled than previous ones. The Statistician-General noted that when “parents are better equipped than the children, it’s a sign of regression” – a situation that he describes as “a cocktail of disaster” (Merten, 2016).

These threats to our transition are exacerbated by the excessive use of condescending promises, convenient statistics and easy claims aimed at proving that “we have a good story to tell” (ANC, 2014; AfricaCheck, 2014). After all, critical debate is not encouraged through statements such as “we represent the good” (ANC, 2007a) and the “correctness of the ANC policies [is] one of its strengths” (ANC, 2012a: 4; Masango, 2012b). Former Deputy President Motlanthe warns that the centenary celebrations of the liberation party (the ANC) could turn into a commemoration of “dead bones”, over-laden with dead ideas, static thinking and self-assurance in the illusion of having a “monopoly of wisdom” (2012).

To some degree, we have opted to stay within the convenient realm of numbers, technicalities and legalities. The result is an obsession with “administrative goals” (such as affirmative action targets) and the “politics of blame”, which has “short-term utility [but] might translate into medium-term and even permanent dependence, resulting in the constriction and abandonment of long-term thinking and objectives” (Ndebele, 2010). In the process uncomfortable conversations about the soul of our society are avoided. Examples of such attenuated discourses are found in the debate on land and the non-debate on the issue of male woundedness.

The discourse on land focuses on what can be called ‘developmental instruments’ (resources, methods of acquisition/distribution and skills), while land is clearly a symbol of much more than ownership. For Masango (2012a), the call for land ownership is “a proxy for a call for the reclamation of a lost cultural identity, and a sense of reconciliation with a history severed by colonialism”. Land symbolises the only tangible connection with a history before black people’s defeat, subjugation and subservience and hence “holds the treasures of meaning, purpose and dignity” (Masango, 2012a). No wonder, thus, that scholars and activists from this field report numerous examples of conflict, frustration, failure and the impossibility of reconciling (undefined) dreams with reality (James, 2007; 4

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4 The General Household Survey of 2012 found an alarmingly high repetition rate in grades 10, 11 and 12, as high as 37% in some grades in some provinces (in Berkowitz, 2013). Only 50% of learners who concluded Grade 10 in 2009 wrote the final matric exams in 2011 (Metcalfe, Orkin & Glennie, 2012). If retention is taken into account, the national pass rate in 2012 was 32.9%. The official pass rate was 73.9% (Equal Education, 2013). Achieving high pass rates at the cost of “pushing out” learners do not contribute to a just and sustainable society, according to Metcalfe, Orkin & Glennie (2012).
Male woundedness is almost absent from the national debate. Yet, Abrams & Van Niekerk (2010) argue that the deep wounding of our nation is most clearly seen on a personal level in the behaviour of men and boys and the identity we are socialising our sons into. The multiple scars and wounds of violent oppression and poverty are driving “our masculine identities into crises” as masculinity and violence are blended into a single identity. Men fall into a state of aloneness or internal exile while struggling in a war of survival over resources and being separated from their families (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). This reality hardly surfaces in the public debate and is subsumed by the dominant discourse on women’s rights and domestic violence.

The above issues pose a real threat to our transition and in the meantime, the combination of past and current wounds continues to manifest in complex patterns of behaviour and attitudes. We experience high levels of violence; the internalisation of the brutality of apartheid and the struggle (the phenomenon of ‘we become like them’); lack of confidence, self-worth, empathy and trust; loss of a direct link between hard work and results (as unfair societies do not reward hard work); and institutional subversion (Biko, 2013: 89-96; Jansen, 2011: 3, 6). Fear and violence have crept back into the psyche of our society. In *Eating from One Pot*, Mosoetsa describes the conflict and infighting within extended families, which is a mere reflection of the battles in the ever-growing informal urban settlements in which they are situated. A single social grant in the household is the ‘one pot’ that has to be divided amongst a varied group of family members, with different needs, desires and power. These overcrowded households are turned into war zones in which relentless battles are fought uninterruptedly, degrading the lives of poor people “to the level of savagery” (related by Terreblanche, 2012: 103-104). The wounds of (frustrated) transformation and transition can indeed be as lethal as those meted out by the original wounding. Msimang describes this in a moving reflection on the exposure of a high-profile case of corruption in 2014. She remembers “a time when the only hurt that we could collectively remember had been inflicted upon us by the apartheid regime”. It is hard to accept that now “we have new wounds to tend to, and that our pain lies not only in the past, but also in the present” (Msimang, 2014).

**1.2.2.3 The health of our nation: statistical overview**

Statistical information affirms concerns about the social health of the South African society and paints a rather bleak picture of how un-well we are. We are battling with unacceptably high rates of crime,

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5 A brief overview of the discourse on male woundedness brought me to the question: are interventions with men aimed at the healing of men or to ‘improve’ their behaviour regarding women and children?

6 South Africa has a population of around 53 million (RSA: Statistics SA: 2013).

7 The number of murders rose from 16 259 in 2012-2013 to 17 068 in 2013-2014 (AfricaCheck, 2013; RSA, SAPS, 2014) - or 32.2/100 000. This is five times higher than the global average (AfricaCheck, 2013). The number rose again with 4.6% in 2015, to 17 805 (RSA: SAPS, 2015)

8 Figures of up to 500 000 rapes per annum are estimated (Rape Survivor Journey, 2011). The official 2015
even babies), HIV/AIDS infection\(^{10}\) and foetal alcohol syndrome\(^ {11}\). We lose approximately 14 000-18 000 people annually on our roads - thus 40-50 per day\(^ {12}\) (news24, 2012; RSA: Department of Transport, 2013). The crime rates translate into approximately 650 000 victims of violent crimes each year in the country. Gould posits that with each year the number of South Africans who have experienced and witnessed violence increases, the extent of national trauma increases (2014).

By March 2014, 15.9 million South Africans were receiving social support grants (RSA: DSD, 2014c; RSA: National Treasury, 2014; Southafrica.info, 2014). On the one hand, research starts to indicate a positive effect of grants on the well-being of children, such as an increase in height-for-age and improved progress through the school system (Coetsee, 2014). On the other hand, it is an indication of the scale of poverty, accompanied by “the shame [of being dependent] on hand-outs ... to put food on the table” (Biko, 2013: 205). This corresponds with statistics on the growing divide between rich and poor in the country. South Africa’s GINI coefficient of 0.71 in 2012 places us amongst the top unequal countries of the world (World Bank, 2012: 8). In this regard, it is important to refer to Wilkinson & Pickett’s study on the impact of inequality on social behaviour/functionality in countries with varying levels of inequality. The findings were conclusive: when it comes to social problems comparisons between countries with different income levels do not speak as loudly as different income levels inside a country (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). The Presidency’s 2009 Development Indicator’s Report found that happiness and confidence levels among communities in South Africa have indeed declined from 84% in May 2006 to 60% in November 2008 (RSA: DSD, 2011c).

What has brought us to a place where service delivery protests have become almost fatalistically violent (people getting killed; destruction of vital infrastructure, and own children prevented for months from attending school); where disillusionment with the security and justice system results in suspects being set alight and stoned to death in mob justice; where destructive sexual and life-style behaviour infects millions with a fatal virus and cause preventable diseases; where motorists recklessly overtake on blind heights; where six-week old babies and 80-year old grannies are raped; and where women are not merely raped, but also disembowelled?

The multiple layers of woundedness, inflicted over centuries and generations of invasion, conflict,
oppression and violence, as well as broken relationships, promises and dreams, appear to have caught up with us. We remain a seriously wounded society. No wonder Mandela urged us to accept “that, in many respects, we are a sick society” in need of an “RDP of the Soul” (RSA: Parliament, 1999).

What has been the contribution of the community development field in the country towards the creating of such a reconstructed soul?

1.2.3 Community development in a wounded South Africa

Mainstream community development, globally and in South Africa, has become trapped in a maelstrom of supply/funding-driven and linear activities, bound by timeframes, pre-determined outcomes, availability of resources, a quest for replicability and corporate-style monitoring and evaluation. The urge to understand through analysis and to reduce the most profound concepts to boxes, tables and brief one-line responses resulted in the loss of a sense of the complex whole. Subsequently, “the intricacy of sensitive social interventions” has been contained and packaged as tools, procedures and instruments (Kaplan, 2002: 6-7) - and then applied in a mechanical way through frameworks, models and manuals. The assumption that a set of outputs will automatically translate into a finite number of outcomes is clearly divorced from “the reality of living in an uncertain world” (Wilson & Taylor, 2004). Does this allow for the slow and careful process needed to liberate the Richtersveld community from the ‘poison in our soil’ and parents from their guilt and fear of failure?

Legal/policy frameworks, such as the White Paper on Social Welfare of 1996, paved the way for the institutionalisation of community development by the state. The NGO field was deeply disrupted after 1994. Without the moral advantage of their status as agencies-fighting-apartheid, NGOs became part of the competitive (funding) world of ‘development’ – a transformation that most failed to accomplish (Soal, 2010: 128-129). Many agencies became dependent on and basically sub-contractors of government (Barnard, 2012; Stuart, 2013). This “smothering embrace” started to erode the radical agenda of community development, and NGOs become more engaged in problem-solving than in “mischief-making” (Regan, 2012: 87).

Consequently, community development in South Africa is now dominated by the state – either directly through the programmes of the Department of Social Development (DSD), the Community Development Workers (CDW) programme or through subsidised NGOs. The focus is mainly on the alleviation of poverty (directly through support grants or through cooperatives and sustainable livelihoods projects) and the improvement of government’s delivery of services to communities, especially through increased access to social grants (RSA: DPSA, 2007a; RSA: DSD, 2011c).
I have looked for references to complexity, woundedness and the need for healing in strategic and policy documents as well as programme implementation manuals of these two state programmes. I found hardly any. The failure rate of the cooperatives is staggering. In 2009, the ‘survival rate’ of all registered cooperatives was only 12% (RSA: DTI, 2012: 38). The possible link between this failure rate and the psyche of communities is not drawn. The real danger is that when expectations are raised through community workers’ promises of immediate change and this does not happen as predicted, “people might get discouraged from continuing to try” (Balfour, 2003).

Woundedness is clearly not adequately recognised and prioritised in these bureaucratised programmes.

1.3 Problem statement

Mostert describes the relationship between Boers and Khoikhoi in the 18th century as one of the “strangest and most upsetting examples of kinship, interdependence, loathing and loving that one is likely to come across” (1992: 277). In the subsequent centuries, oppressor and oppressed in South Africa have continued to live intimately together, transferring and compounding from generation to generation a highly complex set of relationships and perceptions about self and ‘the other’. These were continuously fuelled by official policies and violent structural arrangements. While old wounds remained unprocessed, layer upon layer of wounding are being woven into a tight and intricate tapestry that is our society of today.

I want to argue that the most debilitating and lasting legacy of a history of oppression is not on a material or economic level. It manifests subtly - in a fear to risk, paralysing labels and projections, destructive and obsolete survival strategies and difficulties to trust the possibility of success. Engaging with such complexity requires an approach of equal complexity and defies the notion of simplified remedies in the form of standardised projects, workshops/training, engineered solutions and neat (economic) development plans.

This is illustrated by the experience of Martha Cabrera and her team while working with the victims of Hurricane Mitch in Nicaragua. These communities were less interested to talk about their destroyed homes than about old wounds and nightmares they had never voiced before and which continued to haunt, immobilise and silence them. Cabrera was puzzled by the insignificant impact of the millions of dollars spent on development in this “multiply wounded, multiply traumatized, multiply mourning country”. She learnt that it was not spent on these layers of woundedness. Instead, people, were ‘workshopped’ (2003). South Africa can indeed learn from Cabrera’s experience and her strategy to avoid workshops but rather to travel the country and make an ‘inventory of wounds’.

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14 One of Southern Africa’s First Peoples
15 For more detail on Cabrera’s approach, see Chapter 4 (4.4.5).
Communities are broken down even further by development plans and projects imposed without regard and respect for the "underlying pattern of relationship which had been destroyed" by war and oppression (Kaplan, 2002: 129). Sophisticated strategies, carefully designed by expert planners, are derailed because they ignore the "complicated tangle of political, social, historical, institutional, and technological facts" (Easterly, 2006: 5). This, according to Easterly, is understood by ‘searchers’, who, in contrast to ‘planners’, realise that it is not possible to know in advance what needs to happen (2006: 5). What is required instead is an open-ended journey of searching with communities.

Unfortunately, as could be deduced from the contextual overview above, it appears as if South Africa’s post-1994 development agenda leans towards the ‘planner’ paradigm, with an almost exclusive focus on the material and economic. Mainstream community development (dominated by state-led programmes) focuses on simplified quick fixes, usually in the form of projects, cooperatives and poverty relief. The scope of independent NGO initiatives, which do engage with healing work, is not sufficient to reach a significant number of communities and individuals.

Woundedness is thus under-theorised and there is limited analysis or understanding of the dynamics of practice within complex spaces. A result is that there is also no recognition of the sophisticated skills required for this type of work or a programme to equip and support a significant number of workers to implement it. Thousands of officials and community development workers are sent into complex communities to launch projects, establish cooperatives, get beneficiaries institutionalised, trained, skilled and fed and to hand over/out or redistribute assets (land, houses, support grants and food) - without preparation for or an understanding of what is needed to deal with this complexity. As workers seem not to be adequately equipped with basic technical and financial skills (for example for income-generating projects), the failure rate of projects is high.

I argue that these negative experiences further damage the psyche of both community members and development workers. It is natural to identify with and personalise repeated failure, start to resist any new idea and become increasingly trapped in patterns of apathy, despair, broken relationships and conflict. Parents are literally disempowered by programmes aimed at stimulating their children, but which ignore them or alienate them through demands to be ‘better parents’. The Richtersvelders were seduced by promises of wealth and fame, and could not transform what they eventually received into something meaningful. Instead, they turned the anger and frustration upon themselves, which fuelled conflict, inertia, entitlement and mistrust in future initiatives.

In spite of an acknowledgement that projects and programmes often fail to achieve real transformation, no evidence was found in governmental documents that acknowledges the possible psychological impact of failed projects on participants and workers. Unreflective practice results in a lack of debate on ways to prevent further wounding and to rethink development and healing in South
Africa. Contributing to this is the lack of an articulated and tested approach to make community development workers aware of the issues of wounding and healing and engage with these. Without expressing the critical importance of a healing approach, changes in community development policy, curriculum development, education, training, mentoring or practice cannot be expected. Healing work can be facilitated through the thousands of governmental community development workers already working in communities if a theoretical and practical framework existed to be incorporated in their training and mentoring/reflection systems. However, such an approach is currently not available.

In summary, the key problem identified by this study is:

Mainstream community development does not adequately theorise about or engage with complex wounded communities. One-dimensional projects focus on the economic, often with very high failure rates. Such failure poses the danger of inflicting more pain and compounding the wounding, spawned by oppression and stereotyping. This manifests as vulnerable relationships, paralysing perceptions of self and obsolete strategies. Even though traces of a healing approach exist in some alternative frameworks, an approach that deliberately seeks to engage with complexity and woundedness is not articulated.

The aims and nature of this study are now outlined.

1.4 Research aim, key questions and chapter lay-out

The main aim of this study is:

To investigate if and how mainstream community development can engage with the complexity of woundedness in our communities; and to search for key elements of a healing approach that mainstream community development practitioners/workers can implement.

The following questions guided the research:

1. How does community development globally interact with complex communities? What are the main discourses, dilemmas and alternative voices in the field?
2. What is the current situation regarding community development in South Africa? Are policy frameworks and programmes promoting healing in complex communities?
3. What are the main theories and discourses regarding communal wounding and healing? What elements can be applied in community development?
4. Based on evidence from the research data, what are the key elements of an approach through which community development can facilitate healing in wounded communities? How could these elements be incorporated into mainstream community development? What further research might be necessary?

The study unfolded as follows:
Chapter one (this chapter) sets the scene. It explains the motivation of the study and provides a contextual overview and problem statement.

Chapters two to four present a record of the literature review, through which answers to the first three questions were sought.

Chapter two paints a picture of how development and community development globally interact with wounded and complex communities. Mainstream community development approaches and discourses are reviewed and an overview is provided of alternative voices and approaches.

Chapter three gives a critical overview of the nature of community development in South Africa. The emphasis is on engagement with complexity in the legal frameworks and the practice of the dominant state-led programmes.

Chapter four provides the findings of an investigation into the nature and manifestation of communal wounding. This is followed by an overview of discourses and theories on communal healing.

Chapter five explains the conceptual framework, methodology and research methods used in the study.

Chapters six and seven present the research findings: the key elements of a healing approach in community development. It concludes with a brief discussion, which brings together the different voices of this study.

Chapter eight, the conclusion, provides a short summary of the research process, findings and conclusions and ends with some recommendations for further action and research.

I now close this chapter with a short discussion of how I understand the concept of community development.

1.5 My understanding of the concept of community development

To understand the idea of community development I first investigate each concept separately (community and development) and then bring them together.

The romantic idea of community as a haven of peace, comfort, warmth, unity, cooperation and mutuality is challenged by scholars and practitioners, who prefer to define community as complex, messy and conflictual (Brent, 2004: 216, Burkett, 2001: 242; Westoby & Dowling, 2009: 124). Community is mostly defined in terms of space, without considering how people were forced into shared spaces through social engineering, dispossession and conflict, for example the “dormitory enclaves of township life” (Ndebele, 2009) and homelands in South Africa. Yet, community workers and policy makers continue to perceive communities in such artificial spaces as uniform and engage with them as if they all think the same and act together (Brent, 2004: 250). This contributes to the patronising myth that ‘the community’ is capable of tackling all social and economic problems out of
pure solidarity and the “nostalgic voluntarism that exhorts shattered communities to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps without help – and without money” (Brent, 2009: 259). Another danger is attempts to create community as a reaction against the uncertainty of our social reality. The “horror of emptiness drives one into indiscriminate association, making people gather together without rhyme or reason” (Maffesoli in Brent, 2009: 207-208). Sennewt warns that a “group identity forged by oppression remains in the hand of the oppressor … But this communal life proved to be, at best, a shield rather than a sword” (in Brent, 2009: 208).

The literature reveals a rich discourse on alternative ways to look at community. The first is to see community as a *verb* and not as a *noun*, which defies community as an object. To build community-as-verb becomes “an ongoing act of extraordinary creativity in which one comes face to face with the struggle of human relationship, of engaging with an-Other” (Burkett, 2001: 237, 240). Community can also be linked to the concept of *communitas*, which Westoby & Dowling describe as “a moment, an experience where people encounter one another” (2013: 8). For Esposito communitas is a void, debt, or gift to others – and not a property or territory to be defended against those who do not belong to it (2010[1998]).

Brent bases his theory on how community is created on the concepts of discourse (Foucault) and conjuration (Derrida). Simply by naming ‘community’ in their practices and speech (discourse), people form community. The discourse starts when people come together for a purpose, which eventually leads to “an incantation, an evocation of something that is not there … a creation brought into being by the acts of the participants: the conjuration of events, stories and structures that have arisen from community action” (Brent, 2009: 238-239).

In line with the above I prefer to perceive community as a temporary creation (discourse, conjuration and verb) and a moment of encountering the other (*communitas*). The aim is not to create community, but to create an opportunity to enter the void with each other, engage, explore, reflect, recognise, dream, desire and care with each other - because without each other the journey is too difficult.

This links to the idea of development as a process of un-veiling and un-folding. As stated in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. It does not imply a ‘negative’ start – where something is absent, wrong or too little and thus needs to be corrected, solved or amended through a set plan or project brought by a ‘developer’. It has to engage on a level where assumptions and facades are exposed where the real self can be reached. Nee (1999) talks about ‘redevelopment’: something that has been there, but got lost through histories of wounding - and that needs to be regained. This is in stark contrast to the idea of ‘underdevelopment’ – which assumed something that has never been. Another useful perspective on development is to distinguish between horizontal and the much rarer vertical development. The latter refers to learning to see the world through new eyes, changing our interpretations of experience and transforming our view of reality through increased consciousness –
which is “more powerful than any amount of horizontal growth and learning” (Cook-Greuter, 2004: 276).

Bringing the two concepts together, I see community development as a process where persons form a ‘community’ to support each other in the journey of discovery. Such a process depends on the power of conscientisation and authenticity (Freire, 1996), awareness of own processes (Kaplan, 2002: xvii) and the courage to “face ourselves and our society, warts and all – full of racism, sexism, greed, homophobia, guilt and violence” (Westoby & Dowling, 2009: 26-27). It calls to mind the idea of a pilgrimage, which is a journey into foreign places, but with the aim of coming home - as the true self (Langheld, [n.d.]).

I therefore perceive community development not as the neat execution of a pre-determined plan within strict timeframes, following the easy prescriptions of a manual. It is about individuals within a social organism engaging in an act of revealing and discovery, of restoring/creating relationships (with the self, other and the environment), and of un-veiling long-hidden mysteries, joy and pain.

I invite the reader to join me on this journey to search for another way of engaging with our broken communities.
Community development has been practised under many names and in various guises since the beginning of humankind. For some, it is a way to show compassion and help the less privileged (charity and philanthropy). In Africa, Asia and South America, it was deeply influenced by colonial and missionary policies and practices. In the 20th century it has become a tool to engineer society, promote self-help and bring people into line with how they should behave or be. Especially since the 1950s, community development was increasingly used as a poverty-oriented strategy, mainly through self-help, cooperative and income-generating projects. For activist and social movements, it is a useful tool to convince those in power of a specific point of view, to raise awareness on an issue or campaign around threats or rights.

The most significant influence on communities and community development in the past sixty years has been the global ‘Development project’, which profoundly impacted on the lives of the people from the South. It is steeped in geopolitics, economic ideologies and global realities, such as a threatened earth. Poor communities have to eke out a meaningful life in this environment. As Black points out: corporate decisions “reverberate from global and national balance sheets to the alleys, huts and shanties” of those “who live by carting loads or pounding yams” (2002: 54).

This chapter investigates the relationship between community development and the ‘Development project’ and how/if this impacts on communities. Does it have the potential to inflict more pain and damage? Are there voices arguing for another type of community development that regains its integrity and engages with communities in a soulful way, mindful of the painful history of centuries of colonialism, oppression – and development?

The chapter starts with an overview of the ‘Development project’. This is followed by a synopsis of mainstream community development and its relation to the ‘Development project’. The section closes with a discussion of a few dominant approaches and a brief introduction to the traditions in which community development approaches are intellectually rooted.

The second section explores the dilemmas and opportunities that are facing mainstream community development today. The section starts with a discussion of the current discourses and critiques, and then gives an opportunity to alternative voices to argue for another way of thinking about the field. A
few approaches linked to these are then listed.

The chapter concludes with an exploration of the pivotal role of the community development worker and the nature of the personal practice framework.

2.1 Development and community development over the past 60 years

_We have to abandon the arrogant belief that the world is merely a puzzle to be solved, a machine with instructions for use waiting to be discovered, a body of information to be fed into a computer in the hope that sooner or later it will spit out a universal solution_ (Havel, 1992).

2.1.1 The ‘Development project’

The ‘Development project’ was introduced in January 1949 during the inaugural speech of President Truman of the United States. His Point Four promised development to the underdeveloped or ‘backward’ societies and countries of the world. The promise was to take them out of their poverty and misery and let ‘them’ become like ‘us’: modern, technologically advanced and mass-consuming societies (Easterly, 2010; Rist, 2008: 70-72). This became “the starting gun in the race for the South to catch up with the North” (Sachs, 1990: 1).

In the six decades since, countries, societies and communities classified as ‘underdeveloped’ have thus to resign themselves to the mission of being ‘developed’. They were subjected to technical experiments such as the Green Revolution. Their ‘basic needs’ were determined in a rather undignified manner. They have been ‘restructured’ and ‘adjusted’ in the 1980s to the point of destruction and famine, with communities stripped of critical state support. Shortly thereafter, however, they learnt that they actually have a lot of ‘social capital’, ‘capabilities’/’capacities’ and ‘rights’, which are valuable ‘assets’, and by managing these in a ‘human’ way, their freedoms and choices would increase. In the meantime, they have become the targets of the ‘war on poverty’, and everything possible was done to provide development aid and livelihoods for the poor – preferably without destroying the planet. With unyielding confidence and in spite of a number of setbacks, the United Nations proclaimed yet another grand scheme in September 2000: the Millennium Development Goals, which promised that poverty in the world will be halved by 2015. Tony Blair assured the world at Davos in 2005 that the world could now expect “a big big push” (Easterly, 2006: 8.9) away from poverty and in the same year Jeffrey Sachs published a book with the title _The End of Poverty_, “predicting the end of extreme poverty” (McMichael, 2010: 2). In 2015, the United Nations announced the next grand scheme, “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”. It is called: _Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development_ and the 17 goals and 169 targets “we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda” (United Nations, 2015).
There is, however, another version of this narrative. Gustavo Esteva (2004), eminent Mexican post-development scholar, gives a chilling description:

“On January 20, 1949, the day he took office, President Truman coined the word ‘underdevelopment’, transforming me and two billion other people into ‘underdeveloped’ populations: humiliated, belittled, prevented from dreaming our own dreams, not trusting our own noses, but trapped by development experts in their business suits, carrying their global portfolios. Our noses cut off, our common sense denied, we could easily be lulled into lusting for their technological marvels; our imaginations and hearts seduced with the idea of becoming like the developed ones; our fantasies for family, country and community wrenched away from the soil beneath our feet in order to fly away from home; to escape into the Never-Never Land dreamt up by Truman for the entire planet – reducing Hopi, Hindu and Zapoteco into the same cookie-cutter mould…”

This can be seen in terms of Santos’ theory of the ‘sociology of absences’: ‘non-existence’ is produced as a “non-credible alternative to what exists” (2004: 239). The non-existent is characterised as the ignorant, the residual, the inferior, the local and the non-productive, who stands in contrast to knowledge, linear time, classification, the universal/global and criteria of capitalist productivity and efficiency (Santos, 2004: 238-239). McMichael talks about exclusion: everything that cannot be measured in terms of gross national product or fit with the market culture (“non-monetized contributions”) is devalued and consigned to redundancy (2010: 235).

For Illich, it is a tragedy that since Truman’s speech, it only took twenty years “for two billion people to define themselves as underdeveloped” and as ‘the problem’ (in Escobar, 1990: 23). In addition, the project’s pledge to bring Western-style industrialisation, agricultural modernisation and urbanisation, coupled with the global promise of happiness (read: ‘tomorrow things will be better’ and ‘more is better’) had immediate and immense appeal in the South. The result was enthusiastic participation, which per implication provided the licence for ‘developers’ to start treating and reforming the South through a myriad of strategies and programmes. Soon no other option could be imagined (Escobar, 1990: 25; Rist, 2007: 485; Santos, 2004: 239). The elusiveness of the term further contributed to its popularity: any measure, “foreign investment, lowering – or raising – of trade barriers, well-digging, literacy campaigns, and the like” is justified in the name of development, making even the most contradictory policies look as if they were geared to “improving the lives of poor people” (Rist, 2007: 486).

There is scepticism, especially from post-development scholars, about the motivation for this ‘project’. Rahnema argues that Western nations need it to retain their presence in the ex-colonies (access to resources and markets for their expanding economies), and to serve their geopolitical ambitions in the light of the Cold War (in Kiely, 1999: 34). Kothari states emphatically: “where colonialism left off, development took over” (in Kiely, 1999: 34). This leaves doubt about modernism and the utopian
belief that society can be engineered. For post-development and anti-development theorists, the ‘Development project’ has not merely been poorly implemented; it was misconceived and, with all its misfits and market casualties, it has now reached a crossroads (McMichael, 2010: xiii). The world is staggering under financial, energy, food and climate crises. Escobar thus urges us to start with the task of imagining alternatives, because he fears that the dream of development has turned into a nightmare (1995: 4). Admittedly, it is difficult to imagine the world without development and intervention: “no feasibility studies, no teams of experts, no projects or programmes or even participatory workshops and World Bank policies” (Kippler, 2010: 2-3)!

The incestuous relationship between development aid, natural resources and geopolitics cannot be left out of a discussion of the ‘Development project’. Firstly, there is an absence of evidence that aid is intended to stimulate growth or produce goods, food or services for people or end poverty. It is mostly spent on debt relief, international bureaucracies and discussions (Black, 2002: 33, 60; Easterly, 2006). Between 1980 and 1998, when aid to Africa reached its peak, poverty rose from 11% to 66% (Easterly, 2009). For Freire, aid creates a “satellite society”, which will always depend on the West (1996: 142). Secondly, it sends out patronising messages, portraying poor people as children, who are psychologically unable to embrace development and improve their own lot in life without guidance and help (Esteva & Prakash, 1998: 281; Easterly, 2009). This is aggravated by celebrities making Africa their cause du jour, as they perpetuate negative stereotypes through one-sided portrayals of war, poverty, disease and corruption in their fund-raising efforts. Moyo fears that “taking a picture with a starving African child - that doesn't help me raise an African child to believe she can be an engineer or a doctor” (in Miller, 2009).

On the other hand, Gerson argues that even though aid might not guarantee economic growth, in the form of AIDS drugs it might prevent “a generation of hopeless mass death [that] would have undermined Zambia’s economic prospects” in any case (2009). Collier proposes the strengthening of aid through “governance conditionality”, with agencies insisting on transparent budgeting and free and fair elections (2009). This, however, brings back memories of conditions and ‘insistences’ in the structural adjustment experiment. A 2013 United Nations report indicated a dramatic reduction in global poverty over the previous 20 years. It claimed that never in history “have the living conditions and prospects of so many people changed so dramatically and so fast” (in The Guardian, 2013). However, poverty rates in Sub-Saharan Africa have risen steadily: there are twice as many extremely poor people in this region in 2010 compared to in 1981. In spite of a reduction in the poverty rate, one-fifth of the world population still lives below the poverty line (World Bank 2013). To what extent are escalating global conflict and resulting migration patterns impacting on these poverty rates?

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16 There are different interpretations of these statistics, for example if the claimed poverty reduction could be ascribed to the success of development interventions, specifically the Millennium Development Goals. Some countries already made progress before 2000. A new measuring system has been introduced, which also impacts on the interpretation of the statistics (Friedman, 2013; Sachs, 2013; The Guardian, 2013).
Critique against post-development includes the accusation that it romanticises the Third World (and per implication poverty); and that it lacks African voices and practical alternatives (Ahorro, 2008; Matthews, 2004; Nederveen Pieterse, 2000: 184). Does a plea to end development absolve the West from further responsibility towards nations and cultures ravaged over centuries by colonialism, capitalism and development interference? For Corbridge, an “amoral politics of indifference” is no option, since it would “shunt us towards a politics of despair”: the West has an obligation to respond “morally to the terrible inequities” and needs to find a meaningful response (in Matthews, 2008: 1035, 1039-1040). This is clearly something that still needs much reflection.

Rist suggests that a responsibility of the West is to modify its life style, combat its unbridled consumerism and equate the struggle against poverty with a fight against wealth: if we want to see “another Tanzania” we also need to see “another Sweden” (2008: 156, 230).

Matthews (2004: 378) concludes that, no matter which statistics or indicators are chosen to evaluate the performance of the post World War II ‘Development project’, “it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it has failed abysmally”. Global confidence in the future has been shaken. Surprisingly, confidence in the concept of development does not seem to recede. McMichael finds it a mystery how the faith in development and the market, as solutions for all kinds of social and ecological problems, remains so unshaken and un-contested (2010: xiii). How does one explain a phenomenon that mobilises not only the hopes of millions but also sizeable financial resources (Rist, 2008: 1) - in spite of its unfortunate history?

Rist suggests that the strength of development discourse comes of “its power to seduce, in every sense of the term: to charm, to please, to fascinate, to set dreaming, but also to abuse, to turn away from the truth, to deceive. How could one possibly resist the idea that there is a way of eliminating the poverty by which one is so troubled? How dare one think, at the same time, that the cure might worsen the ill which one wishes to combat” (2008: 1)?

It is in this troubled picture that community development of today is embedded. This relationship between community development and the ‘Development project’ and the impact on communities, already wounded and alienated through the ‘Development project’, are now investigated.

2.1.2 Community development and the ‘Development project’

Mainstream community development today can be seen as the grassroots implementation arm of the ‘Development project’. It is the main vehicle to implement on community level the grand schemes and ideologies of the West, the United Nations, the myriad of funding affiliates and national governments. Atampugre explains that community development “came into the development discourse after the Second World War when the colonizing powers realized that they needed a framework under which the colonies could engage in development activity” (in Burkett, 2001: 242). Unfortunately, it suffers
from the same legitimacy crisis as the ‘Development project’

Since the 1990s, community development approaches correspond quite closely with the theories and trends within the ‘Development project’ (capabilities, social capital, assets, rights and sustainability). Some of these are diffused directly by international agencies, governments and the drivers of the ‘Development project’, such as community-driven or -led development by the World Bank and the sustainable livelihoods approach by the UK Department of International Development or DFID (Westoby & Dowling, 2013: 2-4).

A second link is NGOs’ usefulness in giving development a ‘human face’. They lessen the damage caused by development strategies, capitalism, neo-liberalism and globalisation and are well-suited to provide/supplement services abandoned during the Structural Adjustment Programme. In addition, they are able to limit state abuse and inefficiency and provide a vehicle for democratic participation (Black, 2002: 43; Blaser, Feit. & McRae, 2004: 11-12). They further deliver services at lower costs than governments, which exploit this by mustering participation through appeals to traditional and ancestral practices of voluntary work and solidarity (Campfens, 1997: 17). Examples are calls for *ubuntu* in Africa, the ‘Armies of Compassion’ drive in the United States and the British ‘Big Society’ campaign during the first decade of the 21st century.

The destruction caused by the Structural Adjustment Programme in the 1980s directly led to the rapid growth of defensive grassroots organisations and activism. The aim of the first is to resist or modify development agendas of states and markets, by operating communal kitchens, glass-of-milk committees and income-generating cooperatives. These organisations are mainly based on self-help principles and are assisted by NGOs, churches and political parties (Blaser *et al*., 2004: 11; Campfens, 1997: 16).

Activism by the end of the 1980s was fuelled by identity politics and separatist strategies with an urge for radical social reform. These drew on earlier women’s and black movements, but start to acknowledge the complexities and multiple dimensions of oppression. Intellectual influences on these movements include Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, feminism and Frantz Fanon (Ledwith, 2011). These movements mobilise around particular issues such as hegemony, oppression, low income, low skills, illiteracy, hunger, ill-health, credit, endangered livelihoods through dispossession, deforestation and other political/economic agendas, such as structural adjustment (Black, 2002: 115-116; Ledwith, 2011). Some operated more or less in the style of liberation movements and in many countries these movements became the closest thing to political opposition practically allowed (Black, 2002: 116).

Governments further came to realise that they cannot negotiate with the broad community and huge groups. Since the late 1980s, they have thus begun to rely on NGOs to communicate, consult and implement programmes. The result is that many organisations started performing hybrid functions, by
servicing multiple purposes and shaping, along with state and market organisations, a complex transnational network (Blaser et al., 2004: 11-12). Out of this phenomenon developed the notion of community development as a tool to deliver services for the state (Gilchrist, 2009: 23; Gray, 2010: 77) and to communicate between state and community (Monaheng, 2008: 127).

Concerns about the psychological impact (dependency) or the sustainability of development aid led to a search for local alternatives to both capitalism and the reliance on external aid. This resulted in the development of a range of social and co-operative movements, primarily with a quest to move away from state-controlled social programmes and centralised, top-down and institutionalised structures of decision-making. Examples are the Antigonish Co-operative Movement in Canada and the Mondragon group in the Basque region of Spain (Campfens, 1997: 19).

Lastly, the most significant link between community development and the ‘Development project’ is that of development aid. The “War on poverty” necessitates a massive transfer of resources by international donors (capital, technology and labour) to Third World countries. NGOs became the preferred conduit for aid since they are actually in touch with the realities of people’s lives and have a better reputation at spending money than governments (Black, 2002: 43).

The overall result, however, is that the agendas, approaches and timeframes of community development became dictated by donors and funding agencies. Local communities are mobilised through community development programmes as an integral part of the five-year plans, commonly masterminded by national and international planners and implemented through centralised systems, which manage resource allocation. Economic development remains central to all programmes and plans intended to advance the social well-being of nations – extending the “consumerist lifestyle into millions of households” and offering little to those who languish at its edges (Black, 2002: 54). By the turn of the millennium, after 50 years of an almost exclusive focus on economic development, we have to ask ourselves: has the situation for the world’s poor improved?

We now look at some of the mainstream approaches, currently diffused internationally.

### 2.1.3 Mainstream community development approaches since the 1990s

Since the 1990s, a variety of community development approaches evolved in tandem with emerging issues and theories within the global ‘Development project’, such as human rights, Putnam’s idea of social capital and Sen and Nussbaum’s theories on human development and capabilities.

The rights-based approach is actively promoted and enforced by the United Nations (United Nations: UNDP, 2006) and traces thereof are found in most of the current approaches (Marks, 2003). A distinctive feature of the rights-based approach is that it sets out a vision of what ought to be. This implies a normative framework, which adds an ethical, moral and even legal dimension to community
development (Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, 2004: 1423). There is concern that this approach: ignores the complexities of marginalised communities and indigenous strategies; assumes that ‘rights’ is a universal concept and that all have access to legal instruments (which is clearly not true where there is no state to grant rights); and that it creates another round of donor conditionalities (Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, 2004: 1418; Esteva in Kiely, 1999: 42; Tsikata, 2004). It also exposes double standards: are international financial institutions, trans-national corporations, Western governments and international NGOs, who insist on human rights, going to take responsibility for the violations and increased poverty they have caused through structural adjustment policies (Tsikata, 2004)? No wonder eminent philosopher Martha Nussbaum notes that “one might conclude that the language of rights is not especially informative, despite its uplifting character” (1997: 275).

At least four strength-based approaches developed since the 1990s: social capital, capabilities, asset-based and sustainable livelihoods. The central thesis of Putnam’s theory on social capital is that a region’s successful accumulation of social capital results in a well-functioning economic system and a high level of political integration and that the opposite can be assumed: declining social capital results in various social problems (Siisiänen, 2000). The capabilities approach, articulated by Nussbaum and Sen, argues that capacity has to be built first, based on the valuing of inherent capabilities (Nussbaum, 1997: 275). Kretzmann and McKnight’s asset-based approach has a number of particular hallmarks: a strong goal orientation, systematic assessment of strengths or assets, harnessing of client and environmental strengths for goal attainment, a relationship that is hope-inducing and the provision of meaningful choices – with clients having the authority to choose (Ennis & West, 2010: 404-405).

The fourth approach, sustainable livelihoods, has consolidated into an approach by the late 1990s and is implemented by various intergovernmental organisations, bilateral donors, NGOs and a number of research institutes. It is also the approach chosen by state-led programmes in South Africa. ‘Livelihoods’ is defined as ‘the means of gaining a living’. The approach evolved from changing perspectives on poverty, participation and sustainable development and brings together the ideas of capabilities, capital and assets, while linking these to socioeconomic and environmental concerns (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003: 185-186). The first step is to create an accurate understanding of available assets, processes and institutions. Outcomes are then determined to transform assets into sustainable livelihoods, while considering supportive policies, institutions and processes as well as strategies and mechanisms to mitigate against disasters (Mubangizi, 2003: 141-142).

The discourse on the above approaches shows similarities. On the positive side, it is acknowledged that they challenge the basic concepts of the welfare state, with its focus on ‘needs’ and ‘deficits’ and redistribution of resources to communities. They encourage communities to draw on their own resources and move beyond state-centred transformation. It has the potential to reconnect community development to some of the economic dimensions of transformation that are lacking in some welfare-
centred contexts (Burkett, 2011: 574-575).

On the other hand, the focus on consensus and win-win relations, which are not adequately engaging with the realities of communities, expresses a core belief that society is conflict-free. This de-politicises community development practice. Power inequities and conflict between interests are subsumed by an emphasis on ‘feel good’ connections (DeFilippis, 2012: 35-36; Lathouras, 2012: 30; Siisiänen, 2000). Secondly, it assumes that communities have to learn to survive within the current neo-liberal models of Western societies, rather than challenging these economic systems and issues of power and oppression. In other words, these approaches are “unambiguously market-based in their larger goals and programmatic details”: success (whether through corporations, projects or small businesses) requires the adoption of an “explicitly entrepreneurial set of goals and practices” and they have to work with the corporate sector (DeFilippis, 2012: 35). Thirdly, macro-level issues such as racism, sexism, and ageism, which are often experienced at the personal and community level, are left unexplored in much asset-based community development literature (DeFilippis, 2012: 35-36; Ennis & West, 2010:406-407). This appears naïve in the context of the multiple structural barriers faced by disadvantaged people and communities. Lathouras concludes that “with an analysis of inequality and stratification in society, one sees the inadequacy of such approaches” (2012: 30).

A fundamental concern is that approaches like sustainable livelihoods embody a technocratic development drive, which is at odds with the principles, ethos and values that underpin depth community development work (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003). Another critique is the systematic incorporation of these externally-designed approaches into community-level methods and practices globally. They have developed into frameworks – with the potential to be rigidly applied irrespective of context (Hinshelwood, 2003: 144). Burkett fears that they are “now being touted by a new cadre of global consultants” and are “essentially bundles of techniques or tools” (2011: 575).

An overview of community development practice globally cannot ignore the significant scope of faith-based or spiritual approaches. Some implement the above approaches (for example asset-based community development), but most are aligned with ideologies and dogmas of the founding religion or spiritual grouping. The emphasis is mostly on shelters, housing, education and health intervention. They often contribute to social cohesion, but there is concern about the impact of radical and fundamentalist agendas on programmes around women’s reproductive and sexual-health rights (Clark, 2013, 34; Crawford & Deckman, 2004: 35; Dinham & Shaw, 2012: 12).

2.1.4 Community development traditions

The literature reveals many efforts to define community development and to confine it to a specific set of rules and norms. The result is not only a variety of often opposing definitions, but a debate on the usefulness and desirability of defining the concept in the first place. The definitions vary from an emphasis on solidarity and agency, social justice, a well-connected community, service delivery,
empowerment through education, conscientisation, capacity building and community action, community participation, economic and social progress, to social transformation (Bhattacharyya, 2004: 5, 12; Gilchrist, 2009: 23, 171; Gray, 2010: 77; Maistry, 2010: 161).

The second discourse is whether community development should be defined at all, with norms and values attached. On the one end of the continuum are scholars, such as Bhattacharyya, arguing that without a definition the field is “unfenced” and too inclusive, resulting in the idea that “anything goes” (2004: 6, 8-9). On the other end are those who argue for the dismantling of the concept and who are concerned about efforts to prescribe what should and should not be (Brent, 2004: 225, 215). Who is in the position to determine and then enforce such norms/values – taken into account that each of the above definitions would inform such norms/values? This may result in what Westoby calls “shallow normativity”: norms are framed within a specific ideology or paradigm but perceived as self-evident and universally ‘true’ - and thus limiting as far as any alternative is concerned (2014: 41). Cinham & Shaw fear that the subtlety and complexity of community development can be lost through standardised definitions (2012: 130, 139).

Westoby thus suggests the alternative of “deep normativity”, which allows us to rethink community development in terms of a varied set of norms and customs, situated within diverse historical traditions (2014: 41-42). The advantages of working within traditions is that they span time and historical and geographical boundaries and are thus useful tools to illuminate ideological assumptions, key concepts and tactics/strategies for social change (Westoby & Hope-Simpson, 2011: 5-6). Westoby & Hope-Simpson identify three ways of thinking about traditions: geographically-defined, methodologically-oriented and intellectually-rooted traditions (2011).

Within the disparate intellectual traditions Hubert Campens (1997) identifies three traditions: social guidance, social mobilisation and social learning.

**The Social guidance tradition** can be traced back to the theoretical concepts of positivism, the power of technical reason and economic doctrines, which form the basis for modernisation, industrialisation, social engineering and centrally-directed planning strategies, mainly by state agencies, institutions and NGOs. Existing power relations are taken as a given, with the state ultimately determining “how much change will be tolerated as a result of such programs” (Campfens, 1997: 26-27).

**The Social mobilisation tradition** emerged from the oppositional movements in Europe in the early nineteenth century and forms the intellectual basis for current practices such as radical social-mobilisation, mutual-aid associations, co-operatives and communitarian movements. It differs from the societal guidance tradition in that it asserts the primacy of collective action from below and it is concerned about moral ordering, political practices and human liberation (Campfens, 1997: 28-33;
The Social learning tradition is informed by a diverse group of traditions, ideas and practices, mostly aimed at promoting a non-static dialectical cycle in which theory is enriched/modified by lessons drawn from practice. It stresses ‘learning by doing’ and no division is made between subject and object: all are learners and actors, with the expert as change agent or guide who helps to awaken and focus discontent about economic and social conditions. Most influential is Paulo Freire’s concepts of conscientisation, alienation and dialogue. Critical in this tradition is the role of the practitioner, who intervenes as participant from a horizontal position (Campfens, 1997: 37-38).

Community development thus has a tradition of planned change ‘from above’ (societal guidance), another ‘from below’ (social mobilisation) and one that is horizontal (social learning). Even from this brief overview it can be deduced that the social learning tradition lends itself best to an in-depth engagement with individuals and communities. The other two traditions appear to leave less scope for this type of interaction: the focus is action and the delivery of (pre-determined) objectives and outputs.

In conclusion, Campfens is emphatic in his assessment of community development as it has evolved during the last half century: the “model, adopted in much of South America and other Third World regions, was an unequivocal failure” (1997: 17). Kenny fears that “overall successes of community development have been uneven and often quite modest. Indeed, the story of community development so far is one of considerable unfinished businesses” (2011: i7). The many new trends, approaches and ideas merely represent a change in emphasis on the underlying themes of community development (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2011: 36), but did not change the underlying social values and principles since the earliest days of community development (Campfens, 1997: 441).

The crises of the new millennium, however, also offer unparalleled opportunities for community development to redefine its radical agenda (Ledwith, 2011: 2); to re-vision a community development that brings meaning, context and relationality to the centre of a holistic framework; and to accept different ways of knowing, doing and being that will open up spaces for “difference and mystery in praxis” (Burkett, 2001: 233). These different voices are explored in the next section.

2.2 Dilemmas and opportunities: a critical view

They weren’t interested in what we thought,
they were interested in us as living proof of what they thought (Kundera, 2002: 169).

Since the 2000s, community development entered the modern world of business language. Linear logic, predictability, objectively verifiable indicators, impact assessments, log frames and results-based management are since required. Even the language has become business-like aggressive: we
need to “attack the problem” and “take a stab at it” or “tackle the issue” and then “wrestle it to the ground” (Wheatley & Crinean, 2005: 16). In the process, community development has been “reduced to a pre-defined set of activities on the assumption – implicit or explicit – that they will translate into a finite number of outputs and outcomes” (Wilson & Taylor, 2004: 3). Nebulous activities that promote unpredictable and immeasurable outputs are abandoned (Gilchrist, 2009: 30–31) and a new quest evolved: to package all successful projects into replicable models, irrespective of the context (Balfour, 2003; Kaplan, 2002: 119).

Community development has thus become trapped between the call for innovation, creativity, agency, social action and long-term developmental goals - and the demands of an increasingly restrictive auditing and funding regime, such as targets, government priorities and administrative demands (Gilchrist, 2009: 30; Kenny, 2002: 285; Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012: 1085). Unfortunately, logic does not help us with the problem of alienation and a lack of meaning (Kaplan, 1996: 80).

The first part of this section identifies some themes around the dilemma of a community development field that is struggling to engage with communities in a meaningful way. This is followed by an overview of how alternative voices imagine another type of community development and some alternative approaches.

### 2.2.1 Community development’s dilemmatic space

A few themes can be deduced from a reading of the literature on the current state of community development. Some of these are now touched upon.

#### 2.2.1.1 Denial of complexity and the whole

Community development operates in an environment which Ellison’s *Invisible Man* describes as a confoundedly “complex arrangement of hope and desire, fear and hate” (1986: 414). Yet, mainstream community development approaches this complexity with the scientific principles of positivism and reductionism – without regard for the intangible, invisible, intuitive, emotional and relational aspects of humanity. Through dissection and analysis, parts are removed from the context, which then radically impacts on the integrity of whole (Kaplan, 2002: 44; Ledwith, 2011: xiv; Soal, 2010:133).

Denial of complexity by implication leads to the assumption that concepts and techniques, which are effective in some social organisms, will be effective in all or at all times. Time- and budget-bound frameworks and approaches cannot allow time and resources to be spent on iterative and cyclical processes to foster “complex mutually reinforcing relationships among people and systems”, in which the log frame is not merely a tool or yardstick, but where it “becomes the project” (Wilson & Taylor, 2004: 2-3). In Westoby & Dowling’s experience, any approach to community development that is not cognisant of complexity and uncertainty, is “bound to do harm” (2013: 11).
The seeking of a magical or utopian ‘end’ further prevents us from getting involved in a complex process. For Van Schaik (1996), ‘progress’ and sustainable change involve moving to a new and next level that incorporates and transcends the level that precedes it – in an increasingly complex process of consciousness building and unfolding. However, mainstream development mainly focuses on the exterior, while ignoring the interior and subjective development on individual and communal/social levels (Van Schaik, 1996).

A clear example of the quest for simplicity is the attenuation of the notion of poverty – in spite of a wealth of theories on poverty (Bradshaw, 2007) and the suggestion that we actually should talk about ‘poverties’. Poverty is much more than ‘a lack of money’, and all that is required for development is thus not ‘more money’ (Chambers, 2010: 13; McMichael: 2010: 2). Such a limited focus precludes investigation and reflection on other causes for misery and the search for meaningful responses. Mainstream community development approaches thus continue to operate mostly within the social guidance and mobilisation traditions where all values are subsumed to the economic through a focus on safety nets, community organising and redistribution to develop local assets (Bradshaw, 2007: 10-11; Campfens, 1997).

Complexity is also undermined in the name of ‘rights’, with simplistic campaigns and movements that do not consider problems in context. Gender violence, for example, cannot be addressed through the stereotyped characterisation of perpetrators as monsters. Apart from the danger that the assertion of one right might have a negative knock-on effect (reactive increased violence), the intersection of social conditions is not addressed. Providing adequate lighting where public toilets are used might be a more useful protection against night-time rape than classifying ‘males in general’ as the problem (Davis, 2013). Elliot agrees that “casting men as an evil enemy does very little to endear men to transformation and change” (2003: 6). The interplay between different forms of oppression further complicates the issue of rights. Could it be that the success of feminism to focus attention on the disadvantaged lot of woman had “the unintended consequence of making the problems of black men invisible and depriving them of a voice to state their case” (Morrell in Elliot, 2003: 14)? In addition, is the focus on violence against women and children preventing us from acknowledging and addressing male-on-male violence? Research and victim surveys both in South Africa and abroad indicate that the chances of a man to be attacked and killed are much higher than it is in the case for women (Faull & Mphuthing, 2009: 138; Victims and survivors of crime Week, 2015; Woolf, 2014). Studies done in 2007 and 2009 in South Africa showed that only between 11-13% of murder victims were women (Faull & Mphuthing, 2009: 138). While acknowledging the obligation of society to protect its women, Woolf (2014) questions the absence of measures to protect men or to spread the message that it is “also wrong to hit a man. Is male life cheaper?” Amidst the often one-dimensional and shallow discourse on rights, choices are thus made between different forms of wounding.

The complex and rich content or potential of other knowledge systems is not seriously considered,
because they are assumed to be ‘backward’ and inferior to that of the West. Swanepoel & De Beer reject modernisation’s assumption that all societies have to evolve from a common starting point (‘underdeveloped’) and ‘develop’ in a reductionist continuum – towards Western norms, values and lifestyles (such as materialism and individualism), a notion which remains unquestioned (1997: 20).

### 2.2.1.2 A lack of doubt: certainty and control

The “positivist and modernist trap of assuming there is only one ‘right’ or ‘best’ way” (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006: 231) has led to an assumption that “we know what to do” (Chambers, 2010: 13). We thus started to “suffer from an absence of doubt” (Alves in Freire, 1996: 21). This is especially poignant in what Easterly calls the planners, who believe they know the answers and engineer solutions; searchers, on the other hand, admit that they do not know any answers (2006: 5). Exposure to alternative viewpoints brings uncertainty, ambiguity and often heralds the need for change. This is the last thing that planners, those imprisoned in a “circle of certainty” (Freire, 1996: 21) and in the centre of power want. It is too risky to consider the value of input and viewpoints of those at the periphery, because it might challenge their own truths and plans. But it also represents a missed opportunity to be innovative. The danger of self-assurance, however, is that you “fall asleep” and miss the excitement of searching and exploring (Kaplan, 2002: 79).

The highly mechanistic view of development is divorced from the reality of living in an uncertain world, and denies the importance of “happenstance encounters” and an “element of serendipity” (Gilchrist, 2009: 122). In the process, community development has lost depth, flexibility, confidence and spontaneity, while neglecting the emotional life and the ‘soul’ of communities (Gilchrist, 2009: 122; Ledwith, 2011: 35; Westoby & Dowling, 2009: 6-7).

Scholars warn that even the most creative system and authentic journey is constantly under threat of the magnetism of paralysing and impotent institutionalisation: control, standardisation, policies, regulations, laws and manuals (Gilchrist, 2009: 122; Kaplan, 2002: 147; Wheatley & Frieze, 2011: 10). Caught in such a “bureaucratic web”, creativity is stifled and we are forced “to make predictions about what will be five years hence, when we have no idea what tomorrow will bring” (Wilson & Taylor, 2004: 19). At this stage, organisations and institutions start “serving their own survival and not the cause for which they were founded” (Hollis, 1994: 26).

Community development thus plunged into a legitimacy crisis, “lurching from problem to problem developing new techniques to solve society’s problems” – problems that clearly require social and not technical solutions (Westoby & Dowling, 2009: 7). Community development workers become hesitant to embark on strategies where “outputs do not relate easily and linearly to inputs” (Soal, 2010: 133). This is enhanced by funders who impose foreign agendas and rigid timeframes on NGOs, and in the process reduce community development to the mere “delivery on objectives” (Soal, 2010: 133).

Ledwith links this to the quest for professionalism. Critical concepts such as conscientisation have
been replaced with objectives such as business-orientated efficiency, organisational sustainability, skills training and managerialism. The result is surface-level activities, which create the “comfortable illusion of making a difference” – while in fact, “professionalism has silenced us” (2011: 28-29).

2.2.1.3 Negation of reflection - and focus on (fast) action

It would all be simpler if they hadn’t hammered into you this business of ending up somewhere, if they had taught you, rather, to be happy standing still (Baricco, 2002: 195).

Ledwith pleads for “a unity of theory and practice, action and reflection, thinking and doing” and warns against both “actionless thought” and “thoughtless action”, which are caused by a tendency to emphasise ‘doing’ at the expense of thinking (2011: 3-4). Freire is of the same opinion: without reflection, action becomes mere activism (“action for actions sake”), but without action the word (the essence of dialogue) becomes an alienated and alienating chatter or “blah”. (1996: 68-69).

Exclusive focus on action is typical of the Social mobilisation tradition. Networks, campaigns and alliances often develop and offer structures to harness collective power and they are easily tempted to remain in the realm of action. Ledwith is concerned about the lack of theory and skills in these (2011: 110). Within the Social guidance tradition, community development remains vulnerable to “manipulation and dilution” by the latest fashions and policies of government and funder agendas, because they depend on these for funding (Ledwith, 2011: 4, 78).

In addition, there is a quest for action to be fast and immediate. Relationship building and the creating of consciousness, however, cannot be fast-forwarded. The highly successful Mondragon co-operative in Spain, for example, spent fifteen years on preparations alone (Westoby & Shevellar: 2012b: 2-3). In addition, community empowerment requires sensitivity to differences, tension and expectations within communities and time to cater for a variety of ways in which people can contribute ideas. This implies a longer-term approach (Gilchrist, 2009: 32, 36). Timeframes and funding or reporting cycles do not honour/cater for preparation and processes.

2.2.1.4 The vicious circle of the yardstick, the funder and call for perpetual success

The call for effectiveness, funding and success cannot be separated and together they form a rather vicious circle that impacts quite negatively on the very nature of community development.

Integral in the corporate culture is the issue of measuring, which does ensure accountability, but scholars lament the immense power thereof. Firstly, there is the danger that only ‘easy’ things (targets and quantifiable indicators) are measured. Anything invisible, complex or intangible (commitment, honesty, energy, trust, relationship and even change) is seen as lacking evidence or credibility and are thus excluded from measuring processes (Chambers, 2010: 13; Dinham & Shaw, 2012: 139; Lathouras, 2012: 30). Secondly, difference, subtlety and complexity are undermined by an emphasis on ‘sameness’, with its standardised definitions and normativities (measured with single tools and
modes of analysis) – in short its ‘blunting stories’ (Dinham & Shaw, 2012: 130, 139). Lastly, do we measure so that we can award or punish - for money well/badly spent? In that case, it cannot be seen as a developmental tool. Balfour observes that the expenses of a monitoring visit by a funder (flight tickets, car rental and accommodation) often exceed the annual grant of the project (2003).

This directly links to the dilemma of funding for community development. On the one hand, “without the finance there would be no development” (Wilson & Taylor, 2004). On the other hand, there are numerous dangers, summarised by expressions such as ‘selling out’, ‘strings attached’ and the loss of creativity and innovation.

The nature of funding has an impact on development outcomes. It can create divisions in stable communities and leave them paralysed when grants are not renewed. Funders set organisations up for failure with the allocation of resources beyond their capacity. Some funders are patronising in a quest to be flexible and understanding, which can result in a culture of dependency and lack of accountability. Hidden agendas, surprise visits, secrecy, a failure to declare expectations up-front and unrealistic demands can ruin not only the relationship, but the whole intervention. Power dynamics around money cannot be overestimated and it impacts directly on relationships and direction of practice (Balfour, 2003).

To what extent should funders provide strategic thinking and engage with programme direction? For Maart (2010: 30-31), this is recommendable, but Soal questions the ability of funders in this regard: hardly ever do they engage in self-reflection or pay attention to their own organisational needs and conceptual frameworks (2010: 133).

This relates to the issue of failure, specifically NGOs’ fear for failure in the eyes of the funder. In the world of entrepreneurship the parlance of ‘failing forwards’ is used: failure is embraced as a way to learn. Funding for NGOs, however, is based on successes, with no room for failure. This implies that you cannot even stop when you sense disaster: you report on your promised outcomes and prove that it has worked – otherwise you get no more funding (Norwoord-Young, 2014). Due to the lack of a trusting relationship with the funder, we measure and provide proof, even though we know that we have been “less than honest in stating that the project will of course be sustainable after 3, 4 or 5 years” (Wilson & Taylor, 2004: 19). We know (and fear) that “real development is not about crops or wells but about social, cultural, economic and political choices which are denied to the poor” (Wilson & Taylor, 2004: 19). But the crops and wells may yield easier success stories. Since you cannot change route in “NGO-land, you’re committed to a path for the long haul, and even though funders and the mysterious middle-men and -women might be open to change, it’s a process involving paperwork and negotiation instead of action and movement” (Norwood-Young, 2014).

2.2.1.5 Attenuation of communication, participation and empowerment
Collective action seldom happens spontaneously, which necessitates a deliberate strategy to facilitate
dialogical processes and relationships. Owen & Westoby find that the critical dimensions of dialogue are under-theorised and rarely captured in training manuals. In spite of the “endless supply of techniques and group activity manuals” of “bringing people together”, little attention is paid in community development theory to the critical first step of establishing and responding to contact with members of a community (2012: 306-307).

Dialogue reminds us of the difference between ‘explaining’ and ‘understanding’: explaining is reductionist, while understanding is to see something in the context in which it belongs and is thus holistic. Unfortunately, most interventions start by explaining to communities their problems and their situation and then proceed with a promise for action/solutions (Kaplan, 2002: 15). Understanding cannot happen without dialogue; explaining almost per definition excludes it.

From the literature one can deduce that participation has become a contested concept, divorced from the radical agenda where communities define their own needs and solutions. Governments and institutions use participation as a “loyalty ritual for gaining favours and access to essential goods and services” – at reduced costs (Campfens, 1997: 27). Is the UK’s ‘Big Society’ drive really about “power to the man and woman on the street” - or about saving money by using volunteers and dignifying the cutting of decent services (Watt, 2010)? Are communities participating – or used to assist developers and planners to fulfil their quotas and objectives (Swanepoel & De Beer, 1997: xi-xii)?

Linked to this is the relation between participation and trust in community members’ ability to take development forwards. For Freire, a liberation struggle makes no sense if people are not trusted with their liberation. The latter would imply liberation “by the people for the leaders: a complete self-negation” (1996: 110). Translated into community development reality it could read: participation and development ‘for the NGO/community development worker: a complete self-negation’.

A technical concern is that participatory practices are not sensitive to differences within complex communities and do not consider the impact of a lack of knowledge, skills and confidence on the ability to participate (Gilchrist, 2009: 32-33; Ledwith, 2011: 27; Watt, 2010). Another consideration is that non-participation might be “a rational survival strategy among populations that have other priorities and tactics for coping with long-term disadvantage” (Gilchrist, 2009: 32).

The literature seems to imply that mainstream community development hardly ever moves beyond the placating stage on Arnstein’s Ladder of citizen participation (1969: 217). This implies that it remains trapped in the realm of manipulation, therapy, informing and consultation. Freire noted that attempts to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation would be to treat them “as objects which must be saved from a burning building: it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated” (1996: 47).
Ledwith (2011: 26) is concerned that empowerment has been equated with ‘self-help’. It leads to the deduction that the poor are poor because they have not helped themselves in the first place. It labels wounded and poor communities as both the problem and the solution. The rhetoric that community members “must and can solve” all their problems, “take responsibility” (Westoby & Dowling, 2009: 8) and “develop themselves” is a mere smokescreen to maintain structural inequity and heterogeneity (Ledwith, 2011: 29). Neither is empowerment a solution to redistribution of unequally divided resources. It is about critical reflection on the impact of disempowerment, conscientisation and autonomous action (Dinham & Shaw, 2012: 128; Ledwith, 2011: 29; Van der Merwe & Albertyn, 2010: 151).

### 2.2.1.6 Ignoring conflict and violence

There is a well documented link between poverty and violence, manifesting in weakening relationships, social participation, property value, food security and depletion of human capital in education, such as early school leaving, especially girls subjected to sexual violence (Bowman et al, 2008: 210-211). Violence impacts on all eight goals of the eight Millennium Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development does mention the link between peace and development: “We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development” (United Nations, 2015). Yet, there is a near absence of violence prevention or conflict transformation within the community development agenda. This is cause for concern, especially in a post-conflict country like South Africa, struggling with so many types of violence (Bowman et al, 2008: 214-216).

Mainstream community development (especially strengths-based approaches) emphasises consensus organising, which seems to perceive individual and collective gains and interests as synonymous. For DeFilippis, this form of neo-liberal communitarianism has at its core a belief that society is conflict free. Unequal power relationships are ignored (2012: 36). On the other hand, conflict and disunity should not necessarily be seen as negative. For Brent, conflict tends to create energy and fractiousness might be the strength of community: the lack of unity “subverts the totalitarian danger of the united, apolitical communities in which there is no room for difference” (2009: 194). Fowler posits that community cannot be defined in theory or practice as public consensus or the absence of disputes. If that would be the case, community has become a substitute for politics and “tyranny may indeed lie right around the corner” (in Brent, 2009: 194).

Another reality is that conflict not only impacts on development; development can spawn conflict. Kaplan warns that when we launch interventions to control, intervene and structure dynamically complex systems, we “often cut across and dislocate longer-term self-organising patterns” – and the result is conflict, disorder or stasis (2002: 118).
2.2.1.7 Training in past ‘solutions’

Westoby & Van Blerk express concern about community development training where there is an absence of practice opportunities, on-going support and/or in-service courses and that it still happens along traditional didactic lines and run-of-the mill training courses. These are mostly blocked in modules within limited and cost-effective timeframes, without much consideration for context. It is assumed that instructor-type authoritarian teaching can produce fully-fledged workers (2012: 1084). For Kaplan, this constitutes training in “past solutions, fixed mindsets and behaviours and techniques which replicate particular patterns and understandings” – instead of developing “a resourcefulness out of which we can respond” (Kaplan, 2002: 141)?

This overview of discourses in mainstream development clearly indicates how the field has moved into spaces where it is difficult to engage with complexity and woundedness. There are, however, radically different voices and practices, which are now investigated.

2.2.2 Alternative voices: traces of in-depth engagement

A small but rich literature was found suggesting how communities can be approached in new and exciting ways.

2.2.2.1 An expedition into the unexpected and the unknown

A master archer returned home after years of travelling and found hundreds of arrows, each dead centre in bulls-eyes on trees and buildings all over the village. He eventually met the archer of these shots, a young girl. How did she manage this feat? She shot with her arrow and “wherever it lands, I draw a bulls-eye” (Ledwith, 2011: 79-80).

This is a striking metaphor to explain the difference between the excitement of an open-ended journey and the restriction of pre-determined goals, timeframes, funding regimes and the model or manual.

Community development can thus be a praxis that begins in the everyday reality of people's lives, but then needs to be noted by “extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary” (Shor in Ledwith, 2011: 9). We need an approach of “awe and wonder” (Lievegoed in Kaplan, 2002: 136) to look for the “silenced stories” of the marginalised and excluded (Ledwith 2011: 9). We must not fear to investigate and reflect deeply, enter into dialogue, ask, listen and confront – to see the world 'unveiled' (Freire, 1996: 21). By embracing the invisible, we start to work as “social artists in a world which is at once mysterious and meaningful; ever present and always becoming; ever alive” (Kaplan, 2002: 27).

For Meas Nee, the bull’s eyes are not projects, but relationships. The arrow could be a symbol of what he calls the “redevelopment of the community”: a slow and careful process to regain dignity, unity and trust (1999). Time is of the essence: “Slowly. Sit under the shadow of the trees with the families and listen to them. Sit in the cool of the night. Don’t feel ashamed that you waste time” (Nee, 1999).
In the same line, Blaser juxtaposes ‘development projects’ (bull’s eyes drawn by the state and markets) with ‘life projects’ (2004: 26). While the first is concerned with the “universalist pretension of modernity” and models applied in other places, the latter are embedded in local histories and attend to the uniqueness of people’s experience of place and self. Life projects embrace the possibility that people can define the direction they want to take in life – based on an awareness and knowledge “of their own place in the world” (Blaser, 2004: 30).

Westoby also emphasises the building of relationships through a co-creative journey of discovery between practitioner and participant. Such complexity is not possible through a pre-determined set agenda. Instead, orthodoxies should be deconstructed and “ossified practice” destabilised – so that we can start to imagine something new (2009a: 61-62). Such open-endedness defies all quests for replicability: “only lessons and learnings from other development models, not the models themselves, can be brought to another context because context is unique” (Balfour, 2003).

Wheatley & Frieze call those individuals/groups who refuse to buy into paralysing, restricting and inhibiting beliefs about themselves and how change happens “walk outs”. They then “walk on” to explore and discover new gifts and possibilities in unfamiliar territory – indeed a journey that requires much bravery. It challenges our beliefs, assumptions and internal demons (2011: 4, 13-14). A refreshing motto for this journey is offered: “start anywhere, follow it everywhere” (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011: 8).

2.2.2.2 Conscientisation – inter-action with the complex whole

The idea of conscientização or critical conscientisation, as outlined by Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, had immense influence in community development and various other disciplines. Freire’s argument is that through oppression the oppressed becomes alienated from the self and thus becomes an ‘inauthentic’ being. Authentic development is then impossible. Through an in-depth process of searching and conscientisation, it becomes possible to surmount these contradictions and become “beings for themselves” (Freire, 1996: 142-143). Through the journey of conscientisation, the hidden biases, tendencies, prejudices, mindsets, derived attitudes and habitual behaviours are made transparent and are subsequently unlearnt (Kaplan, 2002: 79). The process generates confidence, autonomy, self-esteem and energy in subordinated groups, while the internalised sense of inferiority and the paralysing feelings of subordination are transformed (Ledwith, 2011: 200).

This links to Peter Reason’s concept of critical subjectivity, which bridges the divide between naïve inquiry (with its biases, anxieties, social pressures, energy and humanity) and scientific objective consciousness. Critical subjectivity does not allow our primary subjective experience to be suppressed or to be overwhelming. Rather it is raised to consciousness and used as part of the inquiry process (Reason, 1994: 11). In the words of Rowan, we now “see the world as our world, rather than the world, we can see clearly through our own eyes” (in Reason, 1994: 12).
It is important to note that interaction with the whole or holism does not imply an attempt to touch on all aspects of life at the same time. It is simply not possible. I want to argue that real holism implies an awareness of the complex whole, or to quote Pogacnik: mastery “does not mean having a plan for the whole, but having an awareness of the whole” (in Senge et al, 1999: 157). Conscientisation, seen as a journey towards wholeness, helps us to understand complexity and interconnectedness. Working in complex organic and social processes, we have to start somewhere - and as we perceive the “invisible” that lies beyond the parts, and build an intuitive grasp, we move on to a next thing. Kaplan explains: our mere presence, even without doing anything, has a domino effect on everybody and everything we touch. Without such awareness, we “can inflict great damage, or simply waste time” (2002: 7, 8, 118-119).

It is critical to understand that action and reflection are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they should happen simultaneously. Freire argues that critical reflection is a deep form of action, a process of unveiling by authentic people who trust themselves and their facilitator (who is not there to teach, transmit or give anything, but to learn too). This does not allow space for conquering, manipulation, domestication and sloganeering, which are too often equated with ‘action’ (1996: 150, 161).

The postponement or substitution of action should not be confused with ‘inaction’. This is confirmed by Nee’s observations in Cambodia. War and oppression make people hopeless, paralyse minds and obscure the idea of ‘future’. This complexity needs to be made conscious. Time is needed just to be together, to do some “happy talk and even teasing” – not to act - because where “community development has worked well the thing that has happened is not the projects. It is the people of the community moving together to support each other” (Nee, 1999).

2.2.2.3 Measuring: a tool for reflection, learning, conscientisation and appreciation

Instead of looking at measuring as a tool for punishment and reward, some voices urge us to see it (with assessment and monitoring) as an opportunity for reflection, reflexivity, learning, refocusing, reprioritisation and re-planning (Balfour, 2003; Dinham & Shaw, 2012). Measuring and researching through a continuous process of conscientisation offer an opportunity to reflect on the values of community development, broaden the terms of measurability, rebalance the financial emphasis, promote ownership and generate local actors (Dinham & Shaw, 2012: 140).

The success of development initiatives should thus be measured in terms of Individual and collective aspirations and talents; people’s ability to challenge each other and their context; consciousness raised; creativity; confidence; the ability to plan an own development agenda and claim rights with responsibility (Balfour, 2003; Dinham & Shaw, 2012: 139).

Such process is only possible within a culture of trust, which, in turn, requires us to perceive not only development, but also problems and failures, as a natural process (Balfour, 2003). This relates to
Norwood-Young’s plea that NGOs increase their tolerance for failure by learning from the entrepreneurial world, where ‘failure conferences’ are held to learn from each other and embrace failure as a way forward (2014). That, however, would imply a totally different system around funding, which would not base ‘success’ as one and only criterion – and it is doubtful if the hegemony is ready for that (Norwood-Young, 2014).

Since we cannot measure relationships and change, Kaplan suggests that we can only learn to appreciate them (2002: 160).

### 2.2.2.4 The art of dialogue, listening and questioning

‘What you are speaks so loudly, I can’t hear what you say’ (Emerson in Jaffe, 1990: 56).

Ledwith perceives dialogue as the most basic skill of community development and defines it as “a mutual and reciprocal form of communication in which the act of listening in a holistic way is valuing, and therefore liberating” (2011: 71). This skill includes what she calls “connected knowing”: to suspend our own truth in order to more fully hear the truth of others (Ledwith, 2011: 71). For Freire, dialogue is not possible without profound love for the world and for people and does not involve a subject and a dominated object: it only involves subjects, who meet to “name the world in order to transform it” (1996: 69, 148-149). Dialogue is not about endless discourses which merely “increase the fears of the oppressed consciousness” or about messages of salvation, but to discover with the people their real situation. It engages with people’s “preoccupations, doubts, hopes, and fears” (Freire, 1996, 69-77).

From the literature it is clear that listening and questioning are key components of dialogue. Listening requires attentiveness and sensitive observation. By hearing what you would like to hear, and not what is said, accumulated knowledge is rendered obsolete and irrelevant. Listening is thus an art and to avoid misleading those in whose lives you intervene, a high level of self-awareness is critical, as well as the questioning of own certainties (Rahnema, 1997).

Fopma describes questions as the “grappling hooks that allow us to begin the slow ascent of Mount Understanding’s flanks and ridges” (2002). A question is not a mere “shot in the dark” (Kaplan, 2002: 150): it is a delicate art to prepare and select “a varied and flexible quiver of questions” and then to gauge the appropriate one to try out and mould for each situation and person (Fopma, 2002). It requires immense skill to find the type of question that can “penetrate the barriers”, break through the resistance to change and eventually “dissolve rigidity and bring the system into movement” (Kaplan, 2002: 150). The temptation (for all involved) is to insist on/provide answers, instead of responding with more and deeper-level questions (Fopma, 2002; Ledwith, 2011: 103). Peavey reminds us that questions are most effective when the answers are not known (1997: 3, 22). Questions are invitations. What they invite us to, depends on how they are asked and they can either lead to clarity and confirmation – or confusion and confrontation (Fopma, 2002).
2.2.2.5 Participation as wholeness and healing

Contrary to the perception of participation as a tool for placating and buying support, a very different picture emerges: participation as tool for wholeness and healing. Wholeness, according to Skolimowski, means that all parts belong together, are connected and thus “partake in each other… Thus participation is an implicit aspect of wholeness” (in Reason, 1994: 10). This type of participation requires empathy and “almost complete identification with the subject of our attention” (Reason, 1994: 10).

Wholeness and participation, in turn, can be linked to healing. To heal “means to make whole: we can only understand our world as a whole if we are part of it; as soon as we attempt to stand outside, we divide and separate. In contrast, making whole necessarily implies participation” (Reason in Ledwith, 2011: 85). Reason goes further by linking wholeness to holiness: a participatory world-view implies that meaning and mystery are restored to the human experience – and the world can once again be experienced as a sacred place (in Ledwith, 2011: 85).

Another angle for viewing participation comes from Freire (1996: 30), who questions the ability of the oppressed to participate while being trapped in the projections and prescriptions of the oppressed. How do you participate as an authentic being? Liberation (through conscientisation) is first needed for participation to be possible.

2.2.2.6 Transformative training and learning

Kaplan states emphatically that we do not need more training programmes: “there had been more than enough of those”. What is needed are learning programmes, or rather programmes focussed on “the unlearning of patterns of behaviour which had become both ingrained and thoughtless” (2002: 127). Training should be seen as a “laboratory for learning” (Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012: 1084), where skills and sensitivities are cultivated to ‘read’ a community, with its invisible soul qualities and social phenomena/processes.

Several scholars agree on some key elements of emancipatory and transformative learning. The gap between theory and practice needs to be bridged. Critical thinking, self-reflection, consciousness-raising and reflexivity can challenge taken-for-granted conceptions, create understanding of realities and facilitate transformation. The social aspect of learning-with-others is acknowledged with a suggestion for ‘communities of practice’. Various processes and techniques are suggested: group, pair and individual work; case studies, reflective reports, in-depth conversations, collaborative experimentation; developmental counselling, mentoring, supervision, journaling and a study of concepts and texts (Kaplan, 2002: 127; Van der Merwe & Albertyn, 2010: 153; Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012: 1086).

In conclusion, it thus appears as if mainstream community development has indeed moved into a space where it is very difficult to explore and move freely in a rapidly changing world. It has got stuck
in old recipes, driven by agendas that do not allow engagement with the woundedness of communities. Due to the heavy emphasis on set plans, action and success, the scope for honest reflection has become so limited that it is difficult to note how the very actions of the field may cause more wounding. At the same time there are voices that paint an alternative picture of a field engaging in new and exciting ways with the ‘soil and soul’ of communities.

The next section gives a brief overview of a few approaches which suggest approaches within such an alternative paradigm.

2.3 Approaches seeking in-depth engagement with communities

The 1990s saw the emergence of approaches and movements intending to deal with the psychological damage of oppression and stereotyping. Some are articulated by academics. An example is Margaret Ledwith, whose critical community development approach draws mainly on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy and on feminist theory. It acknowledges that the personal is profoundly political and emphasises the complex interlinking and overlapping matrix of oppressions: race, class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and sexual orientation (Ledwith, 2011).

Maistry (2010) suggests a theoretical framework for community development in South Africa based on three frameworks: Lessem and Nussbaum’s “Four Worlds Model”, the ecosystems perspective and the “Four World’s Development Project” from Native America (2010: 168-173). Elements of such a framework would bring together rationalism (the North), pragmatism (the West), holism (the East) and humanism/ubuntu (the South). It recognises that “healing and developing a community comprise one of the most complex tasks known to human beings” (Maistry, 2010: 171).

The approach by Changes, a UK-based NGO, was developed from a background in feminist, community education, anti-racist and community activism work. It draws on four ‘essential ingredients’: to know yourself; to know what you need/want; to know yourself with and through others; and to know how the external world operates (Hampson, Bedford & Gorbing, 2011:6-13).

In spite of El Salvador’s growth rate of 4-5% since 1992, inequality and violence continued to rise. Hochachka ascribes this to the exclusive focus of development on the ‘exterior’ and the neglect of the ‘interior’: ethical, cultural, psychological and spiritual aspects. She suggests an approach which integrates the concept of Interiority in community development, since it can bridge the dichotomy between material and interior needs. It operates in three domains: action/application, dialogue/process and self-growth/reflection and focuses on the ‘self’ amidst a community-directed process. The self-development of the facilitator (self-reflection and expansion of worldviews) is critical to ensure shifts in self-identity, a more inclusive worldview and consideration for others and the
surrounding ecosystems in participants (Hochachka, 2005: 111-123).

Pat Cane developed Capacitar, whose energy-based healing practices awakens and empowers people and include body-mind-spirit practices in the healing process (Capacitar International, [n.d.]). Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed with its various techniques, such as the Rainbow of Desire method, is aimed at understanding and reflecting on oppressions and finding ways of dealing with these - “in unapologetically complex ways” (Theatre of the Oppressed, [n.d.]).

A number of programmes and theories aim to create awareness/consciousness of the impact of oppression on personal, social, institutional and/or structural levels and to address these by un-learning bias and embracing diversity. These include Ricky Sherover-Marcuse’s Unlearning racism, Valery Batts’ Visions Inc. and the Anti-Bias Course developed by Helen Robb and Julian Sonn for the Early Learning Resource Unit in Cape Town (ELRU, 1997; Unlearning racism, [n.d.]; Visions Inc., [n.d.]).

Social Role Valorization acknowledges de-valuation as an unconscious reaction to people who are unacceptably different from the majority. Poverty is seen as both cause and effect of being devalued. The approach, articulated by Wolfensberger, is committed to transforming the lives of those who experience devaluation (Shevellar, Sherwin & Mackay, 2012: 81; Wolfensberger, 2005; Ziegler, 1992).

The Collective narrative practice of the Dulwich Centre (Australia) touches upon themes of trauma and uses narrative tools to strengthen individual and collective resilience. This includes the telling, collecting, documenting and sharing of stories “with the potential to deepen insight, build movements and expand the tactical contours of our imagination” (MacLeod, 2010). Double-storied accounts are elicited by acknowledging both hardship/abuse and that which gives value. The intention is not only for participants to become stronger, but to make a contribution to others who are also experiencing hard times. Lives and experiences are thus linked to some sort of collective (Denborough & White, 2007; Denborough, 2010).

Training for Transformation (Grail Centre in Kleinmond, South Africa) was developed by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel and is deeply influenced by the thinking of Paulo Freire and Steve Biko (Hope & Timmel, 1988). The Berkana Institute initiates the Learning Journeys (Berkana Institute. [n.d.]). Westoby & Dowling (2013) suggest in their Dialogical framework very specific steps in getting a dialogue started and maintained and to return depth, soul, solidarity and communitas to community development. The Community Capacity Enhancement (CCE) programme, based on the Community Conversations methodology, promotes community dialogues. It is diffused by a number of South African organisations, such as the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Olive Leaf Foundation and to some degree the Department of Social Development (Gueye et al: 3; Nelson Mandela Foundation,
These approaches offer a vast range of options and praxes, as well as the opportunity to change the face of community development completely and to lead it out of the crisis identified at the turn of the millennium. In different ways they open up the spaces needed for the un-veiling and discovery that development could bring to communities all over the globe. They also highlight the complexity of issues in need of addressing and what an art it is to hold such processes together.

This task lies in the hands of the community development worker. This is now explored.

### 2.4 The pivotal role of the community development worker

At least three interweaving processes are involved during the process of community development: the first is the process within the community or group; the second is the practitioner’s own unfolding; and the third is the interaction between these. The practitioner is simultaneously inside and outside of these three processes and responsible for holding them all at the same time. This is an art, requiring intuition, a sense of the intangible and mysterious, an understanding of underlying archetypical patterns and a simultaneous perception of the whole. This makes the development worker an “artist of the invisible” (Kaplan, 2002: xviii-xix, 26).

Cleveland & Jacobs argue that, while it is the community development worker who pioneers discoveries, inventions, and initiatives, these are drawn from the subconscious, collective wisdom, knowledge and intuition of the society. The development worker becomes a “conscious instrument for the expression of a subconscious will” (1999: 963). The boundary-spanning role of the community development worker includes that of broker, interpreter, expert, guide, enabler, advocate, mediator and organiser in situations of misunderstanding or conflict (Gilchrist, 2009: 161; Monaheng, 2008: 131).

Challenges for the community development worker include the quest “not to let people down or to deceive them”, which requires clear roles and boundaries. A chameleon-like nature is needed to walk the tightrope between friendship, dependency, ‘mothering’, symbiosis, personal intimacy, professional distance (the detached and “outside gaze” of the outside expert), voyeurism, transparency and accountability (Brent, 2009: 16-17; De Beer, 2011: 406-407; Gilchrist, 2011: 142; Mamidipudi & Gajjala, 2008: 235). The worker has to accept that “you can’t be all things to all people all the time”, which is a constant danger in a field plagued by burnout (Gilchrist, 2009: 142,143).

There are also subtle dangers, which are difficult to recognise: projections, mistrust, the temptation to resort to formulae, prescriptions and expert solutions and the urge to provide answers and information. Freire warns against the misguided belief that you bring a message of salvation (1996: 220).
76). Especially volunteers are prone to think they are ‘doing good’, making a ‘sacrifice’ or ‘help’, which is particularly dangerous when working in a foreign context where you are “linguistically deaf and dumb” (Illich, 1968). Kaplan calls the art of facilitation “a dangerous one”: it provides the practitioner with immense power and ample opportunity to use, abuse and misuse this power (1996: 114). Brent warns against co-dependency in the relationship between the practitioner and the community. The co-dependent is defined as somebody who cannot feel self-confident without being devoted to the needs of others (2009: 144). Becoming fixated and dependent on the relationship with the community to feed personal needs is a real threat for the practitioner – and the community.

According to most scholars and practitioners in the social learning tradition, the most critical weapon against these dangers is self-knowledge. This is attained through self-reflection or as Soal puts it: we are our ‘own best tools’, which can only be sharpened through “an exploration into self” (2008: 9). Self-reflection constantly challenges our inner attitudes, prejudices, expectations, baggage, and denials. Without daily reflection, relationships risk descending into dependency, effectiveness is diminished and damage can be inflicted upon the community. A high level of self-awareness allows a state where there are no unnecessary expectations of self or community and no discomfort with emptiness. Only if we understand our own motivations, can we empty ourselves and it becomes possible for a process to evolve with integrity (Fopma, 2002; Kaplan, 2002: xviii, 106; Ledwith, 2011: 77).

The discourse on the expert outsider touches upon issues like power, dependency, capacity building, the imposing of technology and the perpetuation of inequalities and social exclusion. This is aggravated by outsiders who are not sensitive about the power of their influence. The dominance by professionals is especially problematic in situations where external factors (funding programmes or performance criteria) determine the pace and face of change (Campfens, 1997: 39; Gilchrist, 2009: 145).

The social learning tradition contributed significantly to the deconstruction of this discourse by moving beyond the simplified debate on insider/outside. It affirms the expertise needed to listen to different voices and experiences and to challenge dominant discourses and frameworks. It acknowledges the skill to facilitate communication – “as partners in the development enterprise” (Campfens, 1997: 39). Fiol & O’Connor call this a “dance between insiders and outsiders” (2002: 533). Mamidipudi & Gajjala draw on feminist and activist approaches when they promote the notion of “being involved in the practice as we build theory” – which does not result in the disasters usually associated with top-down, expert and outsider involvement (2008: 235-236).

Kaplan points out that the practitioner needs to be able to enter fully into the reality of the group/client, yet simultaneously remain outside, capable of objectivity and of bringing something extra – to add value. This can be done in the form of objectivity or an insight or question that can “break the circular
flow of argument” (1996: 118). The important point is: this can only be done while being inside that circle and observing with respect – even if the conversation appears to be trivial and leading nowhere. This, according to Freire, challenges (outsider) facilitators to observe in totality, without allowing any nuance to escape their attention. At the same time, the group is supported to divide and reintegrate the whole repetitively, until they approach the nuclei of the contradictions and limitation by which they live. The dimension that outsiders/expert thereby adds is “a critical method of approaching reality in order to unveil it” (Freire, 1996: 91-92).

The community development worker thus has to make sense of and respond constructively to the complexity created by competing discourses in the social world (Lathouras, 2012: 169, 6). Kelly (forthcoming) explains this complexity as a “colossal web of disadvantage that grips vulnerable individuals and exerts a stranglehold on the community as a whole”. People are hurting badly and their problems are enmeshed. In addition, workers face the demands of the chosen organisational approach and funding agenda. Where can a worker “begin to untangle that web in the face of so many urgent tasks” (Kelly, forthcoming)? He suggests that the only tool to avoid the often-made mistake of tackling everything at once, on all fronts, of panicking and tumbling “into the very chaos workers are trying to unscramble”, is a personal practice framework (Kelly, forthcoming). This concept is now investigated.

2.5 The personal practice framework

The personal practice framework is described as a way in which community workers make sense for themselves of “what community work is all about” (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006: 321). It ensures coherent, intentional and purposeful practice (Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012: 1092), by providing a structure to organise, analyse and sort out experiences, knowledge and techniques (Kelly, forthcoming; Morris, [n.d.]). It provides awareness and terminology for the way we work and thereby helps to deal with recurring dilemmas (Kelly, forthcoming).

The mental scaffolding provided by such framework prevents the worker from being “swept away by people and events” (Kelly, forthcoming), give in to pressure to conform to a status quo with its power relations and managerial and corporative demands, which do not serve the communities. In Morris’ words: without a personal practice framework, the community development worker “feels naked”, all the time working in “terror and awfulness”- waiting to be caught out ([n.d.]).

Westoby & Van Blerk identify three characteristics of a personal practice framework. The first is to understand tasks and activities in the light of key community development movements, processes and concepts. The second is that it considers different known community development approaches (for example asset-based or sustainable livelihoods) for integration into own practice. Lastly, the framework has to support the worker to navigate complex political realities – not only in communities
but also within departmental or organisational politics (2012: 1092).

The main purpose of a personal framework is thus not to critique community development orthodoxy, but to identify and articulate an “own relation to the work, the people and the contexts of practice” (Westoby & Ingamells, 2011: 11).

How does a community worker develop such practice framework? Ife & Tesoriero suggest the continuous interrogation of own practice by reflecting on own values, personal life experiences, en/disabling personal qualities, identity as community worker (desired changes or mismatches between principles and the sense of self) and so forth. The framework continues to change as more experience is gained. Lastly, there is a plethora of approaches and traditions available and the community development worker has to decide which approaches resonate with personal aspirations and values in a specific situation (Ife & Tesoriero: 2006). Westoby & Dowling (2013: 2-4) provide a useful list of approaches, some diffused internationally – and others articulated by academics.

There are a number of dilemmas regarding personal practice frameworks. These include tension between an established organisational approach and a personally developed framework. Since organisational and funding body requirements and community mandates are stronger than that of workers’ personal frameworks it is a battle to operate in the boundary between the state and civil society (Gray, 2010: 97; Westoby & Ingamells, 2011: 4-5). Another challenge is the availability of supervisory and/or mentoring capacity. Some training and organisational frameworks actually intend to minimise the impact of personal biases and experiences in favour of a general ‘fit’ (Westoby & Ingamells, 2011: 5). A reform of training regimes within the large-scale training systems (as is the case in South Africa’s state programmes) is thus necessary to accommodate the building of personal practice frameworks within the context of a set organisational/departmental practice frameworks. This will require the re-imagining of the institution as a learning organisation, instead of as a programme host (Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012: 1094).

2.6 Conclusion

From this overview one could deduce that the ‘Development project’ has in essence become the remedy offered for wounds inflicted by itself. Mainstream community development has been co-opted as an additional plaster, forcing the field into spaces where it has difficulty to engage with complexity and woundedness. The field is dominated by action: services, projects, self-help plans, resource distribution and campaigns (mainly within the social guidance and mobilisation traditions). This does not imply that healing cannot result from these, especially when sustained over a longer period. What is lacking, however, is an approach that acknowledges the woundedness and deliberately seeks to bring about healing, with an awareness of how careless intervention further compounds the woundedness. There is a near-absence of direct references to the concepts of woundedness and
healing on communal level in the literature on mainstream community development.

A second observation is the emergence of voices, pleading for greater consciousness, sensitivity to the restoring of relationships and in-depth engagement with communities – a rethinking and re-imagining of the field in its totality. These can be associated with the theories and principles of the social learning tradition. A significant distinction from the other traditions is an acknowledgement of the expertise needed for the facilitation of a slow, open-ended process with self and community.

Even though these theories and principles are eloquently articulated by some academics and practitioners the burning question remains: have they entered mainstream community development practice, especially in South Africa where this study is situated? Where are the gaps? Where is the appropriate point to penetrate the mainstream system with such an approach?

One option revealed in this overview is the concept of a personal practice framework. It allows the practitioner to bring into even the most rigid system a ‘personal touch’ and thus leaves the door open for the introduction of a healing approach – also into state-led programmes. This necessitates a closer look at how community development, specifically the dominant state-initiated programmes, are engaging with the ‘soil and soul’ of communities in South Africa. This is the focus of the next chapter.
3 Community development in a wounded South Africa

3.1 Introduction

This chapter paints a picture of community development in the South African society. The canvas has been primed heavily, layer upon layer, generation upon generation, with the tenacious gesso of oppression, hardship and frustrated efforts and dreams. This historical reality cannot be erased, but we can start to paint in new ways. Community development in South Africa offers a colourful assortment of paints, colours and brushes in the form of traditions, approaches and programmes, engaging with various social groups of all ages. It touches upon almost every aspect of individual and communal life: education, health, income/employment, food security, culture, social cohesion, psychosocial and emotional factors, agriculture, housing, infrastructure, services, information, rights and many more. The aim of the chapter is not to create an inventory of these. It aims to determine if the many brushes of community development are used to paint a new picture - or are they used in ways that merely add more layers to the undercoat? It has to be seen against the reality that, compared to the bold strokes possible by the thick brushes of politics and the economy, the impact of community development's brushes is humble and subtle – but this is what we have to our disposal and we have to use our thin brushes with wisdom.

I have looked through very specific lenses at this picture. The first is the level of awareness about the reciprocal relationship between woundedness, community development and healing. What impact does such awareness/lack thereof have on the design and the chances for success of initiatives? Is there an awareness that disappointment or a lack of success can cause more wounding? This is an important question, because if failure or disappointment remains in the realm of the unconscious and personal, it may compound the naïve acceptance of stereotypes and labels created over generations. Even though understanding on its own may not bring about change, it does inform an alternative way of perceiving the self and interacting with the world. If, however, a community development intervention leads to new failure, communities/individuals will need immense braveness to trust when a next opportunity arises that ‘this time’ it will work. Unfortunately, community development initiatives are often sold through the seductive message of that everything can/will change ‘this time’. Is the field understanding that more is at stake than the spinach planted this season or carpet woven today? What is at risk is the courage ever to try again - if it fails now, yet again?

While there is a thick body of literature available on the dominant state-led programmes in the country, relatively little is available on the thousands of non-governmental and community-based organisations (NGOs and CBOs). The few secondary sources available tend to focus on outstanding aspects of the interventions selected for discussion and they are used to prove a specific point (for example to critique a specific approach). These are consequently not helpful to assess the general
nature and impact of the field.

It is also important to note that this review is looking at community development on the level of policy, programme design and implementation and the extent to which these are conducive for in-depth engagement with communities. It does not attempt to assess the prevalence of individual excellence – which is taken for granted: it is assumed that there are many community development workers who manage to bring an own dimension into their practice\textsuperscript{17} and in the process impact profoundly on the lives of community members. The question is if such excellence is being facilitated or hampered by the chosen institutional approaches and arrangements. In other words: where good work is done, is it because of or in spite of the policies, the structures and the programme content?

The structure of this chapter is firstly to give an overview of how community development has developed in South Africa since 1994, both in the NGO field and the state’s initiatives. This is followed by a critical discussion, which attempts to determine if there is mindfulness in the dominant state-led community development that its interventions may increase the wounding or bring about healing. Is there is a spirit of reflexivity, which is critical to let go of a paint or a brush that has been found wanting? The last short section looks at a few approaches in the NGO field which actively promote in-depth engagement with communities.

3.2 Non-governmental community development

Until 1994, state-led community development in South Africa was viewed with mistrust and scepticism by the black majority. It was perceived as a subsidiary service of the apartheid regime and an effort to win hearts and minds for the grand apartheid reform strategies, for example to convince people to move to the homelands (De Beer, 2011: 404-405; Maistry, 2012: 164). On the other hand, NGOs and CBOs\textsuperscript{18} defied the apartheid government with vibrancy and resilience and were seen as a threat by the regime. These “pioneers of the stories of possibilities” (De Beer, 2014: x) made a significant contribution to the liberation struggle.

This picture changed dramatically when the apartheid regime lost its power by the end of the 1980s. In the early 1990s, civic organisations and NGOs received official recognition and were included in consultations on the democratic transition. Ironically, civil society was weakened by its very successes, when the practices and policies they had been fighting for over years became aligned with the political ethos of the newly elected government. Their objectives were mainstreamed – which suddenly left them un-defined and urgently in need of a new focus and niche. They also lost their resource base when “back-door solidarity funding” started to be moved through normal government-to-government channels (Soal, 2010: 128). They were “unceremoniously dumped by donors” - while

\textsuperscript{17} This can be linked to the concept of the personal practice framework, discussed in the previous chapter.
\textsuperscript{18} The Department of Social Development refers to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community based organisations (CBOs) collectively as NPOs or non-profit organisations (Stuart, 2013).
funding donated to the government was often left unspent (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2012: 8). Aggravating the situation was the loss of 60% of NGO staff to government and the private sector (Bollens, 2000: 168, 171-172; De Beer & Swanepoel, 2012: 8).

Strong partnerships started to develop between NGOs and the corporate sector, mainly involving funding. The corporate sector needs NGOs to meet official criteria regarding social investment (De Beer, 2014: ix; Stuart, 2013). To secure this funding NGOs had to corporatise: streamlined managerial structures and a higher degree of professionalism and accountability. The ‘reporting culture’, with its emphasis on measuring, counting and indicators did result in higher standards of accountability and financial self-sufficiency, but it came at a price. NGOs’ accountability turned towards funders - away from the marginalised and beneficiaries (Stuart, 2013), which profoundly affected the culture of community development.

An emerging trend in the NGO field is social entrepreneurship, for example Township Clothing and Reel Gardening. Township deals in clothing, bags and shoes and invests profits into a social arm, Afrique du Sud Bidonvilles & Sewing Co-operatives, which supports several independent sewing cooperatives that enter into contracts with Township and other business partners (Township, [n.d.]). The company Reel Gardening sells vegetable and herb seeds encased in strips of biodegradable paper. Profits are invested in school and community gardens in disadvantaged areas (Reel Gardening, [n.d.]).

Numerous community-based initiatives are emerging all over the country, mostly inspired by what is called ‘the spirit of Nelson Mandela’ and showcased in the public media as the efforts of individuals who want to ‘make a difference’. Radio interviews and media profiles introduce to the public a wide range of these - from support for principals of dysfunctional schools, providing a space conducive for studying to learners from squatter camps, to the establishment of a brass band for gangster kids. It is tempting to start describing some of these inspiring stories, but that is firstly not possible within the scope of this study. Secondly, initiatives deemed excellent today, may not survive tomorrow. A common trend amongst these interventions appears to be the presence of a highly innovative person or group with the necessary skills to pioneer and hold such intervention. The problem is that very few of these organisations manage to move beyond the pioneering phase. They seldom survive when the pioneer moves on or if they yield to the almost inevitable appeal to expand19.

This is confirmed by statistics showing that approximately 30% (36 000) of the 122 000 registered NPOs20 in the country closed down in 2013 (NGO Pulse, 2014). It is important to note that this is not only due to a shrinking funding pool, but also to poor management, corruption, cover-ups, non-
compliance with legal requirements, limited investment in personnel training, a focus on short-term survival instead of long-term planning and flawed high-profile projects without sustained impact (Inyatehlo, 2014; McDonald, 2012: 11, 13). Seokoma further warns against the lack of creativity, honest reflection and the moral high ground assumed by some: we “cannot afford to cruise along with a misplaced arrogance that because we do good, we are good” (2013). Poplak’s observation on NGOs deserves to be heeded: “The collision between self-righteousness and stupidity is almost as old as humanity itself. Not all NGOs are both self-righteous and stupid; some are neither” (2014b).

The struggle for financial survival further forced NGOs to seek funding from government and adhere to government objectives and accountability procedures. They are at the mercy of departmental officials to survive (Barnard, 2012; Matthias & Zaal, 2009: 292-293; McDonald, 2012: 13; Stuart, 2013). The sector practically became sub-contractors of government. This relationship erodes the sector’s advocacy function and quiets the voice of civil society (De Beer, 2011: 405; De Beer & Swanepoel, 2012: 8; Stuart, 2013). In the early 2000s, the government established two statutory bodies to support the thousands of NGOs and CBOs financially: the National Development Agency (based in the Department of Social Development) and the National Lottery Board. Unfortunately, both developed a “seriously problematic history and track record with the NGOs” (Barnard, 2012), amidst allegations of corruption and incompetence. The result was devastating for many NGOs (Barnard, 2013; De Beer & Swanepoel, 2012: 8; NDA, [n.d.]; NDA, 2013: 16; NLB, [n.d.]; NLB, 2014; Seokoma, 2013).

In the meantime, NGOs are playing a vital role in assisting government to fulfil its mandate regarding socio-economic rights enshrined in the constitution (Stuart, 2013), especially where government struggles to meet demands or where legislative constrains hinder action within departments. This forces NGOs to engage in statutory work and take on disproportionately heavy responsibilities – while being treated as rivals (Matthias & Zaal, 2009: 292-296).

Another tendency in the field is a gradual move away from programme/project funding to that of donor support for activism and rights-based movements. They argue that “civil society’s role is not to provide services that government should be delivering (for example HIV care), but rather to hold government to account to provide these services” (Seokoma, 2013). Their strategies often include legal action against government or government departments. The first to rise to prominence was the Treatment Action Campaign, which fought for anti-retroviral treatment during the AIDS denialism of the Mbeki-era (TAC, [n.d.]). Others agitate around issues such as quality and equal education, freedom of expression, exploitation through e-tolling, housing, sanitation and evictions (Abahlali Basemjondolo. [n.d.]; Equal Education, [n.d.]; FEDUP, [n.d.]; OUTA, [n.d.]; Right2Know, [n.d.]; Section 27, [n.d.]).

These movements are obviously problematic for a government growing increasingly sensitive about criticism of its capacity to deliver on promises. The result is an anomalous and contradicting
relationship to NGOs, as is clear from some political statements. DSD announces in 2013 that it intends speeding up the NPO registration process “to ensure that the public derives maximum benefits from the capacity of CSOs”\(^{21}\) (RSA: DSD, 2013a: 10). President Zuma also refers to NPOs as “indispensable partners of government” who deliver “sterling work” and should receive more financial support (Barnard, 2012). His Minister for Higher Education, however, calls NGOs an “ideological third force” (Barnard, 2013) and the South Africa Teachers’ Union (a member of the ANC’s alliance) accuses them of pushing “neoliberal agendas through their use of foreign funding” (Stuart, 2013). Some officials openly argue that elected officials are now the proper conduits for community needs and CBOs should be limited, while others perceive a flourishing civic sector as critical to nurture democracy (Bollens, 2000: 172).

In a sense, a full circle has been made since the apartheid days. The big difference is that NGOs are now no longer fighting the constitution and policy, but the incompetence to deliver on these. They are back in a situation where they step into the breach in the Social guidance tradition to deliver services, not adequately delivered by state departments. Alternatively, they operate in the social movement and radical tradition, where they attempt to force the state to deliver. NGOs engaging with communities in the social learning tradition remain limited – which is where the potential is greatest for engagement with complexity and woundedness.

While the NGO field struggles to find its footing in the New South Africa, state-community development started to mushroom. The nature thereof is now explored.

### 3.3 State-led community development since 1994

During apartheid, racially skewed state-led social services were focussed on the white minority, while excluding the black majority. To reverse this situation, the democratic government opted for a developmental approach, “infused with notions of social transformation, human emancipation, reconciliation and healing, and the reconstruction and development of society” (RSA: DSD, 2013: 13). These ideals are enshrined in the 1996 Constitution and the Reconstruction and Development Programme or RDP (RSA, 1994; RSA, 1996). Embedded in these two documents is The White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997, which frames the current social development model and paved the way for the transformation from social welfare to a social developmental approach (Drower, 2002: 11; Patel & Selipsky, 2010: 52; RSA: 1997a)\(^{22}\). Since 2012, the National Development Plan – Vision 2030 has

\(^{21}\) Civil Society Organisations

\(^{22}\) Subsequently, various concepts/terms started to be used: social welfare services, social development, social work, developmental social welfare, developmental social work, community development, community work and more. Descriptions of and references to these are complex, inconsistent and even contradictory (RSA: DSD, 2011a; RSA: DSD, 2011b; RSA: DSD, 2013: 12-13). In addition, there seems to be different understandings about hierarchy: social work is perceived by some as the overarching profession, while others see social/community development as the umbrella term. This is critical regarding policy, budgets, priorities, programme content, standards and professional affiliation (Cole, 2009: 63; Gray, 2010: 79; Maistry, 2010: 165; Weyers, 2011: 38-47). The Integrated Service Delivery Model, for example, identifies three subsections of social
officially become the main driver of the development agenda (RSA: NPC: 2011c).

The White Paper suggests the promotion of universal access to services, a war on poverty, increased equity, national collective responsibility, strengthened family life (as the basic unit of society), increased human resource capacity, social integration, intersectoral collaboration and the promotion of community development (RSA, 1997a). The latter has to address basic material, physical and psycho-social needs through family-centred and community-based programmes (RSA, 1997a).

The White Paper resulted in the institutionalisation of community development. It has subsequently been translated into a raft of policies, strategic plans, interventions, programmes, campaigns and the employment of thousands of community development practitioners/workers. Several government departments and all levels of government (national, provincial and local) are involved. The two dominant programmes, that of the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the Community Development Workers programme (CDW), are now briefly described.

3.3.1 Community development in the Department of Social Development (DSD)

The mission of the DSD is to ensure the provision of comprehensive social protection services to address vulnerability and poverty and to create an enabling environment for sustainable development. By delivering integrated, sustainable and quality services, a caring society is to be built (RSA: Parliament, 2013b: 1). In addition, the DSD is committed to the realising of national government outcomes, including improved quality of basic education; a long and healthy life for all South Africans; decent employment; a skilled and capable workforce; and vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities with food security for all (RSA: Parliament, 2013b: 1). DSD thus participates in national programmes and campaigns and is linked to various programmes of other departments through the Ministerial Cluster for Social Protection and Community Development. Such programmes include the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the Community Works Programme (which creates a form of social security work) and the Kwanda programme, a ‘community make-over’ programme featured on television and radio (RSA: DSD, 2012b: 44).

DSD’s definition of community development and its main characteristics

The DSD defines community as a social organisation and not merely a “collection of human individuals” (RSA: DSD, 2011c). It can be perceived geographically or functionally in what is called ‘communities of interest’ (RSA: DSD, 2011c; RSA: DSD, 2013b: 21). Development requires the transformation of power relations, the enhancement of capacity and the improvement of access to goods and services, which leads to increased choices, new options, diversification, thinking about apparent issues differently and anticipating change. Development is thus “a holistic and participatory work: case work, group work and community development (RSA: DSD, 2011a: 15). This might explain why by 2009 community development practitioners were in some cases still reporting to social workers, irrespective as to whether the latter had an understanding of or expertise in community development (Cole, 2009: 64).
process that does not always lead to growth but implies growth” (RSA: DSD, 2011c). Merging these two concepts, DSD defines community development as the interaction between people, as well as joint action or collective agency - rather than individual activity (RSA: DSD, 2011c).

Since community development is a tool for managing change, it thus cannot be a quick fix or short term response to a specific issue and it “does not just happen – it requires both a conscious and a conscientious effort to do something (or many things) to improve the community” (RSA: DSD, 2011c). The importance of ‘emotional capital’ is stressed, since it “underpins the level of motivation, enthusiasm and positive outlook that sustains community effort and benefits” (RSA: DSD, 2011c).

The implementation of community development in the DSD lies in the hands of its community development practitioners (CDPs). They have to build strong communities (through the training of CBOs); conduct integrated development planning (using the sustainable livelihoods toolkit); profile households and communities to build understanding of development issues; and distribute food to the needy through various strategies. In addition, ‘change agents’ are placed in wards to mobilise communities, using the Community Capacity Enhancement/Community Conversations methodology (RSA: DSD, 2013a: 82-83; RSA: Parliament, 2013b: 9-10; RSA: DSD, 2014a: 94). An objective of the Department is to professionalise community development practice through the development of a Community Development Occupational Framework and the establishment of a Community Development Association (RSA: DSD, 2013a: 89).

In 2013, the DSD introduced the Mikondzo project (meaning ‘footprints’), aimed at improving service delivery to all South Africans, especially the abused, victims, child-headed households, youth, the elderly and the disabled. Mikondzo engages with communities and service providers through community dialogues and imbizos or gatherings (RSA: DSD, 2013c).

The DSD suggests four community development practice models for its practitioners: the community development model (focussing on material and non-material conditions and poverty alleviation); the community education model (equipping communities with knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes required for effective individual and collective functioning); the social marketing model (persuading communities to accept/act upon the use of a specific socio-economic idea, practice or service); and the social action model, which mobilises communities to change power structures (RSA: DSD, 2013: 22).

The DSD perceives the integration of its different services as critical for the delivery of appropriate, holistic and cost-effective services to its wide range of beneficiaries (RSA: DSD, 2013: 27). There are three key services: social security (administered by the South African Social Security Agency or SASSA), social welfare services (mainly statutory services) and community development. According to the integrated model, movement within the system is dynamic and not linear. Clients may enter/exit
the system at any point. The ultimate aim is the “achievement of the desired level of social functioning” and the existence of an “exit strategy” for all clients (RSA: DSD, 2011a: 17-18).

Since 2000, there has been a gradual veering away from the developmental focus towards statutory work, social security, income generation and service delivery. The bulk of the Department’s budget is spent on social grants. The number of social grant recipients rose from 2.6 million in 2010 to 15.9 million in March 2014 at a cost of R144.5 billion. Of the R114 billion budget of 2012/2013, R113 billion was allocated to Social Security, R394 million to Welfare Services (statutory work) and merely R293 million to Community Development (RSA: DSD, 2010: 81; RSA: DSD, 2012b: 12; RSA: DSD, 2014c; RSA: National Treasury, 2014; Southafrica.info, 2014). Community development is the logical ‘exit strategy’ for the ideal that “short-term beneficiaries … become self-supporting in the long run” (RSA: The Presidency, 2011). Considering the disjointed staff and budget allocation, however, it is unlikely that ‘exiting’ would be the case for the growing number of beneficiaries who enter the system.

We now turn to the Community Development Workers Programme (CDWP).

3.3.2 The CDW Programme

This programme was announced by President Thabo Mbeki in his 2003 State of the Nation Address. The intention is to “sharply improve the quality of the outcomes of public expenditures intended to raise the standard of living of our people” and “increase the effectiveness of our system of local government” (RSA, 2003). Since it could not be expected of people to go to the government to access services that they might not even be aware of, this cadre of multi-skilled Community Development Workers (CDWs) need to live with the masses (thus in the wards where they are employed).

**Legal framework**

The legal roots of the programme are the 1997 White Paper on Social Welfare, but a more recent refinement indicates alignment with the 1997 White Paper on the Transformation of Service Delivery - Batho Pele (People First). The latter binds all public servants to what is called the Seven Principles of Batho Pele: consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money (RSA, 1997b: 15). The programme also has to be read within the context of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act of 2000, which expands the role of municipalities beyond service provision to the promotion of development goals and to ensure community participation (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 6; Tshishonga & Mafema, 2008: 360-361). This materialised when Ward Committees were introduced.

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23 To illustrate the imbalance: in 2010, R83 469 of the community development budget of R194 389 was allocated to the National Development Agency, (RSA: DSD, 2010: 62), which translates into only R110 920 for community development.
**CDWP’s definition of community development**

The CDWP defines community development as a process with individuals at its centre. It is based on the principle that increased awareness motivates individuals to take control of and solve their own problems. Once motivated, individuals can develop skills so that they are able to build a collective community response to an issue. Self-reliance is fostered through bottom-up, collective and participative action. Such a process aims to fulfil concrete and abstract human needs; facilitate learning; utilise existing assets and resources; create awareness about the situation and abilities of participants; work through small, simple projects (instead of sophisticated approaches in large-scale projects); build leadership, organisational and institutional capacity; and make sensitive use of external resources. Another characteristic of community development is that it is a step-by-step progress that invariably leads to further developmental efforts either by the same group of people or by other groups following the example set by the first project. The end result should be: empowered people, the deepening and strengthening of democracy, restored dignity of people, good governance and responsible citizens (RSA: CoGTA, 2006: 12-13).

**Objectives and focus**

The objectives of the programme are: to improve service delivery and accessibility, promote intergovernmental coordination and enhance interaction between government and community (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 12). The focus is on poverty alleviation (social protection such as social grants, food security, the War on Poverty initiatives, early childhood development and HIV/AIDS interventions); local economic development (job creation and cooperatives); the deepening of democracy (mobilising around citizen participation); planning and development (profiling, early warning and community development); and youth support (skills and linkages to projects and resources) (RSA: DPSA, 2013).

**The role of the CDWs**

The programme is implemented by a cadre of Community Development Workers (CDWs). By June 2013, there were 3233 CDWs employed all over the country. There are 4277 municipal wards, which implies that CDWs have been appointed in 75% of all wards (RSA: DPSA, 2013).

The role of CDWs is perhaps best understood through the set of indicators on which they have to report on a weekly basis:

- **Local Economic Development (LED) and sustainable livelihoods**: one outreach programme per month (information on local economic opportunities) and at least one cooperative established per year.
- **Poverty alleviation and micro financing (Strengthening social well-being)**: ten families per month linked to government resources (grants and poverty alleviation programmes) through door-to-door activity and information dissemination about services and rights of access.
- **Public participation**: mobilising of communities in advance of Integrated Development Plan (IDP) cycle to identify community needs
• **Youth upliftment:** five youths per month identified and assisted who would like to continue education but lack resources  

One of the key roles of CDWs is to act as an “early warning system” to pre-empt the collapse of government services. This implies that the CDW’s information gathering and referral services have to be matched by government’s capacity to respond, if necessary through a re-alignment of state resources and other inputs (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 12-13).

It is not clear how the programme definition above can be realised through the stated programme objectives and focus or through the role of the CDWs. They seem to be embedded in different paradigms and the logical link is obscured (this is analysed in more depth in section 3.4).

**Management**

The management of the programme is complex, since it is funded by a national department (Public Services and Administration or DPSA), administered provincially by another department (Co-operative Government and Traditional Affairs or CoGTA) and operationalised by the wards of local municipalities. In addition, a fourth structure was tasked to develop a 12-month training programme for the CDWs.

Scholars and officials agree that the greatest challenge of the programme is its complex and awkward managerial arrangements. It resulted in blurred monitoring, reporting and responsibility lines, difficult relationships, uncertain legalities around CDWs’ appointments and an insufficient budget/resources (Geber & Motlhake, 2008: 16; Gray & Mubangizi, 2010: 191; RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 6; RSA: DPSA, 2013; Tshishonga & Mafema, 2008: 367-370). One of the (unforeseen) consequences of the CDWs’ unique position as ‘public servants of a special type’, whose mandate crosses over departments and levels of governance, is that performance management, promotion and discipline have been compromised (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 16-17).

The Policy Document of 2009 suggests a total rethink of the structure. All functions and roles need to be refined and redefined, for example by deciding on one department to lead with the other in a supportive role (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 17, 19).

**Training and mentoring**

Training is provided through a system of learning known as learnerships or ‘workplace training’. It combines structured theoretical learning with work experience (RSA: DPSA, 2007b: 32; Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012: 1088-1089). Mentoring is a critical component of this system and provision is made for an innovative approach of multiple mentors in several hierarchical levels: the learnership mentor (during training), a workplace mentor and a provincial mentor (Geber & Motlhake, 2008: 10).
The innovative idea of learnerships is lauded, but critical aspects have not been considered carefully enough. This resulted in problems around recruitment and selection, appointment of unsuitable candidates, non-completion of training, training exceeding the capacity of participants, disjuncture between training and practice and problems regarding work placement (HSRC, 2005: 18-19; Raga, Taylor & Gogi, 2012: 246; RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 24; Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012: 1089). No provision was made for exit strategies and career paths for CDWs (HSRC, 2005: vii-viii). Implementation of the mentoring system is erratic. Mentors were appointed late or not at all. No training was envisaged for mentors. The result is that the psychosocial, intellectual and career development of CDWs has not received sufficient attention (Geber & Motlhake, 2008: 8-17).

In the absence of appointed/trained mentors, CDWs started to support each other through peer learning and mentoring (Geber & Motlhake, 2008: 15; Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012: 1090-1091). Geber & Motlhake are sceptical about this type of mentoring, since it lacks the power associated with high level mentors: sponsorship, protection, challenge through new assignments and role modelling. It deprives the CDW of integration into the system and of vital communication channels, which peers cannot offer (2008: 15).

From this discussion it is thus clear that the scope of community development in South Africa is broad – indeed: many brushes and paints are utilised! The question is: what is really being painted? Since they are dominating the scene, it is especially the contribution of the state-led programmes that needs investigation. What are they doing to the ‘soil and the soul’ of our communities? Answers to this question are sought in the next section.

3.4 The state’s Should be – However - Instead route

I have noted a common trend in most governmental reports on its interventions and programmes: most of the documents open with a synopsis of the wrongs of the past and a summary of accomplishments and successes of the democratic government/ANC. This is followed by a list of ‘however’, ‘in spite of’ and ‘on the other hands’, with some explanations for the ‘not fully’, ‘disappointing’, ‘insufficient’, ‘failing’, and ‘yet to ...’ state of affairs. The pattern is also observed in the story of state-initiated community development in South Africa: there is an espoused route of what should be done, followed by a however, which has resulted in an instead route. The intended should be route is explained in the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) and the departmental definitions (DSD and CDWP). These talk about a process (as opposed to top-down pre-determined plans), families, capacity, consciousness and empowerment, necessary to address the apartheid legacy of “alienation, marginalization, disintegration of families and communities, diffused social identities, psychological ills and weakened social copying strategies” (RSA: DSD, 2013: 13). The however, according to Luka & Maistry, is poverty, inequality and unemployment (2012: 21), which necessitated

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a deviation from the original design. The resulting *instead* route focuses on income generation, food security, social relief and service delivery.

The deviation to a focus on income and the economic (through projects or direct financial support/grants) has serious consequences for community development. Firstly, almost all programmes and projects are either directly led by the state or initiated through state funding (through NPOs). Since they cannot survive without state support, projects fail when funding is withdrawn and communities are thus not empowered. Instead, as De Beer posits, both communities and community workers “are in despair” because they “are all, actually, set up for failure” (2014: ix).

Secondly, the erroneous perception that community development is a tool for service delivery did result in improved access to services – but the price is high: communities have not increased their capacity to rethink issues, improve networks, manage change and put innovative ideas into action – as was envisaged in the original concept. Instead, an unhealthy dependency on state support is reinforced, while the ideal of shifts in consciousness and power was sacrificed and the creative capacity of communities eroded (Luka & Maistry, 2012: 21; RSA: DSD, 2011c).

In practice, community development has become a mixture of uncoordinated and unsustainable projects and initiatives, which are impacting negatively on the current standing of community development (Luka & Maistry, 2012: 22). Gray & Mubangizi doubt if one could even refer to some of these programmes as ‘community development’ (2010:193).

It is thus clear that the *instead* route is addressing neither the original problem (the woundedness inherited) nor the *however* problem (of poverty). The logical question is then: why proceed with something that does not seem to serve any stated purpose and might actually cause more wounding through *failure* and *disappointment*? What contributes to the maintaining of the *instead* route and what impact does it have on all involved? These questions are now interrogated from a number of angles.

### 3.4.1 The concept: confusions, limitations and conflations

As has been mentioned in the opening lines of this chapter, there is a colourful assortment of perspectives on and forms of community development. I want to argue that varying perceptions per se are not the problem. The problem arises when definitions become limiting and exclusive, when concepts are conflated and confused, or if the very nature of community development is undermined.

#### 3.4.1.1 Varying perspectives in one programme

Varying perspectives in one programme limit implementation. This danger does not seem to be theorised adequately, though. Only one study was found which investigated the impact of varying perspectives by different role-players in one programme. Travis *et al* (1999: 181) found that scholars, workers and community committees involved in a programme in KwaZulu-Natal had very different
understandings of community development and each was working towards a different objective. This clearly threatened both the future and impact of the programme.

It is significant that I found no evidence in the literature of research findings indicating how community members understand community development.

3.4.1.2 Excluding and limiting perspectives
In spite of the complex history of human experience and interaction in South Africa, community development is “solely equated to economic development” (Maistry, 2010: 167). Not only does this exclude critical aspects (social, emotional and so forth), but with the focus on material deprivation, wealthier communities are viewed as not-in-need-of development.

The implication is that social, psychological and other developmental challenges in these ‘wealthy’ communities are not addressed. In a country like South Africa, with divisions and social wounds still so raw, intervention is necessary for all of us (victims, perpetrators and witnesses) to repair relationships and address the massive social problems that all communities grapple with. A broad definition of community development, which includes all societies and social/economic classes, is lacking.

3.4.1.3 Contradictions, confusions and conflations
Various examples were found that point to confusion about and conflation of often conflicting concepts. There is firstly the “erroneous equation” of community development with “project development”, which led to the assumption that “as long as projects – mainly income-generating projects – are being developed through government funding … community development is happening” (Maistry, 2010: 167).

A lack of clarity about the difference between welfare and development led to the conflation of two very different programmes in DSD. Both service organisations (such as community home-based care) and income-generating projects are expected to become independent. This is impossible for the first, which are basically extensions of DSD’s services. Projects, on the other hand, are supposed to make a profit, but they too have to register as non-profit organisations - clearly a contradiction in terms (Khanya-aicdd, 2008a: vi, 19). DSD staff do not have the technical expertise to support these projects appropriately and nobody (not even the staff) expect these projects ever to make a profit or to survive the DSD funding cycle (Khanya-aicdd, 2008a: 19; Luka & Maistry, 2012: 21-22). This leads us back to the critical link between woundedness and failure: what is the impact of ‘not surviving’ on those involved?

There is a clear contradiction between the CDWP’s definition and its stated purpose and practice. The definition talks about consciousness building and self-reliance, while the purpose of the programme is aimed at improving the performance of the state, brokering access to services and strengthening
integration and coordination between government services (National CDW Policy Summit, 2009; RSA: DPSA, 2007b; RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 10, 12). How do you build consciousness and follow slow processes if you have to spend most of your time assisting people to apply for identity documents and social grants and compiling ‘indigent lists’\(^{24}\) (Gray & Mubangizi (2010: 192-193)? Even a CDWP document suggests another title for the apparent misnomer of ‘community development workers’: they could instead be called “government foot soldiers” or “community public servants” (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 12-13). Gray & Mubangizi’ assessment is that this programme actually has “nothing to do with community development” (2010: 193).

This does not imply that people should not be assisted to access services and grants. My concern is that misplaced perceptions about ‘community development’ are established, which might thwart future efforts to actually engage in in-depth and long-term programmes which are not set up to yield financial gain.

3.4.1.4 Attenuation through standardisation and professionalisation

There is concern about the impact of the confusion caused by the plethora of definitions and the lack of a common understanding of community development and its outcomes (Maistry & Luka, 2012: 14). The absence of common norms and standards forces communities to draw “out of dire necessity” on “untrained workers to address problems beyond their skill and capability” (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002: 197).

The response to these concerns appears to be: standardise and professionalise. Professionalisation is defined as a “set of attitudes and behaviours believed to be appropriate to a particular occupation” (Hart, 2012: 59) and is currently under consideration in South Africa. The intention is that it should address issues such as registration, standardised qualifications and consistency in ethical standards, skills, knowledge, salary and work condition (Chile, 2012: 51; Hart, 2012: 62; Luka & Maistry, 2012: 25). However, the literature reveals a high level of scepticism regarding mainstream professionalisation. It has a tendency to merely reproduce itself, lack innovation, is inclined towards rigidity, conservatism and prone to be co-opted as political rhetoric (De Beer, 2011: 409). In addition, global tendencies point towards exclusion through qualification, a low rate of membership, a lack of agreement on purpose, scope, functions and responsibilities, low recognition in the employment industry (Hart, 2012: 65) and it appears to create “expert professionals” who undermine community-driven development (Mulwa, 2012: 68).

Read against the dilemma that community development’s should be route has been substituted by an instead route in this country, a critical question presents itself: which of these routes will determine the

\(^{24}\) ‘Indigent lists’ is a system introduced in 2001, through which those who can pay for services and those too poor to do so, are distinguished. This identification is done by the CDWs, through a process of mass assessment of the financial state of whole communities. Ironically, the ‘indigents’ are clearly those who need community development, but the CDWs are probably too busy with the administration around them to engage in a developmental way with them (Gray & Mubangizi, 2010: 193).
‘set norms and standards’? Will the standards be in line with scholars who expect community development workers to provide “facilitation of advice” (Hart, 2012: 59) and speed up “predetermined, planned change” (Weyers, 2011: 40-41)? Or will the warning be heeded that a single response or intervention cannot be right for all times, phases, organisations or contexts and that pre-packaged programmes, time-bound projects and products are “at best a paltry response to the intricacies of capacity building” (Soal, 2010: 132)? Would there be scope for creativity and for organic and non-mechanistic engagement with the complex and dynamic nature of community development (Cole, 2009: 17-19; Mulwa, 2012: 68)? Will the ‘uniformed and standardised training’ prepare community development workers to deliver services and create cooperatives - or to facilitate processes of conscientisation and healing?

De Beer gives us a foretaste of the tension that might result. His institution offered training to CDWs. The training deviated from the prescribed focus since it included relational, context specific and reflective aspects. He admits that their training “failed well and truly to prepare the learners for service delivery” – and the disapproval of the CDWP leaders was made clear when they subsequently did not even collect the certificates awarded to the trainees (De Beer, 2014: xii).

It might be useful to heed Kaplan’s argument that development facilitation is an art rather than a science: development does not offer the luxury of rules, regulations, linear sequences of cause and effect or predictability. We mostly work with ‘perhaps’ and need the ability to forge new meaning particularly in the absence of rules and norms (1996: 107; 80). I want to argue that, in order to do this, we need the ability to do rigorous self-reflection, which is not guaranteed through a qualification or standard practice. Professionalism should not lead us to yet another instead situation, where we will have to admit, as Soal puts it: “in removing the ‘fat’ from development, we have lost the heart” (2010: 134). I cannot agree strongly enough with this warning!

### 3.4.2 Espoused theories absorbed by other agendas

Generally accepted principles of community development include the centrality of communities, their participation and well-being. The legal framework and espoused definitions in these two programmes are conducive, but (as noted) an alternative route was followed. What are the consequences?

#### 3.4.2.1 Community development trapped between communities and the state

The literature reveals tension between community-level needs, the nature of community development, the job descriptions of workers, reporting systems and national/political agendas and policies. This leaves workers in an invidious position between the state and the community, where they have to work in and against the state. Lipsky calls them “street-level bureaucrats”, who operate in the space where policy - in all its contradictions - is operationalised (in Westoby & Botes, 2012: 1,2,5). We now investigate some of these ‘spaces’ in South Africa.
On the one hand, the DSD acknowledges the slow, preventative nature of community development, and the importance of intangible and soft outcomes (for example self-esteem). However, performance appraisals are not adapted to acknowledge difficult-to-quantify outcomes or processes that take longer than the standard 12-month assessment period. The result is that CDPs start building the “monuments” of measurable outcomes: number of meals provided, feeding schemes, buildings (like clinics), meetings conducted and steering committees established. They therefore resort to the motto “Quantification brings credibility” (De Beer, 2011: 410).

The CDPs thus have no choice but to work only within the social marketing model (one of DSD’s four suggested models, described above), which involves “persuading community members to accept or act upon or use a specific socio-economic idea, practice or service” (DSD. 2013: 22). This corresponds with the Social guidance tradition, which is characterised by social engineering and centrally-directed planning strategies, mainly by state agencies, institutions and NGOs (Campfens, 1997: 26-27). Most NGOs also operate within this tradition, since funding needs force them into allegiance with the state. The principles of conscientisation, dialogue and merging of subject and object, typical of the social learning tradition, cannot be accommodated within this type of community development.

CDWs have to deal with the additional challenge of a highly politicised context. There is open suspicion about the political motives of the programme (Mbumba in RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 20). Respondents in the Mashaba study refer to CDWs as people “used by the African National Congress (ANC) government to lure more voters into their fold” (2011: 61). They are even perceived as deployments from the ANC, which in effect makes them competition to the ANC councillors (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 21; Westoby & Botes, 2012: 8-9). Mashaba fears the consequences of “transactions that exchange votes for development”: a government bureaucracy contaminated by “visionless and unskilled comrades … deployed into such responsibilities” (2011: 61).

CDWs thus struggle to bridge the divide between community development as defined by the programme, their own institutional survival, the sustainability of community initiatives and the “imperative to ‘deliver’” and quantify, or as they say: programme managers “want reports with good numbers” (Westoby & Botes, 2012: 12).

### 3.4.2.2 Participation: from invitation to claimed and forced spaces

Community participation is not only a widely accepted key principle in community development; consultative processes became top priority of the democratic South African government after 1994. The result was the emergence of what can be called ‘invited spaces’ for democratic engagement, such as municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), izimbizos (traditional forums), and consultation forums on all levels (Buccus et al, 2008: 302-304; Mubangizi & Gray, 2011: 213-214). Both DSD and the CDWP state participation as key outcomes.

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However, several factors started to hamper and change the face of participation: the slowness of consultation processes, open-ended and badly facilitated sessions resulting in unrealistic expectations and wish lists, privatisation of services, communities turned from ‘participants’ into ‘clients’ and ‘beneficiaries’, low levels of confidence/eloquence to participate and a general disrespect for communities’ input, for example through late invitations and the use of jargon (Bollens, 2000: 177; Buccus et al, 2008: 305-306; Mubangizi & Gray, 2011: 214, 218).

The imperative to act fast in order to deliver on mandates/promises thus started to supersede democratic ideals (Bollens, 2000: 167-168, 176). The result is “weak forms of consultation and co-optation” (Buccus et al, 2008: 310); participation becoming public relations exercises (De Beer & Marais 2005: 50) and “spectator politics” - which turned communities into “endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes (Williams, 2006: 2). Communities are left with the impression that government has no serious desire to learn what they have to say, but call them only to persuade them to pay for services or prevent protests (Buccus et al, 2008: 305-306; Mubangizi & Gray, 2011: 218). Without success stories and “visible evidence that their input is respected and that their involvement is worthwhile and beneficial” (Mubangizi & Gray, 2011: 218), communities start to reject government’s ‘invited’ spaces. They replaced it with either apathy or ‘invented’ or ‘claimed’ spaces. Public protests can be seen as a manifestation of the latter (Buccus et al, 2008: 298; Mubangizi & Gray, 2011: 213, 218).

Since 2012, the DSD attempts to restore true participation with the introduction of community conversations and dialogues by using the Community Capacity Enhancement (CCE) methodology (RSA: DSD, 2014b; RSA: Department of Health and Social Development, Gauteng Province, 2012). In addition, the Mikondzo project was introduced in 2013 to listen to even the most remote communities – and enhance service delivery (RSA: DSD, 2013c).

These dialogues/conversations are still relatively new and external reviews are not available. Internal reports, however, already suggest critical challenges, such as time constraints and limited involvement of the relevant stakeholders. The result was that only the first phases could be completed, with no opportunity to explore strategies for change (RSA: DSD, 2013: 8). I find it conspicuous that issues, root causes and proposed solutions in reports from different dialogues are almost identical and to some extent unexplored. What action, for example, could be expected from ‘solutions’ such as: ‘Community to be mobilised’. It reminds me of Kaplan’s warning that the “unbounded idea, the inspiring vision, is finally replaced by the policy, or the manual, or the law” (2002: 147). Even dialogues can result in mere jargon and old recipes repeated. Is it the objective of this initiative to engage in in-depth dialogue – or merely another strategy to get information to improve services?

De Wet identifies yet another type of participative space: ‘forced’ participation. This is how she
perceives volunteerism as it has evolved in South Africa: South Africans are called upon to undergo an ‘RDP of the soul’, which is based on the “rhetoric of people having to undergo personal change in order to meet the various challenges on national level” and where non-participation is characterised as irresponsible and unpatriotic (De Wet, 2012: 115-116). Volunteerism is thus not a sought-after form of participation or care, but imposed on those who need/render it (De Wet, 2012: 121).

3.4.3 The relationship to reality

One of the most cunning ways of compounding old wounds is to set people up for failure. An obvious reason why theories, practice and expectations are not turned into reality is that they might not have much to do with reality in the first place. The literature reveals a number of ways in and levels on which this is playing out in state-led community development in South Africa. One is an over-estimation of the state’s capacity, another is hurried implementation before systems are set in place, and lastly, unrealistic expectations of community members and officials/workers.

3.4.3.1 Impetuous implementation versus careful planning and capacity

Kane-Berman highlights one of our current myths, namely that “we have great policies but poor implementation thereof. In fact, we have bad policies aplenty” (2011). Verwey calls this an anomaly: “for any policy to be good it needs to be consistent with the implementation capacity that is available” (2011: 135). This is to be seen from the tendency in government/departments to introduce programmes without paying sufficient attention to critical aspects such as linkages between systems, capacity or skills. Matthias & Zaal ascribe this to an “over-optimistic view of its capacity to deliver on idealistic targets” (2009: 296). Often, the result is disappointment. Two examples involving DSD are the adoption of the 2005 Children’s Act and the introduction of a compulsory pre-school year (Grade R) by the Department of Basic Education in 2010 (a service that was mainly in the domain of DSD and CBOs). The first aims to replace institutional care with cost-effective and culturally sensitive community-based care – an approach piloted by NGOs. DSD did not heed warnings that implementation would be premature, but instead started to de-fund institutional care. The result was a crisis for AIDS orphans and vulnerable children and for the NGOs, whose capacity was undermined through the de-funding. They were forced to step into the breach again to address an increased need with reduced resources (Matthias & Zaal, 2009: 296).

Similarly, NGOs and academics’ scepticism about the readiness to implement Grade R at primary schools (Excell & Linington, 2010: 8-9; SAIDE, 2010) went unheeded. Children migrated to these schools and community-based early childhood development (ECD) centres lost per-child DSD subsidies. More vexing still is the impact of this programme on the children: a 2014 study found that “grade R classes have almost zero effect on the future performance of pupils in South Africa’s poorest schools” (John, 2014). The 2010 predictions proved to be correct: primary schools appointed teachers not trained in ECD and thus offer “a sort of watered down grade one” (John, 2014).
A number of issues point to impetuous implementation of the CDWP. This complex and cross-cutting programme was introduced without a policy framework or a central coordinator. This is perceived as a critical design flaw and a matter of placing the cart before the horses (Geber & Motlhake, 2008: 16; RSA: DPSA, 2010: 23-24; Tshishonga & Mafema, 2010: 575-579). Consequences vary from inconsistent and limited implementation and resourcing to a lack of ownership. Since there was no policy development process, neither the community nor ward officials were consulted. The result is that this is “a programme of government and the CDWs” (Tshishonga & Mafema, 2010: 578). Progress was since made to establish a National Task Team and to draft a policy document (National CDW Policy Summit, 2009; RSA: DPSA, 2013), but by 2013, some basic issues, such as reporting lines, were still not in place. Appointing staff before deciding to whom they should be accountable does indeed sound like placing the cart before the horse.

To locate CDWs on ward level is also seen as ill-considered and paradoxical: CDWs are supposed to enhance the capacity of local government, while simultaneously falling within its supervisory ambit and receiving mentorship from the officials within these ranks (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 15) – often the very officials whose lack of capacity is at the root of the original problem. In addition, there is no clear distinction between the role of CDWs and that of ward committees and to some extent that of the ward councillors. The tasks of the CDWs and that of ward committees (RSA: DPLG, 2005: 6, 8; Smith & De Visser, 2, 16-19, 56, 61) are indeed almost identical. Since DSD’s focus shifted towards service delivery, certain functions of the CDPs are now also identical to that of the CDWs and ward committees. In the meantime, the Community Work Programme has adopted a community development agenda, while the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform started to establish a Council of Stakeholders in wards all over the country, bodies that this department perceives as the champions of development. Why have similar systems been introduced in the same environment? Is it in spite of or as a result of the emphasis on integration and coordination?

3.4.3.2 The burden of ubuntu

Volunteerism in South Africa is very different from the classic form, which is defined as a deed performed of “one’s own free will, impulse, or choice; not constrained, prompted, or suggested by another” (in De Wet, 2012: 112). Government actively recruits ‘volunteers’ to supplement deficient and derisory institutional care. Through the use of the political rhetoric of ubuntu, ‘extended family’, community and patriotism, an appeal is made to the poor to bear the brunt of caring for bedridden and dying patients (Akintola, 2010: 2; De Wet, 2012: 111-112, 119; Thabethe, 2011).

There is scepticism about this concept, because it is built on assumptions and constructs that ignore reality. Firstly, to do home-based care, you need a ‘home’, with basic facilities - which the shacks
where this care is normally needed, do not have. Secondly, it is assumed that the poor have unlimited
time on their hands. They do not. They have to look for employment, obtain education and secure
food for their own families (Akintola, 2010: 2; De Wet, 2012: 114-115; Plusnews, 2005). Carers have
indicated some personal and psychological rewards, but studies show that these do not cancel out
the negative impacts (Akintola, 2010: 5-8; Thabethe, 2011: 790).

For Matthias & Zaal, this is an indication of how “community self-sufficiency and the capacity of rural
dwellers to support themselves” continues to inform South African welfare and developmental policy
to “a hopelessly disproportionate degree” (2009: 296). *Ubuntu* has to be met by a state that delivers
efficient services.

### 3.4.3.3 Unrealistic job descriptions: workers set up for failure

Perhaps the saddest example of a hopelessly unrealistic expectation in state-led community
development programmes is the job description of the CDWs. The following are just some of the tasks
listed in their job description (there are considerably more!): access and provision of information about
available services, rights and support; the establishment of projects/cooperatives; facilitation of
community participation; provision of linkages to financing, other projects and initiatives; facilitation of
care, education and awareness on health issues; and improvement of coordination and integration
across departments and different spheres of government (RSA: CoGTA, 2007: 8-25; RSA: DPSA,
2007b: 25-27; RSA: DSPA, 2010: 16-21). In addition, there are ad hoc expectations, for example an
appeal by the Finance Minister that CDWs “explain the impact of the global economy on government’s
‘limited budget’ for meeting the needs of people in poor communities ‘immediately’” (Legalbrief Policy
Watch, 2013). The DPSA Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu, announced in 2013 that “there should be no
service delivery protests’ in the wards of effective CDWs” and that in future they will be required to
account for actions taken/failed to be taken to prevent protest action. They are, after all, the ‘foot
soldiers’ who have to communicate that “government cares” and is “working diligently to address their
immediate needs” (Legalbrief Policy Watch, 2013).

The above list of tasks cannot realistically be seen as the job description of a single person -
especially taking into account the limited training and infrastructure (most do not even have offices or
communication technology!), complex local relationships and managerial confusion. It moves in the
realm of sloganism, with the CDW as magic wand to wave over a range of problems amassed over
years. Alternatively, it could simply be seen as an inventory of unresolved qualms. Is it fair to expect
them to explain the global economy to communities? Should individual CDWs assume that they fail
dismally, considering the minister’s pronouncement amidst the escalation of protests? The Minister
concedes (in the same speech) that it is municipal and provincial leaders who have to intervene when

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26 There had been a 500% increase in delivery protests in the period 2009-2013 compared to 2004-2008. There
was a 54% increase from 2011/2012 to 2012/2013 and in the first three months of 2014, 569 incidents were
recorded – six per day (Coetzee, 2014; Lancaster, 2014; Stuurman, 2014; RSA: SAPS, 2013).
CDWs make them aware of “impending or simmering citizens’ dissatisfaction” (Legalbrief Policy Watch, 2013). Where does it leave the CDW if these officials do not ‘intervene’?27

Are officials set up for failure by impossible expectations and sacrificed for the sake of political rhetoric? How damaging is it for those individuals who cannot pass an impossible test? The Westoby & Botes research clearly indicates the despair of CDWs who feel that they fail communities (2012). A speaker noted during a CDW workshop in 2013, that there are “very hardworking” CDWs, who serve government diligently and tirelessly without the necessary resources. However, there are those who have no commitment and “in some cases we have found them in the forefront of the service delivery protests” (CDW Workshop, 2013). Maybe, these CDWs are breaking down under the burden of unrealistic expectations.

3.4.4 Reflection and reflexivity: time for another ‘instead’ moment?

*It is high time that we paid our discipline a little more respect by taking the time to think it through* (Soal, 2010: 131)

Both DSD and the CDWP produce numerous strategic and evaluative documents and reports. What is the nature and purpose of these analyses and what impact does it have on theory and practice? I find the concepts of reflection and reflexivity useful in searching for answers to this question. Reflection helps us to improve our practice through an understanding of the relative successes and failures of previous action (Bolten, 2010: 13; Fook, 1999:11). This necessitates looking at whole scenarios “from as many angles as possible: people, relationships, situation, place, timing, chronology, causality, connections, and so on” (Bolten, 2010: 13). Reflexivity cuts deeper to the bone: it forces us to question our assumptions, attitudes, values, prejudices and habitual actions. It helps us to examine if/how we are involved “in creating social or professional structures counter to our own values (destructive of diversity, and institutionalising power imbalance for example)” (Bolten, 2010: 14). Some scholars deliberately conflate the two, because they are reciprocate in their aim to “de-stabilise our ideas and routines” and taken-for-granted assumptions and influence future action (PLQ(SS), 2011). Both are needed to discover that seemingly innocent details are key, while seemingly vitals ones could turn out to be irrelevant (Bolten, 2010: 13).

In essence, reflection thus determines the effectiveness of what was planned and done, while reflexivity questions the basis of the plan: should I be doing this in the first place – even if it is effective? The apartheid regime, for example, implemented what it called a ‘community development’

27 In spite of the high profile of the CDWP, it was interesting to note that none of the (17) sources consulted about service delivery protests mention the programme. How important is this programme outside its own ambit and of that of the scholars studying it as a ‘special type’ of programme? Does this confirm feelings that it is a mere political gesture?
strategy: removing and resettling people. Mere reflection would give it a positive tick: mission well accomplished. Reflexivity asks: should it happen?

Critical to the processes of reflection and reflexivity is the integrity of the information/data worked with, analysis from different angles and the will and courage to take action.

3.4.4.1 ‘Happy news’

The tendency regarding reflection in the DSD and CDWP is to focus on the “heroic deeds” (RSA: DSD, 2012a: 7) and “extraordinary commitment” (RSA: DPSA, 2009b: iv) of staff. The CDWP’s preferred method of reporting is through successful case studies. The annual publication Grassroots Innovation – A handbook for community development workers is described as a “collection of case studies on the wonderful work CDWs are doing on daily basis” and it is “meant to showcase the difference CDWs are making in the lives of ordinary South Africans” (RSA: DPSA, 2009b: iv). It should further serve as “practical guide” with ideas, successful examples of how to drive development and suggestions for other (RSA: DPSA, 2005: 1-3).

There is no indication in these case studies of scale (what percentage of CDWs manage to accomplish similar feats) or sustainability (reference is only made to activities from the reporting year).

We know from the literature that the CDWP is struggling with a legion of problems and a number of studies point to poor implementation as a result. To mention just two: the Mashaba study finds that “it was evident that CDWs are not performing their duties” and that the way in which some CDWs conduct themselves has shown “that they will not bring any changes in their communities” (2011: 99). Westoby & Botes (2012) report a high level of anxiety amongst CDWs, who feel that they fail the community, especially in terms of cooperatives that do not survive. In fact, even the three studies whose findings are more positive, focus on the dedication of CDWs28, but do not mention the actual impact of this dedication (HSRC, 2005: vii; Raga et al., 2012: 244; Smith & De Visser, 2009: 39).

It is commendable that the dedication and accomplishments of staff members are acknowledged. However, a consequence of the exclusive emphasis on ‘good stories’ is that honest reflection cannot be done and that an opportunity to consider alternatives is missed. In addition, amidst the euphoria of a programme with apparently only success stories, where do those CDWs, who experience serious implementation problems, turn to for support? Do they just have to accept that they personally are not successful? During a CDW workshop in 2013, CDWs who struggle to solve problems, were accused of being lazy and without dedication or commitment (CDW Workshop, 2013). Norwood-Young talks about a low tolerance for failure, which prevents any chance of learning or moving forward (2014).

28 11 of the 16 respondents in the Raga, Taylor & Gogo study were CDWs, which makes it in effect a form of self-assessment (2012: 244).
I want to argue that the unreflective accolades in state-led programmes have to be understood in the context of the ‘good story to tell’ (the ANC 2014 election mantra) and the “sunshine journalism” or “happy news” (Underhill & Harris, 2013) motto that entered our public domain in the past couple of years. The rationale is to promote patriotism and positive feelings towards the country. The flipside is that it leaves no scope for honest reflection on problem areas and for remedial action. Poplak (2014c) talks about ruling by “erasure” – a type of reverse logic, which denies the existence of an issue, and because it does not exist, it does not have to be addressed.

For me, the truly ‘happy news’ is those CDWs who care enough to lament that they are causing damage with failing projects.

3.4.4.2 A lack of remedial action: selective focus and stubborn agendas

There is overwhelming evidence in the literature and programme documents that the CDWs face almost insurmountable institutional challenges (Buccus et al, 2008: 307; Geber & Motlhake, 2008: 10-13; Gray & Mubangizi, 2010: 191-192; Mashaba, 2011: 95-97; Raga et al., 2012: 245-248; RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 12; RSA: DPSA, 2010: 23-24; RSA: DPSA, 2013; RSA: Parliament, 2011; Smith, 2008, 24-33; Tshishonga & Mafema, 2010: 576, 367-370). Yet, not a single reference could be found in the vast body of documents, speeches, media briefings and publications of the CDWP that links the potential impact of these managerial-level challenges on implementation. The fear is not expressed that negative relationships, political interference, limited capacity/training, institutional confusion, antipathy against the programme or severe hardship and violence in communities may lead to failure of CDWs to deliver on their mandates. Instead, as has been seen above, the impression is created of flawless implementation through the sterling work of the CDWs.

It appears to be more comfortable to focus on institutional challenges than facing grassroots reality. Some of these are listed for years, almost as if they are externally imposed factors that can thus not be addressed. The most striking of these is the issue of unclear reporting lines that was noted shortly after introduction of the CDWP in 2004. By 2012, a revitalisation strategy was deemed necessary to create “proper reporting” (RSA: Parliament, 2012a) and by 2013 “blurred reporting lines” was still on the list of major challenges (RSA: DPSA, 2013). Training and mentoring of CDWs are also on the agenda since inception. Tshishonga & Mafema found that only 50% of the CDWs demonstrated confidence in the training they have received (2008: 367-370). Four years later, the Westoby & Van Blerk research still quotes CDWs reporting that their training and support (mentoring) were so inadequate that they feel they “have been set up to fail in their work” (2012: 1089).

This elicits a simple question from Tshishonga & Mafema: why can the programme not recruit and deploy skilled and competent CDWs (2008: 367-370)? Similarly, one could ask what makes reporting lines such an insurmountable problem. For Mashaba, it is clearly a design flaw to let CDWs report to an entity (municipality) that does not employ them. The solution is thus that CDWs function like all officials within a structure with a manager (Mashaba, 2011: 97-98). This leaves the impression that
pragmatic needs are subsumed by what I want to call ‘stubborn’ political or policy agendas. The quest for accountability and clear reporting/supporting lines seems to be in tension with the mantra of coordination and integration, that came with political pronouncements around ‘public servants of a special type’ and a programme that cuts across departments and levels of government. Vague reporting lines will thus remain on the list of problems. The implication, however, is that information on what really happens on the ground does not reach policy makers, because there is no way to report them. Critical reflection, as a result, remains impossible.

A 2006-2008 national evaluation of a DSD programme found that income generating projects are not successful and that DSD staff members do not have the necessary business and technical skills to set up or support these projects. It recommended that “DSD should stop seeing itself as the driver of income-generating projects where it has limited competence” (Khanya-aicdd, 2008a: vi; Khanya-aicdd, 2008b: 19). Instead, the DSD should focus on its core business: social impact (Khanya-aicdd, 2008a: 21-22) and urgently rethink its vision (RSA: DSD, 2009: 4). Kaplan warned in the 1990s already that cooperative ventures and organisations “come to nothing when those who are working in them did not wish for the level of responsibility that goes with the interdependent nature of the cooperative as organisation” (1996: 25). Each project member or worker is at his/her own stage of development and they indicated that all they wanted was jobs – but this was not “‘read’ right or accepted” by the community development field (Kaplan, 1996: 25).

Yet, both DSD and the CDWP continue to establish income-generating projects (based on the sustainable livelihoods approach). This is in spite of these local assessments and research findings, (corroborated by global research) which point to the need for longer timeframes and proper preparation (the successful Mandragon cooperative spent 15 years on preparation alone). It is also in spite of statistics indicating that only 12% of registered cooperatives in South Africa survive (RSA: DTI, 2012: 38). The impression is thus created that the same old recipes are repeatedly employed – irrespective of the results or the potential damage to individuals, communities or workers. Strategies and interventions are designed on national level and implemented as effectively as possible by the cadre of staff.

Soal describes this as a tendency to believe that “things will change, and develop, if we all just follow a given path and acquire the right skills to follow the path better” (2010: 134).

One could argue that it is not easy for the state machinery to change direction easily. It is significant, though, that the should be intentions of the White Paper could be replaced by the instead route within a few years. Looking at the concerns expressed within departments, is it not time for another however moment? This, though, would entail a preparedness not only to let go of some political agendas, but of assumptions on which some programmes are built – which brings us to the practising of reflexivity.
**3.4.4.3 Reflexivity: questioning assumptions**

Reflexive practice demands courage not only to look into the mirror of own assumptions, values and preferences - but to admit that trusted and comfortable values and strategies might be destructive or irrelevant and to let go of these.

In a refreshingly honest reflection, DSD’s draft community development policy framework highlights the impact of the shifts from its original objectives and definitions (the *should be route to the instead one*). It concludes that security/statutory work is detrimental to the ethos of preventative community development, as it causes a loss of emotional capital, inter-generational solidarity and dignity/recognition. It impacts negatively on family and personal development. Attitudinal changes do not happen: ‘recipients of services’ do not become real partners in development and an entitlement mentality does not change to ‘we/I can’. Accountability and ownership (for successes and failures) are hampered. Service delivery on its own reinforces dependency, because communities focus on deficiencies and defer power to external ‘deliverers’ of service. The dissemination of knowledge and resources has turned into the promotion of access to these - with the unfortunate result that communities are not even independent enough to access the wide range of available funding and support services (RSA: DSD, 2011c).

The above constitutes fundamental issues and one would expect every effort to move into another direction. Such an opportunity presented itself around 2010, when a consultative process started to develop a community development policy framework. The aim of the framework is “to transform the community development agenda” in the country (RSA: DSD 2011c). The 2011 draft describes community development as a long-term holistic endeavour, grounded in experience that leads to best practice (see full definition in programme description above). However, this seems to be contradicted in the very next paragraph when it describes the characteristics of community development: it “enhances local services, promotes active citizenship and assists government locally and nationally to achieve best value” (RSA: DSD, 2011c). Why is the opportunity not captured to exclude practices and definitions perceived to be uncharacteristic to the field and downright damaging (as described above in the same document)? Why compound them into policy? This policy will probably also form the basis for standardisation and professionalisation. No wonder De Beer asks if it is the mind-set of the people (community) that needs transforming – or the mind-set of politicians and policy makers (2014: xii)?

There seems to be some assumptions and principles that are untouchable or taken for granted, in spite of admissions by the relevant departments that they are not yielding results.

One example is briefly examined. The concepts ‘integration and coordination’ are used incessantly in practically every document that I studied for this chapter. Yet, I have not found any evidence that the concepts are unpacked or defined, their critical importance explained, the implications interrogated or
alternatives investigated. Playing devil’s advocate, I would thus like to ask: why is integration/coordination assumed to be essential for community development? What the literature does reveal is that the practising thereof has not met with much success. Where programmes span sectors and levels of government, “confusion reigns supreme” and service delivery is compromised (Gray & Mubangizi, 2010: 194). When it fails, it not only spawns confusion, but dissatisfaction, a general development fatigue, tension and de-linked policies and programmes.

In the CDWP it certainly does appear as if the mantra of coordination and integration eclipses managerial imperatives, such as clear roles and responsibilities, accountability and supervision. By spreading it horizontally and vertically over departments and levels of government, it has become so complex, unwieldy and cumbersome (Gray & Mubangizi, 2010: 191; Tshishonga & Mafema, 2010: 575), that even the DPSA itself describes the institutional arrangements as “unsustainable” (RSA: DPSA, 2009a: 18).

Where various departments and programmes are engaged in ‘coordinated/integrated’ efforts, it is unclear who takes responsibility. The issue was raised in Parliament when the DSD delegation explained the challenges of having to measure and report its actual impact, since it is working with several other organisations and thus does not always have control over how its work impacted “on its own” (RSA: Parliament, 2013a). Another example is a case study indicating the contribution of CDWs to the registration of 400 000 voters during a campaign in the Western Cape (RSA: DPSA, 2010: 17). It is hardly possible to assess the impact of the CDWP in this campaign, since the Independent Electoral Committee has its own dedicated registration team and marketing strategy, and the Department of Home Affairs increased efforts to issue identity documents.

The critical question is: who takes responsibility for what is not done or fails in these joint efforts - those voters not registered, the projects and jobs not created or sustained and the damage caused to communities and individuals in the process?

This is obviously no plea for un-integrated and un-coordinated work, but if it does not yield positive results, it should at least be debated so that we can begin to imagine other possibilities. For example, should we not consider focusing or specialising instead? If everybody is involved in everything, all work out-of-depth and nothing might move beyond the point of mediocrity. The 2008 ISRDP/URP research made it clear: DSD should not embark on income-generation: it does not have the expertise (Khanya-aicdd, 2008a: vi, 19). In the meantime, DSD continues to establish these types of projects and has added a new item to its economic repertoire; it has created thousands of jobs and job opportunities (RSA: DSD, 2010: 63; RSA: DSD, 2012a: 94; RSA: DDS, 2012b: 44). Is this an expertise of social workers and CDPs?

In a reflexive process, assumptions need to be challenged. Maybe the debate about the negative
impact of grants (dependency, affordability and sustainability) could be radically broadened by looking at the issue from another angle: are social grants not a cheaper way to reach the poor than complex schemes around projects/cooperatives (with its high failure rate) and job creation (such as an expanded public works programme)? Regarding the impact of the child support grants, a 2014 research study finds not only significant benefits on children’s nutritional and educational development, but an increased expenditure on household goods, like food and clothes. Grants might prove to be an effective strategy for redistribution, while it can stimulate the economy (Coetzee, 2014; Grootes, 2014). Could this result in a situation where CDPs, relieved of ‘project’ work, start to engage on a deeper level with the soul of communities?

3.4.5 Psychological impact of failures and denials

There is almost no reference in the literature to the result of disappointments and failures on communities and community members. With this statement I exclude general departmental references to their own failure to ‘empower communities’ or ‘make them re-think issues’. Communities are probably not even aware that they should re-think issues as per DSD’s definition. I more specifically refer to those initiatives where community members are actively involved – and which are not sustained (such as the 88% of cooperatives that do not survive). What is the impact of this failure?

There are some references to how communities might react or feel if systems fail them. The African Peer Assessment Mechanism posits that discontent “can be an unintended consequence of initiatives to bring government closer to the people” – such as the CDWP. The argument is that “they create an expectation of improved service delivery which raises expectations for speedy provision of services” and where “these expectations are not met or there is a perception of failure” - and increased service delivery protests may result (APRM, 2014: 103).

Two studies (Westoby & Botes, 2012; Westoby & Van Blerk, 2012) go beyond systems and move into the realm of personal affect. The CDWs feel that they fail and in the process “add a layer of disappointment to the experiences of the poor” (Westoby & Botes, 2012: 12).

It is thus clear that this aspect is not acknowledged and is totally under-theorised or catered for in mainstream state-led community development in South Africa.

In conclusion, it thus appears as if the state is firstly struggling to consistently bring into practice its espoused definitions and intentions. In addition these have been adapted, seemingly to suit agendas deemed more important. Even though these adaptations might serve noble purposes, some questions emerged from the discussion: is community development the appropriate field to deal with these agendas? If not, what are the implications for the communities and workers? There is little indication that these questions are asked from within.
3.5 South African approaches engaging with wounding

This section very briefly looks at a few community development initiatives in South Africa that state an intention to engage with woundedness. The intention is to explore possibilities and not to assess or promote any of these or create an inventory of projects. In fact, some might not even be operational any longer.

**Healing for memories:** One of the founding members of the Healing for Memories workshops is Father Michael Lapsley, who lost his hands and an eye in a letter bomb during apartheid. He realised that, if something is done to us, “we are victims, if we physically survive, we are survivors. Sadly, many people never travel any further than this. I did travel further, going from victim to survivor, to victor” (Lapsley, 2010). Out of his personal experience, he realised the importance of a space for sharing and acknowledging experiences and therefore initiated the ‘healing of memories workshops’. The aim of these is to explore the past at an emotional, psychological and spiritual level (Lapsley, 2010; Lapsley, 2011).

**Men and boys:** Over a period of ten years, Abrams & Van Niekerk listened to stories of pain and scarring of hundreds of boys and men of all ages, which were sometimes recounted over three to four generations. The form and content of fatherhood were rapidly disfigured through dispossession of land, migrant labour and urbanisation, which resulted in the phenomenon of absent fathers - a feature that characterises at least 64% of families today (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). The father-son relationship is a critical factor in men’s behaviour towards themselves, other men and women. A “hunger for father love makes it difficult for many men to complete their socialization and move beyond childhood” (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010).

Abrams & Van Niekerk argue that capacity building and developmental interventions have to include personal healing and growth when working in a traumatised nation such as ours: “To reduce violence and begin building peace we will need to heal our men and reconstruct our masculinities” (2010). They suggest a process of healing that simultaneously addresses the individual (personal), relationships (family, community and work) and institutions of socialisation (schools, sport clubs and the media). They initiated such process on the first two levels, through the establishment of community-based reflective men’s circles and community healing processes. A range of approaches and techniques were developed to interact with boys and men, such as active/experiential learning, wilderness leadership camps, coaching, training and mentoring individuals; ritual, drama, storytelling, music and visual arts; and “straight talking weekly sessions” focussed on a theme (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010).

Amongst the most significant lessons learnt from the programme is the importance of grieving over the wounds of history.

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29 For more detail on transgenerational wounding in men, see 4.5.2 in Chapter 4
the damage caused by their own behaviour, working through guilt, and reaching forgiveness for those who hurt them. This cannot happen if they do not “fix it with their fathers, clean up the mess with their families, find new ways to relate to their children and shoulder a new responsibility in their communities” (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). In addition, a complex national process is required to “equip our leaders and managers in all fields of endeavour to understand the notion of multiple woundedness and how we can deal with this” (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). Without transformation of institutions which create identities, the process of healing cannot be realised.

ELRU: The Early Learning Resource Unit’s Anti-Racism/Bias training programme takes the complex work of dealing with the results of oppression to grassroots level. It provides techniques and terminology to create a safe space for both oppressed and oppressor to reflect on and face stereotypes and internalised attitudes/behaviour, without feeling judged and humiliated. One of their most useful tools is a list of ways in which racism and other forms of oppression manifest in society. It sets modern racism up against internalised oppression, and explains the game between ‘dysfunctional rescuing’ and ‘playing the system’ and ‘blaming the victim’ and ‘blaming the system’. Heightened awareness, terminology and tools to handle these dynamics are characteristics of this approach (ELRU, 1997: 18-31).

Free to grow: Alinda Nortje recalls the response of a farm worker when asked what she was good at: “Nee, ek het ’n binne-knou” - an inside-impairment, which made her good for nothing. “I have vine hands and a vine head” (Folscher, 2011). Nortje realised how people are prevented from growing through emotional baggage and decided to find a “methodology that would make it safe for people to open up about their pain and hopes. Only then would they be able to grow” (Folscher, 2011). This led to the establishment of a development company called Free To Grow.

Siyathanda: Siyathanda - meaning ‘we love’ in isiXhosa - aims to contribute to strengthening movements for social economic and ecological justice by raising awareness amongst activists of the interconnection between the personal and political, and enhancing the ability of social justice activists to engage in personal and political transformation” (Siyathanda, [n.d.]). Experiential training (Power of Self Esteem for Activists and More to Life) are offered to support reflection on own practice in organisations and to equip activists with skills to resolve trauma and enhance leadership for social justice. The intention of the training is “to transform the way you see yourself and your true personal qualities, and unhook your self-esteem from your verdict on past performance” (Siyathanda, [n.d.]). This contributes to the liberation of the driving force of fear, which produces unnecessary and unproductive stress and an inability to engage with critical feedback and build relationships. The Power of Self Esteem training was developed by the Kairos Foundation and is implemented internationally.

Facing the Past – Transforming our Future: Another initiative is the programme Facing the Past –
Transforming our Future. It is a partnership between the NGO Shikaya, the Department of Education of the Western Cape and the organisation Facing History and Ourselves, based in Boston, USA. It aims to support teachers to develop young people to be caring, committed and active democratic citizens. Through the Scope and Sequence learning journey, learners engage with issues of personal and group identity, personal choice and ethical decision-making within the context of historical case studies. A key aspect of the programme is the provision of a safe space for mixed groups of teachers to grapple with the impact of apartheid on them and their teaching; their stereotypes and assumptions (Wray, 2011: 179-181). A teacher reported: “I had to look in the mirror and had to face, yet again, the atrocities committed by my people to my people. It made me realise again how important my role is to be an agent for human rights – not only in my classroom but also in my community” (in Wray, 2011: 180). The programme realises that transformation depends on the teachers. During 2009, history learners from 55 schools involved in Facing the Past attended the Dialogue for Hope – The Young African Leaders Conference. The learners’ maturity and capacity to engage critically and meaningfully was remarkable, which proves that we cannot focus on maths and science only: we have to give our learners the skills, values and empathy to have meaningful and critical conversations. They have to learn to act ethically. Wray (2011: 183) concludes: “Instead of choosing mathematics and science over history, let us allow and encourage our children to choose all three!”

Models that have not been investigated in depth, but which might add value in further research include: Embrace Dignity, Right to Care, Sonke Gender Justice Network, Goedgedacht Forum for Social Reflection and DAG: Development Action Group.

This brief overview provides an indication of the type of approaches from which we can draw if we are serious about healing.

3.6 Conclusion

My conclusion from this review of the literature on current (mainly) state-led community development thinking and practice in South Africa is that it does not manage to ameliorate the psychological damage of centuries of discrimination and oppression – and some actions or inactions are actually aggravating the woundedness. The complexity and woundedness of the communities are not theorised or even mentioned. Practice for a healing approach is thus not touched upon.

However, the definitions and legal bases of state-led community development programmes essentially support in-depth work with individuals, families and communities. The challenge is to match what is perceived as the mandate with skills and appropriate policy and practice. It will require the courage to go beyond listing problems and acknowledging damaging aspects of own implementation and policy:

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it will require to actually let go of these. It also requires the prioritising of those elements envisaged in the White Paper that acknowledge the need for healing and psychological engagement.

I want to argue that if community development does not manage to address this, the manifestations of woundedness will continue to be compounded: mistrust in interventions will continue to grow and communities will increasingly turn to destructive and fatalistic strategies to vent their frustration and humiliation caused by failed efforts.

Our broken society deserves the long and slow processes of conscientisation and action suggested in the preambles, definitions and mission statements of the government and involved departments. We need to look at the process and legacy of communal wounding to help us rethink community development, healing and transformation in South Africa. It is important to understand how our decisions and actions continue to impact on communities – and to consider how we can act differently. We also need to understand the nature of and discourse on communal healing, if we want to act in new ways. The nature and manifestation of communal wounding and options for a healing approach are investigated in the next chapter.
4 The cunning and complexity of communal wounding and healing

4.1 Introduction: trapped in the mud

When terrible events bring people to a state of unspeakable loss, dehumanisation and pain, we need to turn to metaphor and proverb to find words to describe and understand:

*He who will hold another down in the mud must stay in the mud to keep him down*

This is an Igbo\(^{31}\) proverb, illustrating that we “cannot trample upon the humanity of others without devaluing our own” (Achebe in Goodreads, [n.d.]). Generation after generation relationships in South Africa and in many other countries of the world have been formed ‘in the mud’. The mud has gone into our bones and into our soul. Nobody can remain untouched and nobody can claim to have been outside it all – not even the generations born after the official closure of the mud arena.

This chapter investigates ways in which communities have over generations been trapped in numerous layers and forms of humiliation, oppression and stereotyping – to understand how the mud has crept subtly into the very fibre of individuals and societies. It then looks at options to work with this mud: how can it be removed or at least stopped to bog us down?

The chapter comprises two parts. The first focuses on wounding and the second on healing. The section on wounding opens with an exploration of the process and results of wounding and the internalisation of oppressive messages. This is followed by a discussion on how these false messages are perpetuated, either by denial or by the very strategies aimed to remedy the situation and which contributes to the dangerous festering of wounds. The second part of the chapter pays attention to how the concept of ‘healing’ is perceived and the power of critical consciousness in such process. A brief overview of some emerging discourses and frameworks on communal healing is followed by a discussion of a number of issues to consider in the healing approach.

4.2 The cunning and complexity of communal wounding

*Invisible contaminants remain a part of the surroundings, absorbed into the grain of the landscape, the tissues of the body, and, worst of all, the genetic material of the survivors. An all clear is never sounded. The book of accounts is never closed.*


\(^{31}\) An ethnic group in Nigeria
Kai Erikson’s description of how chemical/toxic disasters manifest offers a succinct metaphor for the cunning and complexity of communal wounding: these toxins “contaminate, because they are stealthy and deceive the body’s alarm systems, because they can become absorbed into the very tissues of the body and crouch there for years, even generations, before doing their deadly work” (Erikson, 1994: 151). I now look at how the first wounds are inflicted and the subtle ways in which these become entrenched in communities and individuals.

4.2.1 The cut: original wounding and subjugation

Atkinson identifies a common pattern in how peoples and communities all over the globe are subjugated and oppressed. It involves initial brutal invasion, violence and colonising, followed by various types of intervention and oppression. These are aimed at compounding the hegemony (2011: 53).

The first phase (invasion, violence and colonising) can last for centuries and involves dispossession of land, population decimation (murder, massacres, maltreatment and fatal diseases), (slave) labour exploitation, starvation (loss of land and continuous fleeing from persecution) and debilitation through the provision of some stupefying drug (for example alcohol) and small ‘rewards’ for good behaviour (Atkinson, 2011: 53). Characteristic of this period is the instilling of fear through violence, often enforced through petty rules\(^\text{32}\) and enforced bondage and dependency on the perpetrator/settler, who is gradually perceived as omnipotent.

\[\text{In January 1812 Coloner John Graham ordered his men to destroy the livelihood of the Xhosa as a war strategy – the first of many ‘scorched-earth’ policies in this country. Gardens and huts were destroyed en masse and in March it was all over: the Xhosa was removed from the area. The first great ‘removal’ in South Africa history’ was accomplished. Thousands of Xhosa had been dispossessed and driven across the Great Fish river. The number was estimated at 20 000 Xhosa (Mostert, 1992: 388-389).}\]

The second phase is intervention by well-meaning but ethnocentric and paternalistic, philanthropic and religious groups. This is accompanied by some reassessment by governments, which usually intrudes on people’s lives and creates dependency and dysfunction – which “seeps slowly and insidiously into the fabric and soul of relations and beliefs of people as community” (Atkinson, 2011: 53, 58).

Lastly, there are various forms of oppression, which are not specifically related to colonisation or

\(^{32}\) As Biko states: no “average black man can ever at any moment be absolutely sure that he is not breaking a law” (1987: 75).
violent conflict/war: specific groups of people are targeted and stigmatised in societies all over the world, also in so-called ‘free’ and progressive societies. Domination is complete when the victim starts seeing the world through the eyes of the perpetrator, with no sense of another possible point of view (Atkinson, 2011: 59, 67; Camara, 1971: 26; Herman 1997: 76-86). Surrender and psychological control are consolidated when victims start violating own moral principles (for example when forced to witness helplessly when comrades or family experience atrocities), betray basic human attachments and start loathing the self (Herman, 1997: 83-94).

The next section gives an overview of the various forms of oppression and how they manifest in both the oppressed and the oppressor.

4.2.2 Oppression: entrenching the messages of inferiority and superiority

Oppression is defined as the process through which some groups of people are targeted as inferior to others, while the non-target group is perceived as superior. The message is enforced through the invalidation, denial and/or the non-recognition of the complete humanness of those who are members of the target group. On the basis of their membership of a specific group, the members of the targeted group are systematically mistreated and disadvantaged, while the members of the non-target group enjoy unearned privileges. The emphasis here is thus on the word ‘uneared’ (Batts, 2002: 8; ELRU, 1997: 13; Maluleke & Pheko, 2015; Sherover-Marcuse, [n.d.]). Due to their power, dominant groups per definition set the parameters within which subordinates operate and thus determine the structure of society. Biko argues that whatever the “white man does, the colour of his skin – his passport to privilege – will always put him miles ahead of the black man” (1987: 23). When an individual from the subordinate group demonstrates positive qualities to be more characteristic of the dominant group, this individual is defined as an anomaly. The dominant group remains the “norm for humanity” (Tatum, 1997: 23-24).

Maathai describes the process as follows: for “five centuries, the outside world has been telling Africans who they are. In much the same way as happened with the Aborigines in Australia, the native peoples of North America, and the indigenous peoples of Amazonia, Africans were told that their societies were backward, their religious traditions sinful, their agricultural practices primitive, their systems of governance irrelevant, and their cultural norms barbaric” (2009: 34). W.E.B. du Bois talks about the sincere and passionate belief in the South (of the USA) that “somewhere between men and cattle, God created a tertium quid, and called it a Negro - a clownish, simple creature, at times even lovable within its limitations, but straitly foreordained to walk within the Veil” – and between ‘them’ and ‘us’ a veil is hung” (Du Bois, 2006[1903]: 67-68).

Four levels of oppression are suggested: personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural. On personal level it manifests as prejudice, bias and misinformation. When this leads to acts of dehumanisation, subordination and objectification (for example through the use of derogative terms),
it becomes interpersonal. If it is accompanied by sufficient power (social, legal, cultural, religious, educational, economic, political and military institutions) it becomes institutionalised and systemic. It now is enforced through laws, customs, traditions and practices which systematically result in inequality. It always works to the advantage of the non-target/dominant groups (for example higher pay for the same work and access to opportunities). A most basic privilege given/denied is the right to vote. Cultural level oppression elevates the values and norms of social conduct of the non-target group as the taken-for-granted norms of society (Batts, 2002: 12; Biko, 1987: 50; ELRU, 1997: 14-16).

A useful matrix explaining the most common types of oppression or –isms globally was developed by Batts (2002: 5). This was subsequently adapted for the South African context by Helen Robb (ELRU, 1997: 12). In the table below I combined and adapted these two matrixes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of oppression</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Non-target group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>Race/colour</td>
<td>Black people</td>
<td>White people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classism</td>
<td>Socio-economic class (often linked to education)</td>
<td>The poor; working class</td>
<td>Middle and upper class; professional people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elitism</td>
<td>Place in social hierarchy; Education level</td>
<td>Informally educated; low/no literacy; labourers, clerks, students</td>
<td>Formally educated; managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacism</td>
<td>Level of literacy</td>
<td>The illiterate or those with low literacy levels</td>
<td>The literate/educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult-ism/ Ageism</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Children; Young people; Elders</td>
<td>Adults; Middle-aged people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able-ism</td>
<td>Physical and/or mental ability</td>
<td>Differently -abled or -challenged; people with disabilities</td>
<td>Temporarily -abled people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexism</td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people</td>
<td>Heterosexuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguicism</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Non-English (e.g. African and indigenous languages) Or depending on context</td>
<td>English Or depending on context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious oppression</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>This varies in different contexts</td>
<td>This varies in different contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribalism</td>
<td>Tribes, ethnic groups</td>
<td>Depending on the context</td>
<td>Context related</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**

33 **Note 1:** I will mainly refer to racism and to a lesser degree to sexism. This is not to deny the equally destructive nature of and pain resulting from the other types of oppression mentioned. It is done for two reasons.
Some individuals and groups find themselves in multiple target group positions. For example: a black woman without education is dealing with the realities of (at least) three types of oppression: racism, sexism and literacism. This raises the questions: how is the individual or group experiencing multiple forms of oppression and how is this conceptualised in theory?

Tatum looks at this from the angle of identity: which parts of our identity capture our attention first? She argues that it is the target identity that dominates. A black man might be aware of his blackness, but not of his maleness. White people may not define themselves as ‘white’, because they take their whiteness for granted, literally as the norm (Tatum, 1997: 21). Using herself as example: as black woman, Tatum always emphasises her racial identity, but forgets the advantages she has being heterosexual and from a privileged class (1997: 23).

Szymanski offers two approaches that help us conceptualise the relationship between multiple types of oppression in the same person/group: the additive and the interactionist perspective. The first posits a simple accumulation of disadvantage, while the second builds on the additive perspective but suggests a further tenet: multiplicative effects of multiple oppressions on psychosocial health. One form of oppression may thus interact with and magnify the impact of another form of oppression that a person with more than one minority status experiences (2010: 227).

It is important at this point to raise the issue of so-called ‘reversed racism’, often used by the target group to characterise affirmative action programmes and aggression. This, however, is perceived as a misnomer for a number of reasons. Even though each group has the potential to oppress another group, oppression requires the power to institutionalise biased attitudes and beliefs regarding superiority/inferiority. Aggression against the non-target group is normally reactive and operates at the personal and interpersonal level, rather than at institutional level (Biko, 1987: 24; ELRU, 1997: 13). It can thus not be seen as reversed oppression – even when the implementation of these processes is flawed. Watts-Jones reminds us that there is “no collective history of proclaiming Europeans inferior or of wielding institutional power to subjugate them” (2002: 592). The same applies to other forms of oppression: in their effort to be treated fairly, disabled people are not trying to subjugate able-bodied people; neither do the illiterate try to oppress the literate in a systematic way.

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Firstly, it is not practical to constantly refer to all forms of oppression; and secondly, the literature that is relevant to the South African situation deals mostly with racism and to some extent to sexism and classism.

Note 2: most of the older original sources are not gender-sensitive and refer consistently to ‘him’ and ‘he’. These references (either as direct quotes or as explanations) have been left as they are, even though it is obvious that all forms of oppression (such as racism) involve women too.
4.2.3 Compounding the hegemony and the negative labels

I ask the political economists and the moralists if they have ever calculated the number of individuals who must be condemned to misery, overwork, demoralisation, degradation, rank ignorance, overwhelming misfortune and utter penury in order to produce one rich man.

Almeida Garrett (19th century Portuguese poet and politician)

The hegemony of the West and its systems are compounded in an infinite number of ways. A vast literature exists on how mainstream global economic and educational arrangements result in unequal opportunities and misery for target groups. I am thus not expanding on these, but briefly touch on a few other areas relating to the wounding of communities.

4.2.3.1 State interventions to help and support the oppressed

There is scepticism about state interventions aimed at supporting the oppressed and the violated. Concerns include the issue of power, as access to services and resources is granted, allowed or restricted “by decree of government officials” (Atkinson, 2011: 68). Through the “process of governmentality” (Westoby, 2009b: 89) the wounded are reduced to ‘clients’ and further stigmatised through labels such as ‘at risk’ in what Brent calls a form of “welfare colonialism” (2009: 248). Freire talks about “instruments of manipulation”, which distracts attention from the true causes of the problem or the finding of lasting solutions (1996: 133). Nickson et al link the minimisation of domestic violence by indigenous women to the on-going fear that children will be removed by the state, would the violence be reported (2011: 86). In Atkinson’s research with Aboriginal people “not one of the participants in the study was able to name a positive outcome they had experienced with mental health professionals” (2011: 242).

4.2.3.2 Representation

Maps, reports, social studies, policy documents, cinema, novels, the media and even songs turn target communities, and even the areas in which they live, into ‘problems’ and ‘problem areas’ – “the other world” (Achebe in Zvomuya, 2013). These “snapshots without historical depth” are especially dangerous when they are not aware of themselves as representation, but suggest they are “merely reflecting reality” or “displaying the truth” (Brent, 2009: 87-88, 246). These become labels that “freeze” ‘the other’ into a frame from which they cannot escape and which entails and maintains inequality (Brent, 2009).

The 2000 Economist cover shows Africa as “The Hopeless Continent” (Zvomuya, 2013), which is an example of how Africans are stereotyped as hopeless, hungry, dying, fighting, corrupt and incompetent. This does not consider that there is also another Africa or that these attributes might are also present in any other continent. It most definitely does not consider the role that these other continents might have played in Africa’s current dilemma (Moyo in Edemariam, 2009).
4.2.3.3 Research

Linked to the issue of representation is that of research projects, which have the potential to cause deep wounding. The Maori academic, Tuhiwai Smith, perceives research as “probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (in Atkinson, 2011: 13). The first concern raised about ‘scientific research’ is the methodology and epistemology. Research into the ‘problems of communities’ often evolves from cultural and social engineering theories and then influence policy, further research, government debates and social perceptions. Western researchers are unaware of and not expected to state bias or power relationships (Atkinson, 2011: 14; Reason, 1994: 4; Walker, 2001: 77). Subjects of research are excluded from research design and when data and findings are not shared with indigenous people, it is considered as the “stealing [of] knowledge” (Walker, 2001: 87).

The second concern is the plight of indigenous researchers within hegemonic academic systems. They have to avoid the “bleach” from getting “to us all” (Fine et al, 2003). The ‘bleach’ is used as a metaphor to indicate the assimilation of target-group researchers into the culture of and identification with the oppressor. For Guishard, the bleach is the pungent detergent of the academy that exemplifies institutionalised racism, sexism and classism in science (2009: 94). The ‘bleach’ thrives on homogeneity, depersonalisation, objectivity and intellectualisation. This forces researchers outside the hegemonic groups to ‘sterilise’ their research (Guishard, 2001: 94) and “distort their experience to fit within formal academic research paradigms” (Walker, 2001: 79, 80). The same applies to language: ‘valid’ research has to be written in formalised scientific language, which is often “dispassionate, highly coded insider language, indecipherable to many of the Indigenous people whose daily lives are greatly affected by formal research” (Walker, 2001: 81).

In conclusion: the wounding of whole communities, subjected to overt and covert physical, structural and psycho-social power abuse and violence over long periods is multi-layered, complex and comprehensive. This “‘interplay between multiple traumata’” manifests layer upon layer in the psyche of individuals and communities (Simpson in Atkinson, 2011: 57) and eventually strips them of any certainty about “who we are, what we are doing here, where we belong” (Atkinson, 2011: 257). The hurts and losses resulting from this complexity, as well as how these are entrenched and internalised, are explored in the next section.

34 An example is the Tindale & Birdsell anthropological research of “racial crossing” within Aboriginal communities in Australia between the 1920s and 1960s. It involved physical measurements, photographs from different angles, genealogical information, cognitive tests, blood sampling and genetic class (Tindale Collection, 2012).
4.3 ‘The broken string’: multiple losses

A common theme that runs through the literature on violent invasion and colonisation is that of a break or a cut and the destruction of continuity. The “psychic amputations and mutilations of the self” through the “unexpected rupture” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 49; 134) result in the “scarring of the sense of self and a ripping apart of the psychological skin of the community” (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). Human bonds are left fragile and dislocated and because these losses occur so rapidly, there is no time to recover and prepare for the next, leading to what Cabrera calls the “multiple wounds phenomenon” (2003: 6). Thereafter follows the internalisation of these messages. These two phenomena are explored in this section.

4.3.1 The losses of multiple wounding

The cut from the violent invasion and colonisation is so comprehensive that there is often “no baseline state” left from which to function, be calmed or comforted (Herman, 1997: 86-95). Janoff-Bulman calls this the “‘shattering of the assumptive world’” (in Suedfeld, 1997: 858), while the loss of a “personally meaningful moral narrative of self” destroys the frame through which “things take on stable significance and in which a person is able to weigh possibilities as good or bad, meaningful or superfluous” (Hoey, 2008: 134). There is nowhere to go with anger and there is a loss of direction on what to do. For the victims this implies a loss of “both their inner compass and their outer maps for what is considered ‘proper’ behaviour” (Erikson in Atkinson, 2011: 54). Some of the most critical losses resulting from multiple wounding are now briefly highlighted.

*Time: an ‘endless present’*: Colonised people became “caught between a past that no longer provides them with a sense of their place in the order of things and a future that must be faced without the kind of promise that a shared faith can offer” (Erikson, 1994: 46). The ability to “relate the present
to the future’ is lost amidst the engulfing sense of destitution (Biko, 1987: 56). The obliteration of both
the past and future dooms the wounded to an “endless present” (Herman, 1997: 89).

**Soil and land:** The loss of land, regarded as “living matter with intentions and humors of its own”, is
such a complex and emotional issue and so devastating in its scope that it might suffice to just repeat
Erikson’s observation: it is difficult to “get adequate English words to describe the problem of the soil”
(1994: 54).

**Systems and structures:** Indigenous systems of governance and justice were brought to an end
when colonial masters not only deliberately ignored and replaced these with foreign systems, but
more damaging: they put into power collaborators, often outcasts in trouble with the local
establishment (Achebe, 1986; Maathai, 2009). This process is described in-depth by Mostert in his
research on the interaction between the British colonisers and the Xhosa people in South Africa in the
19th century (1992). These chiefs and assistants promoted the authority of the colonial government
with great cruelty and the “newly powerful men became the new African elite” (Maathai, 2009: 26).

**Family and social relationships:** A complicated loss resulted from the deliberate destruction of
social and family structures through strategies such as migrant work, child removals, rape and sexual
exploitation. The humiliation of men who could not protect their women against the oppressor or play
their role as fathers may be linked to subsequent high levels of domestic violence and sexual abuse in
these communities (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010; Atkinson, 2011: 61, 63, 84; Herman, 1997: 61).
When family ties, the “bastions of safety and support” and “reference point of love, acceptance and
safety”, were broken, the new narrative becomes stories of maltreatment, dishonour and feelings of
apathy, despondence and hopelessness (Thibodeau & North Peigan, 2007: 53-54).

**Trust:** The original invasion, with its betrayal and its broken promises and contracts, results in loss of
trust in self, the immediate family and clan members, the community and government/outsiders.
Children still learn from their parents not to trust, to be cautious and “to build walls” (Thibodeau &

**Culture:** Soon after invasion, the colonist starts with the process to ‘civilise’ and ‘Christianise’
indigenous people, mainly by devouring their culture. The oppressed is forced to surrender the
assumptive world permanently and is thereby deprived of recourse to a “linguistic or cultural ‘default
drive’” (Kwenda in Keet, Zinn & Porteus, 2009: 110). This “leaves behind a bastardised culture that
can only thrive at the rate and pace allowed it by the dominant culture, leading to a “mimicking [of] the
white man rather unashamedly” (Biko, 1987: 46). In essence the invaders simply “attempt to make
White people out of us” (Barras, 2004: 47) and since it was the settlers who established this new
order, they remain the expert and “the perpetual teacher of those to whom the new is being brought”
(Biko, 1987: 56).
In addition, the cruel illusion is created that assimilation into the society of the oppressors is possible. However, the substitution is never adequate and it leaves the oppressed in a “world between, devalued, and devaluing who they are” (Atkinson, 2011: 71) and with the burden to recover their dignity by having to “terminate earlier efforts of imitation and self-denial” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 114).

Culture, according to Erikson, helps people to camouflage the actual risks of the world around them, to “edit reality” and screen out some perils so that they seem manageable. These are stripped away during disaster and invasion, forcing individuals to look those dangers straight in the eye — “without blinders or filters” (1994: 152).

**Spirituality and certainty:** The indigenous spiritually came under tremendous strain when the settlers arrived with a written Bible, which was presented not only as containing the words of God, but as more relevant to their lives than the oral knowledge and wisdom of their own spirituality. They “were mesmerized” (Maathai, 2009: 37). In addition, their healers were helpless against the illnesses that came with the invaders and then white medical personnel managed to stop the infections. At this moment “another and more subtle kind of disease” started to infect the tissues of the indigenous spirituality “and the name of that malady was doubt” (Erikson, 1994: 44-45).

Another spiritual crisis developed when the combination of epidemics and massacres made it impossible to conduct essential ceremonies for the huge number of dead, because “the living were also dying” (Atkinson, 2011: 60). As the Aboriginals of Australia fled away from the places of massacres and pain, they moved all over the country, leaving what Atkinson (2011) calls ‘trauma trails’ – indeed a succinct description of the total destruction and bewilderment. The world became fragmented and shattered, without a sense of wholeness, context and meaning (Atkinson, 2011: 60; Erikson, 1994: 55-66).

This was further compounded by the concept of sin as conveyed by the missionaries. This encouraged a *mea culpa* attitude, which constantly urges people to “find fault in themselves” (Biko, 1987: 31). Ignoring the complex context of unemployment, overcrowding, lack of schooling and migratory labour, black ministers today still perpetuate negative messages about black people, which are interpreted as “proof that after all the white man was right when he described us as savages” (Biko, 1987: 57).

**Visibility and history:** The devaluing and even erasure of the history, stories and knowledge of the colonised are important tools to ensure the emergence of hegemonic accounts of what happened and why (Farmer, 2004: 307). This is clearly illustrated by the idea that the New World was ‘discovered’ by Europeans - as if “[we did not have] our stories, our knowledge, our ways of organizing, our ways of
praying and our ways of mapping our territories. But none of that was of importance to the Whites. They made their written words and their maps the only valid ones” (Barras, 2004: 47). This history is absent from official history (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 105) to the point that black people perceive their past as one long night from which the white man rescued them (Achebe in Zvomuya, 2013).

On the other hand, what is left of the past is distorted and disfigured. Africa is the ‘dark continent’ with its culture reduced to ‘barbarism’, its history to tribal wars and its religion to superstition (Biko, 1987: 69, 29). Without a past, the colonised “have nothing to lean on, nothing to cheer them up at the present moment and very much to be afraid of in the future” (Biko, 1987: 69).

Santos distinguishes five ways in which the non-existence (or “non-credible alternative to what exists”) is produced. By only acknowledging hegemonic knowledge, linear time, classification, the universal/global and criteria of capitalist productivity and efficiency, the oppressed is defined as the ignorant, the residual, the inferior, the local and the non-productive (Santos, 2004: 239).

Maybe one of the clearest signs of the erasure of visibility is the apartheid signs in public spaces: non-white. Non.

**Hope and dreams:** The intensity of invasion replaces hope and dreams with a fatalistic belief in life as predetermined by cosmic or spiritual forces, from which there is no escape. Fatalism manifests in the toxic internalisation of feelings of inferiority, worthlessness, emptiness and meaninglessness. There is no sense of agency or a belief that the future can be affected. The result is a “numbing of desire” and “amputation of seeing” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 51, 216-217). Fatalism, however, is not inherited, but is repeatedly internalised through lived experience amidst social domination: if my efforts (in school, shining shoes, watching cars) bring me nowhere, there is no sense in setting goals or dreaming (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 111-116).

Because communities are in continuous mourning, these patterns cannot be perceived over generations. Desensitisation results when the “shock value” of intense trauma is lost and trauma behaviour becomes the norm (Atkinson, 2011: 83).

**Humanity:** In order to steal the humanity of the oppressed, the humanity of those who steal it, has to be distorted too. The perpetrator can only repeatedly kill and torture others, if he “kills or silences almost all of the positive feeling capacities that belong to the realm of the human in himself and becomes a kind of killing machine” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 90). In a country like South Africa, with its long history of white brutality against black people, “whiteness has thus been soiled beyond recognition” (Biko, 1987: 77).

The danger is also real for the wounded: their pain and suffering can take control over them and when
they completely stop to recognise the sacredness of their own life, they become “a beast”, an enemy to their enemy - and they are dehumanised (Puljek-Shank, [n.d.]: 186-187). Biko argues that fear strips people of basic humanity; it makes it almost impossible “to behave like people” (1987: 76).

**Containment and constructive channelling of emotions:** When the safety of social and cultural structures is damaged, there is no safe place to retreat to with frightening emotions and experiences. There seems to be consensus in the literature that feelings of hurt, pain, anger and powerlessness/impotence (resulting from perceptions that the oppressor is omnipotent) are turned into violence, especially into horizontal violence against the self, the own and the less powerful (Atkinson, 2011: 24, 54-55, 70; Biko, 1987: 28; ELRU, 1997: 24-25; Fanon, 1990; Freire, 1996: 44; Puljek-Shank, [n.d.]: 184; Pyke, 2010: 565; Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 113-114). Biko observes that a people “without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine. Their emotions cannot be easily controlled and channelled in a recognisable way” (1978: 29-30).

Another form of violence aimed at the self is dysfunctional behaviour, such as the abuse of alcohol and drugs, suicide, homicides and domestic violence (Atkinson, 2011: 54). This type of violence can be linked to an effort to establish self-esteem, to defend the self-image and demonstrate “that they too, are significant”, which is necessary when the need for power cannot be lived out in normal ways (May in Atkinson, 2011: 69). On communal level self-sabotage manifests in community vigilantism, public violence, the looting of public resources and denial of the failure of governance by subservience to authoritarian leaders. A common feature of woundedness is the denial of mistakes and failure (Ramphela, 2012). Fanon adds another dimension: in order to avoid facing the terrifying world of the settler, an even more terrifying magical and mythical world is created, affirming that there is a “world belonging to us. Believe me, the zombies are more terrifying than the settlers” (1990: 43-44). An extreme example of such self-destruction was the cattle-killing ‘suicide’ of the Xhosa people in the 19th century. For Mostert this was a “consequence of territorial confinement, the national despair of a people who saw no way out of their losses and defeats and the cultural onslaught of the past half century” (1992: 1195).

Compassion and solidarity are famed as highly valued attributes in oppressed communities, but the literature reveals contradicting information. The struggle for resources causes the oppressed to “oppress one another when an opportunity to oppress is available” (Clavecillas, [n.d.]). Biko also refers to the situation of “absolute want in which black will kill black to be able to survive” (1987: 75). Clavecillas ([n.d.]) observes horizontal violence “in the bullying in a long queue of water containers, nitpicking, name calling, sarcastic comments, nasty talk, humorous ‘put downs’, belittling, intimidating, undermining, slurs and jokes based on gender, ethnicity, etc.”. The tragedy is that it is the result of vertical violence and while psychological healing does not get attention, horizontal violence will continue to worsen “like an epidemic” (Clavecillas, [n.d.]). This phenomenon is also observed in individual members of oppressed groups who have succeeded in the world of the oppressor: they
start to look down upon and/or blame others in their group, who have not managed to climb the ladder of success (ELRU, 1997: 24-25; Pyke, 2010: 565).

**Authentic image of self:** One of the most troubling and long-lasting losses resulting from colonialism and oppression is the impairment of an authentic image of self and self-knowledge and when the world is viewed through that gestalt only (Hollis, 2009: 37-38). Maathai argues that Africans have been obscured from themselves, as if they look at themselves through another person’s mirror (that of the colonial administrator, the missionary, teacher, collaborator or political leader) – and what they see is “their own cracked reflection or distorted images, if they see themselves at all” (2009: 34). The result is the obliteration of a true self, because the “native replies to the living lie of the colonial situation by an equal falsehood” (Fanon, 1990: 39). This is illustrated by Mostert’s summary of the British strategy to civilise the Xhosa people in South Africa in the 19th century: “to cover the bodies and to veil the minds” (1992: 957).

The way in which this internalisation happens is discussed in more depth in the next section.

4.3.2 **Loss of self: internalising the messages of oppression**

*I am talking of millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement (Césaire (in Fanon, 2008: 1)).*

*What does the black man want? … The black man wants to be white. The white man slaves to reach a human level (Fanon, 2008: 1, 3).*

Most definitions of internalised oppression boil down to the following: the message that the oppressed is inherently inferior and the oppressor inherently superior is believed and ultimately internalised by both oppressor and oppressed (Brondolo et al, 2012: 370; Kaufka, 137; Rosenwasser, 2002: 54). This message is compounded by “the conditioning of new generations of human beings into the role of being oppressed and the role of being oppressive” (Sherover-Marcuse, [n.d.]). In this way oppression becomes what Watts-Jones calls “a worldwide, airborne virus” (2002: 592).

These “distorted assumptions” limit insight and openness to other ways of seeing the self and other, which in turn prevents change and empowerment (Mezirow in Van der Merwe & Albertyn, 2010: 152). Foucault argues that historical processes form and reform our perceptions of reality and thereby influence the construction of our identities or subjectivities. In a situation of asymmetrical power relations we adopt roles and ways of being that are incongruent with who we think, feel or desire ourselves to be. Through these embedded discourses we become alienated from our authenticity and vision of who we want to be (Rau, 2004: 25, 26, 38).

A heart-rending description of this dilemma is given in Morrison’s *Beloved* (1997: 220-221). The slave
Paul D is plagued by the question if they are indeed ‘men’. Their owner Garner “called and announced them men – but only on Sweet Home, and by his leave. Was he naming what he saw or creating what he did not? ... What would he [Paul D] have been anyway – before Sweet Home – without Garner? ... Did a whiteman [sic] saying it make it so? Suppose Garner woke up one morning and changed his mind? Took the word away?”

This “monster inside” (Kaufka, 2009: 138) makes oppressed individuals accept and internalise derogatory messages and images of themselves as the truth. As Maluleke & Pheko put it: historically, black people continually have to “assimilate into just enough whiteness for them to survive on a permanent dose of inferiority and a prevailing sense of incompleteness” (2015). In their self-loathing, self-depreciation and self-blame they eventually become the agent of their own subjugation and may even act out these messages (Allen, 2003: 29; Freire, 1996: 33; Kaufka, 2009: 138; Rosenwasser, 2002: 54). Childhood labels such as dirty, bad, weak, a failure, feeling scared, fearful, frightened, ashamed, insecure, powerless and perceptions of being non-persons with no personal identity or agency are internalised, carried over into adulthood and eventually into parenting. It ultimately determines the identity and agency of subsequent generations (Atkinson, 2011: 234).

When this false picture is absorbed, reality becomes fictitious. Consciousness is submerged (Freire, 1996: 33, 34). This loss of an authentic self poses the ultimate challenge for the oppressed: how do you face the task of liberation and healing as “divided, unauthentic beings” (Freire, 1996: 30) - with a “false consciousness” (Blyden in Allen, 2003: 30)?

Fanon observes how he suffers “from not being a white man” after centuries during which the coloniser has reduced black people to skin colour and ‘epidermalized’ them (2008: 73). This leads to such identification with the oppressor that solace is found only in close identification with the white society (Biko, 2987: 29). The oppressed feels “an irresistible attraction towards the oppressor and their way of life” – and this omnipotent power of the oppressor becomes his model of humanity (Freire, 1996: 44, 30). In his effort to become white, the oppressed “renounces his blackness, his jungle”, but this elevation above the “jungle status” is possible only “in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards” (Fanon, 2008: 9). According to Fanon, however, this option will be futile, since “the black man who wants to turn his race white is as miserable as he who preaches hatred for the whites” (2008: 9). Unfortunately, the struggle of the oppressed might ultimately become an aspiration not to liberation but to identification with the oppressor (Freire, 1996: 28). Another option for the oppressed is to become sub-oppressors or oppressors themselves (Freire, 1996: 27).

This links to the concept of ‘false assimilation’, which happens when the oppressed lost consciousness of themselves as persons and start to take the boss/oppressor ‘inside’. In this way, the oppressed become ‘hosts’ of the oppressor and is trapped “in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor” (Freire, 1996: 28, 30). WEB du Bois calls this double-
consciousness, “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (2006: 9).

Another reality is the impact of internalised racism in intra-racial class oppression. Pyke argues that all blacks, regardless of their social class, are stereotyped as poor, ill-educated, criminal, lazy and immoral. Class-privileged blacks tend to distance themselves from these negative stereotypes in the hope of creating a positive self-identity as the ‘good blacks’. This is done by attributing these traits to poor blacks only and to blame their values and morals for their poverty. This phenomenon forces us to consider the simultaneity of resistance and complicity, but also of oppressor and oppressed. This analytic method reveals the centrality of internalised (racial) oppression in developing a general theory of how inequality is created, maintained and reproduced in the matrix of domination (Pyke, 2010: 565-566).

Critique against the idea of internalised oppression is based on the possible implication that the oppressed are complicit in their own oppression. Szymanski, however, argues that internalised oppression is always the result of pervasive external oppression and that the locus of this analysis is the broader social, political and cultural context and oppressive forces – never the individual or his/her pathology (2010: 227). In fact, if oppression is not understood within the complex context of historical, social and power dynamics, the individual will suffer tremendously and oppression can be perceived as an individual deficiency or weakness (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 112).

I find the tragedy and cunning of the internalisation of oppression most beautifully described by Helen Luke in her seminal work on the awakening of the ‘perennial feminine’. Even though she focuses on the oppression of women, her insights can be applied to all forms of oppression. She argues that real liberation from the weight of the inferior status imposed on women lies “not in the reiterated assertion that women must now strive to live like men, but in the affirmation, so difficult for us, of the equal value of the specifically feminine” (1996: 12). The real damage of the eternal dominance of masculinity is “the contempt for the feminine implicit in so much of the propaganda of the women’s movements. It even creeps unrecognized into the work of some of the most far-seeing women writers of today. Indeed, it requires a great effort of consciousness in every individual woman to remain aware of this destructive spirit which is constantly whispering to her the collective judgment of centuries about the inferiority, the dullness, the uncreativity of her passive feminine nature” (Luke, 1996: 12). The real nature and creative power of woman cannot come to fruition while she is caught in “an unconscious imitation of men or identification with the inferior masculinity in her unconsciousness” (Luke, 1996: 12-13).

The picture painted above invites the question: what can be done to rectify and reverse these losses and wounding? ‘Action’ is the first thing that comes to mind for most. Unfortunately, action that is not based on in-depth reflection and understanding can lead to more misery. The result is what I call
‘forced and frustrated remedies’ and some of these are now explored.

4.4 Forced and frustrated remedies

… they tried to stitch her old past onto her present life.
As if they were amputating her forearm and attaching the hand directly to the elbow;
as if they were amputating her calves and joining her feet to her knees.
(Kundera, 2002: 43)

In this section I investigate ways in which further damage can be caused, when old oppressive messages are actually compounded by superficial and ill-conceived efforts to liberate, ‘help’ and remedy.

4.4.1 Empty liberation

A set of complex and interwoven issues complicates the process of liberation. The first is the issue of internalised oppression: too often the oppressed is drawn into the liberation process as “ambiguous beings, partly themselves and partly the oppressors housed within them”, which cannot result in authentic freedom (Freire, 1996: 108). Is the aim of agrarian reform to become free - or to acquire land and to be like the landowner, “or, more precisely, bosses over other workers” (Freire, 1996: 28)?

Secondly, there is concern about the motivation of the leaders. Do they seek the liberation of the people or their own benefit? There is the danger of what Fanon calls the exploitation of ‘petrification’, which is deliberately cultivated by the new leader(s) to prevent criticism of their economically privileged position and to ensure complacency and avoid criticism (Olivier, 2011). During the struggle the leader awakens the people with promises of “a forward march, heroic and unmitigated. Today he uses every means to put them to sleep” (Olivier, 2011). Leaders might fail to enter into dialogue with the people, using the pretext of organising and strengthening revolutionary power and unity, but it actually implies a fear of or lack of faith in the people. By losing their right to say and think their own words, the oppressed relinquish all power to the leaders (Freire, 1996: 110).

22 years after South Africa’s liberation, Dlanga observes that our people “have not been inspired to be their own liberators; the state has made sure that the people are dependent on it. Thus, the party remains as their liberator and shackles them to itself” (2016). This points to the next point: how liberation is kept in the hands of the organisation and not in those of the people.

35 ‘Petrification’ is defined as an excessively strong adherence to tradition in the face of the coloniser’s culture, which brings about a kind of paralysis or immobility of the culture of the colonised. It is especially cultivated in rural areas and expresses itself as a commitment “to the old ways, to the superstitions and rituals that, however fantastic, offer outlets for their profound anger … they effectively distract themselves from the hard realities of colonialism and this ultimately benefits the colonisers, the architects of petrification” (Ficek in Olivier, 2011)
Thirdly, there is the danger that the obtaining of freedom is attached to institutions and entities and when achieved, it is not perceived as own efforts, but presented as the efforts of these entities, “to whom we are bound to in blind gratitude. The saviours, our messiahs” (Mpondo, 2014a). The result is that the liberated are not given “the opportunity to imagine ourselves beyond the prescripts of the organisation that afforded us our freedom. They have become our freedom” (Mpondo, 2014a). Another result of ‘false liberation’ is that new oppressors and scapegoats have to be found. Wa Azania hints in this direction when she notes that a “false consciousness has taken hold in the minds of our people. The belief that the enemy is migrants …” or to “feast on each other like the animals they have been reduced to” (2015). Such freedom stifles imagination, make the newly-freed person hold on to the past with no real agenda for the future (Mpondo, 2014a). In this way the project of national liberation can turn into a crude, empty shell, which does not heal injuries and trauma (Mbembe, 2011).

Lastly, the defining of priorities in a newly independent/liberated nation is critical. Often the focus is structural, political, security and financial reforms, infrastructure and institutional redress – while hardly any attention or resources are allocated to deal with the personal and interpersonal level psychological impact of colonialism and oppression (Abrams, 2011: 30). In the euphoria after the victory that ends the struggle, amnesia about the past sets in - but it remains “hidden in our souls and the very fabric of our daily existence, terrorizing us with the actions of rapists, murderers, perpetrators of family violence, in the trend of binge drinking, road rage, taxi conflicts, school violence and murders, deaths at initiation schools and the high rates of interpersonal violence which all prevent our self actualization and development as a nation” (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). Instead of understanding and dealing with the past and creating the vocabulary to express our feeling, we have “normalized the abnormal behavior that comes from these scars” (Abrams & van Niekerk, 2010).

4.4.2 The modern face of oppression

Traditionally, the face of oppression was quite clear to the oppressed. Obedience and outwitting were the weapons against the many forms of oppression. As Fanon remarks: the “settler and the native are old acquaintances”, who know each other well, with the oppressed sensing intuitively how to act to avoid the “great array of bayonets and cannon” (1990: 28). As a result of civil/human rights movements, de-colonisation and democratisation over the past few decades, brutal types of oppression have been outlawed in many countries. In post-1994 South Africa, for example, all legalised forms of oppression and discrimination have been dismantled and the rights of target groups are entrenched in a progressive constitution. This clearly impacts on behaviour and institutions, and through programmes, such as affirmative action, opportunities are created to address the inequality resulting from generations of oppression.

The question of this section is: are progressive legislation and programmes helping us to get rid of the internalised messages about self and other?
The answer from the theory of modern –isms is a clear NO. Since old-fashioned behaviour has become inappropriate, the old beliefs and assumptions of inferiority and superiority have merely been driven underground where the affect is expressed in subtle and covert ways. Masked forms of –isms have become difficult to recognise, but are as detrimental to change in our society as old-fashioned oppression has been (Batts, 2002: 8; DeRosa, 2001: 2).

Batts thus calls modern oppression a “New Melody for the Same Old Tune” (in ELRU, 1997: 29) and for DeRosa this new ‘mutation’ of oppression remains the “the same poison, but packaged in new bottles” (2001: 1). We are no longer given “formal instruction in these difficult matters, but we learned our lessons well … we learned more from acts than words, more from a raised eyebrow, a joke, a shocked voice, a withdrawing movement of the body, a long silence, than from long sentences … These ceremonials of White supremacy, performed from babyhood, slip from conscious mind down deep into muscles and glands and become difficult to tear out” (Smith in DeRosa, 2001: 2). Modern racism has created white liberals who claim to “have black souls wrapped up in white skins” (Biko, 1987: 20).

This masked form of oppression manifests in different ways in our societies. These however, cannot be looked at in isolation: they interact with the manifestations of internalised oppression. Common manifestations of both were identified during in-depth anti-bias work by the USA–based Visions Inc. and the South African NGO ELRU. Their observations are brought together in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manifestations of Modern –isms</th>
<th>Manifestations of Internalised oppression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional rescuing: helping in an unhelpful way</td>
<td>Playing/beating the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming the victim</td>
<td>Blaming the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of contact and engaging as equals</td>
<td>Avoidance of contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of differences – colour-blindness</td>
<td>Denial of heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of political, historical, economic, psychological and social significance of differences</td>
<td>Lack of understanding or minimisation of the political, historical, economic, psychological and social significance of racial oppression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from: Batts, 2002: 14-19; ELRU, 1997: 21)

Modern –isms and internalised oppression trigger reciprocal responses - in a type of subtle dance.

### 4.4.3 The perpetual *pas de deux* between oppressor and oppressed

From the literature it appears as if there is an interdependent relationship between oppressor and oppressed – a type of complicated dance where reactions and counter-reactions tend to feed the original message of superiority/inferiority. A few movements typical of this *pas de deux* are explored in this section.
The invitation to the dance can come from either the modern racist or the internalised oppressed. This can be explained by a common scenario in the workplace: the white person (modern racist), who wants to ‘prove’ that s/he is ‘not a racist’, offers/agrees to ‘help’ a black colleague with a task that the latter should be able to do. Implicit in this action is the message that the black person cannot do it (as effectively as the white person). The black colleague (the internalised oppressed) accepts the offer. This implies that the oppressed does not confront an act of covert racism and does not avoid falling into an act of ‘beating/playing the system’. The dance starts. It accelerates until it spins out of control and ends in conflict or resentment. The old message is maintained and the system kept intact (ELRU, 1997: 25-26).

Blaming is a popular movement in this dance. The oppressed are blamed for their disadvantage, without considering how they have systematically been denied of opportunities over generations – which cannot be reversed by (often badly implemented) affirmative programmes. This even goes as far as “seeking explanations for the perpetrator’s crimes in the character of the victim” (Herman, 1997: 115-116). Regarding the oppressed, Gumede (2014) warns that institutional racism has plunged black South Africans into perpetual victimhood, preventing them from taking responsibility for their individual and the country’s failures. Instead, they are forever blaming racism, apartheid and colonialism, which makes it impossible “to take control of their destinies”. At the same time, Batts is concerned that we do not confuse survival with playing/blaming of the system: if there is no feasible alternative for survival than to use/play the system (like accepting social security), it should not be seen as internalised oppression and neither should blame be heaped upon the victim – yet again (2002: 20).

The modern racist does not openly state an unwillingness to establish equal contact (which excludes the normalised employer-employee relationship). Exclusion from mixed schools, sport clubs and suburbs are arranged through entrance requirements, language and an unwritten ethos that ensures discomfort. Black people are equally reluctant to see equal contact, often driven by mistrust of white people, fear of rejection and reluctance to explain feelings and life experiences. This should instead be confronted (Batts, 2002: 18).

The denial of differences is a very dangerous tune to dance on. A few issues emerge. The first is the discourse on ignorance: we did not know what was happening. Steyn suggests that we employ epistemologies of ignorance36 to investigate not-knowing as a social accomplishment, deeply related to domination and power (2012: 9-10, 21). We can relate this to the ‘loss of visibility’: the history of the oppressed is actively excluded from official history. Yet, Steyn argues that dominant groups easily enter into the “ignorance contract”, which challenges us to reflect on the choice around ignorance and how the “ignorance contract of apartheid continues” to live in our society (2012: 21-22).

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36 McHugh defines an Epistemology of Ignorance as the “study of not knowing or unknowing and the study of the generation of subject positions that are ignorant. It is also the study of the refusal to be ignorant and the active reconstruction of one’s knowing” (in Steyn, 2012: 9).
The second strategy of modern racism is to “banish ‘race’ instead of finding ways to talk about it” (Mangcu in Thamm, 2014a) and this is indeed a dangerous modern racist game. By declaring race a taboo topic “you can’t talk about it, you can’t understand it, much less fix the racial problems that plague our society” (Gumede, 2014).

A third manifestation is the argument that the current generation is not responsible – the “it wasn’t my fault, what should I do about it’ category” (Mpondo, 2014a). Mpondo agrees that it is not the 16-old white’s fault that his great-grandfather appropriated land and wealth. However, neither is it the 16-year old black’s fault that his great-grandfather lost that land and wealth, but he has to live with the consequences. The question to the white person is if they at least consider this and if it causes some discomfort (Mpondo, 2014b)? To deny this difference by suddenly insisting on ‘colour blindness’ and ‘we are all just humans’ is thus deeply insulting to the history of those who have been wounded (ELRU, 1997: 21-22). It minimises white privilege and the insidious nature of the mentality of ‘West is Best’ on key aspects of the lives of all.

In black people the denial of heritage inherent in an insistence on colour-blindness may imply the acceptance of the inferiority of the own culture. This finds expression in the valuing and over-emphasising of white standards as superior and authentic, the denial of the own (for example mother-tongue), the exclusive use of white professionals and education systems (ELRU, 1997: 24) and copious buying (symbolic status striving, as seen in the purchase of cars and clothes, and conspicuous consumption). While there are limited historical assets to support this, it often leads to huge debt, anxiety and corruption (Batts 2002: 19).

The result of this dance is that the ‘invisible’ dominant culture is maintained. Contributing to this is the “superficial multiculturalism of popular culture”, a discourse that directly impacts on a willingness to embark on anti-racism activism, diversity, affirmative action, and multicultural education. Many white people believe “not only that the fight against racism has been won, but that it is White people who are now at a racial disadvantage” - especially in the debate on affirmative action (DeRosa, 2001: 1). Mpondo cautions against a state where “my blackness has becomes meaningless” that it is discarded in favour of popular discourse, which reminds us of Biko’s advice: “Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation” (2014b).

This directly relates to the issue of the participation of the modern racist in the struggle of the oppressed. Biko argues that these ‘leftists’ and ‘liberals’ perpetuate the inbuilt complexes of inferiority and superiority in an artificial and “hastily arranged integration” (1987: 20). It might provide “a vague satisfaction for the guilt-stricken whites” to be seen as different from the “the rest” (the old-fashioned racist), but in essence this type of integration only allows blacks to make a breakthrough into the white society and their established set of norms (Biko, 1987: 22, 24, 65). The superior-inferior – white/black
stratification is maintained.

Internalised messages are per definition acted out unconsciously. While being unaware of the above, nobody stops the dance. The needs of the modern racist can take the focus away from the essential problem, namely oppression. The oppressed has to heed Pyke’s argument that every instance of internalised racism among the racially subordinated “contributes to the psychic, material, and cultural power and privilege of white folks” (2010:566). It is thus of huge importance that greater awareness is created of the dynamics between modern racism and the internalisation of messages of superiority/inferiority.

Added to this already challenging dance is the reality that, inside each of us we house both oppressor and oppressed, firstly because most of us find ourselves in multiple target and/or non-target groups, and secondly as a result of false assimilations. These are in constant battle with each other inside us, but also often projected onto ‘the other’ – inside or outside of us.

### 4.4.4 Good intentions: charity and aid

... evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence, if they lack understanding.

On the whole men are more good than bad; that, however, isn’t the real point ... there can be no true goodness nor true love without the utmost clear-sightedness

(Camus, 1987[1947]: 110)

The urge to ‘do good’ for others, has always been part of humanity. This good-doing has many faces, such as charity, voluntarism and donations. Since the emergence of the ‘Development project’ and foreign aid it has become an institutionalised industry. To what extent are these compounding the psychological wounding and the messages of oppression?

There is a rich and growing literature which considers answers to this question. One of the most eloquent is Illich (1968) who laments the paternalism and hypocrisy of those who feel it their duty to share “God’s blessing with his poorer fellow men”. His list comprises teachers, volunteers, missionaries, community organisers, economic developers and ‘vacationing do-gooders’. Even young students turn up “in every theatre of the world” in the belief that that they “could help Mexican peasants ‘develop’ by spending a few months in their villages” (Illich, 1968). He describes this as “an abysmal lack of intuitive delicacy” and offensive to those ‘targeted’ for the do-gooding (1968).

The devastating impact of foreign aid, according to Maathai, keeps Africa on its knees: begging for aid, “paying now-illegitimate debts, or praying for miracles” is a mere continuation of a dehumanising history that started with the slave trade (2009: 20). The “false generosity of paternalism” has made the
oppressed the deliberate objects of humanitarianism - merely a new form of dehumanisation (Freire, 1996: 36). There is also the issue of power: the giver and receiver are never equal partners in the deal (Edemariam, 2009).

Since Illich compiled his list of good-doers in 1968, new faces have appeared on the stage: the world’s celebrities, famous and rich. We see songs dedicated to ‘the poor in Africa’; millions of dollars donated for various types of schemes and projects; orphans from the Third World adopted; and celebrities standing on the global stage, talking ‘for’ Africa. Is Africa re-colonised by this “glamour aid” (Moyo in Edemariam, 2009) and “celebrity-endorsed Love” (Poplak, 2014a)? It is argued that songs like Geldof’s “Do they know it’s Christmas?” are perpetuating negative and damaging stereotypes about Africa; conflate one group of people in a country with ‘Africa’, wipe away any number of possible Africas (Allison, 2014) – and there are questions about the ultimate destination and benefits of the ‘donations’ (Poplak, 2014a).

Easterly (2009) qualifies the criticism he and others have on foreign aid: the affect of aid cannot be verified easily, since it can only be compared against the hypothetical situation of the ‘absence of aid. Positive results of aid, such as in health campaigns (vaccination, small pox, and so forth) need to be considered when aid is evaluated. Yet, most statistical evidence suggests a zero or even negative effect on most development outcomes for African countries receiving massive aid. Poor countries, such as Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, India and Vietnam, on the other hand, have managed to get out of poverty on massive export booms – without development aid (Easterly, 2009).

Trapman is concerned about the classification of people as ‘innocent’, ‘victims’ and ‘suffering’, which “entitles them to our support” and causes the Western ‘help-reflex’ to kick in (2001). This ‘help-reflex does not guarantee good methodology and by projecting ‘innocence’ onto the subjects of their efforts, the latter are obliged to comply with this role. To qualify for help, ‘victims’ have to “re-arrange their identity as to be innocent” and this leads to a process of “falsifying history (and in this, falsifying personal as well as collective memories)” – which exacerbates the damaging loss of identity (Trapman, 2001). In addition, what does this do to the helper’s psyche? Mpondo posits that the moment charity is based on the assumption that the helpless black masses are in need of redemption, the ego of the white messiah is assumed. This self-gratifying charities make “good tea time conversations”, but they do nothing to “exempt [whites] from the ‘white psyche” (2014b).

And so the dance goes on … resonating falsely in the mud.

4.4.5 Glossing over: superficial recipes amidst layers of complexity

There is a tendency to deal superficially with deep complexity: ‘Just get over it’ and ‘Let us forget the

37 The title of the song reminds me of Mpondo’s warning to those who dedicate their lives to charity: “once you assume that you are saving ‘them’ from themselves, your efforts are rendered inconsequential” (2014b).
past and look forward’ are often-heard and impatient remedies for the highly complex woundedness in our country. Is it really possible to ‘just get over it’?

The complexity of multi-layered wounding over long periods is perhaps best described by Martha Cabrera, who observed intense passivity in Nicaraguan people after a devastating hurricane. People simply did not react on interventions or attempted to rebuild their houses. She and her co-workers realised that even though people were prepared to talk about their immediate losses, “they had an even greater need to talk about other losses that they had never voiced before” - the stories of many layers of wounding (2003: 1). Social and grassroots organisations have minimised or ignored these. Instead, the people of Nicaragua got workshops and training – on every conceivable topic. Millions of dollars are invested in these. Why have these many workshops not worked? Cabrera concludes that workshops were not what was needed: the action needed was the creation of a safe space in which people could talk about these previous painful experiences. The problem was simply deeper and more complex than what could be solved by the old recipe of one-day workshops on ‘self-esteem’ or empowerment. Cabrera’s team thus soon found themselves busy compiling what they called an ‘inventory of wounds’ in this “multiply wounded, multiply traumatized, multiply mourning” nation (Cabrera, 2003: 1-6).

In spite of the fact that American history “is replete with cultural trauma”, Cardozo notes that few teachers have been trained to manage fallouts and group tensions “when history hurts” and racism and other –isms surface (2006: 167-177). These issues are simply not actively addressed, for example through structured racial identity development praxes. Educators and learners continue to battle with emotional outbursts, active resistance and negative backlash on student evaluations (Cardozo, 2006: 170). Is South Africa considering how it is confronting its history in the classroom?

Since the 1990s the world has taken notice of national and international processes to bring about reconciliation, justice and peace in countries emerging from violence, genocide and oppression. There appears to be disparate opinions on the success, potential and damage resulting from these interventions. It is not possible to embark on such voluminous debate here, but it is important to highlight the one issue that does not seem to be disputed: superficial, once-off and over-optimistic interventions are not only unsustainable, but are downright dangerous.

Weinstein & Stover observe that the fantasy of a fast, cathartic cure for broken nations may have profoundly negative effects, because the context is often not established to contain overwhelming memories over time (2004: 13). Nathan (1998b) warns against the convenient tendency to work superficially with deep-seated problems. South African mediators are constantly faced with the phenomenon of “recycled conflict”: parties seem to be relieved and satisfied, but a few months later the same parties are in conflict again (Nathan, 1998b). Even though different issues appear on the agenda, the indications are strong that the conflict “is deriving its energy from the same deep
emotional storage tanks”, from the “collective pool of anger and fear built up during the centuries” (Nathan, 1998b).

The urge to ‘act’, build societies and get rid of the discomfort of the pain results in the denying or lack of recognition of emotions in national strategies. Instead, emotions like hatred, fear and anger are used as tools for political appropriation, while empathy, compassion and wonder become marginalised. The neglect of emotions in post-conflict and reconstruction eras can be fatal, because it leads to new sources of hatred and conflict (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2008: 386-394). This is confirmed by a research participant in Yugoslavia, where emotions such as empathy are still largely absent: “We can live together, we just can’t sleep” (Halpern & Weinstein, 2009: 308).

Another danger is that public events are often focussed on the sensational cases of those who suffered at the hands of security and military forces (detention, torture, disappearance and murder). It does not include the broad community, those in South Africa “whose lives were mutilated in the day-to-day web of regulations that was apartheid. We arrive in a world in which reparations are for militants, those who suffered jail or exile, but not those who suffered only forced labor and broken homes” (Mamdani in Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 318).

Maybe one of the most contested issues is forgiveness. For some forgiveness is critical for reconciliation, liberation and the future (for example Desmond Tutu). On the other side of the continuum are people like Braithwaite who asserts that the right of the victim to deny apology, to continue to hate and to call for punishment is greater than the obligation to forgive (Thompson, 2005). Others point out how dangerous forgiveness can be when universalised (Thompson, 2005) and when individuals/groups are pressurised to ‘forgive’ (Kraybill, 1998). Kraybill relates how he has spent a “great deal of time in religious settings mediating the conflicts that result between people who say they have already forgiven each other … These people have engaged in ‘head reconciliation, but their hearts – key actors in most conflicts – were left behind. The consequence is often further damage” (1988). A driving force is guilt: if people feel guilty, they easily ‘forgive’, but the resentment remains and grows stronger (Kraybill, 1988). This is especially relevant where former enemies are forced to be neighbours and where oppressor and oppressed continue to share the same space. A resident of Mostar in the former Yugoslavia explains: “We are forced to live together. Because of that we are all pretending to be nice and to love each other. But, it is known that I hate them and they hate me” (in Weinstein & Stover, 2004: 1).

We can thus conclude that good will is not enough to bring about healing. It does not prevent the wounds from festering “within deep silence and denial” (Hoffman, 2005: 124, 227). Biko suggests in-depth reflection on all possible causes and side-effects to “understand the basics before setting up a remedy” - for if we diagnose incorrectly “whatever is improvised as a remedy will hardly cure the condition (1987: 27). And if it is not cured? We look at the result in the next section.
4.5 The power of the festering wound

“…, the survival that I never survived” (Kertész, 2010: 112)\(^{38}\)

What happens if wounds are just left to themselves and deliberate efforts are not made to bring about healing – if the dance in the mud just continues unchecked?

4.5.1 The haunting past

The dire consequences of ignoring the pain of the past are expressed by numerous scholars. The past will continue to haunt us, we repeat what we do not understand and the door is left open for ideological manipulation (Erikson, 1994: 228; Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 313). In short, the “suppressed past will rankle and return” while left unaddressed and unrecognised (Hoffman, 2005: 267). There is a saying: Beware of being the victim of a victim. This confirms the need to name and understand the wounding, in order to escape the cycle of repetition, in reversed roles (Van der Merwe in Mengel, 2010: 176).

However, we need to appreciate that it is not a natural reaction to do something about the unspeakable. It is natural to deny, suppress and banish it to the unconsciousness. Unfortunately, atrocities “refuse to be buried” (Herman, 1997: 1). Not talking and thinking about torture and terror might be a necessary weapon for immediate survival, but De Vifar warns that after some time we see the discomfort in the social environment, which points to suffering and repetition – the signs of “recent social catastrophe which is still active” (2012: 107). At the same time, there is no point in the mere retrieving of messages, if the point is not to “help to dream a new future” (Cabrera in Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 22). Holding on to resentful emotions and memories might be the only way to keep connected to the loved one no longer present, but this also implies holding on to the moment of wounding and the perpetrator. Gobodo-Madikizela warns that, if memory is kept alive to cultivate old hatred and resentment, it will result in repetitive violence, instead of being transcended and healed (2003: 103).

While engaging in superficial action, the important but very difficult work of the humanisation of both oppressed and oppressor does not get attention. The messages of superiority and inferiority, as well as all the marks and scars of a violent past remain obscure and are subconsciously carried over to next generations – where they will “fester for generations causing repeated cycles of aggression” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 313).

4.5.2 The ‘deadly’ in the next generations

Lonely lonely lonely lonely:
The story with a middle only (Aughawall Graveyard, Paul Durcan, 1975)

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\(^{38}\) Kertész was a Holocaust concentration camp survivor.
There is a growing literature on how trauma that remains unrecognised and untreated, the “buried speech of the parent” (De Viñar, 2012: 97), is transmitted into the psyche of succeeding generations, where compensatory behaviours and beliefs compound the traumatisation. Families become “closed systems”, where mistrust of the outside world is taught and massive rage and grief are not only turned inwards, but cascaded down the generations, growing more complex over time. Transgenerational patterns reflect poverty, low self-esteem and self-image, epidemic alcoholism and drug misuse and family histories of violent behaviour. Transgenerational trauma is indeed a “soul wound” (Atkinson, 2011: 80-82, 86).

The trauma of the first generation results in the destruction of the internal organisation and the incapacity of the mind to digest, understand and find representation for bodily and psychic events. Cavalli calls this destruction the ‘deadly’ (2012: 601). The second generation grows up under and forms an attachment to this influence. In the third generation the ‘deadly’ becomes assimilated into the self and generates a mental void. The third generation has to absorb this confused mass of personal and transgenerational facts that had not been understood in the previous generations (Cavalli, 2012: 599-600). Several generations thus become psychologically united in unconscious identifications through the ‘deadly’, which has been “evacuated from language and suppressed” and which remains a “representational void” and “camouflaged unutterable wound” (De Viñar, 2012: 97-98).

An interesting aspect of transgenerational wounding is that the first generation still has a memory and experience of another type of past - the before-the-wounding. Subsequent generations have no such memory: “‘My parents’ generation grew up in a world without a Holocaust, but for us there could be no such world’” (Bar-On in Hoffman, 2005: 15). The dilemma for communities like ours in South Africa, subjected to colonisation and oppression for protracted periods, is that there is no living memory of the ‘before’.

The problem of the third generation is therefore that the ‘deadly’ is the future – and not the past: it is easier for this generation to assimilate within the past. While unaware of the nature of the wounds, it cannot be removed from the present and there is no movement possible towards the future. A sign of healing in later generations would thus be when differentiation between own unprocessed emotions and those of previous generations starts to take place (Cavalli, 2012: 598; 611, 604).

Abrams & Van Niekerk look at transgenerational wounding through an additional lens: fathers, sons, grandsons and even great grandsons. In colonised countries like South Africa the expropriation of land, migrant labour and urbanisation changed the role of the father in the family structure, which disfigured the form and content of the relationship between father and children. Most obvious is the change from fathers being present to the scourge of absent fathers (up to 64% of families in South
Africa today). The “hunger for father love” makes it difficult for many men “to complete their socialization and move beyond childhood. Unresolved father issues seem also to act as a catalyst for further relationship breakdowns and traumas” (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). The absent father epidemic results in a generation of youth who are socialised without positive male role models and in the distortion of masculinity. This is transmitted from generation to generation in a spiral of “identity blending of masculinities and violence” (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). Little attention is paid to the psychological recovery of oppressed men and social norms do not allow male expression of distress. Scholars start to recognise the link between high levels of sexual and child abuse in oppressed societies to the unconscious transmission of cropped-up emotions over generations (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010; Atkinson, 2011: 86-87).

4.5.3 The wounded oppressor, witness and bystander

Little is known about the mind of the perpetrator, because “he does not volunteer to be studied” or helped – unless there is trouble with the law (Herman, 1997: 74-75). However, there is a growing literature on the wounding of the perpetrator and the bystander/witness and how this is transmitted into next generations. Whole communities and nations have been mobilised/forced/brainwashed to participate or passively witness the oppression of others, often with few options for or choices of resistance. The process of healing in such groups is critical, not only for themselves, but also for the process of healing in the victims (Atkinson, 2011; Freire, 1996; Herman, 1997; Jansen, 2009; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

A counter-narrative needs to be developed, especially where there is a long, solid and uninterrupted history, as is the case in the psyche of the Afrikaner (Jansen, 2009: 88). Psychic wounds (especially of the bystander) include the severing of the self, dissociation, a preoccupation with personal survival and success, comparative neurosis, loneliness, narcissism, degrading of others, fear of oneself and of the abject, an empty self, replacement of being with having, greed and false feelings of entitlement, psychic numbing and lastly an obsessive-compulsive rehearsal of violence (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 64-76). Gobodo-Madikizela notes a profound feeling of loss in the perpetrator when the situation (of power) changes. This includes the loss of innocence and the desperate efforts afterwards to affirm themselves “as still part of the human universe” (2003: 78, 47).

4.6 Conclusion: a wounded community

What then is a wounded community? Is there the possibility of communities that are not wounded? I did not find straight answers to these questions in the literature. It may be useful to return to the metaphor of the mud: what community (or country) can claim a totally mud-free history? To reflect on this question, I first looked at how scholars describe a wounded community.

A long list of classic manifestations of protracted communal wounding can be deduced: paralysis of
initiative, which can include automatic obedience; restriction of cognitive processes and problem solving skills; a ‘vacant’ esteem (feelings of helplessness, depression, victimhood, detachment, isolation and alienation); limiting of capacity for nurturing, bonding, love and intimacy (which impacts on parenting, family and relationships); no clear sense of self as worthwhile; high levels of mistrust; a sense of resignation and fatalism, leading to numbness, fearfulness, vulnerability, anger and violence (expressed in high incidences of HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, road accidents and poor academic performance); and a search for instant gratification (frequent partner change and high consumption). All of these impede the building of a better future (Atkinson, 2011; Cabrera, 2003; Friedman, 2012; Herman, 1997; Leclerc-Madlala, 2013; Lederach, 2003; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

Is there a community free from the above? I do not believe that there is\textsuperscript{39}. In this sense, all communities are wounded. While being mindful of the dangers of comparing wounds and pain, I suggest that we consider the matrix of oppression: communities and persons who have been in multiple target groups – for generations – clearly need to receive priority attention when we talk about a ‘wounded community’. In a country like South Africa there are whole communities and groups who have for centuries heard that they are inferior, that what they hold dear is useless and who have suffered in multiple ways: dispossession, frustrated efforts, abject poverty and hardship. Even though there is overwhelming evidence in the literature that the oppressor need to be healed, humanised and liberated from their false superiority, it is from a position of privilege that this is required. Those who suffer from multiple layers of wounding are in many ways still been held in the mud – by many different hands and strategies. This brings us back to the original argument: those who hold others down in the mud are also in the mud … We all are in urgent need of healing.

The second half of this chapter looks at the daunting task of breaking these complex cycles of wounding and oppression. It seeks to answer some questions about a deliberate healing process:
1. How is ‘healing’ and a healing process perceived in the literature?
2. Key to all discussions on healing is the concept of consciousness. However, what is meant by the concept of ‘consciousness’?
3. What discourses and frameworks are emerging regarding communal healing?
4. What aspects should be considered when engaging in a healing process?

4.7 Perceptions of communal healing

‘Healing is a really confusing word. When I first thought of it I thought I would go along and all this pain was going to be healed and at the finish I would just walk away and I would be healed, but now I know healing means learning. Learning about yourself – learning about looking at things in a different way. Understanding how those things came to be. Owning your own things, but not

\textsuperscript{39} I am reminded of Rist’s argument: if we want to see another Tanzania, we need to see another Sweden (Chapter 2).
taking on board other people’s things. Being responsible for what you are responsible for, but not for other people’s responsibilities. Learning how to deal with different situations – how to interact with people – how to lessen conflict – seeing your own things differently’
(workshop participant in Atkinson, 2011: 140).

For O’Dea, the process of communal healing is “an affirmation of our power to create meaning, relationship, and health … empowered to dialogue with history - and history in the making - and not simply to experience it as a series of externalized events or enactments that are beyond our reach. It is a form of self-actualizing democracy: It requires the participation of our inner lives. It begins in our awareness, and is an expression of our longing for greater wholeness (O’Dea, 2004).

At its most fundamental level, healing is “an ever-deepening knowledge, of the deep structure of the self and the layered and multiple parts of who the person is, at both biographical and transpersonal levels, culturally and spiritually” (Atkinson, 2011: 100).

Healing is action that has physical, social, emotional and political elements and is not only about the draining away of pain and the processing of traumatic events (Kearney, 2014: 606). It is a transformative process of “unfreezing”: from private to public, lack of control to control; shame to dignity and from the past to the future (Westoby, 2009b: 32).

4.7.1 A new state of being: no option of re-

In the discourse on national and international process towards healing after nations and groups emerge from catastrophic periods of war, oppression and colonisation there is considerable use of words with the prefix re-: reconciliation, repair, restoration, reconstruction, redress and so forth. It is indeed a tempting idea, but it is equally unlikely that we will ever find a way back. Some cuts have been made centuries ago. It might thus be more useful to forget about a ‘re-turn’, but to focus on the construction of a new framework.

The option of replacing what has been lost in an unaltered way is thus closed. I want to argue that instead we need to isolate the essence of what has been lost to understand what needs to be constructed. An example is the cultural losses during colonialism and oppression, which resulted in the stripping of “emotional insulation” (Erikson, 1994: 153). Instead of trying to recover ‘culture’, we could focus on finding new forms of ‘insulation’. This links to Watkins & Shulman’s suggestion that we draw on concepts of the unconscious (depth psychology) to understand the psyche within the context of ideology, culture and history. This “can help us to break with the past, and provide fuel for efforts to create a world that is less wounding in the present and future” (2010: 48).
It is important to find new meaning\textsuperscript{40}, put the past into a fresh story and connect in new ways with memories (Westoby, 2009b: 32). It will require separation and containment: the past has to be seen as the past and be separated from the present, which has to be judged in its own light. This, however, is terribly difficult, because it requires that we give up mourning, which might feel like a betrayal of the past. It asks of the wounded to keep on dipping into the past, without being swallowed by it – until a “rich vein of meaning” starts flowing (Hoffman, 2005: 190, 278-279).

Imagination is a useful tool to create new possibilities, break away from taken-for-granted ways of thinking, renew the past by refiguring it and create conditions for an awakening of hope and imagination (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 3). This requires for example an African imagination, free from a preoccupation with the oppressor, the Black Messiah and the prevention of white domination (Mpondo, 2014a).

We might need a new rupture, similar to the one that caused the original wounding to snap us out of the current internalisation of the status quo. Freire believes that “there is no creativity without rapture” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 194). This sounds hard and truly implies ‘no return’ - but such a break, even conflict, offers the opening for a decision to look at a new beginning.

\textbf{4.7.2 Becoming visible again}

There is a real challenge to find and reclaim what has been erased, on personal and national levels. After all, the “human self is given personality through the act of recognition” (Fanon in Keet, Zinn & Porteus, 2009: 114). This implies that the history of the oppressed has to be re/written – and be liberated from the non-status. It does require of the society as a whole to dare to construct this common history, to accept responsibility and to adopt the changes (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 22). Cabrera warns that this is not going to happen merely by changing a few textbooks. These can even be more polarising, especially when they are constantly rewritten. It is necessary to reconstruct our history, first personal and then national, in such a way that we learn to understand that there is meaning in what we are and what we have lived through – despite everything (2003: 5-6, 9-10).

Santos suggests a reverse of what he terms a ‘sociology of absence’ by recognising a variety of knowledges, understandings of time, differences in equality, scale or “localised globalism” and productivity, which involves alternative systems of production, ‘growth’ and economic arrangements (2004: 238-239).

\textsuperscript{40} It might be relevant to consider briefly what ‘meaning’ entails. Gould refers to three areas in which man can find meaning: the realms of activities (meaning-fulfilling work, for example); of personal experiences; and of attitudes, such as suffering and sacrifice (Du Plessis & Human, 2009: 73). Meaning provides a sense of purpose and a feeling that an effort is worthwhile and makes a contribution to the greater good or something/someone beyond oneself. It contributes to directedness, engagement, commitment, a sense of connectedness and a sense of mission (Du Plessis & Human, 2009: 73).
4.7.3 Becoming human again

The loss of humanity for both oppressed and oppressor cries for attention and the task is immense. If this is not getting attention, the oppressed will simply turn into oppressors, instead of restoring the humanity. Freire urges us to hold onto a seemingly impossible paradox: “Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both [oppressed and oppressor]” (1996: 26).

Gobodo-Madikizela emphasises that by humanising the perpetrators, they can be held responsible. By demonising them as monsters, they are left off the hook: such radically ‘other’ cannot be held accountable. The simplified view of the perpetrator as an ‘evildoer’ closes the door for enduring peace (2003: 119, 125). She calls the act of humanising at the same time punishment and rehabilitation (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003: 120). This new humanity implies that we start to engender “kindness to self and other” (Friedman, 2012).

4.7.4 Facing freedom and the self

*Healing is facing up to the fact that you've got choices, and there is no need to live all our life in this pain* (Atkinson, 2011: 141).

Freedom is a feared concept for those living for so long within the “prescription” of the oppressor (Freire, 1996: 28). It implies the giving up of projections and prescriptions, coupled with the risky business of reclaiming authenticity, autonomy and responsibility. It requires the ejecting of the oppressor within and of becoming wholly themselves; and of having choices and the responsibility of making them. It brings an end to being mere spectators and the illusion of acting (through the action of the oppressors), but to become authentic actors (Freire, 1996: 30). This is no easy task and needs to be seriously considered during every intervention, which includes those by the field of community development.

The popular slogans of resistance and freedom are seriously challenged by Fanon’s wish: “What I want to do is help the black man to free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment” (2008: 19). This implies that we cannot focus only on the physical chains of oppression, but we need to battle for the liberation of the authentic self; “the envisioned self which is a free self” (Biko, 1987: 21, 49).

True healing thus implies that we face the wounds – and ourselves. Even if we decide to leave the wounds open, cut the blood supply and “become strong in new ways”, as Kearney suggests (2014: 606), it is fine - as long as it is a conscious decision. Without consciousness, however, you “continue to wound yourself and others repeatedly (Hollis, 1994: 8-9).

The process of facing the self, of unlearning false messages and creating a new picture of self is
beautifully explained by a participant in Atkinson’s healing workshops:

As a child, she was like a whole jigsaw puzzle (“I was a complete picture”), but after she was raped at the age of three, the puzzle was shattered, with “bits and pieces all over the place”. She believed that some parts of the puzzle were taken away, but through the healing work she came to understand that many pieces were actually added during her life: the negative messages from the rapist, unloving parents and an abusive husband. She had accepted these pieces, bad, dirty, unlovable and good for nothing, as authentic parts of herself. “Now I have got to find the real me again, by sifting through the different parts of the jigsaw and discard those bits that don’t fit, and find and give value to those bits of the picture that do fit and I want to keep” (in Atkinson, 2011: 179-180).

Critical consciousness is thus the first requisite for societal change and is discussed in more depth below.

4.8 Critical consciousness: the key to a healing approach

Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.

(CG Jung)

Maybe the most critical question to face in the search for healing is thus: how can the oppressed and the oppressor find healing and liberation from the ‘deadly’ inside, from the dehumanisation of generations, from the false message inside? A theme that dominates the literature on healing and liberation is that of consciousness. The oppressed discover that they act as ‘hosts’ of the oppressor and live according to the prescription of the oppressor. The oppressor discovers lives lived in the dehumanised and dehumanising illusion of superiority.

For Foucault, it is through the awareness and questioning of the underlying assumptions of the discourses that construct us that we can become empowered to confront the discourses and take responsibility for co-creating our own reality, our community, our sense of belonging, of ethos and of self-knowledge (Rau, 2004: 24-26, 38). Put in another way: consciousness is the process through which the oppressed can “see himself as a being, entire in himself, and not as an extension of a broom or additional leverage to some machine” (Biko, 1987: 68). Since oppression has reduced the oppressed to a shell, it is necessary to “pump back life in this empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity” through “an inward-looking process” – which is Biko’s basic definition of Black Consciousness (1987: 29). Challenging all forms of oppression can only start when “individuals become aware and acknowledge that racism and internalised oppression still exist” (ELRU, 1997: 25) and “give up the need to deny that ‘isms’ still exist” (Batts, 2002: 19).

The process of conscientisation is an empowering group process, which allows active engagement
with socio-economic structures previously identified with – and been blind to. Critical consciousness is “the maximum potential of consciousness” and the end product of the successful navigation from states of magical and naïve consciousness (Guishard, 2009: 90). Firstly there is the magical stage, where problems are experienced as inevitable and normal and efforts to act believed to be futile. The next stage is to perceive problems as caused by individuals (self or others), without understanding of an unjust and oppressive social system. The third stage is that of critical consciousness, where there is an understanding of the socio-political system and how an unjust and oppressive system has become the normal. This is when the oppressor’s ideology can be rejected and transformation in collaboration with others sought. What was previously seen as ‘personal’ problems, are now seen as community, class (or racial) problems (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 194). This is when the “perception of the inevitability of one’s fate crumbles” (Guishard, 2009: 93).

A similar paradigm for gaining consciousness through a process of analysis comes from the Dogon people in Mali. The first stage is ‘sight without understanding’ (Giri So). Then a perspective is invited, resulting in the development of a viewpoint (Benne So). In the next stage (Bolo So) the essence is penetrated to gain meaning. The highest form is So Dayi, which implies complete understanding, the ability to see beyond the physical and the gaining of vision and imagination (related by Mpondo, 2014a).

Another way of looking at this is: “by nurturing awareness of how we are positioned, we can take a measure of responsibility for co-creating our own reality – our community, our sense of self-worth, of belonging, of ethics and self-knowledge” (Rau, 2004: 26). This results in the empowerment that is necessary to resist being regulated by others or by the discourses in which we are embedded (Kendall & Wickham in Rau, 2005: 26).

The dilemma is that those from the non-dominant frames have been forced to carry the “burden of constant self-consciousness” alone (Kwenda in Keet, Zinn & Porteus, 2009: 110). This responsibility needs to be shared by increased awareness amongst all, target and non-target groups. Kwenda suggests that it is through mutual vulnerability “that the meaning of intimacy and reciprocity in community can be discovered. It is in this sharing that, on the one hand, cultural diffidence is transcended and, on the other, cultural arrogance overcome” (in Keet, Zinn & Porteus, 2009: 110).

Freire acknowledges that the process of conscientização or conscientisation cannot be achieved idealistically. Instead, it is like the process of childbirth, with huge responsibility foisted upon the ‘midwife’: the educator, community development worker, or facilitator of a process (Freire, 1996: 17, 31). When such unfamiliar or “difficult knowledge” is encountered, trust, strong relationships and compassionate understanding are required (Zembylas, 2012: 10), as well as the “nourishment of a space were one can reflect, deliberate, and de-ideologize reality, with others” (Guishard, 2009: 90).
Embedded in the creating of critical consciousness are the concepts of dialogue, reflection and action. It is important to create open spaces for deconstruction, dialogue and imagination, where new alliances and practices can be proposed, tried and analysed. The animator has the responsibility to be careful not to indoctrinate or to proclaim the problem and the solution, which would intensify the oppression already internalised in the participant (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 195). It is the task of the facilitator to understand how to establish a conversation that goes beyond the immediate objective of the intervention. A literacy class does not merely intend to teach the illiterate to read and write the word, for example ‘water’. Water needs to be explored within its socio-economic context and the control thereof. The next step is to decode an everyday situation in relation to dominant paradigms and to translate it into conceivable social arrangements that are more just – a step called ‘annunciation’. This is in contrast to denunciation of the undesirable, which can be associated with fatalistic abandonment (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 192-194).

As can be deduced from the dance between oppressor and oppressed, it is necessary not only to know the self, but also to know the ‘enemy’: oppression and its cunning manifestations. The reality is that “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed”, who needs to be liberated from “the lie that black is an aberration from the ‘normal’ which is white” and to replace this by an understanding of the “deliberateness of God’s plan in creating black people black” (Biko, 1987: 68). Through reflection on how we position and see ourselves, we gain the freedom to choose whether we continue to reproduce or challenge the values, behaviours and identities sanctioned by the discourses in which are embedded (Rau, 2004: 6).

In this sense healing implies that we have to create an opening into the wall that had closed the wounded up in rigidity, stagnation, inertia, silence and fatalism. Critical consciousness is needed to awaken agency, the power to act and to quicken “imaginations of desire” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 25).

Fredericks recorded the words of a participant in a healing process, who explains the process of increased consciousness:

> [It] has been a process of daring to take my tape, to load it in the tape recorder and rewind, play, rewind and play, dealing with the past, digging down deep into the crevices of where I buried my deepest hurt, re-experiencing some of the feelings, the tears I did, and I didn’t cry, the screams I never let out and all the emotion, secret and shame that for a long time I have attempted to hide and bury. One day I know if I keep going along my healing journey when I hear, smell, touch, see and sense something, I’ll think back and I’ll be able to say ‘yes that did happen and yes I’m OK’. (in Atkinson, 2011: 206-207).
4.9 Emerging frameworks and discourses

Over the past few decades a discourse on social healing has been emerging, which in essence challenges hegemonic theories and practices in various disciplines. Creative responses (artistic, judicial, economic, educational and psychological) were necessary to illuminate the ‘predicament’ of the wounded - as we “cannot let ourselves grow comfortable with easy explanations that do not address the underlying causes of the catastrophe” (Dorfman, 2004: xiv-xv).

Watkins & Shulman talk about the many “wellsprings” of learning practices on which we can draw (2010: 3-4, 13-14; 23-25). These wellsprings include the various fields of psychology (such as depth-, community-, peace-, and political psychology, trauma recovery and models such as Transactional Analysis\(^{41}\), Historical Trauma theory, whiteness studies\(^{42}\), liberation theology, feminist leadership, collaborative arts, Theatre of the Oppressed, (post)colonial studies, engaged spirituality, queer theory, participatory and critical research, performance studies, interdisciplinary work in the humanities, conflict transformation, indigenous studies, national and international processes in the aftermath of large-scale trauma, oppression and genocide, critical pedagogy and models for anti-bias, diversity and identity development work.

The scope of this study does not allow for a discussion of this rich and growing literature. A few aspects from the discussions most relevant to community development in the South African context are highlighted.

4.9.1 An anti-bias approach: fighting the false messages of oppression

The anti-bias, diversity and identity\(^{43}\) development theories presume that oppressive messages have been internalised over generations and that they can only be unlearned through conscious effort. This implies wilful strategies to break with all messages, forms and manifestations of oppression (old-fashioned, modern and internalised) and requires an increased awareness, recognition and appreciation of identity, oppression and difference.

Sherover-Marcuse reminds us that nobody amongst us actually chooses or wants the roles attached to us – neither as target nor non-target. However, we have to accept that the hurt from this conditioning clings to us and it makes it difficult to see and hear each other clearly. Since we make

\(^{41}\) Valerie Batts has done extensive work in exploring how the Transactional Analysis model with its modes of adult, parent and child behaviour, can be used to understand the way in which the cycle of oppression is perpetuated and how it can be broken. This has been found very useful in the anti-bias and diversity work of the Early Learning Resource Unit in the 1990s (ELRU, 1997: 8).

\(^{42}\) Theories on whiteness are characterised by “a structurally privileged positionality (un)informed by ignorance/blindnesses – taking for granted unearned entitlements that come at the expense of racialized others, and generally lacking insight into the normalized racial order that shapes life opportunities and conditions imperceptibly around the comfort, convenience and advancement of whites (Steyn, 2012: 11)

\(^{43}\) A definition of identity is: the way in which we see and describe ourselves, the ways we want to be seen and described by others, as well as the variety of and combinations of identities we are born with and acquire (ELRU, 1997: 8).
“unaware assumptions” about what other people are thinking and feeling, we forget to check in with each other and to really listen ([n.d.])

Watts-Jones notes that internalised racism is rarely a presenting problem in therapy, but it is embedded in issues of self-esteem, self-confidence, depression and anxiety. The dangerous side of internalised oppression is thus that “it has remained largely invisible in its impact, and this needs to change” (2002: 593). This makes the conscious work of unlearning so critical.

4.9.1.1 Constructive unlearning of bias and oppression

A constructive model of non-oppression and the creating of new identities is needed for the deconstruction of false identities/messages. Basic steps in such a process include: the recognition, challenging and unlearning of bias; getting in touch with hope, to move beyond the paralysis of guilt, shame or anger; reclaiming own identity (a critical step to avoid despair); and using collective experiences to move towards constructive change (Cordozo, 2006: 172; ELRU, 1997: 26). The latter does not mean that everybody tries to be the same: it values diversity and accepts the validity of ways of being other than the own way (ELRU, 1997: 26).

There seems to be a common pattern in how both target and non-target groups react in anti-bias and identity development work, but it varies regarding the manifestation and duration in the different groups. The first phase is non-salience of the identity and denial or even resistance, which can be concluded from expressions such as ‘Why dig up the past’ and ‘Let us focus on the present’. In the fight against racism, white people show a lack of awareness and remain in a ‘deep sleep’ in this phase (ELRU, 1997: 30). Another form of denial is to silence debate by claiming that race is not the issue, for example in a discussion on inequality (Mzileni, 2015). DeRosa reminds us that the power of privilege is invisible for the non-target dominant group and they are more likely not to be aware that what they perceive as the ‘norm’ is actually oppressive to other. Even if a member of this group rejects and fights against the oppression, the system continues to operate all around us and perpetuates advantage and power (2001: 7). Black people tend to assimilate into the dominant culture and deny own pain and experience of oppression in an effort not to rock the boat (ELRU, 1997: 30).

The next stage is that of initial awareness and disequilibrium - a very difficult stage. Both sides feed each others’ fears, fantasies and rage and all tend to get stuck. For white people this stage includes the facing of realities around their own privilege and institutionalised oppression, sharpening of conflicts and feelings of blame, shame, sorrow and guilt, which are often projected through blame. It is also a time when white people do not like their white identity. For black people it involves the opening up of wounds, to be overwhelmed by feelings of anger, rage, hatred and pain, as more awareness is raised about internalised oppression. It also brings frustration with white people who are slow to change (ELRU, 1997: 30-31).

The third stage is intensive exploration of and immersion in own identity and securing of own identity
This is discussed in more depth in the next section. The last phase is reconstruction, where historic realities are acknowledged and work starts happening to realise meaningful change. This is also the stage where real commitment to the process is made. This engenders pride; an understanding and acceptance of an own identity; constructive channelling of strong feelings (instead of projecting them); more responsibility; and increased and more comfortable reflection/contact between target and non-target groups (ELRU, 1997: 30-31).

The work of constructive unlearning has to undo oppression on all the levels through which it has been established in the first place: the personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural (ELRU, 1997: 27; Hope & Timmel, 1988). In the next section elements of this work are explored in more depth.

**4.9.1.2 Fundamental elements of an anti-bias and identity development process**

Anti-bias work and curricula require not only a philosophy: facilitators and educators need techniques and content, with specific tools. But Derman-Sparks & The A.B.C. Task Force ([n.d.]: 4-5) point out that we should never consider a ‘recipe book’: the work is too context-bound and requires deep understanding of the issues, with critical thinking and problem-solving skills to recognise bias and act immediately.

Moreover, any work on oppression needs to understand the profound role that fear plays in the opposing of change. Without directly addressing fear, this work will not be embraced by either the target or the non-target group members (ELRU, 1997: 27). By giving up the fear, it might be possible for individuals “to give up the need to deny that ‘-isms’ still exist” (Batts, 2002: 19) and that they are living with false messages about themselves. Only when some benefits become apparent, can the work of building consciousness start to challenge the system and to stop inviting dysfunctional behaviour in self and the other. Watts-Jones adds another dimension, namely the intense reactions that the target and non-target groups have been eliciting from each other for generations. Oppressed groups always feared the anxiety and anger of the dominant group, because it was dangerous (often life endangering). Any possible strategy has been applied to avoid the oppressor from getting upset. Consciousness has to be created around this aspect so that the necessary courage is built not to avoid the dominant group’s anxiety, but to let it stand and eventually worked through. The “degree to which a person can sustain his or her position in relation to others without attacking, defending, or cutting off, is based on the ability to tolerate the anxiety of difference” (Watts-Jones, 2002: 599).

Even though it is a principle of anti-bias work to start with the ‘self’, it is acknowledged that this work is too difficult in isolation. We are likely to make mistakes and will become anxious. It is critical to find others for the work of self-reflection, to mirror mistakes and to explore alternative ways of engaging with the ‘other’ and the own groups (ELRU, 1997: 7-8). Another linked factor is the development of a state of paralysis when the oppressed believe that their difficulties were “due to personal inadequacies” (Belenky in Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 216).
An essential manifestation of modern racism is the high visibility of liberal movements. According to bell hooks these often mask the all-pervasive white supremacy in society. White people fail to recognise the ways in which their actions support and affirm the very structure of racist domination, which they profess to eradicate (in DeRosa, 2001: 8). DeRosa acknowledges that she too “was seduced by the myth of ‘fairness’”, and as a liberal she was able to “mouth the rhetoric of democracy and equality without having to give up anything or make any change … [or] sharing discomfort” (2001: 8). Working through this subtle form of modern racism is indeed one of the most complex challenges of anti-bias work.

There needs to be constant affirmation of all individuals, families, cultures and experiences, and vigilance is required in such work to ensure that any form of prejudice, stereotype, bias and discrimination on all levels are challenged (ELRU, 1997: 10). It is important in this regard not to fall into superficial games. An example is what DeRosa calls “Racism as Tourism”: the excessive effort to participate in black people’s cultural activities, events to learn bits and pieces of other ‘exotic’ cultures, inappropriate identification with/use of others’ traditions or what could simply be called “cultural theft” (2001: 9). This is not affirmation, but what Brent calls ‘voyeurism’ and symbiotic relationships with the ‘other’ (2009: 16-17).

Anti-bias work is not only the domain of adults. Much of the research on anti-bias work has been done with a specific focus on education and curriculum development for children from pre-school age up to university level (Cardozo, 2006; Derman-Sparks & A.B.C. Task Force, [n.d.]; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; ELRU, 1997; Pyke, 2010; Rosenwasser, 2002; Tatum, 1999, 1997). In fact, a wealth of knowledge on how anti-bias work can be approached comes from the early childhood field. On the one hand, it is unsettling to see 3-4 year old children exhibit bias against the ‘other’, but on the other hand, it is encouraging to observe how children of that age recognise and challenge different forms of bias and unfairness. This is facilitated through critical awareness, careful attention to learning material, active engagement with bias as soon as it is expressed and involvement of parents/families. Special attention is paid to the development of a strong self-identity to withstand oppressive/stereotyped attacks (Derman-Sparks & The A.B.C. Task Force, [n.d.]: 2-3).

Imbalances can only be addressed if attention is paid to how historic and current power imbalances are playing out in respect of all power discrepancies. For example: black women are targets of both racism and sexism and both have to be addressed (Batts, 2002: 20-21). But at the same time these women are possibly non-target members with the power to oppress their children, the old people in their family and homosexuals in the neighbourhood. The anti-bias framework of multiple ‘target’ and ‘non-target’ identities avoids having to make a decision on ‘where to begin’ in this complex situation. Instead it offers a framework to deal with all of these in a balanced way, allowing for increased consciousness and reflection from the angle of both target and non-target groups. It is thus important that we pay attention to the multiplicity of identities that co-exist in a person/group and these need to
be incorporated and accepted in our definition of ourselves – in our effort to rid ourselves of our ‘them’ and ‘us’ identities. We have to become sensitive about all our identities (Ramphele, 2008: 159, 161).

Steyn contends that ignorance is a choice and we can choose to know about each other’s lives, past and present, and to take or evade responsibility in relation to others (Steyn, 2012: 22). I further argue that talking about differences is a serious challenge in diversity work, because the experiences of the target and non-target group are totally different. To make it worse: since we all have lived together for centuries, we assume that we know each other. The easy option is to deny the significance of our different histories, which prevents us from paying proper attention to this aspect. It is not about a ‘cultural evening’ at school. Instead, we need to consider studying our history together and deal with the reality that one event had been a victory for some, but a deep source of mourning for the other.

Lastly, the importance of the difficult route of consciousness is emphasised by Batts, who juxtaposes the idea of a ‘salad bowl’ type of pluralism with the monoculturalism of the ‘melting pot’. The latter does not constitute the unlearning of bias, but results (again) from the domination of the ‘superior’ culture, either through exclusion or through assimilation. On the other hand, the ‘salad bowl’ strives towards the “[a]cceptance, appreciation, utilization and celebration of similarities and differences” (2002: 4). Whereas the ‘melting pot’ ideal takes the easy but unsustainable route of ‘forget and forgive and let’s all move happily along’, the journey of creating consciousness and of humanising all involved (oppressor and oppressed) is clearly the hard, but more sustainable route. The following words by Martin Luther King, Jr. come to mind: “I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be …” (in Batts, 2002: 5).

4.9.1.3 Moving from the sanctuary of within-group work to the crossing of barriers

The anti-bias framework argues that there is a critical stage in the unlearning of bias where the target and non-target groups have to be separated in order to get immersed in their own work and identities.

Watts-Jones describes the separated space as ‘sanctuaries’. Such safety is necessary because it is painful to acknowledge the wounds in need of healing in the presence of the ‘other’ group. A safe space needs to be created for this process (2002: 591). This is related to the concept of “public homeplaces” which bell hooks describes as the fragile but tenuous site where “one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist” (in Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 210-211). Historically, oppressed people have always created sanctuaries or homeplaces where survival, thinking and resistance have been nurtured; where visions, dreams and a longing for alternatives were evoked and problems solved collaboratively. It is where individuals start to understand that what is being suffered is not only one’s own and by putting all the bits for everybody side by side so that a full picture could emerge (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 216; Watts-Jones, 2002: 594). It offers the freedom to relax, reflect, explore, express themselves, take care of each other and to take off the masks that are usually required in the daily dance with the other group. The necessity thereof is
explored by Tatum in her 1997 work “Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?” She found that black adolescents and adults in predominantly white settings need to deal with racism by getting together in a space where they are safe to explore their internalised racism without being concerned about safety or how the whites might respond (Watts-Jones, 2002: 595).

Another aspect regarding within-group work is that of shame in the oppressed groups. Oppression and trauma are accompanied by shame, which manifests as an original shame (resulting from being shamed during slavery, colonialism and protracted oppression) and a secondary shame, which turns the shame into victimhood. Since nobody wants to admit being a victim as it “flies in the face of the ‘can do’ ethos of our day”, this shame is turned into a secret, which binds the oppressed to the primary shame (Watts-Jones, 2002: 593-294). Ciccarello-Maher agrees: the result of the “self-help trap, the mythical ‘American dream’ of pulling oneself up from one’s bootstraps” and the notion that “if Blacks simply behaved differently, the veil would disappear” is fundamentally a disregard for the internal battle of the oppressed (2009: 384, 397). It makes public recognition of and reflection on self with the non-target group a counter-intuitive act. Would such exposure not be seen as an act of embracing the self as a victim, as offering “ammunition to the empowered”, increasing own vulnerability and creating “a double bind of being oppressed but limited in our ability to speak about the personal costs of such oppression” (Watts-Jones, 2001: 593-594)?

Similarly, the non-target group needs a sanctuary to struggle with their false messages and humanity. Their battle against bias is complex and subtle and cannot be accomplished by eliciting feelings of guilt and shame – especially not in a mixed group. Sherover-Marcuse [n.d.d] emphasises the support non-target groups need to believe in their own humanity and to understand that humans do not naturally take on the role of oppressor or choose to do it: it is acquired through systematic conditioning or training. It is especially important to point out how this has been done: violence, joining in racial/sexist jokes or slurs, keeping silent in the face of injustice or even to be ‘extra nice’ towards black people/women. An understanding is needed that no material rewards and preferential treatment can compensate for the real cost of oppression: it has “given us a false picture of reality, isolated us from the majority of the world’s peoples, blunted our imagination, limited our vision, enforced a sense of powerlessness, hampered our ability to love” (Sherover-Marcuse, [n.d.d]).

The foremost task of the oppressors is thus to understand themselves to be damaged by the burden of the myth of superiority. Malcolm X once answered a white woman’s question on what she could do to help the struggle of black people with a simple: Nothing. Later he realised that he should have answered: go and work with other white people in white communities to challenge racism and then

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44 The ‘veil’ refers to Du Bois’ the “Veil of Race”, the “Black World beyond the Veil” that separates the races and shuts out black people (2006: 8, 60, 61). For him “the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil”, who sees himself “darkly as through a veil” (2006: 9, 12). During social interaction with white people Du Bois believed for a moment to have been accepted, “but even then fell the awful shadow of the Veil, for they ate first, then l – alone” (2006: 50).
work in alliance with black people to end white supremacy (recorded in DeRosa, 2001: 10). Biko agrees: the problem of white liberals, activists and intellectuals is that they try to work ‘for the blacks’, instead of realising that “the place for their fight for justice is within their white society” (1987: 25).

The theologian Ackermann urges fellow white South Africans to “move toward lament; to break the silence and face the truth, feel the pain of one’s complicity, conscious or not, and move from isolated suffering to a community of solidarity” (in Thompson, 2005). In the same way, Thompson, as a white American, calls upon herself and other whites to “ignite a spark of courage; a spark of moral imagination” which can “unlock the bondage of denial, shame, hurt and anger” in order to transform “our legacy of violence into mutual liberation” (Thompson, 2005).

An emerging discourse is that on men and masculinity. Abrams & Van Niekerk (2010) emphasise how critically important it is for the healing of our society to pay attention to the healing of our men and the reconstruction of our masculinities. They warn that we cannot afford another generation growing up without fathers or with fathers stripped of a healthy sense of self and their masculinity.

I further argue that the complexity of the wounding of men should be looked at within the framework of multiple oppressions in one person/group. The majority of black men in South Africa are in the non-target group in terms of women, but very much in the target group regarding racial oppression (and several other target groups, such as class, literacy and language). The latter damaged their masculinity (for example by stripping them of the ability to protect and care for their families, and by brutal humiliation for instance in the workplace even in front of their children). Impotent anger and hurt are turned inward, horizontal and on those in an ‘inferior position’. In this case the obvious target would be women and children. Old-fashioned sexism allows this. This combination of factors is lethal for a society and it eventually leaves men with the difficult task of liberating themselves of the internalised messages of inferiority, as black, and of superiority, as men.

As progress is made in the with-group work, across-group work should gradually be incorporated. This creates an opportunity to learn to “host the unhomely within oneself while in dialogue with people from other communities” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 231). Healing from internalised oppression eventually includes the freedom to share the pain and shame across groups, because continuing to bear it as our shame alone reinforces oppression. The shame of internalized racism among people of African descent does not belong to us. It is the shame of oppression, and needs to be shared by whites as well. This is part of our healing and the healing work that whites need to do” (Watts-Jones, 2002: 595-596). An example of such a space is the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, a type of public homeplace where blacks and whites could nourish relationships across racial lines and work in solidarity. This “rare meeting place” crossed many barriers and spawned sites of support for grassroots reconciliation (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 228). Such spaces offer a practice “of the uncomfortable, of difficult conversations, where one is pulled up short, surprised by how one is seen
by others" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 230).

### 4.9.1.4 Scepticism about internalised oppression and anti-bias work

Criticism against the first studies on internalised oppression\(^\text{45}\) led to a rejection of the concept of internalised racism (inter alia because a racial personality was implied) and it became a taboo. The result is that internalised racism has remained one of the most neglected and misunderstood components of racism. Sociology thereby is not exposing the hidden injuries of racism and the subtle mechanisms that sustain white privilege (Pyke, 2010: 551, 554-556).

Reservations about anti-bias, diversity and identity development models include scepticism about: the focus on race, which limits the scope for addressing the complex interconnection between race, religion, gender and other forms of oppression; the exclusion of the growing number of people identified as multi-racial; and the exclusive focus on adult experiences (Cardozo, 2006: 176-177). The idea of internalised oppression might imply complicity in the own oppression or an inherent weakness in the oppressed. It is further suggested that these theories and the slow, reflective nature thereof stand in direct opposition to the focus on resistance and activism (Akili, 2011; Pyke, 2010: 559; Szymanski, 2010: 227).

Akili does not find it surprising that healing work, with its emphasis on feeling and intuition, is problematic in activist spaces. The latter privilege intellect and logic and will deny, dismiss and move on as quickly as possible from difficult emotions. Waiting for the wounded to ‘open up’ does not fit into any timeline (2011). For Freire, the time spent on reflection and analysis until appropriate action is distilled is not ‘inaction’: “[c]ritical reflection is also action” (1996: 109). Still, mere reflection is not enough: higher levels of consciousness must lead to a state of expectancy and yearning – which leads to action (Freire, 1996: 111-112). In the same vein, concern is raised about what Mohanty calls the “theoretical hegemony of resistance” (in Pyke, 2010: 560): it contributes to “an exaggerated belief in the ability of the individuals to resist complex structures of power through localized actions and consciousness-raising efforts” (Pyke, 2010: 561). Rubin warns that “we cannot dismantle something that we underestimate or do not understand” (in Pyke, 2010: 567).

It is difficult to see the possibility of complicity in a theory that is inherently based on the fact that internalised oppression is the result of external misinformation and protracted mistreatment (Sherover-Marcuse, [n.d]; Szymanski, 2010: 227). The internalisation of oppression is a multidimensional phenomenon that assumes many forms across situational contexts, including the intersections of multiple systems of domination. It is “an inevitable condition of all structures of oppression” (Pyke 2010: 553).

\(^{45}\) The first psychological research on internalised oppression was by Clark & Clark in 1939. It was called the ‘doll studies’ and they found that black children preferred white over black dolls, which was interpreted as self-hatred. It led to more research on self-esteem, self-identity, psychological adjustment and attitudes regarding racial groups and the seeking of therapeutic responses to internalised racism (Pyke, 2010: 554-556).
In conclusion: the relative silence on the topic of internalised oppression “only buttresses these misconceptions while denying the existence of some of racism’s most insidious and damaging consequences” (Pyke 2010: 559). Pyke thus laments the fact that sociology continues to underestimate the injuries of racism, which will persist until it finds “a fitting conceptual location in our discipline where it will not be reduced to a psychological phenomenon” (2010: 567).

The next section looks briefly at a few other frameworks and discourses that can enrich the debate on healing.

### 4.9.2 Other frameworks and discourses

Ideas and practice from various disciplines and field can make useful contributions to our understanding of how to deal with woundedness in our communities. These perspectives are presented in this section.\(^{46}\)

#### 4.9.2.1 Liberation psychology

Orthodox psychology tends to restrict treatment to individuals or families, while leaving the social environments that mitigate against well-being intact. The impact of collective trauma has thus remained obscured (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 4). Hook further argues that traditional psychoanalysis has been guilty of reductionism, often perceiving racism as an effect and expression of internal psychological dynamics and then attempted to categorise these clinically as paranoia, neurosis and so forth. By making universalising and de-contextualised assumptions, psychoanalysis perpetuated Western suppositions and legitimised versions of oppressive politics (2006: 213-214). The question is thus whether psychology is not (re)producing racism in society and in the discipline itself (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011: 242).

Martín-Baró, seen as the father of liberation psychology, argues for a psychology that acknowledges the psychological wounding caused by war, racism, poverty and violence. Such psychology supports historical memory and critical reflection and aids the emergence of the sorts of subjectivity through which people creatively make sense of and respond to the world (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 25). This situation thus asks for a re-evaluation or rehabilitation of psychological praxis, which has the tools to help us grapple with racism’s “uncanny logic of return” – something very necessary amidst the apparently growing levels of intolerance, racist hostility and hatred that the world is experiencing (Hook, 2006: 213).

Liberation psychology asks for a new goal, epistemology and praxis. It highlights the relationship

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\(^{46}\) Note: this overview does not include frameworks and models in the field of community development. They are discussed in the chapters on development and community development.
between personal estrangement and social oppression, by linking individual psychological suffering to the social, political and economic context. The role of the psychologist thus needs to change to that of “a convener, a witness, a coparticipator, a mirror, and a holder of faith for a process through which those who have been silenced may discover their own capacities for historical memory, critical analysis, utopian imagination and transformative social action” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 26). Martín-Baró suggests a new praxis of pragmatism, where learning is done through communal processes of discovery, imagination, experimentation and evaluation of own failures and successes. Such psychology emphasises processes of inclusion, reflection, transformation, investigation, dialogue, decision-making and responsibility, through which the humanity of individuals, communities and habitats can be restored (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 27-28). A new psychology further has to consider how to look at and address new forms of exclusion resulting from persistent unequal distribution of power and resources, environment, new forms of interaction and the working of economic and social orders (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011: 252). The impact of inequality is devastating on the societal health, as so clearly concluded in the Wilkinson & Pickett research (2009)

Watkins & Shulman further argue that it is critical to break the discourse of a “vast imaginary difference between a homogenized privileged North and a homogenized impoverished South”: in both there is suffering, a struggle for a meaningful future, abuse, agonies of doubts with its many symptoms, torturers and victims, bystanders who ‘did not know’ - in short, “an interlocking mosaic of despair” (2010: 29).

### 4.9.2.2 Research as tool for healing

Conventional social and scientific research is challenged by a discourse on research as an approach for healing. Walker pleads for the decolonisation of research and academic paradigms so that the native voice, imagery and words can be liberated from the burden of self-inflicted compromise (2001: 83). Instead, indigenous research should be allowed “to expose the festering wounds of colonial influence to direct our research in ways that are important to us” (Meyer in Walker, 2001: 83). Such research creates a culture where feelings are expressed and valued (Rosenwasser, 2002: 54); interconnectedness, process, relationships and the inclusion of spiritual experience are emphasised (Walker, 2001: 84, 92); and assumptions and myths exorcised (Stover & Weinstein, 339, 339-340). In this way, the marginalised can start to identify themselves as knowing actors, define their reality, shape their new identity, name their history and transform their lives for themselves (Sohng, 1995: 3). It might become possible to “mend the web” of relationships so brutally broken by oppression and violence (Walker, 2001) and to recreate ‘songlines’ (Atkinson, 2011).

Essential aspects of such research are authentic collaboration, reciprocal dialogue, joint learning, self reflection, social action and witnessing without judgement (Atkinson, 2011: 14-22; Reason, 1994: 1-3, 11; Sohng, 1995: 6; Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 284; Stover & Weinstein, 204: 339). It implies a move away from testing to exploring (Brent, 2009: 24) and from interviewing, which presupposes the primacy of the researcher’s frame of reference and one-way flow of information (Sohng, 2995: 6). It
also implies the ethical use of information and how results are represented (Brent, 2009: 41-44).

To be able to create the safe space required and the ability to listen to and understand participants in such research, the facilitators/researchers need to undergo an own process. Female researchers, for example, need to open up repressed memories of own girlhood traumas while working with adolescent girls. The benefit is that their “vulnerability to their own unfolding memories allowed them deeper access into the meanings the girls were conveying, often as much through the girls’ hesitations and pauses as through their words” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 284). In this way, a “research conversation” unfolds, instead of a one-sided question/response type of interview and this indicates mutuality, reciprocity, free-ranging and deep dialogue (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 285).

4.9.2.3 Conflict transformation

From this field comes a wealth of insights that can support healing processes in every community. Instead of focussing on peace-making, the ultimate aim of conflict transformation is not merely the reaching of agreements; in addition to ending the conflict, it strives to heal the wounds of ancient and generational conflicts and prevent conflicts within future generations (Walker, 2001: 69). Burton coined the term *provention*, which implies the removal of the “sources of conflict, and more positively to promote conditions in which collaborative and valued relationships control behaviours” (Sandole, 2006: 544). Lederach proposes an elicitive approach, to be distinguished from a prescriptive method, which empowers through content and technique. The elicitive trainer provides an opportunity for a “process of discovery and creation” and for engaging with the psychological dimensions of conflict (2000: 65-70). The latter raises questions about self-identity and esteem and necessitates “exploring and dealing with deep-rooted, protracted conflict, where nearly institutionalized images of the enemy prevail and dominate perceptions” (Lederach, 2000: 18). For Walker, the primary purpose is thus the transformation of individuals and society, the “re-establishment of interconnectedness, which recognises the relationship between each other, all things, the past, present and long-term future” (Walker, 2001: 65-69).

From the same field comes the voice of Kraybill, who identifies three levels of self-awareness. The first is to become aware of own feelings and to say it: ‘I am angry’. The second is to become aware of deeper vulnerabilities and that there are memories of old injuries below the surface. With the arousal of emotions, deep introspection is needed to determine if I am fighting the current situation or the old emotion, which should lead to the point where past traumas “lose their power to control our responses in the present” (Kraybill, 1988). The third level is to acknowledge one’s own power and to stop feeling a helpless victim with little power to inflict injury or any consequence on other (Kraybill, 1988).

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47 *In spite of the reality that conflict shifted from between states to within states after 1945, this field remained preoccupied with relations between states, peacemaking and conflict resolution. Since the 1970s scholars like Azar started to highlight the reality of ‘protracted social conflicts’, which refers to ‘prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs such as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation’* (Ramsbotham, 2005: 113). This gradually led to the development of the field of conflict transformation.
4.9.2.4 Social healing

O’Dea (2004) describes social healing as an emerging field that seeks to deal with wounds created by conflict, collective trauma and large-scale oppression. It focuses on areas of collective experience that have remained unresolved, neglected, repressed and without meaning within the psyche of groups and even nations. It invites us to see ourselves as empowered to dialogue with history (and history in the making) and not to experience it as a series of externalised events beyond our reach. This requires the participation of our inner lives (O’Dea, 2004). It begins in our awareness, and is an expression of our longing for greater wholeness. The domain of social healing is centrally within consciousness rather than politics per se; it is psycho-spiritual in nature yet activist in its consequences. Thompson & O’Dea conclude that previous approaches to social transformation have much wisdom and insight to offer, but their solutions are often incomplete, leaving out the fullness of human experience and the influence of larger social systems (2005: 11).

4.9.2.5 Community organisations and leadership

Cabrera approaches wounded communities by working with community leaders and organisations who work with those communities. Leaders and organisations are often not conscious about their own pain and therefore at a loss on how to deal with the apathy and pain of communities. The result is an abundance of projects, which mostly fail to bear fruit. For Cabrera this is because they try to do “open heart surgery with a machete”: “activism abounds while theory is rejected”, critical education is diluted to an “endless cycle of working groups ‘systematizing’ their discussions on drawing-paper flipcharts”, and old tools and recipes are repeated without questioning why it “leads nowhere” (Cabrera, 2003: 6). It is only after facilitating processes where leaders/organisers worked through their personal histories of pain that they could start with the actual work of healing. Three simple steps were identified for personal healing within these organisations: acknowledge, express and then reflect on what happened. Even though this sounds very simple, it is highly complex in a community where so much is still denied. A reason for the denial and refusal to reflect on organisations is the fear that such reflection can destroy the organisation, because it requires admitting to and accepting of mistakes made (Cabrera, 2003). Emphraim observes this phenomenon in South Africa, where an admission of failure has become a taboo, not only because it forces us to accept that we are human and capable of despicable acts, but “in some freakish twist of logic that ‘the enemy’ would win” (2014). Abrams & Van Niekerk also emphasise the importance of equipping our leaders with an understanding of the notion of multiple woundedness (2010).

4.9.2.6 Mind-body-spirit work

Practitioners of mind-body-spirit practices have demonstrated for thousands of years the ability to ‘make whole’. Only recently has this been backed up by neuroscience research and quantum physics. A leader in this type of work on community level is Capacitar, founded by Pat Cane in Latin America. Its practices engage the emotional/limbic brain to unblock energy and facilitate a moving forward by reprogramming it through body work. Feelings of inferiority, isolation, cynicism and anger, caused by various kinds of social oppression and subordination, are challenged. Access to the capacity for
connection is supported and new neural pathways created by activating resonance with a new coherent pattern or intention (Friedman, 2012).

### 4.9.2.7 Transformative and liberating education

Derman-Sparks (2010: 4-5) identifies five goals of anti-bias education. Children are able to demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride and positive social identities. They can express comfort and joy with human diversity. They use accurate language for human differences and make deep caring human connections. Children are increasingly able to recognise unfairness, have terms to describe it and understand that it hurts; and demonstrate empowerment. They have the skills to act (with others or alone) against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions. Such education is based on a few basic principles, which include the need for everybody to do this work (not only the target or non-target group). Attention has to be paid to the realities of the lives of those involved: even though the above goals might provide a framework, a one-size-fits-all curriculum will not be effective in varying conditions with different types of inequity and power issues. Anti-bias learning and education do not happen in one lesson and educators have to know themselves (Derman-Sparks, 2010: 4-9).

This links to the Freirean model that rejects the ‘banking system’ of education, where information is merely ‘deposited’. Critical education is about dialogue between teacher and student in which they look critically at the way in which they live and in which reality is constantly in process and transformation (Freire, 1996: 60-61, 64-65). Such education not only helps the target group to learn they have been “miseducated, lied to, misled, brainwashed, and confused by racist conditioning”: it leads to anger and rage (DeRosa, 2001: 10).

There is also a growing literature exploring how to deal with this ‘difficult knowledge’ and ‘pedagogic discomfort’ (Jansen, 2009: 256; Zembalys, 2012). Deliberate attention is required to deal with the (expected) resistance of privileged students. Important in this regard is the pedagogical principle of mutual vulnerability, the value of compassion and strategic empathy (Zembalas, 2012: 8, 11), as well as the reciprocal necessity that everyone carries the burden of troubled knowledge as they move towards each other (Jansen, 2009: 268). Central to ‘mutual vulnerability’ is the pedagogical process that allows teachers and other authority figures to open up and render their frames vulnerable for learners and students to risk their full participation in the pedagogical transaction. Through this full participation other frames and default-drives are dislodged, which in turn makes them accessible to critical reflection and moderation through educationally driven processes (Keet, Zinn & Porteus, 2009: 110).

### 4.9.3 Stages of a communal healing process

In conclusion, from the literature I infer basic stages of a healing or transformational process. Even though the sequence of events are important (for example creating safety before the work can start), the stages are not strictly linear, but cyclical in nature. Safety, for example, is never stable or
permanent, but might need to be rebuilt repeatedly.

These stages include an understanding of the nature of wounding and healing; the building of safety to encourage talking and sharing; remembering, decoding and reconstruction; contextualisation of personal stories in historical, political, religious, economic and gender patterns; connection with self (critical consciousness); mourning of losses and longing for new relationships and possibilities; planning of strategies for well-being and transformation; and linking with others/other communities to share experiences and technologies and to build a public record of the work done.

4.10 Considerations when designing a communal healing approach

From the literature on healing it is clear that a healing process is complex and that it is necessary to consider carefully how such process should be attempted. It is also clear that it goes far beyond a set of tools and techniques or a clear recipe. In this section I look at a few issues that frame an approach to healing work.

4.10.1 The critical link: the facilitator of the healing process

Holding all these processes together is the facilitator of the healing process. The most basic requirement mentioned by most scholars is that of a high level of self-knowledge and consciousness. This will avoid issues around transference, counter-transference and projection, without which it would be impossible to create the necessary safety for others to embark on a journey of conscientisation.

What is the role of the facilitator? Kaplan describes the facilitator as “the guerrilla fighter, who operates “from the hills, mobile and innovative, striking at the heart of unconscious social assumptions and presumptions” (Kaplan, 1996: 115). Atkinson links the role of the facilitator to the Latin root for the term educator, educates, which means to lead out from or to bring forth. This implies the task of drawing out new knowledge about the self or out of the “student of life” (2011: 252). Healing is not about the “treatment of diseases or disabilities”, but an “adventure in self-discovery” and it is the role of the facilitator to create a supportive setting for this adventure (Atkinson, 2011: 252). An occasional opinion from own wisdom can be offered, which implies a high degree of consciousness development and self-knowledge, as well as “the ability to participate without fear in the intense and extraordinary experiences of another person, and willingness to face new observations and situations that may not fit any conventional theoretical framework” (Grof, in Atkinson, 2011: 252-253).

To be able to fulfil this role, a particular combination of personal traits is necessary, such as sensitivity, intuition, empathy and sufficient confidence to maintain control – without being too assertive or anxious to achieve a set outcome. This requires flexibility, rigorous analysis, cultural sensitivity, but above all the ability to keep the ego in check (Nathan, 1998a). As Friedman puts it: increased self-knowledge requires “less attach[ment] to a particular ego” (2012). It becomes possible
to let go of the idea of an image (how to look, what to be admired for) and to focus on being a better facilitator and to work collaboratively for a solution.

One of the biggest challenges of the facilitator is to create trust. Contrary to general assumption, a collaborative working relationship in the healing process cannot be taken for granted: trauma damages the ability to enter into trusting relationships. The establishment of a “working alliance” is a predictable difficulty (Herman, 1997: 136). In addition, issues seemingly sufficiently resolved at one stage of the healing journey may be reawakened during a next stage, and it has to be accepted that these will “reverberate throughout the ... lifecycle” (Herman, 1997: 211). It is not only the wounded who need to learn to trust: the facilitator has to trust group members with their process.

The facilitator needs an in-depth understanding of the complexities of woundedness and the healing process. This requires an ability to recognise and name survival strategies in the wounded, for example ‘doublethink’, denial of or obsession with traumatic experiences, avoiding reality, loss of a concept of space and time, a fixation with the perpetrator and mistrust (Atkinson, 2011; Herman, 1997; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

Herman further highlights the skill of distinguishing between behaviour from the original trauma and from the healing process. In addition, symptoms tend to simultaneously call attention to and deflect attention from a deep secret of pain (1997: 146). The focus has to be on the original pain and not the manifestation thereof – a huge challenge indeed!

The outsider role of the facilitator is critically important: from the inside, it is not possible to question, doubt and challenge. However, coming in from outside requires almost impossibly difficult qualities: inner resourcefulness and personal integrity (Kaplan, 1996: 166).

When the facilitator is, in terms of the matrix of oppression, from the ‘other’ group than participants even more self-knowledge and theoretical understanding would be required (for example a white facilitator with a group of black people or a male facilitator with a group of women). The anti-bias model suggests a mixed group of facilitators to represent all sub-groups in the group. However, if this is not practically possible, the work should continue – with utmost care and reflection (ELRU, 1997). It might in fact be equally dangerous if the facilitator and participants are from the same group (for example white/white, black/black or women/women), because it is more difficult to recognise, and challenge assumptions from within.

The facilitator of a healing process needs training, mentoring and constant support, because trauma can be “contagious” (Herman, 1997: 140). The facilitator is thus in danger of becoming emotionally overwhelmed while sharing so many traumatic experiences and feelings. On the other hand, Friedman (2012) notes how the facilitator’s “certainty becomes contagious”. This requires utter
mindfulness and the setting of an environment of care – for self, others and the world.

4.10.2 The personal and the communal

Their feelings were like my feelings. They were stealing my story – I wanted to know how did they know my story and what it felt like to be me?

The discourse on personal versus communal healing approaches needs some consideration. There are theoretical concerns about personal level work for reasons of affordability and/or that it might be embedded in Western welfare and psychological praxes (especially regarding the individualistic and out-of-social-context nature of some of these). Communal wounding, Martín-Baró reminds us, has a dialectic character: it is produced in actual social relationships/contexts, of which the individual is just one part (Anckermann, et al: 136-137). Wounded communities are not merely “assemblies of traumatized persons”: the wounds inflicted on the individuals start to combine and create a mood, an ethos – almost a group culture – that is different and more than the sum of the private wounds that make it up (Erikson, 1994: 230-231). This implies that because psychosocial trauma is socially produced, an intervention aimed at alleviating the suffering should be addressing the social fabric of the community. In other words: suffering has to be socialised through the establishment of “ethical social relationships” (Westoby, 2009b: 89).

On the other hand, there are strong arguments made that there “can be no social change without personal change” (Cabrera, 2003: 7). Liberated nations, new democratic governments and development projects often state ‘the reconstruction of the social fabric’ as goal – but forget to pay attention to the question: what does this fabric consist of? The answer is: people, individuals with personal dreams, wounds and frustrations. Cabrera thus suggests that if we expect the fabric to be reconstructed, we need to start with those who have to do the reconstruction (2003: 10).

My conclusion from the literature is that no choice has to be made: individuals, communities and institutions are to do this work in tandem. Personal healing thus needs to be built into all developmental activities, but this is not possible out of the context of individuals-in-community and without working with the healing of institutions simultaneously (Abrams & Van Niekerk, 2010). Keet, Zinn & Porteus remind us that even though African philosophy puts forward the normative conception of a person as rooted within group solidarity (as expressed in the notion of ubuntu or ‘I am because we are’), this does not displace the recognition of individual human beings: the ‘we’ can only exist when the ‘I’ is acknowledged (2009: 115).

Methodologically this also makes sense: a normal reaction after being wounded is to withdraw into a kind of protective envelope in which the experience is treated as a solitary burden, which eventually becomes an “aching loneliness” (Erikson, 1994: 231). A healing process within social context breaks
this isolated suffering (Westoby, 2009b: 30) and offers an opportunity to become a “source of communality”, a “gathering of the wounded”, where no explanations are needed and where a spiritual kinship or sense of identity can be created (Erikson, 1994: 231). Group work offers an opportunity for the “re-working of subjectivity”, which makes it possible to reflect together on how social limits came to be, to begin to see them as a construction that can be undone and a situation that can be rethought and transformed (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 207). The discovery that others had similar feelings and experiences is critical for the person who feels isolated in his/her pain and suffering and who blame the self for being in this situation (Atkinson, 2011: 137).

Working as individuals in a group also offers the chance for mirroring, which is described as the process in which one person reflects back to another, often by imitation or parallel conduct, the content of other’s communication. The aim is for the self to come to know itself and to relax in the secure awareness of its rightful place in the world (Bader, 2010).

In addition, all over the globe communities, groups and even whole nations have embarked on communal strategies to deal with pain and oppression, support their struggle for liberation and find healing. Examples include community art, protest song and dance, music and chant, the building of memorials and altars, creating ceremonies and rituals, theatre, role-play and drama and sport. Even though these offer powerful tools, communal action and resistance should not neglect the critical aspects of personal reflection, consciousness and authentic dialogue in these endeavours.

4.10.3 Understanding apathy, resistance and impatience in the wounded

There seems to be agreement in the literature that it is not a natural decision for the wounded to want to heal. The natural reaction to pain and hurt is either to strike back or to flee - to banish the unspeakable to the unconsciousness. It is thus unlikely that any community will explicitly express a need for healing or ‘ask for’ a healing programme – something that should be considered very seriously by those who like to do ‘needs analysis’ (Puljak-Shank, [n.d.]: 182, 185; Trapman, 1999). Atkinson observes that even though the issues and experiences of racism are a “cumulative compounding trauma”, it was never mentioned by participants (all subjected to racism) in her study groups. It had to be drawn out actively. Her analysis is that the experience of racism is “such an everyday occurrence that it was unacknowledged and unrecognised” (2011: 229). The motto that “we can”, supported by strengths-based programmes further emphasise resilience, which may exclude an honest look at the wounding (Puljak-Shank, [n.d.]: 185).

To start with healing work thus requires deliberate intention and there are no guarantees of an ‘outcome’ – which makes it considerably less appealing than community development projects that are so seductive with their promises and clean timeframes. Healing work can be difficult and last for years, which requires utmost dedication, commitment, trust and honesty (Puljak-Shank, [n.d.]: 185). It is unlikely that a day will be reached when we can announce: we are healed! Fighting oppression in
all its forms is thus a lifelong process of challenging hidden messages (ELRU, 1997: 9). After all, we are dealing here with the mud that has seeped into all fibres and keeps on with its contamination as long it is unconscious.

In order to encourage prolonged participation in such process Cabrera emphasises the importance of stressing the gains that might be produced. One such gain is the release of energy. It is known that people suffering from the multiple wounds phenomenon have much less energy. This can easily be understood on the physical level and can be addressed through simple breathing exercises. With improved energy, it is possible to move on to the process of dealing with pain (Cabrera, 2003: 7-8). Such a taste of success is an important source of motivation and trust building. In addition, we need to remember that the process of healing does not always have to involve tears: gaiety, games and laughter are of critical importance and facilitators need to be provided with a “continuous flow of tools” to work with (Cabrera, 2003: 8).

Hoffman warns that the wounding can reach “the limits of its usefulness” (which she thinks is the case six decades after the Holocaust): we need to heed the danger of creating the “perpetually damaged patient” instead of lengthening and widening the lens to extricate more and more layers of meanings (2005: 192, 196-197).

Kearney posits that the ethical response to the narrative of wounding is to also pay attention to stories of survival and that some individuals/communities “refuse to be defined by their wounds” (2014: 611). We need to note the capacity for innovative strategies, celebration and reclamations, which should not simply be written off as ‘strategies for coping’. She thus prefers the term wounding to trauma, because it “implicates the capacity to heal” (Kearney, 2014: 601).

### 4.10.4 Creating safety

As mentioned throughout this chapter, it is not natural for the wounded to enter into the difficult process of sharing and participating. Thibodeau & North Peigan note that “when people are afflicted by such a loss, they do not participate in family and community activities, and appear passive and unavailable for meaningful social interaction” (2007: 57). Even when they do attend, “a guarded stance” compromises engagement, disclosure, personal reflection, confrontation and other essential characteristics of effective group functioning (Thibodeau & North Peigan, 2007: 57).

It often happens that, even when a level of safety is created, unexpected (an often seemingly unrelated) triggers can disrupt it. This happens when an old blocked-out memory is suddenly brought to the surface by a remark, a scene in a film, a song or even a sound or smell. These can elicit an

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48 The body reacts, shrinks into itself and tenses up when trauma or aggression is suffered. The first effect of that reaction is to reduce the amount of oxygen that the body takes in. And when the body receives less oxygen, it has less energy available (Cabrera, 2003: 7-8).
exaggerated reaction, which requires the re-establishment of the safety needed to continue (Atkinson, 2011: 194).

The literature offers various techniques and principles to build sufficient safety and trust. These include clear guidelines for discussion, a framework for understanding the own process (Cardozo, 2006: 174) and working in a circle. The latter breaks down hierarchical structures between target/non-target groups, teacher/student, counsellor/client and researcher/researched. It gives equal value to all stories and indicates that each story is relevant to the whole (Atkinson, 2011: 239-241). It is also important to start with ‘easier’ topics, before moving on to the difficult ‘inner work’. Cabrera finds that psychological wounds usually manifest in physical ills and it is useful to start with the less threatening topic of personal health problems (2003: 3).

This can also be linked to Kraybill’s work on the issue of risk. The willingness to risk can easily disappear, especially when people are forced through public processes to make commitments expected from them while their “hearts are not ready” yet – which eventually leads to resentment and a battle between “head and heart” (Kraybill, 1988). The question is thus: what risk would be safe to take? He suggests it should be a risk that you can afford to lose or have rejected. With the smallest risk rewarded, it gets easier to take a bigger risk (Kraybill, 2006).

4.10.5 Opening the space for dialogue

An essential aspect of the healing process is dialogue. The art of inner or self-dialogue is critical for the process of conscientisation. It acknowledges the right of the ‘other’ within to exist - without which the validity of the ‘other’ outside cannot be admitted (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 177). Freire identifies three requirements for true dialogue: humility (which excludes arrogance), faith (in humankind and its power to make and remake, create and re-create humanity) and critical thinking. The latter should not be confused with naïve thinking, which accommodates the normalisation of dehumanisation and historical realities. Only dialogue can generate critical thinking (Freire, 1996: 69-74). But above all he insists that dialogue cannot exist “in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people” (Freire, 1996: 70).

Atkinson (2011: 16-18) draws on the concept of dadirri, an Aboriginal way of referring to a deep contemplative process of "listening to one another". It is informed by the principles of reciprocity (we call on it and it calls on us), community and relationships, learning, witnessing, reflecting and learning. Profound watching and deep listening invite the urge to get the story right and to know the self.

Gobodo-Madikizela highlights the importance of dialogue between perpetrator and victim, those who now have to live together in a broken society – and to live with themselves (2003: 119). Dialogue does not solve all problems, but it certainly creates ways for broadening the scope of justice and healing processes. Through dialogue, victims as well as the greater society “come to recognize
perpetrators as human beings who failed morally, whether through coercion, the perverted convictions of a warped mind, or fear” and this dialogue can facilitate the humanisation of the dehumanised (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003: 119).

4.10.6 Stories: telling, not-telling and decoding

... in order to start the process of healing, one needs to find words for one’s experience (Krog, 2008: 226).

At the core of the healing process is the telling of stories, personal and communal. Group members listen more deeply to themselves by listening to the stories of others and to discover the “same courage in themselves that they observed and named in others” (Atkinson, 2011: 254). In a sense, the telling of stories allows the individual to re-author his/her own story. It provides space to work through emotions and facilitates the dialogical interaction between the “multiplicitous and conflicted aspects of self” (Kaufka, 2009: 137). It disrupts individuals’ identification with the problem and sets the stage for dialogue, encourage collaborative inquiry into new possibilities and invites people to leave behind agendas of ‘winning’ or convincing’ (Watkins & Shulman, 2010: 202-203). Brent argues that public narration provides a relief from individual guilt and forms part of the “daily production of alternative frameworks of meaning that nourish collective action” (2009: 199). A helpful way of storytelling is family and community story maps, which helps to make sense of situations across generations, which “have long seemed senseless and are becoming increasingly harmful and dysfunctional” (Atkinson, 2011: 226).

However, working with stories is highly complex. It is difficult for the wounded to tell a story while battling between the desire to deny and the desire to proclaim aloud what happened (still happens). The result is a story told in a “highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy” (Herman, 1997: 1). This relates to the thorny issue of truth, especially when this plays a role in trials. How true can memories and stories be? Atkinson’s work amongst siblings and parents reveals conflicting and different memories of the same event – and she concludes: “Each is right. None is wrong” (2011: 235). Krog, Mpolweni & Ratele (2009) reflect on the testimony of Ms Konile during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s hearings. In Konile’s story, which they called There was this Goat, truth is to be sought (and accepted) within the complexity of language, culture, translation, the spiritual, dreams, metaphor and the intense experience of trauma.

The latter might result in scepticism about the story of the victim (Herman, 1997: 144) – and the last thing a wounded person needs, is somebody judging or blaming him/her for not being accurate, reliable and even a good victim! Gobodo-Madikizela reminds us that the “facts” are most accurately written in the body and heart of the victimised (2003: 85-86).
We also need to pay attention to silence. What “is happening when nothing is happening in a group” (Kaplan, 2002: 22)? Another veil through which we have to see is that people refer to themselves in the terms of the false messages attached through generations of oppression, which expresses “the fragmented and distressed feelings of a traumatised identity” (Atkinson, 2011: 179). The facilitator of the process needs to be on high alert all the time to pick these labels up and to make it conscious. Brent further notes in his study how deeply the stories were influenced by the audiences: the tellers wanted them to receive a different story from the usual representations of their community (2009: 198-199).

The telling of the story is merely the beginning of the work. Krog emphasises the “absolute necessity of interpretation and translation if health, healing and transformation are at stake” (2008: 225). Freire suggests a structured process of co-inquiry between facilitator and community during which information that emerges is decoded or classified into themes. He also alerts us to the importance of the ‘silent theme’: it suggests a structure of what could be called ‘mutism’, which is established in the face of the overwhelming force of limit-situations. The latter is defined as situations and perceptions that limit an objective view of self and reality. This is critical and the facilitator has the duty to include these themes, which he calls ‘hinged themes’, into the activity. Crucial during this process of investigation is to eliminate the risk of identification with themes, which is done by separating the people from the themes. A danger is if no action flows out of the process (Freire, 1996: 83-89, 101-102).

4.10.7 Allowing emotions to unfold

One of the most common manifestations of woundedness is the blocking off or numbing of emotions and this is perceived necessary for survival, but has serious implications for the mental and physical health on the long term. An emotionally sensitive model of social healing is underpinned by the notion that societies need to acknowledge and work through the emotions associated with their first-hand experience of trauma, but also through the collective forms of emotions (such as anger and fear) that feed into or fuel disingenuous perceptions of others and which keeps societies divided and too scared to interact and come together (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2008: 395). This links to the concept of ‘troubled knowledge’, which is defined as the “knowledge of a traumatized past such as the profound feelings of loss, shame, resentment, or defeat that one carries from his or her participation in a traumatized community” (Zembylas, 2012: 2).

Hutchison & Bleiker argue that the whole range of emotions, not only anger, fear and resentment needs to be explored in the healing approach - including empathy, compassion and wonder. These have the capacity to facilitate more “lasting and ingenuous forms of social healing and reconciliation” (2008: 385).

In addition, we need to understand the significance of gender-socialised emotions. The emotion
permitted to women is sadness and her feminine role thus allows her to suffer, complain and cry – but not to express rage and thereby ‘acts like a man’. Men, on the other hand are only allowed to express anger or violence, but never fear, guilt or sadness and they most definitely may not cry. All pay dearly for these repressions (Cabrera, 2003: 4).

A highly valued emotion in the healing process is empathy. In essence, it deepens our humanity. The absence thereof assaults our humanity and keeps human beings separated (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2002: 20). It involves genuine curiosity and interest in another person, which individualises and particularises – and challenges the dehumanisation of both victim and perpetrator (Gobodo-Madikezela, 2003; Halpern in Halpern & Weinstein, 2004: 307). An empathic response is “something in the self that is felt to belong to the other” (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003: 127). Such reciprocal emotional process opens the possibility of making an empathic connection with someone who has victimised us, as response to the pain of his/her remorse. Identification with the other as ‘bone of my bone’ through the sheer fact of his being human, draws us to ‘rescue’ others in pain, almost as if this were a learned response embedded deep in our genetic and evolutionary past” (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003: 127).

The value of less comfortable emotions cannot be overestimated. Discomfort serves the important purpose of disruption and can be used very effectively, for example in educational systems (De Viñar, 2012: 107; Zembylas, 2012: 1, 8).

4.11 Conclusion

South Africa has experienced almost all types of wounding described in this chapter: colonisation, genocides, oppression, wars, various scorched earth strategies for over a century, liberation, strategies to remedy but that also continue to wound, development, charity and welfare, poor education, inequality - and the list goes on. It has been made a global example of how to end such wounding by not descending into civil war with the transition of power in 1994. Unfortunately, like in many other countries, we have underestimated the cunning and complexity of so many layers of wounding. Maybe we did not pay enough attention to the crevices where mud is still trapped, poisoning and re-poisoning our ‘soil and soul’. It is also clear that the healing process is not easy – in any case infinitely more difficult than what the jargon and superficial programmes suggest. It is not counted in statistics or amounts; it has no predictable outcome or a certificate declaring success or ‘competence’. The uncovering of each of the complex layers of wounding does bring new energy and meaning though. It liberates us from the taste and smell of the mud so that we can breathe and see the authentic us and form relationships in new ways. It leaves us free “to risk an act of love” (Freire, 1996: 32) – to ourselves, others and the world that we call our home.
5 Methodological framework

They seek neither truth nor likelihood; they seek astonishment
(Borges, 2000: 14).

The chapter defines the methodological framework of the study. It starts with a description of my research journey, followed by an explanation of how the study was conceptualised. I then look at the qualitative methodological paradigm within which this study is embedded and the research methods used. It concludes with considerations around ethics and limitations.

5.1 My research journey

The normal route to this type of academic study is through a step-by-step academic path. This did not happen in my case. I stumbled upon this path literally out of the field: more than two decades of fieldwork in community development. I soon discovered that the distance between my practical experience and what appears to be necessary to work ‘academically’ is rather significant. Because I did not have the academic language and theoretical knowledge to name and position my years of praxis, they appeared to be without value or validity. I lost my voice and my enthusiasm for this study - until I eventually found courage in the work of scholars like Guishard (2009). In the record of her research journey I recognised much of my own predicament. I briefly relate her story as I interpret it.

Through participatory action research Guishard aimed to gather deeper understanding of the nuances and progression of critical consciousness across several generations of poor and working class Bronxites (New York). As passionate novice she “scoured voluminous bodies of literature” (Guishard, 2009: 89) to approach her project with a safe theory and conceptual framework. Her enthusiasm was eventually replaced by doubt and depression: the information gathered (oral history) appeared to “read like blatant disregard for our questions”; she felt “overwhelmingly oppressed by the literature on oppression”; and realised that she had been engaging in “theory worship” (Guishard, 2009: 94). She found her discipline ‘obsolete’ and she lacked the language to describe her experiences. Eventually, she had to acknowledge the fear that her conceptualisations would “pale in comparison to established theorists” (Guishard, 2009: 99). Even her research questions and findings became vague and lost.

It was only through a gruelling process of reflexion (succinctly reflected in the title of the article: The false paths, the endless labours, the turns now this way and now that) that she managed to recover and re-claim her research and her voice. She realised the importance of embracing her standpoint to this work: even though her conceptualisations might be “naïve, contradictory, and limited … they were as good if not better than theorists before me” (Guishard, 2009: 99).
I was immediately drawn to Guishard’s reflexive and honest record, which I found a poignant and moving account of an authentic and (in)credible journey (even though I continued to be puzzled how this could be acceptable in the academic world). I could relate to her experience, even though my experience started from the opposite end: I engaged with communities without having ‘scoured volumes of literature’. I had not even been aware of such literature, theories or the option to define pre-set theoretical, methodological or conceptual frameworks. Mine was a journey of discovery and un-veiling, based on what I perceived as ‘common sense’ and driven by “an urgent curiosity” (Emerson in Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005: 626). My dilemma was thus that I did not know of a theory that supports my praxis – or worse: that I would be ‘caught out’ and my emergent style exposed as invalid and ‘wrong’.

Guishard struggled to get out of the theory – and I struggled to get in.

The discovery of scholars like Guishard helped me in different ways. Firstly, it might not have been such a bad thing to work intuitively (in the sense of remaining open for discovery – not naïvely): there are even theories and methodologies supporting this. Secondly, it is acceptable to despair and to acknowledge it. Thirdly, I had not been functioning in a vacuum and did not come from ‘nowhere’: I do have a very specific view of reality and my task was to find and name the relevant paradigm.

The spirit of excitement returned and I started to explore the mysteries of ontology, epistemology and methodology. In the hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm and methodologies like reflexivity, human inquiry and the dialogical approach I started to recognise elements of my praxis and how I perceive reality. I gradually reclaimed my research and my voice.

5.2 Conceptual framework

Schram describes the design of a conceptual framework as “the uncovering [of] what is relevant and what is problematic among the ideas circulating around the problem, making new connections, and then formulating an argument that positions one to address the problem” (in Lathouras, 2012: 57). The conceptual framework thus brings together the various aspects involved in a study and provides the lens through which the problem is observed. It can also be seen as a ‘tentative theory’, which informs the study’s design, refines goals, develops relevant research questions, facilitates the selection of appropriate methods and identifies potential validity threats (Lathouras, 2012: 57).

However, in constructivist and hermeneutic paradigms, in which this study is embedded, a rigid framework might limit the inductive and flexible nature of the research. It might be more useful to work with an open ‘beginning framework’ that allows for discovery, interpretation and understanding (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 553; Boblin et al., 2013: 1269). The dilemma of Guishard comes to mind: she experienced practically how, in an evolving and iterative research process, the researcher can
outgrow his/her research questions. Fixed theories and frameworks may then result in forced responses from participants (Guishard, 2009).

Heeding this caveat, I merely offer the broad context within which the research took place and the purpose of the inquiry.

The study is situated within the South African context49, with its deeply wounded ‘soil and soul’ and society that struggles to deal with the complex manifestations of oppression, inequality and poverty. These are poignantly exposed through the social problems and violence that we experience on daily basis (briefly described in the Introduction and elaborated upon in the reflection on communal wounding in Chapter 4).

I perceive community development as the appropriate field to deal with the task of communal healing, since it has for decades established theory and practice to engage with communities (Chapter 2) and there are thousands of community development workers currently working all over the country with communities (the scope of community development in South Africa is described in Chapter 3). They could potentially contribute significantly towards communal healing.

Unfortunately, in spite of prolific community development activity in the country, engagement with the ‘soil and soul’ of our communities in this field is very limited. Instead, the woundedness is mostly glossed over and there is an absence of a discourse that links woundedness with the potential of initiatives (especially the economic enterprises and cooperatives) to meet with success. (This was analysed in-depth in the discussion on how community development in South Africa engages with the woundedness, in Chapter 3). It is indeed a pity that the presence of so many practitioners is not optimally utilised to engage with communities in this regard.

I thus argue that a gap exists between mainstream community development praxis and our wounded communities. How can this gap be addressed to ensure increased engagement with the complexity of community?

I do not expect that the agenda of mainstream community development will change in the foreseeable future: organisations, departments and funders will continue to pursue models driven by economic agendas (poverty eradication), budgets and timeframes and they will continue to be implemented by practitioners who are insufficiently equipped to deal with the complex reality of communities. However, the link between wounding in communities and the capacity for development may be acknowledged in these programmes, which can result in a desire/decision to integrate a healing approach into mainstream community development praxis.

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49 This does not imply that South Africa is unique: societies all over the globe grapple with these complexities.
Such integration will depend on two factors: the availability of community development practitioners/workers who are able to facilitate such a process and the availability of an accessible and practical healing approach, suitable for implementation by grassroots facilitators. The question is: are these available? The answer is negative: workers are available and in the field, but there is a problem regarding a healing approach. Even though there is an emerging discourse on communal healing, most focus on victims of specific trauma and not on the broad community and is not situated within the field of community development. An articulated healing approach suitable for implementation on community level by grassroots workers is still lacking.

It is thus the purpose of this study to search from the research data essential elements of a healing approach, suitable for mainstream community development initiatives and practitioners, and to consider ways of integrating such approach into mainstream community development.

An option investigated in this study is the concept of the personal practice framework\(^{50}\), which enables the facilitator to move beyond the core task and to integrate an appropriate approach into his/her daily work. This may increase the potential for engagement with woundedness – in spite of/in addition to the agenda of the set organisational framework. It can be assumed that, if the personal practice framework of a significant number of practitioners is enriched by elements of a healing approach, the latter may eventually filter into the organisational framework.

It is important to note that it is not the intention of this study to create complex theoretical constructs or a blueprint. The aim is to find the most basic dimensions of a healing approach that will make it easy for the average practitioner to engage with communities in new ways – not to burden them with complex theories or models.

### 5.3 Methodological framework

#### 5.3.1 Ontological and epistemological paradigm

I realised that I am at home within an ontological paradigm that assumes reality as socially constructed and subjectively perceived – which excludes the possibility of a single reality or ‘truth’ (Boblin et al., 2013: 1269; Laverty, 2003: 13). This world view is illustrated in a ‘disclaimer’ that Wiese (2009) added to his record of the story of the Elandskloof community – which I find both moving and irresistible:

\[
\text{Elke woord van hierdie verhaal is natuurlik waar, ook die leuens.}^{51}\]

I am further positioned within the constructivist and interpretive interactionist epistemology. This

\(^{50}\) The personal practice framework is described in Chapter 2.

\(^{51}\) “Every word in this story is obviously true, including the lies.” [my translation].
stance does not see knowledge as constructed around an objective social reality ‘out there’ (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 455). Instead, lived reality is constructed by the cultural contexts, values, shared meanings and assumptions in which individuals are rooted. These assumptions seldom offer avenues for escape, since they are inherent and hidden in the subconscious (Rau, 2004: 26-27). Within this epistemology we aim to grasp the subjective worlds, meanings and interpretations of the individual positioned within a social context and to address the interconnection between private lives and public responses to personal troubles (Gladstone, Volpe & Boydell, 2007: 434). It allows us to remain open to the unexpected and to explore irregularities in a way that allow interpretations and meanings to emerge inductively from the data (Laverty, 2003: 17; Rau, 2004: 129). The possibility of value-free inquiry, an objective researcher and interpretation based on causality are thereby ruled out (Gladstone et al., 2007: 434). Instead, biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but embedded in and essential to an interpretive process. Researchers are called upon to give considerable and ongoing thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim their own position (Laverty, 2003: 17).

Moore (2007) warns that within this epistemology we are forced to unmake many of our “methodological habits”, including the expectation that we can always arrive at more or less stable conclusions; the belief that “as social scientists we have special insights that allow us to see further than others into certain parts of social reality”; and an expectation of generality or even universalism. But first and most importantly: we need to “unmake our desire and expectation for security” (Moore, 2007). This relates directly to my concern about the seductive nature of mainstream community development, so deeply embedded in ‘safe’ plans that promise success through pre-determined projects and the reluctance to embark on open-ended processes.

5.3.2 Methodologies underpinning the study

Since it is assumed within the qualitative paradigm that individuals make meaning of their social world, reality is perceived as multilayered, complex and ever-changing. The purpose of a qualitative methodology is to deepen understanding and promote transformation. This is made possible through the concurrent occurrence of discovery and interpretation (Boblin et al., 2013: 1269; Hesse-Biber, 2010: 455, 456; Sloan & Bowe, 2013: 1293). Dialogue and deep listening between researcher and researched allow genuine expressions of beliefs and values to emerge (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 456). It requires caution regarding what is said, what is said ‘between the lines’, silences or the absence of speaking, the “silence of the unspeakable and the silence of being or life itself, as it is herein that one may find the taken for granted or the self-evident” (Laverty, 2003: 19). Careful examination of words and views is needed for rich and complex descriptions and explanations (Andrade, 2009: 43).

Qualitative research is open to new information and it is aimed at exploring and theory-building rather than at confirming (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 456). It is useful to refer in this regard to the distinction between theory building and enriching research. Drawing on Stiles, Rennie (2009: 127) explains that
theory building aims for an internally consistent, explicit understanding, which results in some improvement to the precision, generality or realism of the theory. Enriching research, on the other hand, aims for a deeper, richer, broader and more profound appreciation of the object of study through a systematic exploration of multiple perspectives, alternative interpretations and possible meanings of texts and events. An encounter with the research (for example the reading of a research report) can lead people to find their own meanings and uses. This study is aligned with the enrichment model.

The methodology is further embedded in the hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutics focuses on the evolving of meaning and does not necessarily seek for a ‘correct’ answer or valid interpretation, which is more typical of the foundationalist nature of phenomenology (Laverty, 2003: 16). Or, in Guignon’s words, hermeneutic phenomenology challenges the assumption that “empirically discoverable generalizations about causal relations can be discerned in the study of humans. It holds, instead, that since humans are ‘self-making’ or ‘self-constituting’ beings, there is no reason to expect to find fixed, unchanging regularities underlying their behavior” (2010: 99). For Heidegger all understanding is connected to a given set of forestructures, including one’s historicality, and these cannot be eliminated. One therefore needs to become as aware as possible and account for these interpretive influences, which is very different from the “naming and then bracketing of bias or assumptions” in the phenomenological paradigm (Laverty, 2003: 18).

Embedded in the hermeneutics is the concept of the hermeneutic circle, which demands self-reflexivity and an “on-going conversation about the experience while simultaneously living in the moment, actively constructing interpretations of the experience and questioning how those interpretations came about” (Laverty, 2003: 22). Rau describes it as a dialogical process between data, theory and interpretation, while oscillating between evolving interpretations of text and context, theory and data (2004: 134-135). It moves from the parts of experience to the whole of experience and back and forth again and again to increase the depth of engagement with and the understanding of texts. This spiralling through a hermeneutic circle ends when one has reached “a place of sensible meaning, free of inner contradictions, for the moment. It is thus not permanent: it is for now only” (Laverty, 2003: 9). Gadamer emphasises the role of language, which together with history, supplies the shared sphere in the hermeneutic circle. Understanding occurs when we surrender to the movement of questions and answer. It takes us to a discovery of something new and not recognised before – the aim is thus not to understand better, but to understand differently. The hermeneutic circle keeps the dialogue open through question and answer. Because interviews and conversations are non-directive, stories are told as the teller wishes and how something is experienced – which is very different from structured interviews based on a set of questions (Koch, 1996: 176).

For a choice of methodologies and methods, I drew on the metaphor of *bricolage*, the French term for do-it-yourself. In qualitative research *bricolage* refers to the use of a variety of theories, sources and
ways of interpretation; to use what is available, to adapt, to work by trial and error, and to try several things at once - akin to the handyman's use of any materials and tools that are available and which seem sensible.

You've slapped together travel notes, moralistic ramblings, feelings, notes, jottings, untheoretical discussions, unfaible-like fables, copied out some folk songs, added some faible-like nonsense of your own invention, and are calling it fiction! (Xingjian, 2001: 453)

So, what may we ‘slap together’ to call it ‘qualitative research’? In bricolage all of the above seems to be in order, as well as “the assembly of mythic elements, motifs, allusions, characterizations, allegorical bits and pieces, narrative techniques and other stock materials to form stories that are nevertheless new and particularized for the local context” (Lincoln, 2001: 693). Brent views bricolage as pragmatic, of “how life is lived, an inventive tactic as opposed to strategy, which is a model of imposition used both by power and by political, economic and scientific rationality” (2009: 47-48).

Bricolage should not be seen as a form of triangulation: it does not add up to any proof. It “actually emphasise a complexity that belies proof” (Brent, 2009: 55). The limitations of a single method and the discursive structures of one disciplinary approach are recognised - “the inseparability of knower and known, and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience” (Kincheloe, 2001: 681).

Three closely-linked methodologies underpin this research. The two case studies used were also embedded in the methodological frameworks of reflexivity, human inquiry and the dialogical approach. These methodologies are now briefly described.

5.3.2.1 Reflexivity

Greatrex-White perceives reflexivity as a central component of hermeneutic phenomenology and qualitative research in general (2008: 1842). It is characterised by thoughtful and critical self-reflection and conscious awareness of own biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences and power imbalances (Finlay, 2002: 532; Underwood, Satterthwait & Bartlett, 2010: 1586). Reflexivity emphasises pluralism, multiple realities and ambiguity, which undermines any claim to authority or the representation of an objective reality (Couchman, 2000: 468). As we, as individuals or larger social groupings, reflect on our own history and understand how structural forces shape us, it becomes

52 The terms reflectivity and reflexivity are relatively new concepts in social research and they are used rather interchangeably by different authors in the social work literature. The definitions of critical reflection, reflectivity and reflexivity continue to be defined, re-defined and synthesised and there is ongoing blurring and overlap between the meaning of these terms (Adamson, 2011: 34).

Reflectivity can be described as “the beginning of the process of reflexivity”. It is a form of “benign introspection”, of looking inward and thinking about how own experiences may influence our thinking. Reflexivity, on the other hand, is the process of giving meaning to experience: “it uses self reflection and complex reasoning processes to understand and learn from experience”. This is done in three ways. Connections are made between current experience or a practice situation and related previous experiences. Practice is contextualised within the accumulated and synthesised knowledge base of the practitioner. Lastly, the understanding or rationale related to questions of what, why, how and by whom, is explored (PLQ(SS), 2011).
possible for us to escape from these constraints and change history (Finlay, 2002: 534). By approaching the phenomenon with openness and wonder, we actively construct our knowledge (Finlay, 2002: 532, 536) and produce “better and less distorted research accounts” (Hertz in Pillow, 2003: 178). Reflexivity thus becomes a “deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself” (Macbeth in Pillow, 2003: 179).

Reflexivity helps us “to make aspects of the self strange”, which involves the act of closely reflecting on own actions, thoughts, feelings, values, identity and their effect upon others (Bolten, 2010: 14). This is possible through internal dialogue, the ability to stay with personal uncertainty and the support of others. By standing back from our habitual ways of thinking and relating to others, we manage a critical focus on beliefs, values and professional identities. In this “highly responsible social and political activity” we become aware of how we affect/are affected by the other and by surrounding cultural structures (Bolten, 2010: 14). Economists are also encouraged to practice forms of reflexivity to examine own bias and question the methodological underpinnings and one-size-fits-all blueprints that have informed development orthodoxy: the “discipline of economics is not a study of atomic individuals devoid of time and space but that of social relations” (Basnett, 2011: 168-169).

It is important to note that reflexivity is not about naïve acceptance of data or process: it requires a rigorous, systematic and conscious process of data collection, interpretation and analysis (Couchman, 2000: 468). Even more demanding is the rigor required to reflect continuously on personal and possibly unconscious reactions, the role of the researcher, omissions and even fabrications (Finlay, 2002: 538) – and to make these practices and processes of knowledge construction visible (Pillow, 2003: 178).

I have used reflexivity as a basic guideline throughout this research. I have expected it from myself (as facilitator, mentor, team leader and researcher) and from all involved (facilitators, participants and community leadership) in all processes. This was the case during the data collection process (the case studies) and during the analysis. Rigor was demanded from all to reflect constantly not only on method and content, but on feelings, possible projections and emerging shadows that might impact constructively/destuctively on the next step in the process or the group/self as such.

Criticism against reflexivity comes from both the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Reflexivity’s subjectivism, personal disclosure (of bias, for example) and the “superhuman self-consciousness” required are not perceived as legitimate (Finlay, 2002: 542-3). For Pillow, these are actually strengths: a reflexive approach not only contributes to the production of knowledge, but also provides insight into how the knowledge has been produced, resulting in increased insight and a more accurate research account (2003: 178). This is in stark contrast to the traditional social sciences that could only offer what McCarthy calls a “view from nowhere” and the “privileged non-position of social-scientific
knowledge” (in Pillow, 2003: 178). Subjectivity is thereby transformed from a problem to an opportunity (Finlay, 2002: 531).

Moore links the scepticism about reflexivity to our obsession with success in the academic arena: the result is that it remains “risky and exposing” to face “a ‘failed’ interview and place it at the centre of an academic article” (2007). It is indeed scary to look at the inner self in the mirror. This is movingly illustrated in The Neverending Story (Ende, 1984) when Engywook describes the attempt of some travellers to look at their inner selves in the mirror. They

_yelp with horror and run away at the sight of the monster grinning out of the mirror at them._

_We had to care for some of them for weeks before they were even able to start home._

Since the reflexive researcher per definition has to look into the mirror first, s/he knows the power of this ‘monster’. After such experience, the fear for ‘exposure’ and ‘failure’ in the eyes of an outside world loses its power and, most importantly, the researcher understands the importance of approaching the task with caution, empathy and care.

I have noted certain tendencies after a particularly ‘good’ group session in which participants managed to open up and be touched by their own stories and insights. This is often followed by avoidance (absence from the next session); regressing into destructive patterns; or testing of the facilitator’s seriousness. One can almost hear the unspoken question: _Will you continue to come after what you have seen about me, after what I have done?_ It requires in-depth reflexion to understand this ‘yelp with horror’; to debrief and support such a ‘tested’ facilitator (who might be battling with his/her own issues of rejection); and to ensure that the opening up (mirroring) was done with empathy and wisdom.

### 5.3.2.2 Human inquiry

In human or co-operative inquiry research, all involved contribute to the creative process, which increases the potential of research to integrate inquiry, education and social action – thus the possibility of knowledge ‘in and for action’ – and not merely ‘in and for reflection’ (Reason, 1994: 20, 12-13). This is made possible through the paradigm of ‘critical subjectivity’, which bridges the divide between naïve inquiry (primitive subjectivity) and objective consciousness or “dead knowledge, alienated from its source” (Reason, 1994: 11). This is needed to free our attention from the constrictions and distortions of past distress and political oppression and to enter into “multiple domains of experience” (Reason, 1994: 11-12).

This type of inquiry is more demanding than orthodox science as it demands a very high degree of self-knowledge, self-reflection and co-operative criticism. It is highly involved and intensely self-critical and requires us to move forward “to a new form of integrated consciousness and critical awareness” (Reason, 1994: 13).
For Ledwith, the purpose of human inquiry is not so much to search for truth, but to heal, especially to heal the broken relationships and the modern experience of division. Wholeness cannot happen while some are standing outside and the emphasis on participation in human inquiry is thus not coincidental: it is fundamental (2011: 85).

The concepts of wholeness and healing were indeed fundamental to my research process and were integral in all aspects and levels of activity. I perceive rigorous and on-going inquiry into one’s own behaviour, attitude and perception of self as the basis for increased consciousness, which is a basic requirement to avoid/limit projections and inform action (whether on personal or group/community level).

An important aspect of co-operative Inquiry as far as this study is concerned, is that it has the potential to raise “all kinds of emotional issues which are ignored or denied by conventional research doctrine. It is an essential aspect of co-operative inquiry that these emotional issues are addressed. It also challenges members to make new choices and take new risks” – a pressing problem in communities struggling with the legacy of years of oppression and deprivation. It can be “a vehicle for … deep personal learning, if we allow it (Reason, 1994: 28, 29).

Human inquiry has also been termed ‘dialogical inquiry’, because it emphasises the establishment of a dialogue between research workers and the grassroots people with whom they work. The issue of power or status can endanger the dialogue and should be addressed through a negotiated open contract at the beginning of the process (Reason, 1994: 20-21).

This links directly to the third methodology: the dialogical approach.

**5.3.2.3 Dialogical approach and Menippean dialogue**

*There has been a widespread social tendency to place an inordinate amount of value on the finished product* (Wiebe, 2012: 34).

Bakhtin identifies three relationships in the dialogue: I-for-other, other-for-me; and I-for-myself. This implies that we give value to others, are valued and value self in the creative process. This requires understanding that we as researchers enter into the dialogue through the lens of our own history. In order to manage these relationships, we also need to learn to ‘linger’ over the particularity of the other, which involves a “loving interest in details of the other” (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005: 622 - 625). It also implies participation in the practices of participants’ everyday life to allow us to begin to understand and feel the significance of what participants say and do. True dialogue is thus not a case of trying to ‘master’ the other, but of true participation and an embrace of difference (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005: 627).

The tendency to focus on the final product leads to the perception of things and people as fixed –
instead of “lingering longer in the aesthetic processes of composition” (Wiebe, 2012: 34). Wiebe suggests the use of Menippean dialogue as an approach to create such a “multiply-positioned self world” and to think of us as “a human becoming” rather than as a completed ‘human being’ (2012: 34-35).

The Menippean dialogue is one of three genres in the dialogical approach relevant to inquiry. It is described as carnivalesque and “marked by imagination, sensuousness and freedom” (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005: 630) that does not rely on an authoritative knowledge or expert voice (teacher/therapist/researcher) to lead the other (student/patient/participant) in the dialogue (Wiebe, 2012: 37). Since all voices are allowed to speak in new situations and to reflexively make sense of their own history, Menippean dialogue valorises otherness and accepts the otherness of the other (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999: 11). It thus leads us not towards a rejection of the contextual or historical conditions that influence experience, but towards a view of experience that sees these as available to the consciousness: it thus has the capacity to open up history and context through dialogue (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005: 633).

In essence, the Menippean approach is a dialogue between disparate voices, while enhancing the capacity for a continual counter-response from the other. This allows us to be surprised by what emerges from the exchange and to creatively understand the other (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005: 633). It allows for the slow aesthetic processes of “receiving the other” and of experiencing the strangeness within self and other (Wiebe, 2012: 41, 44). Such a view ensures that we are defined less by the position that we hold (for example practitioners or researchers) and more by the particularity of our response to the other. It becomes possible to enrich and supplement the other - a view that Sullivan & McCarthy find both aesthetic and ethical (2005: 635).

An important aspect of reflexive dialogue is that the researcher checks his/her own neediness. This is explained by Sullivan who, while researching artists’ experience of making art, suddenly felt a need to ‘make art’ too. He reflexively discovered that his academic work actually brought him closer to the artists’ experience than his nascent art experience. It helped him to view the text as material for a more artistic, creative participation than before the need for making art arose (in Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005: 635). In this regard I can relate an experience that I had soon after starting to work in the townships of the Free State in the early 1990s. A white person in this environment was quite a novelty then and I felt very protected and special. After I enthusiastically explained my work to a group of women in Dublin, Ireland, one of them asked me: And what is driving you? From somewhere out of the unconscious came this unexpected reply: They are mothering me. This was a critical moment in

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53 The other two genres are the magistral/authoritative and the Socratic. The magistral is characterised by inequality, involving three ‘voices: the superior magistral/first voice, the novitiate/second voice and a ‘third voice’ on which the first is drawing to justify instruction and moralising, such as an institution, theory or the Bible. The Socratic dialogue also involves a ‘third voice’, but questions authority more than the magistral (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999: 17-22). The Menippean dialogue emerges from the Socratic.
my praxis. Not only were my needs exposed, but also that I have ‘used’ participants to satisfy these. I started to understand the danger of projections, the critical importance to reflect constantly on one’s own shadows and to find appropriate ways to deal with these.

Significant to this study is the way in which the Menippean dialogue allows all involved (for example researcher and participants) to understand their own desires, which is an important connection to the fantasy of the projected self. Drawing on Wiebe’s suggestions for staged role rotation in education/poetry, I propose a similar ‘staged act’ within community development. An example from my own experience in the anti-bias paradigm is to take on the role of the ‘other’ (oppressor/oppressed) to establish contact with suppressed emotions and blocked-out feelings – or as Wiebe calls it: a “missing signifier” that is “still central to the social construction of how one is to be valued” (2012: 43). I, as the only white person in the team, sometimes found it necessary to move into the role of a specific white person who had caused deep pain in the childhood of a black/coloured facilitator or participant. By entering into this (long-overdue) dialogue with me as ‘offender’, the unspeakable could be spoken, the significance of the incident recognised and projections disrupted. In addition, I became a witness, which allows “an aesthetic process of nourishing empathy” (Wiebe, 2012: 43).

Bakhtin and Frye caution against the “hard humor” and potential violence and chaos inherent in this form of dialogue – or, as Kristeva notes: “it is no more comic than tragic; it is both at once, one might say that it is serious” (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999: 22). Menippeanism is often accused of being immature, deviant, sick or subversive, which elicits efforts from the third voice to banish “the unruly second voice” (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999: 22-23). This danger has to be weighed up against the advantage that entrenched viewpoints and truths can be challenged and opposing consciousnesses brought together through the “extraordinary freedom of plot and invention” (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005: 632-633).

Shotter talks about the viewing of a painting from “up close, from a distance, from this angle and that” (2003: 463), but Sullivan & McCarthy go further: within the Menippean genre, which does not allow an audience or disengaged/privileged perspective, it is not a process of viewing but of “making a picture”, (2005: 634).

The next section looks at the research methods used.

5.4 Research methods

I have used two qualitative case studies as data and the analysis was done through qualitative thematic secondary data analysis. These are now discussed.
5.4.1 Data collection: case study method

A qualitative case study method is used, which Yin describes as “an in-depth inquiry into a specific and complex phenomenon (the ‘case’), set within its real-world context” (2013: 321). It offers researchers the opportunity to understand a larger class of units through an intensive study of a single unit (Gerring, 2004: 342).

Single or multiple/collective case studies can be used. The decision on the number of case studies requires a balancing trick between the horizontal and the vertical: more case studies produce a thick description and add credibility and robustness. However, choosing more studies increases the danger that the researcher drowns in overwhelming amounts of data and that depth and context are sacrificed. This highlights the importance of boundaries regarding time/place, time/activity, definition/context and what/what not to analyse. A useful hint is to remember that no sample can ever be sufficient to result in a final conclusion or end result (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 545-547; 550-551; Yin, 2013: 325).

Qualitative case study research is not synonymous with any method and allows for the use of a variety of methods, data sources, complex interventions, relationships and programmes. This ensures that the phenomenon is explored through more than one lens and that multiple facets are revealed and understood. This can inform professional practice or evidence-informed decision making in the realm of policy making (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 544; Boblin, et al., 2013: 1267, 1270; Phelan, 2011: 221-222).

Two community development projects were used as case studies in this research: the development of a family support programme in the Free State and the design of a development plan for the Richtersveld community. Both engaged with woundedness in communities and are thus relevant to this research. Neither was intended as an academic project.

I was responsible for the design, piloting and implementation of the family programme and for most aspects of the Richtersveld intervention (and only these aspects are used in the case study). My style was mainly reflexive, inductive, iterative and explorative and no hypothesis was tested. The inquiry was aimed at raising critical consciousness, which could lead to change and transformation. Both cases are thus positioned in the qualitative and hermeneutic phenomenological framework.

In the family programme a variety of tools of interaction were used, mainly within the reflexive, human inquiry and dialogical framework, such as mirroring, reflection, drawings, storytelling, role-plays, ‘concerts’, songs, illustrations, metaphors and games. The work in the Richtersveld falls within the description of Bricolage: every tool possible was used to elicit information and analyse the data. This includes a type of passive or lingering presence while waiting for issues to emerge, a literature review (previous development plans, surveys and research reports), maps, field trips, observation,
interviews, feedback and reflection sessions with the community, presentations and personal notes.

Throughout these processes, all action was accompanied by self-reflection, which increased consciousness about how my position as (often the only) white person and outsider influenced the process, but also how my own insecurities and woundedness may be projected onto participants/process. I have attempted to make this explicit and encouraged others (especially the facilitators in the family programme) to do the same regarding their attitude towards me, but also their privileged position compared to most of the participants in the programme.

I now give a short description of the two case studies\textsuperscript{54}.

5.4.1.1 The family programme

The aim of this pilot programme was to find ways of supporting families to care for their young children with greater ease and gentleness. This was done by raising consciousness amongst adult family members about their own childhood and wounding and how this is projected onto their child-rearing practices. However, it was clear that it could not be expected of participants to embark on such a process if we as team did not do the same. Without critical awareness of similar unresolved issues in ourselves, we could harm participants by kidnapping their stories for our own healing (as I had previously done regarding my need for mothering). However, self-reflection is no spontaneous process and cannot be instructed or trained\textsuperscript{55}. A cascading model evolved around what we called the ‘start-with-self’ principle: I, as team leader not only had to engage in self-reflection, but had to share this with the team to create the safety for them to embark on a similar process – so that they in turn could share/model it with participants. In this way a culture of reflection and consciousness raising was created, which became one of the pillars of the programme.

The programme was implemented through weekly sessions with groups of families (approximately ten members per group). Families were recruited on farms and in informal settlements around rural villages. The only criterion for participation was involvement with a child, aged 0-9. Participation was voluntarily and any member was free to leave the group at any stage. Some groups continued meeting for up to four years, while others had a shorter lifespan, mainly due to logistical circumstances. We worked with approximately 180 participants annually.

Roughly 40 sessions were developed over the period of six years and where logistically possible we brought groups in their third or fourth year together for full-day workshops (monthly or bi-monthly)

\textsuperscript{54} More detail is provided in the Introduction chapter.

\textsuperscript{55} Pillow highlights the difficulty in ‘teaching’ reflexivity: “I do remain puzzled by how to teach students how to be reflexive. Is reflexivity a skill, a set of methods that can be taught? If so, what are the methods of reflexivity – is it keeping a research journal or the inclusion of a questioning researcher voice in the text? What should we be reflexive about? The other? Ourselves? The place? Who gets to be reflexive? How does one write reflexively? How or should the reader judge whether the researcher was too reflexive or not reflexive enough? Can we avoid the morass of ourselves …” (Pillow, 2003: 177)
instead of the weekly sessions. The approach was essentially iterative, which is defined by Lathouras as “an approach in which each step of the research, from beginning to end, has informed the development of the next step, but has also related back to the previous step” (2012: 66). The team met every week to debrief, evaluate methodologies and logistics and especially to consider the stories that emerged during the sessions with the families in the previous week. Issues from these stories informed the development (content and methods) of the following session. As team leader, I attended and/or co-facilitated sessions and thus remained a participant in the process and stayed connected to the context and lived experience of family members and the facilitators.

Basic elements of these sessions were repeated with new groups, but new sessions were constantly ‘cooked’ (as we called the process of session development) or old ones reviewed to address new issues emerging from the groups. As the team’s self-awareness and understanding of the manifestation of woundedness grew, it became increasingly difficult to repeat sessions. Facilitators intuitively started to ‘add spices’ during sessions. The important aspect was thus to increase the capacity for facilitation and reflection and not the development of a manual with fixed sessions.

Documentation was extensive. In addition to administrative documents (such as attendance registers), the following was kept: a detailed journal of the weekly team sessions, the actual sessions conducted with the families, forms and records of ad hoc activities such as viability studies, extensive reflective progress reports and funding proposals. These were shared in the team and are available. I also kept a personal reflexive diary.

As is customary in community development programmes, no consent forms were signed: participation was voluntary and public and real names were used in the documents. I decided to protect the identity of all involved in this study and thus refrain from naming any individual, the organisation or the farms and villages where the programme operated. I will mainly refer to ‘facilitator’ or ‘participant’.

5.4.1.2 Richtersveld Development Plan

On 12 October 2007 an agreement between the Richtersveld Sida!hub Community Property Association (CPA), the State and Alexkor was ratified by the Land Claims Court, through which the community was granted restitution for diamonds and land lost in the previous dispensation. It was further ruled that a development plan for the area had to be designed to ensure sustainable development.

The proposal of the NGO Development Works for the design of this plan was accepted in December 2008. The result was a 20-month process, during which Development Works and the Richtersveld community together designed the plan. This included the strengthening of leadership capacity and structures; the conducting of community-based planning (CBP) in each of the four villages; the employment and training of village-level staff to build local capacity and create a developmental spirit (through manageable small projects and practical experience); the conducting of in-depth research to
understand the developmental issues; and a comprehensive and participatory strategic planning process, informed by the research findings.

My involvement spanned all of these activities. In this study I focus mostly on the research and strategic planning activities.

The research on ‘key developmental issues’ was an emerging and open process. Based on my previous experience in community development I sensed the importance of understanding the psycho-political dynamics, perceptions on ‘development’ and the manifestations of woundedness due to previous losses and hardship. I thus allowed myself considerable space just ‘to be’: to immerse myself in the world or this community and to breathe the atmosphere - or what Churchill et al. call an “intuitive ‘empathetic dwelling’”, through which one allows “oneself to feel one’s way into the other’s experience” (in Finlay, 2008: 16). This was accompanied by a review of existing documents (plans, reports, court records and legal documents). After some months of mostly informal interaction I was ready to share my tentative observations with the community. I presented these to the community through workshops in the villages and we embarked on a process of joint reflection and planning.

The community-based planning, research and strategic planning phases overlapped and influenced each other in an iterative process. The activities around the village plans, for example, enriched the research, while findings from the research influenced implementation of the village plans. Through the strategic planning process, more insight was gained regarding the developmental issues, which impacted on the research findings. Even though the latter was aimed at informing the planning process, it was only completed at the end of planning process.

Four series of workshops were conducted in the four villages (Kuboes, Sanddrift, Lekkersing and Eksteenfontein) between July 2009 and July 2010. The first series was to reflect on the research findings; the second to identify objectives and strategies for the plan; the third to identify projects; and the last to finalise the plan. Even though each series of workshops had a specific objective, due to the spiralling and iterative nature of the process, previous issues/topics were constantly revisited and refined.

In addition to pamphlets, presentations and other documents, a comprehensive report on the process was compiled. The five volumes, which record the journey with the Richtersveld community, includes an overview of the process, the village plans, the analysis of priority developmental issues (the research) and the strategic plan.

I have decided to name the community, even though it could be argued that naming it might compromise the community and label them. I was led by Brent’s argument regarding his naming of Southmead community in his study of this community: NOT naming it would be impossible to maintain
since their story is public knowledge; the voices of this community should be heard and properly attributed and thirdly, it grounds the book/story (2009: 14-15). The naming of the community, however, is not comfortable and carries a heavy burden of responsibility and respect. It requires constant awareness of the danger of voyeurism or of turning an area and its people (especially an ‘exotic’ area like the Richtersveld) into a spectacle. But the fact remains that the above documents are in the public domain and summarised versions were distributed to the whole community. All interaction, apart from a few interviews, was done in public and voluntarily. Still, I have taken care not to mention the names of individuals in this study.

5.4.2 Data analysis: qualitative thematic secondary analysis method

In accordance with the hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm, analysis was guided by the aim to create a rich and deep account of the researched phenomenon. This is done through intuition and the focus is “on uncovering rather than accuracy” (Cohen & Daniels, 2001). For Coffey & Atkinson, data are there “to think with and to think about ... We should bring to them the full range of intellectual resources, derived from theoretical perspectives, substantive traditions, research literature, and other sources” (in Silverman, 2000: 253).

Hermeneutics avoids ‘method for method’s sake’ and does not require a step-by-step method or analytic requirements. Instead, it is guided by a commitment to an abiding concern; an oriented stance toward the question; the investigation of experience as it is lived; description of the phenomenon through writing and rewriting; and consideration of parts and whole (Cohen & Daniels, 2001). The latter speaks to the concept of the hermeneutic circle.

The method of analysis in this study is qualitative thematic secondary analysis, which entails “the use of already produced data to develop new social scientific and/or methodological understandings” (Irwin, 2013: 295-296). Reasons mentioned for undertaking secondary analysis include the desire to: answer the original research question with better statistical techniques; relate one’s own primary research or data to existing data resources; develop insight into hard-to-reach populations or sensitive topics; to bring different datasets into conversation with one another; and answer new questions with old data (Glass, 1976: 3; Irwin, 2013: 296, 299). The latter is applicable to this study, which focuses on questions which were not the focus or aim of the original programmes (family support and Richtersveld development plan).

Apart from allowing the researcher to ask new questions, the use of ‘unmined’ data offers a number of advantages: it expands understanding of a particular phenomenon, avoids duplication and reduces the burden on research participants (Bishop, 2009: 256; Gladstone et al., 2007: 440). Samuel reminds us that it is inconceivable that from a body of work/data only one selection can be made. The information, which the original researcher had brushed aside as irrelevant, “may be just the thing upon which a future researcher will seize” (in Bishop, 2009: 265).
Several models for the conducting of thematic secondary data analysis were identified (see Ajjawi & Higgs 2007: 621-626; Gladstone et al., 2007: 434-435; Jackson et al., 2013: 573). The analysis done in this study draws mainly on the model of Ajjawi & Higgs and included the following steps: immersion (the separate reading and re-reading of the two data sets), the development of themes; the synthesis of the two sets of themes; selection of text for illumination and illustration; and lastly the final integration. This was done through an iterative movement between parts and the whole for understanding and insight to evolve – in line with the concept hermeneutic circle. The process was inductive.

Elo et al. point out that even though some aspects of the analytical process can be readily described, others are difficult to describe to others, since it also partially depends on the researcher’s insight or intuitive action (2014: 1). I experienced this difficulty throughout the analysis, which was indeed a very intimate journey with the data. I was not looking for ‘something specific’, but read and re-read, anticipating something to emerge, or as Ajjawi & Higgs put it: for “the text to speak” (2006: 622-623). The prism is a useful metaphor in this regard: when it is turned, one part becomes hidden and another opens (Cohen & Daniels, 2001). Indeed, how do you ‘describe’ the movement of the sides and wonderful game of light?

The literature reveals a number of concerns about secondary analysis, such as ethical issues (confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent); the loss of subjectivity integral to interpretivist and hermeneutic research; the loss of context; and the impact of time lapse on relevance (Bishop, 2007; Gladstone et al., 2009; Irwin, 2013; Moore, 2007). The general response to most of these is that they are essentially epistemological issues, which equally concern primary data collection and analysis too (Bishop, 2009: 266-267; Gladstone et al., 2007: 441). These are touched upon in more detail in the next section.

5.5 Considerations regarding quality and ethics

As stated in the first section of this chapter, I did not approach this research with an academic background. I was thus anxious to do things ‘right’ – but soon discovered that there was no obvious ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. My subsequent battle to find ‘correct’ practice appears to mirror the struggle that
qualitative researchers have had over the past decades with criteria such as validity, reliability, trustworthiness and rigour.

5.5.1 The dilemma of ‘criteria’ in the qualitative world

Qualitative research has been accused of and criticised for lacking ‘scientific’ rigour, for being anecdotal, impressionistic and subject to researcher bias; it cannot be reproduced and there is no guarantee that another researcher would not give an entirely different account; it cannot be generalised; and the text/product can be fabricated and falsified (Koch & Harrington, 1998: 883-884).

Emden & Sandelowski provide a succinct and brief history of how qualitative researchers dealt with these accusations and the implicit challenges regarding criteria such as reliability and validity since the 1980s: they have been “championed, translated, exiled, redeemed and surpassed” (1998: 206).

In the ‘champion’ phase criteria of standard in quantitative research were directly applied to qualitative research in an effort to align it with the traditional tenets of quantitative research. Increasingly, these were found to be problematic to uphold within a qualitative context. The ‘translation’ phase is associated with Lincoln & Guba, who identified four constructs to ensure trustworthiness. They are (with the ‘original’ quantitative/positivistic concepts in brackets): credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity/generalisability), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity) (Elo et al., 2014: 2; Emden & Sandelowski, 1998: 208-209; Shenton, 2004: 53-54; Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001: 527).

In addition to translations, new terms were created, old criteria redefined and reconstructed and strategies suggested to ensure quality. Amongst the ‘new’ criteria we find terms such as goodness, verisimilitude, adequacy, trustworthiness, believability, ‘quality in craftsmanship’, fittingness and plausibility (Koch & Harrington, 1998: 885; Sandelowski, 2006: 643; Underwood et al., 2010: 1592; Whittemore et al., 2001: 528-529). It is especially the term validity that has gone through a series of reconceptualisations and redefinings. Lather points out that in the discourses of the social sciences validity has always been the problem, not the solution, which requires that we circulate and break with the signs that code it. It is thus not about “looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what frames our seeing” (1993: 675).

Another strategy employed to ensure standards is an emphasis on methods and the development of a plethora of techniques, such as multiple methods, rigorous and systematic data collection and

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56 Whittemore et al compiled a synthesis of criteria from the work of various scholars. These are categorised in primary and secondary criteria (2001: 528-532). They further suggest that context and philosophical approach determine which criteria would be the focus of a specific study. For example: critical theorists working within a social, historical and political culture will emphasise sensitivity, explicitness and vividness, while the phenomenological investigation will emphasise bias, vividness and thoroughness regarding the phenomenon in question (Whittemore et al, 2001: 529).

The practical application and subsequent critique and analysis of these criteria soon revealed that that problem had not been averted: the “‘borrowing’ [of] evaluation criteria from one paradigm of inquiry and applying them to another” remains problematic and untenable (Koch & Harrington, 1998: 882). Qualitative research principles remained sacrificed in this endeavour: depth is lost to breadth; the subtle nuances of life experience to aggregate evidence; context and subjectivity to generalisability and objectivity; creativity to the slavish attachment and devotion to method; and “the artfulness and sensitivity to meaning that are essential to quality” to the inflexibility and rigidity of rigor (Whittemore et al., 2001: 522-526).

The discourse on the crisis around ethics and quality appears to centre around four issues: political/moral, epistemological, practical and the need for criteria.

**The political and moral (ethical) discourse:** While focussing on the project of ‘criteriology,’ qualitative researchers have avoided or neglected engagement with moral or political contexts and issues of gender, race, ethnicity and age, which play a role in all research. New concepts entered the discourse: authenticity (Emden & Sandelowski, 1998: 210); the right to place issues on the table (Koch, 1996: 175); guiding principles, such as accountability, partiality and positioning, which generate one’s own set of criteria; usefulness (Koch & Harrington, 1998: 887); and “care and reciprocity between the researcher and the researched” (Arvidson, 2013: 280). Regarding the classic definition of ethics that pertains to ‘doing good and avoiding harm’, Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012: 65) raises a complicating factor: since qualitative research is concerned with the influence of history on social reality, who decides what is good and what is bad?

**Practical application (methods and rules-driven tensions):** It proved to be a major challenge in qualitative research to operationalise criteria, methods and rules that are essentially embedded in positivism. An example is the ‘member check’ rule (returning data to the research participant), which is supposed to guarantee authenticity, but poses practical and logistical problems (Koch & Harrington, 1998: 885). Another concern is that most best-practice guides and protocols are based upon Western culture, but are not holding true in non-Western settings. An example is the assumption that responses by participants are manifestations of individual opinions, but this might not be the case in cultures that emphasise collective identity and may coat information not to make the collective ‘look bad’ (Narag & Maxwell, 2014: 312).
The epistemological discourse: The concern is raised that the many alternative criteria and terminology developed since the 1990s remain wanting: to a large extent these remained a translation of conventional criteria (precision and verification), which suit quantitative research but cannot hold in qualitative research (Emden & Sandelowski, 1998: 206). This led to what Whitemore et al. call “an epistemological quagmire” (2001: 523). A critical issue is the opposing positions regarding reality and truth. Positivism searches for a reality ‘out there’ and perceives understanding as a “fixing of meaning” (Freeman, 2011: 543). This stands in stark contrast to the phenomenological concept of multiple truths (Sandelowski, 2006: 643-644) and the hermeneutic stance that no method “can ascertain that an interpretation is correct or incorrect, true or false” (Freeman, 2011: 549). The hermeneutic inquiry is not about confirming and validating, but about thinking out loud, about opening ourselves up to the ideas of others and to keep “searching for ways to invite the topic to say what it has not yet said about itself” (Freeman, 2011: 549-550). It can thus be concluded that criteria to ensure quality should be consistent with the philosophical and methodological assumptions in which the research is embedded (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007: 631; Emden & Sandelowski, 1998: 209; Koch, 1996: 174; Wittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001: 532).

On a practical level, this implies that we look for “rigor of a different kind” (Emden & Sandelowski, 1998: 209), which includes epistemological and contextual (socio-political) concerns. Koch & Harrington suggest a reversed approach from the norm: we start with ontological questions surrounding the researcher and researched; then ask the epistemological questions, which in turn leads to the methodological level (1998: 887).

The ‘criteriology’ debate: certainty and safety: To return to Emden & Sandelowski’s brief history of reliability and validity: in addition to the phases of conforming and translation, we saw a phase where reliability was denied, while validity was ‘redeemed’ - in spite of the commonly held position that reliability is a precondition for validity. Then the phase followed where reliability and validity were exiled and denounced, even though a commitment to the value of criteria per se remained intact (Emden & Sandelowski, 1998: 208-210) – but only for some. This brings us to the question: do we need criteria and why?

Some scholars argue for a continued search for ‘goodness’ criteria and ethical considerations to avoid a situation of “a completely unacceptable relativism, one that reduces knowledge to the level of merely belief, opinion, and/or taste” (Smith in Emden & Sandelowski, 1999: 3). For Freeman, the constructs and definitions so deeply embedded in the spirit of audit trails and adherence to ‘truth’, keep qualitative research “moored to a view of research representation as a form of correspondence to reality” (2011: 544). There are voices who appear to suggest some kind of compromise: keep criteria, but not in the current form. Cho & Trent suggest a framework for validity which excludes a definition of the term validity itself, but which focuses on continuous ‘thinking out loud’ about concerns, safeguards and contradictions (Freeman, 2011: 544).
My reading of this debate is that it is in essence a battle between certainty and uncertainty. Schwandt links the idea of criteria to the obsession with certainty/safety: we “have to abandon the idea that somehow methodological criteria exist that will insulate the inquirer from the moral and the practical/action implications of his or her work” (in Koch & Harrington, 1998: 886). In the same vein, Heshusius concludes that if something “is good, you know it. It is a mark of naiveté to be dependent on a list of criteria to arrive at something you can trust. Such dependence is a regression into security seeking, a reverse kind of positivism. It is finding refuge once more in ‘method’” (in Emden & Sandelowski, 1999: 3). For Childers, the safety net of institutional approval, informed consent, confidentiality “seductive assurances and policing mechanisms” masks “the unpredictability of research” (2012: 760). Ethics includes “quick, rash, split-second decisions that are difficult, potentially violent, possibly dangerous, and maybe even blatantly wrong” (Childers, 2012: 760). She thus suggests a deconstruction of ethics that can push analysis towards the margins, excesses, contradictions, elusive moments and absences at work in the data, and to counterpractices of knowing, embodied readings of texts, catalytic interchanges between researcher and participants and a deconstructive rigor that places it all in suspense. For her, the marks of validity and ethic practice lie in the “slipping and sliding, this failure to fix” (Childers, 2012: 753-759). Caputo alerts us to the fact that “one is rather more on one’s own that one likes to think, than ethics would have us think” (in Childers, 2012: 760).

Emden & Sandelowski even consider the inclusion of a criterion of ‘uncertainty’ (1999: 5-6), while Caputo asks us to contemplate the idea of judgement passed in the name of “undecidability” (in Childers, 2012: 759). He explains:

> Ethics makes safe. It throws a net of safety under the judgments we are forced to make, the daily, hourly decisions that make up the texture of our lives. Ethics lays the foundations for principles that force people to be good; it clarifies concepts, secures judgments, provides firm guardrails along the slippery slopes of factual life. It provides principles and criteria and adjudicates hard cases. Ethics is altogether wholesome, constructive work, which is why it enjoys a good name. The deconstruction of ethics, on the other hand . . . shows that the net is already torn, is ‘always already’ split, all along and from the start (in Childers, 2012: 759).

**Conclusion:** It thus appears to me as if there is no consensus on the issue of ethics or appropriate terminology and definitions in qualitative research. A growing number of scholars argue for the inclusion of moral, political and ideological value-commitments, which go beyond methods. But there is also an argument made for no formal set of criteria – which leaves behind the methodological preoccupation. The inquirer might be requested to develop the most appropriate criteria for the particular study, show how ethical issues are addressed – and let the reader decide “if the study is believable” (Koch, 1996: 178). Koch & Harrington suggest that findings are judged on the usefulness of the research product (1998: 886).
Maybe we should heed Alvesson & Sköldberg’s warning that we should not over-problematise social research methodology: it may lead to a nihilism in which empirical research is seen as either too hard or as having little point (Couchman, 2000: 467).

5.5.2 My position on quality and ethics

This research is embedded in a paradigm where I accept that another researcher in a different relationship with the data will unfold another story and also that the qualitative research process itself has the potential to transform the very phenomenon being studied. I feel drawn to Heidegger’s rejection of the notion of ‘truth as correspondence’ in favour of the idea of truth as ‘unconcealment’ (Freeman, 2011: 544) – which links to my perception of development as a process of unfolding and un-veiling. I further take note of the pragmatic voices of scholars who argue against the urge for safety offered by ‘criteriology’, rules and rigid methods.

I am guided by Koch & Harrington’s suggestion to describe ‘what is going on’ during the research – and then let the reader decide about the product’s plausibility (1998: 889). Plausibility is possible when an internal logic is achieved through the detailing of each interpretative, reflective turn and social, political and critical insight. The final research project “resembles a thoughtfully constructed tapestry. Its appreciation will rely upon each needle point and the craft of its makers” – and if written “with eloquence and incorporating reflective accounts, the reader may well consider the research as believable or plausible” (Koch & Harrington, 1998: 889).

In addition, since this study is positioned in a reflexive paradigm, I align myself with scholars who premise issues of validity and ethics on methodological reflexivity (Finlay, 2002; Lather, 1993: 674; Pillow, 2003; Underwood et al., 2010: 1592). Reflexivity is not about ‘coming clean’ and admitting biases and preconceptions in an apologetic and confessional manner: it is a tool that we can use to determine when methodological adaptation is required (Underwood et al., 2010: 1592-1593). The “problematics” of research are no longer viewed as incidental, but become objects of study in themselves (Pillow, 2003, 179). Fraught as reflexivity is with “ambiguity and uncertainty”, it provides a valuable tool to examine the impact of the position, perspective, and presence of the researcher. It promotes rich insight by examining personal responses and interpersonal dynamics and empowers as it opens up a radical consciousness (Finlay, 2002: 532). Finlay further maps out how reflexivity can be applied at each stage of the research (2002). While describing my methodological framework and research methods in this chapter, I have touched upon these ethical issues.

I want to highlight three issues, which lie mainly in the epistemological and moral/political level. Walker argues that formal Western researchers promote colonial practice by avoiding transparency regarding their own cultural background and worldview. By doing this, they fail “to acknowledge the existence of other ontologies and epistemologies, assuming that theirs is the only reality” (2001: 81).
Being deeply aware of this danger, I have stated openly throughout all three processes (the two case studies and this research process) who I am and what I may bring into the process: I am a privileged white Afrikaner and in South Africa this has profound significance. This privilege contributed to the lack of opportunities for my team members and the participants. I was the team leader, which implies that white/black power imbalances remained intact. There were cultural differences and opposing views, informed by very different life experiences. We tried to deal with these openly. We might not always have handled it well, but it was surely not ignored.

Language received on-going attention in both case studies. In addition to translations, care was taken that participants told their stories and shared emotions in the mother tongue – even if they could speak English/Afrikaans well. This ensured a much deeper level of reflection than when doing the ‘thinking’ in a second language. I made a point of listening carefully to these discussions, even when I could not understand the language. I suggest that it might have been possible to ‘listen’ with greater care and with all senses, because I did not have access to the meaning of the words. It enabled me to elicit deeper reflection and embark on what Nagata calls “mindful inquiry” (2006: 135) during the subsequent translation/discussion process: When you were so angry, what did you talk about? What was the sadness about? This insistence on the translation of emotions (which seldom surfaces in direct translation) led to rich discussions and I believe that it made it possible to bridge many cultural and language barriers and power games.

Through on-going reflexive processes I have remained conscious of the potential danger of a pas de deux between the voyeur, audience or messiah on the one hand and a performing community, acting out the role of the dependent poor waiting to be rescued by the other. This was especially poignant in the Richtersveld, where the cultural and botanical heritage has drawn the attention of developers and cultural/environmental experts for many decades. It has become the role of this community to act ‘exotic’ and the outsider is constantly tempted to be the audience – a serious threat for honest involvement, reflexion and dialogue. Deliberate strategies are asked for to limit potential damage or conflict.

The last issue is that of “choices and power of presentation” that can “freeze” an individual, group or community into an object (Brent, 2009: 16, 37-41, 88). This was addressed by the iterative process of documenting, submitting the written presentations for reflection and allowing input and changes. Still, I was constantly aware of the power inherent in all processes. For example, the practising of mirroring is no neutral act: the holder of the mirror has the power to change the angle at which it is held, decide when to withdraw the mirror and how to represent what has been seen. I perceive the acknowledgement of the danger and on-going reflexion as an ethical response.

I want to highlight some ethical issues concerning secondary thematic analysis, which are mostly equally valid in original research. The first is about the rights of participants, such as confidentiality,
consent, the minimising of harm and the burden of over-research. Bishop’s response to these concerns is that researchers also have a duty towards the scholarly community (professional standards) and the public (the production of quality research with social value). Participants’ rights do not pre-empt other ethical issues. In addition, Bishop argues that there is a common misunderstanding that all research data is confidential, while this is actually only the case when it has been promised or implied. Consent and confidentiality should not have developed into insurmountable challenges (2009: 258-267). Both programmes used as case studies in this study were public community projects, where confidentiality and consent were not required or promised. Nevertheless, for the ethical reason of anonymity I have decided not to use real names.

A second issue is the critical qualitative elements of subjectivity and context, which could be lost in secondary analysis since researchers may be too far removed from the context or treat data as neutral (Irwin, 2013: 297). However, in practice, original fieldwork is often done by ‘hired hands’ and not by the investigators (Gladstone et al., 2009: 427) and Bishop argues that validity and authenticity cannot be guaranteed merely by the argument “trust me, I was there” (2009: 267). Where analysts return to their own data to ask new questions “this distance may work in their favour”: they have both proximate knowledge of the data and a form of critical distance, which can shed analytical or critical light (Irwin, 2013: 297-298). There is clearly less danger of de-contextualisation and a lack of subjective immersion if the researcher was involved in both the original research and the secondary analysis – which has been the case in this study.

The third concern is that data can become irrelevant and redundant, especially in contexts of rapid and profound change, as is often the case in developing countries (Irwin, 2013: 298). I perceive the critical question in this regard to be: has the context changed in the period between the original work and the secondary analysis? Related to this study, the questions that I had to ask were: Has the woundedness of individuals and communities decreased during the past five to eight years? Has community development started to engage with the woundedness of communities? Have land reform policies changed to ensure in-depth engagement with the ‘soil and soul’ of involved communities and individuals? From the overview of the social health of our society (Introduction) and the literature on community development in the South African context, I am confident that the context has not changed significantly since the data was collected and that the data is thus still relevant and authentic.

5.6 Limitations and exclusions

Some areas of exclusion or delimitation are noted. These are influenced by the nature of the community development projects used as case studies and the research goal and paradigm.

Since communal wounding is inflicted on personal, social, systemic and institutional levels, the healing process thus has to include all of these. The focus of this study is the personal and the
communal. It is not investigating approaches such as campaigns or mass-mobilisation movements aimed at systemic/policy change – even though I would argue that elements of a healing approach should be considered in all of these.

Working with oppression should ideally be done with both target and non-target group. The literature indicates the importance of within-group work before cross-barrier is done, especially if there is a significant power imbalance. The case studies were limited to within-group work: black women in the family programme and the Nama/Baster community of the Richtersveld. Efforts were made in the family programme to involve fathers, but it resulted in the women withdrawing: they could not open up in front of the men. Special skills are needed for diversity work and it should be investigated if this is within the realm of community development with grassroots workers.

Communal or social healing is emphasised and not trauma therapy, which is perceived as more applicable for specific types and cases of acute trauma. It is the broad community, which has been subjected to on-going deprivation, dispossession, oppression and loss of relationships that is the focus of this study. The study does not claim expertise in the fields of psychology or trauma recovery. The focus is small groups of people who undertake a journey together, during which they attempt to understand themselves better and find new meaning.

The study did not intend to compile an inventory of all South African community development approaches, programmes and projects or to make an in-depth study of the theories and practices of each. It is acknowledged that some NGOs do engage with the complexity of wounding. Relevant concepts and practices were integrated where possible in the literature review, but the focus of the study is mainstream community development programmes in South Africa.

5.7 Conclusion: the wonder of the kaleidoscope

The kaleidoscope is a useful metaphor to illustrate how the hermeneutic phenomenological process unfolds. You are constantly aware of how temporary the pattern is: one turn, twist or shake – and a totally new picture unfolds. The kaleidoscope can be held by theoretical perspectives, methodological paradigms, social theories, the participants, the researcher or any other given context. It can be the ‘soil and soul’ of an individual or community, who is turning and looking on in awe as the picture of self unfolds and changes. We are at the same time makers, observers, the script and the actors – who keep on shaking in wonder, touching and moving away from each other in a fascinating pas de deux.

I trust that I have been a responsible maker of useful patterns - while being part of this ever-changing pattern. I have certainly found astonishment.

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57 The idea is based on metaphors created by Rau (2004: 324) and O’Brien (in Silverman, 2000: 76).
6 A guiding storyline – from wounding to transformative action

'We become aware of the void as we fill it'
(Porchia in Sharp, 1992: 7)

6.1 Introduction: the research findings

The first chapters of this study point to the urgent need for community development to engage with the complexity of woundedness in our communities. The ‘soil and soul’ are neglected and it is causing more damage. It is also clear that this gap between community and community development praxis cannot be addressed without an articulated healing approach. This approach needs to be pitched at the level of communities which continue to live in the huts and shacks of our land with the wounding of generations. They are the vast majority who have been deprived of a voice, proper education and other basics that are needed to live with dignity. The healing approach that we are searching for in this analysis needs to speak to them.

The aim of this data analysis was thus to search for key elements of a healing approach that can be implemented by community development practitioners/workers. An answer was sought from data emanating from two community development initiatives engaged with woundedness: a family programme and the design of a development plan for the Richtersveld community. The findings of this investigation are now presented.

Through the analysis of the data I identified eight elements that appear to be critical in a healing approach. The first is the need for a guiding storyline through which the process of healing is explained and which can be shared by all involved. Such a storyline comprises distinct ‘episodes’. The other seven elements can be grouped together as the ‘how’ elements: what is needed to get the facilitator prepared to allow this storyline to unfold? The ‘how’ elements are discussed in the next chapter, while the storyline is the focus of this chapter.

It is important to note that the word ‘a’ is used: this is not ‘the’ story, but mere starting points from where each person or organisation interested in engaging with wounding and healing can explore further. An own style of working has to be developed to suit specific circumstances, participants and the personal experiences, wisdom and style of facilitation teams. The elements presented here provide options to consider for selection and adaptation.

Technical notes on this chapter:

Probably the biggest challenge when designing a healing approach is to translate highly complex and sophisticated concepts into activities, metaphors and images relevant to grassroots communities and
community development practitioners/workers\textsuperscript{58} - without attenuating the very depth and complexity that necessitates the work in the first place. Some of the terms and images used in this study might be challenged on the basis of political correctness or developmental, social and psychological theory. However, they have to be read within the context in which they were designed in the two case studies: every possible way had to be found (often while working with a group) to ensure that everybody involved understands and can work with this material. I thus present them unapologetically and unchanged. I present the original activities, illustrations and discussions unaltered except where differences between the two case studies require some merging or adaptation.

The two case studies were very different in many aspects. The family programme worked with participants in a small group context of 10-15 participants per group over a long period (some of the groups existed up to four years). Stories emanating from this case study are thus personal and indicative of a long-term process that allowed for deeper understanding and unfolding of the self. The process in the Richtersveld happened over 17 months and most interaction was done through village workshops and meetings. The Richtersveld process ended before implementation of their development plan could start, while participants in the family programme actually worked on their planned action. It was thus possible for the latter to reflect on action, which was not possible in the Richtersveld. A team of facilitators under my mentorship (as programme developer) was involved in the family programme, which implies a structured set of activities, feedback and adaptation in a team. In the case of the Richtersveld project I was the only member of the contracted organisation to engage on-site with the community throughout the process. Mentoring was limited to an informal and \textit{ad hoc} involvement with the village facilitators to support them in implementing the village plans developed in an earlier stage of the project. No structured programme was developed or implemented and no long-term training was done.

Participants told their stories in the vernacular (Sesotho\textsuperscript{59} in the family programme and Afrikaans in the Richtersveld). In the family programme these were recorded in English as translated by the facilitators. These translations are `raw': mostly done during interaction for the benefit of the mentor or in rough notes for reporting during team sessions. All interaction, records and reports in the Richtersveld were done in Afrikaans and presented as such to the community. I subsequently translated these into English. These translated records are used with the minimum of editing. I believe that the raw translation allows for a more intimate sense of how the participants felt and experienced themselves, their worlds and their relationships.

\textsuperscript{58} Community development practitioners/workers are mostly drawn from the communities they work in and most of them have only basic education and some form of additional training in a specific field of community development (for example early childhood or health care). It is unlikely to find professionally trained therapists, counsellors or social workers amongst these workers.

\textsuperscript{59} Sesotho is the dominant indigenous language in the Free State province
To facilitate reading and for the sake of clarity, I add this short glossary of terms used in this chapter:

**Glossary for this chapter**

**Healing facilitator or facilitator:** the community development practitioner/worker (or in specific cases a researcher) who implements a healing approach. This may be done in addition to another designated task in a community development programme/project or healing work may be the main focus of this practitioner/worker.

**The mentor:** this term is used for the person who supports a team of facilitators and/or to whom they report. It refers to whatever title is used to indicate responsibility for the implementation of the approach in a mainstream community development programme: team leader, supervisor, coordinator, manager, coach, mentor and so forth.

**The team:** this refers to the team of facilitators and their mentor.

**Participant/s:** these are the individual community members who participate in the community development activity and in the activities aimed at healing.

**The group:** the group of community members who participate in the approach.

**The data:** the records, reports, activities and reflections from the two case studies.

To facilitate reading in this section I have used different box outlines and colours to indicate which voice is ‘speaking’. There are four voices:

1. **The voice of this study:**
   My own voice (explanations, findings and conclusions): in normal typescript without boxes.

2. **Activities with the groups/community:**
   Activities during interaction with groups and community members in the case studies: sessions, role-plays, concerts and so forth as well as input and reflection during such activity.

3. **The voice of the participants: their responses and stories**
   Responses and stories from the groups and participants, emerging from the above activities and inputs. These are in the first person – direct quotes (all of them in translation).

4. **Third person description of responses by participants and the community**
   Description of and comments on how participants responded, in the third person, by me as researcher in this study.

Before moving into the storyline, the rationale for the design of an easy storyline is briefly argued.
6.2 The need for a storyline to guide the process

The first element that emerged from the analysis of the data is that a storyline is essential for a healing approach. There are a few reasons why it is so essential to create such a simple storyline.

Firstly, a shared storyline ensures that all become and remain characters in the story. The plot comes from the lived experience of participants, facilitators and mentors. They provide the content for the case studies, role-plays and metaphors of the story. These stories also provide the themes for the subsequent episodes. In this way the story continues to be written by the characters. If the story is easy enough everybody in the process feels safe to engage with it.

Secondly, it is tough to deal with an open-ended story and at the same time pay attention to a number of characters who are all eager to tell or hide their own stories and emotions. A broad story outline helps the facilitator of a healing process to manage, while it allows the members of the group the freedom to explore and find their own stories.

Thirdly, the availability of an easy storyline demystifies the assumption that healing work is the exclusive domain of the professional therapist; healing can happen under the trees and in the shacks and huts where communities meet if there is a story that they can relate to.

Lastly, the process of healing is spiral and layered, moving forwards and backwards, up and down. If the storyline is known and understood by the facilitators and mentors of a healing approach, they will not be surprised and disheartened by the twists and turns of the story. But more importantly, the understanding of the process might prevent the team from creating unrealistic expectations and making seductive promises to the characters in the story (the participants): there is no guarantee of a happy ending. The discoveries made along the way make participation in the story worthwhile.

The episodes unfolding in the case studies are now presented.

6.3 Episode 1: Uncover the forces that have shaped us

The opening scene of the healing process finds us looking at a picture of us in the past – at the most significant characters, events and conditions that have had an impact on who we are today. True development is about un-veiling the true self that became hidden under a veil of stereotyping, false labels and messages, given and accepted over generations. It is the beginning of the search for the authentic ‘soil and soul’.

How can the wounded be supported to start facing this? It is important that the dangers of a festering wound are juxtaposed to the possible benefits of opening up the wound and attending to it (it is important that these benefits are not promised or understood as material gains). The topic was
opened up in the family programme through an activity called ‘Red and green’.

**Red and green**

**Material:**
Green and red cellophane that are cut into strips of ±4cm x 10cm, one of each for every participant.

**Activity:**
Each participant receives a green and a red strip of cellophane. They look through the green strip and associate what they see with ‘nice’. Then they do the same with a red strip and have a feeling of discomfort or unhappiness.

The facilitator mentions different situations and people and after each of these every participant shows the feeling that it elicits by holding either the red or the green strip in front of her/his eyes. An opportunity is given to explain and tell the stories of the feelings they had.

Below are examples of the type of situations and people that can be mentioned. Alternatively, the participants can simply talk about green or red episodes in their lives, holding the appropriate colour in front of their eyes.

| **Early childhood:** | Not yet born - your mother is still expecting you; First time at your mother’s breast; Wet nappy; Playing with your friends; Father comes home on pay day/month end. |
| **School:** | Your Sub A teacher; It is school report time; Maths; Homework; It is break. Not in school. |
| **Apartheid:** | A white man in a bakkie; The white woman brings old clothes to the village/township; You see a policeman. |
| **Romantic relationships:** | First time you fell in love; Wedding, starting to live together or being stolen; Mother-in-law/family-in-law; Your current partner, husband, boyfriend, girlfriend or wife. |
| **Parenthood:** | Discovering that you are pregnant; Being pregnant: Giving birth; Looking at your baby for the first time; Child breastfeeding; Your child’s first words; Taking your child to school; You look at your children playing. |
| **Life in general:** | what are the red and the green things that shape your life today? |

**Reflection/Input:**
If we want to be free, we must understand the things and people that have shaped us. Even though it is not nice to look at the reds, they made us who we are and they can hold us back. With too many reds inside us, it is also difficult to make space for new greens to get in.

We also have to believe that *my* life story is really important. I cannot just say: I must accept and forgive and forget. That does not help us to heal from these old wounds. We also need to appreciate the greens: they are the things and the people that made us to survive. Nobody would be sitting here if there had not been some greens in the life of each.
Some of the red and green experiences of participants in the family programme are reflected in the box below.

**Red and green stories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not yet born</th>
<th>My father was kicking my mother while she was pregnant.</th>
<th>Those were rough times, because my parents were very poor.</th>
<th>My parents struggled long to become pregnant so they were very happy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being born and life as a baby</td>
<td>My father was so happy, he named me after his mother-in-law.</td>
<td>It was a very difficult birth.</td>
<td>My mother was working in the field and gave birth to me without help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When my mother was 7 months pregnant with me she was caught without a “slaap ticket” [permit to sleep over] at the hostel in Welkom. She was sent to prison for more than a month. That is where I spent my 7th to 8th months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My mother left just after I was born.</td>
<td>There was a lot of happiness, because I was the first girl after many boys.</td>
<td>Very red! There was not even something to wrap me in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My mother lived in G-Hostel in Welkom and was so poor she had to cut up an old blanket for nappies for me. She was so sad to use this rough material on a soft baby. It got so heavy when it was wet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month-end in our home</td>
<td>My father used his pay for drinking.</td>
<td>There was no father to bring money.</td>
<td>My father was responsible and there was peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White people and apartheid</td>
<td>The farmer came to take us out of the school to work in the fields.</td>
<td>The farmer’s wife once gave me strong school shoes that took two years to wear out.</td>
<td>When I see a white person, I see an enemy. We were afraid of the beatings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The farmer brought us bags of maize meal.</td>
<td>The farmer used the sjambok on us.</td>
<td>I hate white people because they abused our parents with little pay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>They kicked the doors in and shone light in our faces.</td>
<td>The old policemen were kind in the old days. Today they are worse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td><strong>The teacher combed our hair with an iron comb if our hair was not properly combed.</strong></td>
<td><strong>I could not remember the number 23!</strong></td>
<td><strong>I was the only one in our home who attended school and I was happy.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I had a cruel teacher who liked food so much the he took our food and called us the children of the witches.</strong></td>
<td><strong>I knew that because of whipping at school I DID NOT LIKE SCHOOL. So I failed.</strong></td>
<td><strong>My Sub A teacher is my role model. I was bright in the class.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I did well in school and liked report time.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The teacher was beating me and my mother took the teacher’s side, without ever asking me why I dodged school.</strong></td>
<td><strong>I was caned with many canes!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I had to leave school in grade 5, because my mother had a baby and I had to look after the baby.</strong></td>
<td><strong>I was caught out for swapping boyfriends.</strong></td>
<td><strong>I was afraid of this boy. He was scorning and kicking me</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First relationship</strong></td>
<td><strong>The first time was like floating on a cloud.</strong></td>
<td><strong>It was nice. My boyfriend used to buy me sweets and handkerchiefs.</strong></td>
<td><strong>My first boyfriend was beating me.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I do not have patience with being controlled by other people and this guy wanted to control me</strong></td>
<td><strong>My boyfriend forced me to make love.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I was not mature and fell pregnant while in matric.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marrying or getting stolen (tradition)</strong></td>
<td><strong>I visited my friend and it was decided to steal me. I was happy, because I loved him.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The day I was stolen I was supposed to go out with another guy. It was not nice and I was not prepared.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Immediately after the wedding my husband had to leave to go and work some place far away. It was not nice.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>My mother-in-law will always tell the whole world about my mistakes</strong></td>
<td><strong>We were forced when we were stolen and it was painful.</strong></td>
<td><strong>It was nice as I agreed with my boyfriend. My mother-in-law loved me and she said I had a sharp nose.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>It was nice at the beginning, but then later as I did not quickly have children, the in-laws threatened me with knives.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Own pregnancy and children</strong></td>
<td><strong>I waited so long for this child! Big green.</strong></td>
<td><strong>I was too innocent and did not know what was going on.</strong></td>
<td><strong>I was a teenager when I became pregnant. My father was strict and angry. I lost my education.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stories told by participants showed how life started to be tough for most – literally from before birth. There were also beautiful stories of love, fun and humour. Even episodes where apartheid policemen kicked in doors evoked memories that made all laugh and eager to illustrate the embarrassment of those ‘caught’ out in wrong places or reactions in moments of fear. They mimicked the ‘red policemen’. Red? Yes, their faces were red because they were always so angry. These stories have clearly been told and retold many times over decades.

Care was taken to ensure that participants took out and talked about greens too. The highlighting of the greens is not to deny or underplay the reds, but to indicate that without some green it is difficult to survive. In addition, it will be too overwhelming to leave with the impression of having only reds. Still, the facilitators reported that some participants could not find any greens, not even with the support of the group.

They were thinking and thinking and they did not come up with green things. Only one person managed to come up with something. The rest claimed to have reds only. Then they related the red things.

Many have come to accept red as a given. When participants were asked about their feelings while they talked about their experiences with white people, domestic abuse and poverty, only a few said that it was ‘painful’. Most had no conscious feelings about it: they were used to these things and did not question it. Pain, humiliation and hardship have become normal.

My husband used to fight me a lot. The children saw this. When they got married and had children, I encouraged that they should accept and not to do anything. Now their husbands abuse them and they do not react. I believe that this is how marriage should be.

Through the red and green activity a safe metaphor is created to help participants look at the forces that have shaped and continue to shape them. The ‘red’ and ‘green’ thence run like a thread throughout the process. Months later a participant checked in by telling the group the following:

I shouted at my child. I almost gave him a hiding too, but then I remembered about the red and green. Because I want the child to grow up with more green memories than red ones, I did not punish him, but talked to him. I asked for explanations and I told him my concerns and feelings.
The past experiences of the Richtersveld community

Over the past centuries, the Richtersveld community adapted their lifestyle to cope with the extreme isolation and climate of this area. They established a nomadic stock farming practice that suits the arid landscape. Oppressive regulations and officials were outwitted and the continuation of their culture and lifestyle ensured. They maintained a level of self-authority which has left them with dignity and pride in their own history, leadership and culture. They cultivated a unique sense of humour and talent for telling the stories of their cunning in getting their way. Their isolation is cherished as it is perceived as protection against onslaughts on their social and cultural fibre - even though there is deep regret that they did not manage to protect the Nama language and culture sufficiently. One is especially struck by the general and open declaration of love for the Richtersveld, for this very special land with its unique range of endemic plants, the mountains, the Orange River and the soil with its rich mineral deposits. Few are prepared to leave the area, not even for better opportunities elsewhere. The above provides ample proof of a lot of green.

But this community has not escaped the political and economic battles that characterises the South African landscape over the past centuries: oppressive legislation that gradually stripped them of political rights, dispossession, the dividing and uprooting of groups, the forced sharing of resources in state-owned reserves or communal land, broken promises and agreements and disregard for indigenous leadership and customary/cultural systems. This happens against the backdrop of isolation and an extremely harsh environment.

When diamonds were discovered in their land (around 1928), the community could not benefit directly. On the contrary: they were kept out of the area by fences and lost access to agricultural land. More and more fences were erected until, as one of the community members put it, they lost the freedom of movement – the ultimate dispossession. This dispossession started to strip them of their human dignity. This community has had its share of reds.

To become aware of these past experiences does not help if the impact thereof is not understood. What does one do with this mixture of repetitive messages and the constant limiting of opportunities and Lebensraum? How does this impact on the image of the self, others, how one perceives the world and on behaviour and attitudes? The next episode looks at some ways in which the past is carried over into the now – and then into tomorrow.

6.4 Episode 2: Discover how the past lives on in the present

Past experiences tend to find a life of their own. They can deceive us for generations, since they manage to change form, hide in deep corners of the self, distort the image of the self or present themselves as false strategies (such as braveness, submission, aggression, acceptance of ‘fate’, perpetual action, addictions, cruelty or goodness). These dynamics seldom enter the conscious state
and mostly result in a paralysing cycle with no apparent way out. This is what makes wounding so cunning: it is hidden and we first have to expose it. It is therefore imperative in a healing approach to understand some of the ways in which past experiences manifest in the me/us of today. A number of such manifestations and strategies are explored in this episode.

6.4.1 The lasting legacy of past experiences: destructive and obsolete strategies

*The whole is more than the sum of its parts.* This well-known statement also applies to the impact of past experiences. Yesterday’s experiences form today’s perceptions, attitudes, survival strategies and relationships, which in turn becomes the legacy of tomorrow. In this way the effect of the original experiences is not only compounded and perpetuated, but it becomes new ‘red experiences’ – for which new strategies have to be designed. This iterative cycle intensifies unabated – until it is exposed.

The team members of the family programme went through an intense process to understand how their reds and greens continued to impact on their coping skills and relationships. They subsequently used their own stories as case studies to explain this concept in their groups.

**Mixing the reds and greens: the browns**

**Material:**
Two transparent bottles with water and an empty glass. Food colouring is used to colour the water in one bottle red and in the other green. While talking, red and green water is poured into the glass.

**Case studies:**
The following stories from the life experiences of the facilitators were told while the appropriate colour water was thrown into the glass. The water in this glass gradually turned brown.

**Brown story 1**

When I was in grade 1 my teacher did not explain that we had to keep our writing on our slates after she marked our work. I cleaned mine before she wrote down the marks. She then let me fail grade 1. It was a big red and very painful. I started to believe that I am very *dum* [stupid]. Fortunately, my mother kept on pouring green into my life, encouraging me to continue and telling me it will be okay the next year.

Now look at this terrible brown. This brown is a confusing colour. It makes my life very difficult. Every time when somebody gives me feedback, I just see this teacher and I feel very small. Even if the feedback is going to help me, I do not listen properly. I just see myself failing again and again. I cannot even afford to look at myself honestly, because I had started to play the teacher myself: I find reason to fail myself. I had put her into myself totally, so deeply did I believe the red.
Brown story 2

I was the youngest child in a big family. Everybody spoilt me by doing everything for me. Even if they meant it well and believed that they were giving me green, it was very red for me. I never learnt to do things myself. I did not get strong and I did not learn domestic skills. But their love gave me a lot of green, especially my mother’s. She was my agent, who always respected my side of the story.

Today, I am stuck with the problem that I struggle to do things by myself. I give up, sometimes even before I try. I just do not believe that I can lift the bucket with water by myself and easily call somebody to help. On top of it, this makes me look lazy!

Even worse: since I left the protective circle of my family, I got hurt easily. Maybe this is because something that looked so green (love of the family) turned out to be red for me. This made me very vulnerable, because I cannot protect myself with a clear distinction between love and danger. I have many fantasies about other people and what they think about me. This has a bad influence on my relationships and my assertiveness.

Brown story 3

My father was taken to Robben Island when I was 8. We suffered, especially as the Special Branch people came to our house all the time and harassed us. They called us “Terrorist kids”. I stood at the gate and shouted at them in Afrikaans, which I especially learnt for this purpose, and in this way I tried to keep them away from my family. When it really went bad, the Council of Churches people came to give us food. That was a big green.

Now I expect hatred from all white people. When I see one, I wait for it. But this hatred goes much deeper - to all people in authority. Black policemen are informants. Black teachers saying something to me just try to abuse me. I simply mistrust everybody who might have authority over me. Now the result (the brown) of this is:

- I am not open for feedback from anybody. I cannot distinguish between constructive feedback and comments aimed at breaking me down.
- As I am always accusing everybody for everything, I had never learnt to take responsibility for my own life. This is worst when it comes to financial matters. I am always in trouble and always cross because this or that family member did not rescue me.
- I find it difficult to socialise, because I find it difficult to trust others as friends. Ultimately, they will reject me.
- I see “red” everywhere: In marriage I waited for the break; in the church I cannot belong to committees, because I am scared there will be a fight to deal with. In work I had very negative experiences.

It is as if everything is distorted.
Reflection/Input:

People often tell us to forget the painful things and to accept life. But, we know very well that nothing is really ever forgotten. We keep these things deep inside us and then they come out in ways we do not understand or sometimes we are not even aware that they come out. Unfortunately, we often get stuck in the reds and give them a lot of power over us. Then we feel sorry for ourselves and play the victim throughout our lives. This helps nothing.

It is so that we cannot throw away the reds, because they are our history. But we can do something about this glass: it is our choice how we mix our reds and our greens into it. We can also decide to throw this mixture away. The big problem is when we are not aware of these browns – or that we have the power to reject the brown things that we believe about ourselves.

It was significant in the Richtersveld case study how difficult it is actually to distinguish between positive and negative past experiences. The greens appeared to have come at such a high price that they could only be described as red or brown.

The browns in the Richtersveld

The Richtersveld community is with good reason proud of their ability to survive in their beloved but difficult land – but it came at a price: a handful of browns.

We know the Richtersveld and its people.

This is how we have always done it in the Richtersveld. This will not change.

This flipside of these pride announcements is an unwillingness to reflect on own behaviour and strategies - even when these are not/no longer functional or are actually having a negative impact on their relationships, environment or economy. There is a stubbornness that does not allow creative and innovative debate or alternative ideas, especially when coming from outsiders. (Ironically, the community does not appear to want outside interference, but they constantly employ outsiders as ‘experts’. What brown lies behind this double bind?)

This community also had to deal with another form of harshness: the realities of oppression and apartheid, which continuously eroded their living space, humanity and independence. What browns came out of this?

Through an in-depth analysis process, the community listed the (brown) results that they now have to cope with: a lack of confidence; the abdicating of responsibility (while waiting for help and blaming another for ‘wrong’ action); a stubborn belief in an own point of view; the exploitation of communal resources to survive; sticking to old patterns and plans even if they have never worked before; unrealistic expectations from leadership and government to solve all problems; a sense of entitlement; a lack of stimulation leading to destructive social behaviour and gossip and mistrust.
They are thus maintaining strategies that have become obsolete. A poignant example is the undermining of authority: this might have contributed to survival during apartheid, but is this still appropriate in a democracy that offers the option of voting for other leaders? How constructive is a constant strategy of undermining and outwitting?

The power of the browns is accumulating and indeed more than the sum of the reds and greens: browns become new reds and together with the original experiences spin into a cycle of ever-deepening dysfunction. The exposure of this pattern is critical in the healing process.

When a characteristic is assigned repeatedly, it starts to get stuck and the result can be that a life is lived with such a label – whether true or false.

6.4.2 Living with labels

The noun ‘label’ can have a neutral meaning: a “small piece of paper, fabric, plastic, or similar material attached to an object and giving information about it” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). However, it can also be described as a “classifying phrase or name applied to a person or thing, especially one that is inaccurate or restrictive” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.) or as a “word or a phrase that is used to describe the characteristics or qualities of people, activities, or things, often in a way that is unfair. “He seems to be stuck with the label of ‘troublemaker’” (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, n.d.). How does this link with the reds and the greens described above? The following activity investigates the impact and nature of labels on a person and a community – specifically those ‘inaccurate’, ‘restrictive’ and ‘unfair’ labels that are the result of our sad history.

Labels: the results of the reds and greens

Activity 1: How I label people and the world around me

Material:
Red and green strips of cellophane (same as used above)
The facilitator tells a story while participants use their red strips:
- My father has always been abusing my mother. (Red strips in front of the eyes.)
- My first boyfriend abused me. (Fold the strip double and look again: it is dark red.)
- My friend’s boyfriend abused her. (Fold the strip again and look.)
- I meet another man and he is very interested in me. Here he comes (green strip is held up). What colour is this strip?
- Answer: dark brown.

Reflection/Input:
After a few experiences with men who behaved red, all men have become a brown for this woman.
They are dangerous and she cannot give this (green) man a chance.

Unfortunately, the brown becomes the colour that has power over us: it determines how we live, the choices we made, the things we believe, the green chances that we miss and the messages that we give our children. This woman probably warns her daughters that men are dangerous.

But: to live in the brown is to live a lie. Yes, there are bad men out there, but there are also many good men. To become free, it is necessary to take off the red and the green glasses and to look at the world and others as they truly are. Then we can plan our strategies according to a reality and not based on coloured glasses.

What happens when we take a message from outside and put the label inside ourselves?

Activity 2: How I accept and swallow labels about myself

Case study: Thabo’s labels

Thabo has a bad maths teacher. Instead of helping him, the teacher tells him every time he gets bad marks that he is *dom* [stupid]. He starts to believe it. When he sits in the exam room and has a maths exam paper in front of him, he thinks: “Ohhh … I am not clever enough for this! I cannot do it!” Then he becomes so paralysed that he does really badly. The results come and he fails. Now, with the results in his hand, he has actual proof: I am *dom*. The longer this goes on, the worse it gets – even in other subjects.

Reflection/Input:

This is how we gradually get labels and they are not only stuck outside: we swallow them and they sit deep inside us. Then it is very difficult to get rid of them - especially if we do not even realise that we have them and that they are not true. In addition, they invite new labels: when Thabo fails, he will get a hiding and new labels, such as lazy and stubborn. Unfortunately, while we believe that what the labels attached to us say about us, we lose parts of our true selves and live in this false self.

Participants gave examples of labels they lived by on personal level: stubborn, lazy, stupid and naughty. One was told that she was ugly, because she was compared to a specific uncle who was indeed very ugly. She believed it all along, until one activity in the programme forced her to look into the mirror and now “I have stopped believing I am ugly”. Participants admitted that they also label their children. They call them stubborn, lazy, *stout* [naughty] and even ugly.
In addition, names are important in indigenous cultures, as was seen in the discussion on labels. Some tried by all means to live out their names: Malethola, ‘the quiet one’, believed she should be quiet, while Seboeng, ‘talkative’ or ‘chatterbox’, had to talk. Seberekenane was almost killed because of her name: it means ‘strong woman’ and “everybody is giving me a lot of work and abuse my power.” One was called Nkwapo [like to fight] and “I still like fighting”.

Activity 3: Labels for groups of people (stereotyping)
The facilitator calls out words and participants shout out the first idea that enters their mind when they think about these groups of people:

- **Farm people**: dom [stupid], don’t know anything; vuil [dirty]; don’t know the town; eat only pap and morogo [type of spinach]; they eat chips at Christmas; mamparras [moegoes]; not streetwise; and they are like slaves.
- **Town and township people**: high class; have big houses; fashionable; educated; eat nice food; have cars, are streetwise, are always hungry; are thieves and they are clever.
- **Boys**: like balls, cars, bicycles and tractors; they make young girls pregnant; and they are tsotsis.
- **Girls**: they cook, wash, clean, smear the huts and pick marogo; they play mantlwana [fantasy games]; are lazy and slordig [untidy] and talk too much.
- **Black people**: they are poor, work hard, are swart [black], dom [stupid], lui [lazy]; they make muti [traditional medicine] with body parts of children (especially business people).
- **White people**: are rich, have domestic workers; are lazy, drive cars, have everything; are givers of food and work; repeat bad actions (mohlorisi); and practise apartheid.
- **Black men**: work hard, they beat women, ba tena [nag]; and they take chances.
- **Black women**: they get children, fix panties with a needle; are lui [lazy]; witches; man snatchers; liars; and gossips.
Where did these ideas come from?

From our grandparents and parents, the churches, in school, the neighbourhood/local people, the TV and radio and from magazines. We also see it from government through its laws: it made life difficult for women and for black people during the years of apartheid.

Reflection/Input:
We are going to call these ideas you have just shouted out ‘group labels’ or stereotypes, because they cling not only to an individual person, but to a whole group. So, when you see somebody in one of these groups, you cannot help to think all those words. But the saddest of all: if you belong to such a group, you believe these very same labels about yourself.

It is not easy to get rid of labels that cling to a group, because you cannot personally get yourself out of the group (for example, nothing that a black person does will make him/her white). And in our country we have put many group labels to people over hundreds of years. These labels are now truly stuck!

Activity 4: What to do with paralysing and false labels?

Reflection/Input:
We are paralysed by labels as long as we do not understand that they are false. Then we live them out. But there is something that we can do: we can ask if this label is really true. Am I really stupid? Or am I struggling with maths or is my teacher not good with explaining? When I take off the label ‘stupid’ and say ‘struggle’, there is a chance to make a plan.

The concept of labels was not directly addressed during the Richtersveld process, but the presence of group labels/stereotypes was undeniable:

The Richtersveld labels

While researching the issues that impacted on development in the Richtersveld, I talked with many members of the Richtersveld community as well as with outsiders in neighbouring areas and towns. When I tried to understand the dynamics and asked a question or made an observation, I often got the following response, accompanied by a shake of the head and a sigh: “…we Richtersvelders …!” or “…those Richtersvelders …!” These sentences apparently did not even need to be completed. What is it about ‘those’ Richtersvelders? Are they ‘difficult’, ‘strange’, ‘troublemakers’, ‘unreliable’ or generally impossible to work with? I never heard the label given a name, but it was clearly stuck and believed by all involved.

Towards the end of and especially soon after their land claim was awarded, the community was shaken by high levels of conflict. The label started to become clearer: failure, unworthy and a joke in the eyes of the world:
The tragedy of labels is that we cannot defend ourselves against it, because we are not aware of them as labels and believe them to be true. It is a dead-end. Something else that is done with reds and browns is to pretend that they do not exist: they are denied or hidden as a secret. This is discussed in the next section.

### 6.4.3 The power of secrets and denial

When pain is too much to face, it is not faced - but instead hidden or denied. Pain and humiliation are often accompanied by an element of shame. This makes it even more difficult to acknowledge and talk openly: the abused woman trying to hide her bruises, community members not saying that they cannot understand what is discussed in a meeting or the person struggling to fill in a form in a second language. Keeping a secret takes a lot of energy and scheming. It also involves a confusing mixture of emotions and is thus truly destructive.

This form of woundedness is now investigated through a question-and-answer exercise between facilitators and participants of the family programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the painful things that we try to keep secret?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Illnesses (cancer, HIV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nyatsi (lover and affair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘Night things’ (sex), such as unfulfilling sex life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drinking – alcohol abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• That we do not understand (in a public meeting)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do we keep secrets or deny problems? What risks do we take when we start talking about this secret?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Fear rejection, blame or hatred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pain too much to accept/face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shame - as if you are guilty (e.g. abuse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationships that might be broken; marriage affected, divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chased out of house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear you won’t be believed (especially in the case of abuse, where children should not talk about these things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being laughed at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Everybody is laughing at us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How is a secret/denial affecting the person with this secret?

- Fear
- Worry
- It eats energy
- Physical illness, e.g. high blood or other stress related illnesses
- Endanger others (e.g. infecting with AIDS)
- Lose self-confidence
- Negative/bad communication
- Hatred for one who caused the problem
- Not getting support
- Focus on the secret and then neglect other tasks (such as work, raising children, marriage)

What can help us to get out of this secret?

- Knowledge/information (e.g. from radio, church, session)
- Kindness of a person
- Somebody showing real interest
- Confession
- Promise or hope for support
- Looking into a mirror (seeing myself through others' eyes)

How is a secret or denial affecting the people around the person, as well as his/her relationships in general?

- They worry, but cannot help
- Wonder why she did not trust us with this thing that is clearly eating her
- Things remain unsaid
- In case of young parents dying, children are not prepared emotionally – even physically/financially
- Tension, conflict
- No possibility of saying goodbye in case of serious illness
- They are afraid of the one who is closing up

What are the feelings after a secret has come out?

- Relief
- Happy
- Able to get support
- Stress lifts
- Satisfaction – less to worry about
- Able to start planning
- If negative: Misery and stress

How does denial of pain manifest?

**Denial of pain in the family programme**

It was noted how often participants denied that they had any strong feelings about what happened during the hardship of apartheid: they never knew anything else and did not expect anything better. However, when forced to look at these issues through various activities of the programme strong feelings started to emerge. There was anger, sadness and frustration about lost opportunities and lives – and about the illusion that all of this has disappeared in the New South Africa. The opportunity to talk brought ‘relief’, they observed.

The Richtersveld has not been spared the results of secrets and denial and the destructive impact thereof:
Secrets and denial in the Richtersveld

The Richtersveld community has become vulnerable through a constant undercurrent of suspicion and hidden agendas. This may be a result of living for years in almost total isolation, which turned this small community into a big family. On the one hand, it created a feeling of geborgenheid [safety], with a rich history of intimately-shared events, language, humour, anecdotes and customs. But there is a flipside: even though families tend to close ranks against attacks, criticism or threats from outside, siblings can be quite ruthless to protect themselves and their space within the family. This was observed in the Richtersveld, with its high level of internal conflict, scheming and dealing, gossiping and jealousy. For example: I sought an explanation for the absence of small businesses in the villages and was told by many that there was only one reason: jealousy. Nobody can be allowed to succeed or excel alone: it could divide the community or break the “sameness” of their long-shared fate. When a business started to succeed, it was immediately undermined by others (or imitated by others which right away overstock the supply for the same type of business).

(The nature of the ‘secrets’ was never revealed, but my impression was that it had more to do with ‘secret’ strategies to survive, for example overgrazing, the shame that some schemes have failed and their inability to avert conflict. I did not sense any real ‘scandal’, such as large-scale corruption, that needed to be hidden. This for me confirmed the power of the fear to fail or be seen as a failure.)

It is very difficult to address this situation, because there is no neutrality possible from within, while outside mediation is carefully avoided, because it will imply that the perceived ‘family secrets’ have to be exposed. This limits the ability to do honest introspection and reflection. How do you reflect on the unsaid and denied, on cards held so closely to the chest? The community is thus open to exploitation by those with ulterior motives: it is easy to ‘recruit’ dissident members to divide the community and thereby get your hands on their communal assets.

An interesting contradiction was noted: community members shied away from giving information that was critical for their development, but they are constantly going to court where, as some remarked, their dirty washing was hung in public for the whole country to see and to laugh at them.

Another way, in which parts of the true self can get lost, is shadows.

6.4.4 A crowd of shadowed me’s

Another way of losing parts of the self, is by repressing them or to leave them “unactivated” (Stevens, 1994: 300). They literally go into the dark – into a shadow. The shadow can be described as an “imitation or inferior version, but also a constant companion” (The Free Dictionary. n.d.). What is the nature and effect of this constant shadowed companion?
Activity:
A story (told or mimicked)
The adults are drinking tea in the living room and the three-year old Ntabiseng comes in. She has not seen the lovely porcelain teapot before and is curious. She tries to touch it, but her hand is quickly pulled away. She gets a light slap on the hand and is warned not to do it. She does not understand this: she only wanted to touch something beautiful or maybe wanted to investigate what it was. Nobody explains that she can get burnt or that the teapot is precious and can break easily. The next time Ntabiseng tries again and gets loud shouts and a proper smack. If she is spirited, she might try even a third time. But the adults become very impatient and angry. Then Ntabiseng stops trying.

One day she started drawing with her brother’s crayon on the wall. She gets scolded. Because Ntabiseng is too small to understand that drawing on a wall is wrong; she thought drawing was wrong or that her drawing was not good enough. Frustrated, she hit her brother. She is now properly punished.

Reflection/Input:
‘Good’ and ‘creative’ shadows
What happens here? This child’s desire to investigate things in life or touch something beautiful becomes hidden inside herself – it becomes a shadow. If this happens, she might find it difficult for the rest of her life to try out new things, to investigate or to be creative, because she will always expect the same kind or negative response. Even if she would follow a scientific or artistic career, she might find herself stopping short of creating or completing something ‘special’. It will be as if the spanking hand is still hovering above her.

How many things do the adults in our families forbid us to do, without giving or even having reasons? When we get older, there are even more people and systems (such as the state, church, economy or school) that forbid us things – and more and more parts of us can become shadows. Each of these bits of me that goes into the shadow becomes something that we can call a ‘little me’.

This also happens to whole groups of people when they are oppressed and deprived of opportunities to develop and have success. When we are not allowed to get a proper education or do creative or challenging work, what do we do with our brains? Is it also driven into the shadow? When there is no recognition of or reward for good work, the hope for success goes into the shadow. It does not matter if I am excellent: I am not going to even try again. In the process, we lose the most beautiful and precious parts of ourselves.

‘Destructive’ and ‘bad’ shadows
Just as there are ‘good’ desires in us, there are also destructive ones: to kill, to break, to have as
much as possible, not to share, and so forth. Our parents, the school, the church and the government make sure that these things do not come out of us and this is mostly done through rules, laws and punishment. When Ntaabiseng’s desire to hurt her brother is punished, this is also put into a shadow. But maybe the instinct to protect herself was also banned into the shadow.

It is obviously a good thing that we don’t go around killing people we don’t like or steal or fight all the time. Unfortunately, we are never taught that behind the desire to kill or break there is a strong feeling, such as anger, fear or greediness. Because these feelings are now in the shadow, we do not know and respect them. They are also little hidden me’s.

Because they are hidden and denied, we do not learn what to do with these destructive feelings and desires. I learn that I am not allowed to kill or break, but what am I supposed to do with my unhappiness, anger, fear or frustration? It has to come out somehow or somewhere. And the sadness is that we cannot get rid of these dark shadows simply by trying to be ‘good’ and ‘nice’: They have a way of coming out in places where we do not expect them – sometimes exactly when I am trying to ‘do good’. Instead of showing the anger, I find myself being nasty, spiteful or overly critical on others. Or I will simply sabotage my own progress or relationships.

This is where shadows become dangerous. If such a strong emotion gets out of control, it can really be very destructive. Every day we see around us the result of this: people commit crimes, beat their spouses and children, steal, bribe, gossip, drive aggressively and abuse alcohol. They call other groups names, label them as inferior and even start to attack them. We simply do not know what to do when we are in trouble with our shadows.

Crowds of little me’s
In this way, a whole crowd of potential people ‘little me’s’ is formed. So, inside myself there is a potential artist, an explorer, a manager or a scientist - but there is also a murderer, a crook, a burglar or a saboteur. If I know them well, I would be able to manage them much better. I will know what tricks they will be up to!

Shadows use up a lot of energy
It takes a lot of energy to control these many me’s inside myself, to keep them in the dark all the time. It is the same as having to hide lots and lots of secrets that just want to jump out all the time. It is actually a huge relief when I know my shadows and when a light shines on them, because then I can stop pretending and I will be free to use this energy much better.

How do we recognise a shadow?
The following might help us to recognise a shadow:
When we get stuck in life

When we do not understand our emotions or when we make the same mistakes over and over or we get stuck in life, it is possible that we are battling with a shadow. Then it is time to stop and ask: where does this come from? When did something like this happen before? What are the destructive patterns in my life? If we can be courageous and manage to trace and face the pain, we might be able to bring the shadows into the light and acknowledge them.

When a mirror is held up in front of us

Seeing your own shadows is almost as difficult as trying to see your own back. It is only possible if we have a mirror, which in we can any case not hold behind our own backs. We need somebody or something to hold it up for us. We can ask somebody to hold the mirror (like in a programme such as this one) or it happens unexpectedly. When I get more irritated or upset by a situation or a person than makes sense, I can almost be sure that a shadow has jumped out and I am looking at my own shadow in the mirror.

Story to illustrate a shadow that jumps out:

I hear over the news a story of a terrible murder, but it hardly touches me and I do not even think about it again. But then they say something about a teacher who has been arrested for corruption and I want to explode with anger. Logically speaking, I should have been more upset by the murder than by corruption. Why am I then so upset? The reason is probably that a light has fallen onto a shadow. Maybe, when I was in school, there was a teacher who did a ‘corrupt’ thing and it caused me much pain. It might have ruined my education or prevented me from performing well. It might have been so painful, that I never even had the courage to think about it again. Now, all of this comes back. The news bulletin was like a mirror and I briefly looked into my past/shadows.

We need mirrors, but it is very seldom nice to see my shadows in the mirror! Only the very brave manage to face the mirror. Instead, we pretend that there is no mirror and that the picture we see is that of the person holding the mirror and not a ‘little me’ – and we get cross with him/her. If we do this, we dodge responsibility for ourselves. This also means that we do not have to change. But it is not going to help us for long: if a light shines on a shadow, it is no longer a shadow. It will come out again and again until we see and face it. Or we will spend all our energy and time running away from the mirror and the shadow. In the process we will continue to make mistakes, get stuck – and deny a huge part of ourselves, which we could have used to be a full person.

It is thus helpful if I have wise people around me to help me understand my shadows, make peace with as many little me’s as possible and use my energy better.

Shadows thus imply ‘unactivated’ parts inside each person – often the very best qualities. The ‘inferior’ and negative qualities are easier to recognise. People find it much easier to talk about their
bad qualities. Those were constantly expressed by participants in terms of the changes that they wanted to see in themselves: not to get angry, control themselves better, be more patient with their (abusive) husbands and so forth. It appears to be more difficult to recognise the good qualities that are hidden in the shadow than the negative ones. Instead of recognising these qualities in themselves, they are admired in others (a common example is to fall in love with the own un-chosen qualities in another person).

This dilemma is illustrated through an activity in the family programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admired qualities – projected shadows</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants in the family programme did an activity ‘To like myself’. As first step, each participant mentioned a person that they admired and explained what they admired in this person. The next step was to give a ‘stroke’ (a word for something like an appreciation or compliment) to the person sitting next to them. Feedback from this activity was done in the first person: My neighbour says that I am … The last activity was to say what each liked about themselves - first something physical and then a characteristic.</td>
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</table>

Everybody enjoyed the first activity and had no problem thinking of people they admire. These include politicians (often Nelson Mandela), radio and TV announcers and stars, singers, spiritual leaders, teachers and family members. Some mentioned the farmers or white people, mostly because they have ‘things’ and power. The second activity was a bit more difficult, especially to report-back from the neighbour in the first person: … I am friendly; … I have beautiful eyes. Talking about something that they liked about their bodies was also relative easy, especially as they could do it with the aid of a mirror and through a dance or ‘show’. But it became really difficult to talk about something beautiful inside themselves. However, when they realised it was safe and that talking about themselves would not be perceived as pride or boasting, they enjoyed listing the things that made them special.

It is significant that the characteristics admired in the ‘heroes’ and in the neighbours were exactly the same than those ‘unactivated’ parts that they eventually found in themselves.

| Admired in others | Confident; brave; strong; comforting; gives good advice; gives love; helps in times of need; is strong; trusts in God; and supports others (financial and other). |
| Admired in self | Confidence; helps others; perseverance; speaks the truth; has mercy and love; respect for others; fear and respect for God; kindness and quietness; fairness; courage and strength to work for God; hard working (“even if I do not have a job, my children are eating”); the strength to pray; “patient and accepting, even those who betray me”; good relationships with neighbours; gives good advice; cares for others, even visitors/strangers; loves the in-laws and cares for their children; does not fight; and feels for others. |
This clearly indicates how the good shadow is projected onto others and not recognised in the self.

The community of the Richtersveld battles against several elements of themselves that had been driven underground by past experiences.

**The Richtersveld and its shadows**

The shadows allow both oppressor and oppressed to resort to a form of ‘forced dysfunction’: blaming, rescuing, dependency, avoiding responsibility and so forth. An example is the Richtersveld’s relationship to government and companies operating in the area. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries the Richtersveld’s political and economic base was constantly eroded and agreements broken. This was often followed by regulations to pacify the community, soften the blow of the injustice or to compensate them for losses and injustices inflicted. In exchange for the loss of ownership of land, the apartheid government started to provide and maintain infrastructure for farming on the commons (such as windmills and troughs). The mining companies established corporate social investment programmes, such as the Namaqualand Diamond Fund Trust (NDFT), which sponsors projects and makes bursaries, transport and equipment available for education. Since 1994, the new democratic government prioritised redress of past injustices and started to introduce legislation and policies to facilitate restitution of land rights and the pay-out of social security grants, amongst many other arrangements. The land claim was awarded to the Richtersveld community in 2007 and many members receive social support grants.

Some of the above can be seen as essential for survival at specific stages. During our planning process, the Richtersvelders were prepared to consider if they had been done a favour by all these compensations. They recognised a culture of *bakhand-staan* [receiving charity], which had driven confidence and trust in their own ability into some hidden place or shadow. Some wondered if this could be linked to the high level of early school-leaving: there is no financial implications/loss for the family when a child fails or drops out because somebody else (mostly the NDFT) pays in any case. To what degree has this distorted the potential for financial management and business: somebody else pays for outlay and expenses – and we take the profit? Farmers have got used to a government that takes care of agricultural infrastructure and when this practice was stopped in the new dispensation, it was not replaced by any internal structure. The absence of control and authority is probably seen as a victory: nobody is interfering in ‘our business’ any more. The tragedy is that, without control, the environment is seriously under threat. This community, who fought so hard for more than a decade to be compensated for land taken from them through legislation is trapped in a shadow that has stripped them of the capacity to take care of what is dear to them.
Shadows are probably the most difficult aspect to deal with in the healing process. It even requires a critical look at admired and loved ones (such as parents, family and trusted spiritual and political leaders) to investigated how/if they have contributed to the forming of our shadows. It involves claiming back the self and rejecting the constructs ‘inherited’ from these powerful forces.

Apart from carrying around the reds as labels, living them out as browns or hiding them, they can be projected.

6.4.5 Projections: avoiding the self

*If you hate a person, you hate something in him that is part of yourself.*
*What isn't part of ourselves doesn't disturb us* (Hermann Hesse: *Demian*).

While shadows and secrets remain hidden, they are easily projected onto other people, situations, systems or even objects. How does this happen?

**Activity:**

*Case study/role-play: The mother and the child’s request*

The child asks the mother for pencils and a book that he needs for school. The mother literally explodes. She starts screaming: where should the money come from; how will the father react; why is the child always bothering her, expecting more and more every day; and he is in any case performing badly at school. Spending more money on this going-to-school business is a waste.

**Reflection/Input (with the aid of the illustration below):**

Let us talk about what happened here:

- Because this mother cannot provide in the child’s legitimate needs, she feels inadequate and guilty. She cannot deal with her husband’s response to the child’s needs and she cannot deal
assertively with what she knows is a fair request.

- Instead of telling the child straight that there is no money and that she is sorry about not being able to give him what he needs, she throws all these feelings (guilt, sadness and fear) onto the child.
- She obviously feels terrible afterwards, but she does not understand what is really happening. She is not aware of the possibility of projections.

Something terrible that we do with our reds is to try to give them to other people. This is what we call projection, or ‘to take it out and throw it’. Projections normally come out of our reds and if we are not aware of them, it is easy to throw them onto others or into situations. We do not know that we do this.

For example: I had a bad experience with my first boyfriend – and now I do not want my daughter to play with boys at all. If I can manage to deal with my pain, I will not project it onto my children (and they on their children too). I may spoil their relationships and greens with my reds. I can free my daughter too when I free myself of my shadows and secrets. She has the right to have positive relationships with anybody.

As we have learnt from the shadows: we also have good things in us that have become shadows. These we sometimes also project onto others: we admire them for the things that are really deep inside ourselves.

Note: Two things are needed to make a projection: something behind or inside me that I avoid facing – and the thing/person that I project it on. I cannot just call anything that does not work for me or causes a problem a projection. To talk about a projection, I should be able to make a sentence that goes like this: Instead of owning this (a red/green thing)…, I am throwing it at … (the blue box)

The biggest gift that parents can give their children is to give them a ‘clean slate’: then they do not have to first deal with the shadows and labels of the parent before they can live their own lives.

Dialogue between facilitators and participants in the family programme:

1 What are we projecting?

- When I fought with my husband, I tell my children that I have my own family and home and that I will leave them, without telling their father. I do not even tell them that I have been fighting – I just announce this suddenly.
- When my child does not pass at school, I take it out to the school and the teachers – as if they were doing a bad job.
- When I have a lot of work to do, I take it out on things (pots and pans).
- My husband was drunk, was attacked by tsotsis and came home late. He takes it out on me.
2 Why are we projecting?

- We do not want to see or hear about our mistakes.
- We feel stereotyped – and blame others when criticised, all based on unchecked fantasies.
- We deny our pain or fear.
- When our secrets are in danger of coming out, we have to get rid of them by projecting or throwing them around onto others/situations – without saying/knowing they are ours.
- We are angry with ourselves, but it is easier to be angry with others – and not face the pain of our problems, secrets or mistakes.
- We still struggle with bad childhood experiences – red ones.
- We are afraid of the person who has hurt us.
- We do not have enough communication skills.

3 What is the result of projection?

- There are fights and relationships are destroyed.
- There is a lack of responsibility.
- Problems do not get solved, because the real problem is not discussed – only the projection.
- Life is miserable for all around this projection – the thrower and the receiver.
- Confusion and fear, especially for children; as they never know what to expect next.
- Kill the spirit of the person on whom you project (especially children).

4 How do I stop projecting?

- Know myself: my reds, greens and browns!
- Take responsibility, instead of blaming others or making excuses
- Get the skills to deal with problems, for example to be assertive
- Don’t be scared of rejection/of what other people might say
- Communicate honestly and openly
Similarly, the Richtersveld community struggles with unconscious matter that is projected:

**Fences and the Richtersveld community**

An interesting example of projection was found in the Richtersveld: the community’s relationship to fences. When diamonds were discovered in 1928, one of the first steps by the state was to put up a fence to keep the Richtersvelders out of the diamond area. Over the subsequent decades, new fences were continuously put up, through which the community increasingly lost land. This infringed on their nomadic lifestyle. By 1957, apartheid fences were put up “not to keep us out, but to keep us in, like animals in a cage – the ultimate dispossession” [my translation] (Die Gespande Draad, 2007). But hope cannot be caged in and the community successfully claimed back some lost land. Each claimant received what they called Die Bruin Boek and the following victorious statement is made in the introduction: “A new generation set foot on its heritage – and the fences of yesteryear lie trampled underfoot in the dust” [my translation] (Die Gespande Draad, 2007).

The pain about fences appears to be projected onto various issues. I sensed a negative attitude amongst some members about the declaration of part of the area as a World Heritage Site: the fear was that it might imply yet another fence and restrictions. The number of farmers and stock has increased and overgrazing has become a serious problem, especially since some of the farmers are new to the area and do not understand how to move their stock wisely. However, it proves to be very difficult to even discuss strategies around soil erosion: the idea of fences might come up. This is a taboo with a group of people whose association with any fence is so traumatic. The irony and tragedy is that the loss of land/soil through soil erosion will probably have a more permanent effect than any disposessing legislation. We joked that they will have to make their next land claim to God - to get their land back out of the Atlantic Ocean. This community has fought for more than a decade to gain land through land claim processes, but seemingly does nothing to fight against the loss of soil and natural resources through its own practices.

Fences are also linked to the favourite strategy of outwitting: if an official set up a fence, it was apparently perceived as a challenge to see how fast the farmers could get their stock through or underneath that fence. Even if the idea of fences gets accepted in future plans, it is probably safe to predict that such a fence is not going to keep the sheep and goats of the Richtersveld farmer out!

There are many stories about officials and fences in this community - told with obvious pride and humour. Has the idea of fences perhaps also been projected onto all forms of authority?

Life can really be made miserable amidst labels, shadows, secrets and projections. While still hidden in the unconsciousness, the efforts to deal with these can make things worse. This is investigated in the next section.
6.4.6 The turning screw: getting stuck

Without awareness of the impact of labels, secrets, shadows and projections, we can get stuck in despair, apathy, fear, over-reactions or lethargy. It is difficult to risk any new action while feeling trapped. A useful metaphor to investigate this is that of the skroef or screw.

**The screw that just turns and turns inside us**

**Activity:**
An old screw is used during the input. It is turned into a hole in a piece of wood, plastic or any object available to illustrate how a screw just turning and turning – stripped or having no grip on the too big hole. When a participant relates his/her own story, s/he gets the screw and the ‘hole’ to illustrate the story told and feelings evoked.

**Reflection/Input:**
Imagine we and our feelings are this thing (the item with the hole). Now this screw is something that makes our lives difficult and it just keeps on turning and turning. These are the problems, pain and fears that look as if they never end: the domestic violence that goes on month after month, year after year or the anxiety about enough food on the table, day after day for years. The hole is too big or the screw is stripped: it goes nowhere, but it continues to hurt us while turning and turning inside our flesh. It gives us this feeling:

It makes us helpless and loose heart, because it feels as if there is no way that we will ever get a grip on this screw to turn it out. It even feels dangerous to try something new: what if I risk this project and it does not work? If this would happen, it will just be another turn of the screw.

Through the activities and interaction with the participants in the family programme, it was possible to understand what types of ‘screws’ they are battling with.

**Stories of screws in the family programme**

When a new group was recruited, the family programme was explained as a ‘programme of the heart’ – and not one of money. Each group listed the types of ‘heart things’ that they would like to work on. This list gives an interesting picture of the types of screws in which these communities are trapped. Four broad categories are identified: the relationship with their husbands (deal with “our angry husbands”); relationship with their children; emotional growth (“I want to be able to have control over myself. I am too angry inside myself”) and skills to cope with everyday life (to be responsible, stand up for self; and have self-esteem). Through subsequent activities more ‘screws’ were identified:
• A battle with resources and finances – either through a lack of income or the inability to manage resources. They live in constant fear that the precarious balance making them to just survive will be disturbed, for example if the breadwinner gets ill (it was peak HIV/AIDS time) or if the farmer sells the farm and they have to leave. And then ....?
• Many mothers faced the problem of husbands/partners who were drinking and abusing them.
• Many felt ill and wondered why – which was mostly linked to the fear for HIV/AIDS. They worried about the future of their children if “something would happen to me”. They were scared that they would not get a decent funeral. Many had constant health problems, mostly stress-related (especially high blood pressure and neck pain). Due to poverty and a lack of information they had poor eating habits. The cheap and comforting food and drinks they consume were mostly unhealthy. They abused alcohol as a weapon against stress and a low budget.
• Most of them struggled to be assertive enough to cope with the different systems they have to deal with: schools, social services, health services and shops.
• They live in an unsafe, ugly, dirty, noisy and depressing environment. There are lots of fights, jealousy and gossip in the closed community that they live in.
• Many had mainly destructive relationships with their children and parent-child relationships were falling into a cycle of provocation, mistrust, punishment and aloofness. There are many trucks and taxis in that area. They fear their daughters might go away with these drivers or fall pregnant or get AIDS. They were scared that their children might get raped, become criminals, be kidnapped or land in prison. There is no optimistic picture about a different kind of future for their children.

The way in which the Richtersveld community got stuck into a screw was almost tangible.

The Richtersveld: getting stuck in destructive patterns and obsolete strategies

The Richtersveld community provided a vivid picture of a community that got stuck in the complexity of past experiences, the resulting strategies and the consequences of the latter. The way in which this complexity played out in the psyche of the Richtersveld community was opened up and discussed through the metaphor of a plant that struggles to yield flowers. The hidden patterns and strategies are especially poignant in two areas, which happened to correspond with the colours used in previous metaphors: the ‘brown’ of the soil and the ‘red’ of the stem. The first is supposed to provide the stability and provide the food, while the stem is the conduit of these nutrients. The condition of both was perceived as lamentable.

The illustration of the Richtersveld plant below is a condensed version of the plant that the community built of themselves over a period of months.
The Richtersveld Plant

[Absent flowers]

Leadership is not sufficiently trusted and equipped (experience, resources, clear mandates, structures) to unite and inspire a divided and dependent community to engage constructively in development.

Contested and insecure land ownership and the communal use of resources.

Conflict between conservation and development (apathy, resistance, lack of knowledge, agreed strategies).

Inadequate levels of education.

Eroded social fibre and limited self-belief or determination / passion / embracing of excellence.

Inappropriate culture of business and economic development for 21st century.

Destructive communication, lack of creative debate and trust.

Legacy of the struggle to survive, isolation, dispossession, humiliation and disappointment.

Lack of stimulation – boredom – destructive social behaviour, gossip.

Abdicating responsibility – waiting, blaming.

Apathy: this is our fate; how it has always been; will always be.

Dependency on external solutions for internal problems (interdicts, courts).

Dependency.

Entitlement.

Resistance to individual success, excelling and loss of sameness - envy.

Internal conflict.

Lack of confidence.

Mistrust, especially outsiders and authority.

Exploit communal resources to survive – no responsibility for the communal property.

Fear of change, risk/trying or new ideas.

Highly emotional or sensitive about most issues, e.g. land, ownership, authority, culture.

Obsessive about “It belongs to all of us”.

Unrealistic expectations.

Stick to old patterns – even if it does not.

Inadequate trust, confidence to persevere.
The Richtersveld's response to the picture of their plant

The community was quite emotional about this plant, especially the soil and roots:

This is very painful to look at! How did we get our soil so poor? It is full of poison!

They were further concerned about the 'red card' in the middle: 'Destructive communication, and a lack of creative debate and trust'. During discussions they often referred to this 'red card' that they are giving each other (used more or less in the sense of a red card in sport: sent off). This is self-destructive, because it makes it impossible to move forwards as a community.

The red card is killing us! It is everywhere!

This community has clearly become trapped in a screw, and there is no obvious strategy to get a grip on this painful situation and turn it into a new direction.

The metaphor of the stripped screw is poignant, because it illustrates so clearly the pain of a perpetual problem, the indignity of poverty, the on-going conflict, the inhibiting power of poor education and the scramble for resources. Nobody wants to live forever with this screw. What happens when the existence and power of the screw are realised?

6.4.7 A yearning for healing

When a light shines on a shadow or a label is seen as a label, it becomes very difficult to continue just as before. In this episode the many faces of the false self (the labels, shadows, secrets, denial and projections) are brought to consciousness. It elicits strong emotions to look into the mirror and being faced with a crowd of me's, labels, secrets and projections. The immediate reaction in both case studies was: we do not want to stay like this. This is a critical step in the healing process. It implies that there is a willingness and readiness to risk change. It is also important that an opportunity is created to state this yearning clearly, because it is the foundation for the rest of the process.

A yearning for healing

Activity:
The following illustration is used to explain how we land in a screw and to illustrate a way out:
Reflection/Input:
It is important to find a grip on this screw and change the direction in which it is turning. We have the power to change our lives. However, this will depend on our willingness to work with our labels, shadows and projections. If I am still living out of my labels, my plans will be for the labels and not for me. The chances are great that the plan will not work. This is one of the risks to calculate when we move into action.

The yearning for healing was expressed in many direct and indirect ways by the participants in both case studies.

Yearning for healing in the family programme
After realising how difficult they found it to communicate with their children, parents requested the programme “to support us to learn how to talk to our children”. At the end of a session in which participants could make wishes for their own childhood – what their parents could have done instead of punishing them so much, they started to realise how much anger they had about things their parents did to them. They noted how well they still remember everything that happened to them. “This means that our children will always remember what is happening to them now”. This means they have to create nice memories for their children – and they need a strategy for that.

The yearning for healing was expressed through a strong metaphor:
The Richtersveld community expressed their yearning for healing through the metaphor of their plant:

- Our soil is poisoned – nothing will grow. We will have to clean it up and put compost in before anything will grow.
- I have looked into the mirror today and I saw many scars in my face. It has to change, because I do not want to look at these scars any longer!
- The time has come for the people of the Richtersveld to change these many yellow cards (the negative things/challenges) into green cards! We have seen the things that are wrong: they have to be changed into positive strategies now – hopefully at the next workshop!

The yearning for healing links the process of conscientisation to action. It provides the motivation that will make it possible to take the risk of doing something, even if there is no guarantee of long-term success. The next episode looks at the preparations that need to be made to proceed with longer-term action.

6.5 Episode 3: Prepare for action: finding an authentic desire, voice and eyes

The message of oppression is that the oppressed is inferior and the oppressor as superior. The internalisation of this message results in the loss of self and an acceptance of attributed labels as the true self. Oppression is usually accompanied by structural inequality that deliberately limits access to skills and resources. Unfortunately, these are the very things we need to build confidence and provide a taste of achievement. The combination of the above (internalisation of a false self image and perpetual restrictions and frustrations of potential) prevents positive stories to unfold or an authentic desire, voice or eyes to develop.

These dynamics are critical when action is planned. Where there is no clear voice expressing a true desire, which has been informed by an analysis of self (and not of labels), the chances are great that the whole venture may end up in a cul-de-sac. Preparing for action is thus not just a matter of obtaining a few life skills and drafting a plan: it is on-going work to check if each wish expressed, decision made, step taken is authentic - or driven by a false force.

Episode 3 is telling the story of the battle to find an authentic desire, voice and analysis. These are interlinked and reciprocal, but I attempt to discuss them separately to clarify the concepts as they unfolded in the data.

6.5.1 An authentic desire: assertiveness

The data from the two case studies reveals a highly ambiguous attitude towards the concept of assertiveness. There is an urge to stand up for self. But this goes against a culture that teaches the
The following activities were used to facilitate such discussion:

**Assertiveness**

**Activity:**

**Role-play 1: Doing babysitting**

Masabena is in her house, busy cleaning. Thabile knocks and gets in. They greet and there is a small conversation about their families and health. Then Thabile asks Masabena if she will look after her baby that afternoon, because she wants to go to town. Masabena looks reluctant, but Thabile is very pushy in her request. Masabena eventually agrees to look after the child.

When Thabile leaves, Masabena starts complaining loudly about this neighbour who always asks her favours. She actually wanted to visit a friend that afternoon and now she has to look after the child. She keeps on stamping around in her house.

**Role-play 2: Borrowing sugar**

Dineo is busy in her house. Mampho walks in and asks for a cup of sugar. Dineo has got only enough sugar left for her own family until the next payday. She knows this neighbour does not work carefully with her things. But she does not know how to say no. So, she gives Mampho the sugar, but the whole day she is cross, because she knew she should have said no. Now she has to explain to her own family why they have to drink tea without sugar until the end of the month.

**Discussion:**

Do you recognise these situations in your own community? Can you give examples from your own life?

The following responses emerged:

**Participants’ experience with assertiveness**

**When do you struggle to be assertive?**

- My friend wanted me to go to town to buy vetkoek. I was very tired and did not want to walk all the way. Still I did.
- I gave cooking oil to my neighbour and I complained to myself.
- When I went for family planning at the clinic, they did not put me on the scale. I kept quiet and went home.
- Every month my neighbour buys a lot of meat and then wants me to keep it for her in my fridge.
The fridge is small and I pay for the coupons. But I allow her to do it every month.

- I was in hospital for diabetes treatment. They gave medicine without checking me - but I did nothing.
- Whenever I go to town, the neighbour asks me to bring things for her, even heavy things such as 12.5 kg mealie meal. I can’t say no.
- I often have to look after the grandchildren.
- Others come to drink at my place and then they do not bring their own drinks.
- I do not say clearly when that I am too tired to make love after a long day.
- A dog bit me and I went to the clinic. They gave me medicine without even looking at me. They did not explain how I had to treat it – not even how to clean it.
- I do not tell the taxi driver to go slower even if I am so scared.
- Teachers are beating our children with an ‘open hand’, but we find it difficult to go and confront the teacher. (Some managed to do this after the topic was introduced and one teacher apologised and “asked for forgiveness”.)
- I cut my beautiful thick hair short, just because my husband wants it like that. He criticises my hair, asking me if I am South African, if I try to be young, or if I want a lover. For the sake of peace I cut it, although it is so beautiful when it is long.
- I gave my last washing powder to the neighbour. I did not have enough for the rest of the month.
- I received too little change, but did not challenge the white person at the till.

What are the reasons for not being assertive?

- I will lose my friend. That will be bad.
- I am afraid that, if she is unhappy with me, she will reveal my secrets.
- People might start to believe that I am not a good neighbour.
- Next time it will be me who is in need.
- The neighbour will tell others and they will see me as cruel and selfish.
- I will feel unhelpful.
- I will be rejected.
- What are neighbours made for if not to help?

The dilemma of participants was clear: they are tired of neighbours who ‘break our budgets’ because they are not careful with their (own) resources. They were cross with themselves for trying to protect a friendship that depended on giving. They wished that they could learn to say honestly what they wanted to say, without a fight. But there was also obvious resistance and fear to learn to become assertive as the price might be too high: the loss of their cultural security.

The discourse on assertiveness is thus crowded by a complex interplay between oppression, needs, un-allowed wishes (perceived as ‘acceptance’), a mixture of emotions and culture. The latter, however, might need further investigation, especially when ‘culture’ is confused with ‘poverty’: is the
perpetual borrowing and lending of life's basic necessities from neighbours a sign of humanity and ubuntu – or is it simply about poverty?

Similarly, one could question the authenticity of the land claim of the Richtersveld.

**Asserting an authentic desire: the Richtersveld**

Understanding the authentic desire of the Richtersveld community is a challenge. It is hidden behind a complex set of emotions, oscillating between pride in the tenacity and wit that they believe have served them well, a fatalistic acceptance of suffering, the abdicating of responsibility and an expectation to be compensated for their perpetual struggle against past injustice. This is most clearly demonstrated in the utopian dream of wealth created through the land claim process and effort to get parts of the area declared as a world heritage site.

This dream started to turn into a nightmare after the claim was awarded but thwarted by complicated arrangements and conflict. Some community members even expressed the wish that they never started with this claim: it has brought them nothing but misery and conflict.

What was the true desire of this community when they submitted this claim for reparation? Reparation implies repair. What had they hoped to repair through their quest for reparation? They insisted that historical losses had stripped them of their dignity and humanity. Did the content of their land claim and the spirit in which it was requested come from an authentic desire to reclaim this dignity and humanity – or was it inspired by hurt, anger, pain and verontregting [being wronged] – and maybe a hint of greed and opportunism? When looking at the new poison that was added to their soil, one could make an argument that the claim might have been coming from an inauthentic space.

One could only conclude that the ‘soil and the soul’ of this community had never been noted in a conscious manner. More attention was paid to the diamonds, the fragile plants and potential enterprises than to the psyche of the people - the real damage they needed to repair. The exercise with the Richtersveld plant started to create the consciousness needed to bring insight into who they are. No wonder thus that the following was heard throughout the process with the Richtersveld plant:

If only we did this type of work before we started with the claim!

They realised that they had to start with the ‘soil’ and with their soul. It does not make sense to repeat old strategies and to focus on the diamonds and the flowers:

Previous efforts to bring about change here had started at the flowers and that is why it did not work!
What could be done to negotiate between the ambiguities and contradictions that stand in the way of becoming more assertive? The following ideas were explored:

**Desire and assertiveness**

**Activity:**
Consider the implications of each of the following statements:

- **The opposite of anger is desire**

**Reflection/Input:**
I can only be assertive if I know what I want – what is my desire. It is not always so easy to know what I want. It is easier to know what I do not want and to be angry with something and somebody. So, the first challenge for assertiveness is to make sure that I know myself: it has to be my real desires, not labels, shadows and projections that tell me what I want.

- **Assertiveness is not the same as aggression**

**Reflection/Input:**
To be assertive means to calmly stand up for what I want. I cannot do this if I am aggressive and in a fighting mood. I need to keep calm and focus so that I can say clearly what I want and I cannot afford to lose my head.

- **A request is not a test for friendship**

**Reflection/Input:**
If a friend asks me a favour, it is a request and should not be seen as a test for friendship. I may say no. I can also say yes – only if I want to and not because I am scared of rejection. It is not easy, especially when we feel vulnerable and scared that the loss of the friendship might cost us dearly in future. It is not assertive to cook up a lie, such as ‘I do not have’. The best is to be able to say that I have, but unfortunately not enough to give. To be assertive does not mean I am not allowed to help others. It means: I express what I desire.

- **Assertiveness can be dangerous**

**Reflection/Input:**
It is irresponsible to instruct an abused woman to be assertive and to stand up against the abuse. We need to make the necessary preparations and take precautions to ensure safety. If an abusive man is suddenly confronted by an assertive partner, he might become so angry that she is in real physical danger. This type of assertiveness needs careful planning.

Assertiveness further depends on the capacity to communicate clearly and analyse properly. The next section investigates the nature of communication.
6.5.2 An authentic voice: constructive communication

In both case studies the battle to communicate constructively was a leitmotiv. Either there is no communication or it is not constructive. A game was used to illustrate the results of poor communication and how this can change.

Communication

Activity: The pencil game

The participants are divided into pairs. Each pair receives one pencil and 3 pages of clean paper. They sit at a table or a place where they can draw on the papers.

**Step 1:**
Hold the pencil together so that you can both write at the same time with this one pencil. You are going to draw together on the first page. You are **not allowed to talk** or give signs with your hands. Each person draws whatever you want. The game is stopped after a while (when there is more or less chaos and some pencils broken!).

**Step 2:**
Hold the pencil together again. Now draw on a new page. **You may still not talk.** Draw a house together. The game is stopped after they had time to draw something resembling a house.

**Step 3:**
Hold the pencil together again. On a new page, draw a house again, but now **you may talk.**

**Discussion:**
The pairs show their pictures and share the experience and feelings – specifically the change from the first picture to the last. (The facilitator makes a special note of those pairs where the first picture is already something recognisable. It is raised in the reflection.)

**Reflection/Input:**
In all three activities there had been the same four resources: two people, one pencil and a page of paper. The only difference between the three pictures was communication. The first picture reminds us of the screw: a total mess. The last is a beautiful house. The difference between the first and the second pictures was that at least there was a common goal.

The cases where the first picture looks so much better than the mess the others have produced need deeper investigation: the pair might even be proud of their picture, but it might have happened because the one gave in and allowed the other to draw alone. This points to domination and submission and not to communication.

To keep on telling yourself and others to ‘communicate better’ or ‘properly’ does not help anybody. We need techniques for doing this. One such technique is the ‘Contract of cooperation’\(^{60}\), which is especially useful where a group of people have to work together.

\(^{60}\) Acknowledgement: ELRU’s Anti-Bias work.
When the contract is not followed, something quite harmless might develop into a deep red: conflict, crisis, stress, illness or depression. It can be illustrated as follows:

- **Account**: you account for what is going on or how you feel, especially if something is unusual about your behaviour, attitude or mood. If you do not account, everybody wonders – and builds up fantasies. *I did not sleep well yesterday and am very tired.*
- Check **fantasies**: if you are unsure about what is going on, check the fantasy with the person who is causing the discomfort (especially if this person does not stick to the contract and does not account). *I have a fantasy that…*
- Share a **resentment**: say honestly when something is not nice. This is expressed through feelings: *I feel sad/angry/scared/…, when you …*
- Make a **wish**: a safe way of getting something uncomfortable out of the way. *I wish we could make a break now.*
- Give or ask for **strokes**: this is a compliment or any sign of gentleness.

The contract of cooperation

There are five actions that could help us to say more clearly what we want to say and to prevent conflict:

Both case studies abound with examples of the many problems experienced with communication and which keep people perpetually in the screw.

**Communication in the family programme**

Communication problems between partners and between parents and their children were issues raised throughout the whole intervention, in all groups in all settings. It was perhaps best illustrated in the battle around ‘obedience’ and rules.
A safe way was found to open this topic. Parents could talk about their own childhood and role-played the things that they were punished and praised for. They then could make wishes: what I wish my parents did instead. The wishes of all of them were the same: I wish my parents asked me first, before punishing me. Most made an immediate connection and put their hands over their mouths: But this is exactly what we do to our children! Having identified the yearning for better communication opened the way to obtain practical skills. A starting point for addressing the huge issue of communication was to work with how rules are made with children.

To unpack this issue, participants compared the nature of the old apartheid ‘rules’ (laws) with those of the New South Africa, as negotiated at Codesa61. They considered aspects such as fairness, pettiness and consistency. They then had to contemplate if they were running apartheid-style or Codesa-style families. With astonished laughter most admitted that their rules mirrored apartheid rules. Today, ‘playing in the house’ is not allowed. Tomorrow it is ‘playing outside the house’ that is forbidden. One moment it is fine to talk; the next moment talking is not allowed. All depends on what is convenient at that moment for the mother. Nothing is explained and action is taken (read: punishment) according to whatever is the rule in the mother’s mind at that moment. It becomes a crisis when the children reach adolescence. Then mothers have less control and without communication, there is a constant battle. The only option left is punishment and shouting. No questions were asked or explanations given, because no such culture had been established. ‘Making rules with my child’ thus became a key activity with parents.

The issue of communication is clouded with reds, greens and browns, shadows and projections. The mother is scared something will happen to her daughter while out in the streets. The concern is not explained: the only message is to ‘stay out of the streets’. This is something the daughter will not do and the result is destructive for the relationship and for the daughter’s safety. The mothers were encouraged to start making a rule by defining a concern – to avoid using rules as part of a power game. After defining a concern, many realised that they did not need a rule. By sitting down with the child and talking about the concern, the relationship enters another dimension: the child can respect a concern, but not an unspoken, ever-changing and petty rule.

The feedback from the ‘making a rule’ homework elicited heart-warming stories. Parents were so proud of this new-found ability to interact with their children and the positive reaction of the children. However, for some it was too late, because the relationship with their teenage children was too damaged and communication too destructive. One reported that her child laughed at her when she asked him to sit down and talk.

61 Codesa (or the Convention for a Democratic South Africa) is the process through which the end of apartheid was negotiated, between 1990 and 1993.
The Richtersveld community realised that their struggle with communication was probably the most debilitating factor preventing them from getting out of the screw. In the metaphor of the Richtersveld plant communication was written on a red card and placed just where the plant gets out of the soil.

The Richtersveld: a ‘red card’ and cows
An oppressive system elicits scheming and secret strategies to outwit legislation/regulations, officials and authority. The latter responds with counter strategies and the result is a culture where intentions, agendas and interests are not openly expressed. The Richtersveld community has developed a culture where issues are communicated through attack, defence, counter-attack – or silence. Everybody accuses everybody else of not communicating properly.

This is especially poignant in the communication between the community and their leadership. The first message I got was that leaders do not communicate. It then appeared that meetings and consultative workshops were indeed held, but members were often overwhelmed or bored by indigestible information (often provided by technical and legal advisors). The necessary safety was not always created or time allowed for meaningful discussion and questions. The result was that decisions were made and mandates given which were not fully understood or of which the implications were not clear. When members subsequently realised the consequences of their decisions (or their interpretation thereof), mandates were simply nullified in their minds/amongst themselves - often without notifying those who had in the meantime started to implement these decisions and mandates. By the time all of this was realised a lot of damage had already been caused.

The inability of all parties to communicate their desires, fears and disagreements objectively and constructively contributed to a culture where creative debate is not possible. Mistrust created an atmosphere where a difference of opinion is not dealt with as a difference of opinion or a mistake seen as a mistake: these are treated as deliberate actions to undermine others/the community and thus justify allies, interdicts or court cases.

There was clearly a problem with technical skills regarding communication and how the leaders facilitated meetings. Community members felt intimidated by technical and financial language, the jargon, too sophisticated facilitation methods and documents with complex layouts and language, which did not invite participation. These could be recognised and addressed. More difficult to address is the issue of literacy, confidence and assertiveness levels in the community. But even trickier is the recognition of the unconscious issues that impact on communication: projections emerging out of old shadows, labels and the legacy of their specific history. While these remain hidden, they have real destructive power.

A telling example was the decision about the cows on the dairy farm that the community had received
After deep reflection I started to understand what could have happened. After fighting for 13 years to get compensation for generations’ of pain and suffering, these cows became the first tangible proof and thus a symbol of this accomplishment. It was emotionally too difficult to let them go immediately. There was no way to bring this to consciousness and communicate this appropriately. (One can only imagine the despondency and disappointment when the cows eventually had to be sold - after serious financial losses forced all to agree to this.)

No wonder thus that participants in the village workshops were constantly picking up the ‘red card’ (the stem in the Richtersveld plant metaphor), which read: Destructive communication and a lack of creative debate and trust.

It is thus clear that communication is not just about being able to talk and to listen. It is a battle to know what I, not the labels, shadows and projections, want to say and then to trust that somebody wants to hear this without distorting it. Communication can be a risky business! This takes us to the next step in the episode of ‘preparing for action’: to see clearly.

6.5.3 Authentic eyes: seeing and understanding the self

To get out of the screw implies the recognition of the screw and everything that has contributed to this situation. But this implies that I have to see through all the browns, labels, shadows, secrets and projections. It does not make sense to spend energy on tools to take a screw out of a label: I have to work with the self. Two convenient metaphors were used to investigate this process: the diagnosing of problems and the tearing off of labels.

The Greek root of the word diagnose is diagignōskein, which brings together the words dia (the prefixes ‘apart’ or ‘through’) and gignōskein (‘to come to know’ or ‘to discern’). This implies that the act of diagnosing is to take apart and see through - to expose - in order ‘to know thoroughly’ (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.; Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). To look through the labels and shadows in order to see clearly is what is asked for in healing work. The metaphor of diagnosis is further useful as it is a concept that participants are familiar with, more so than with words such as ‘analysis’. Even though participants know the term from their experiences at health clinics, it is not used in the medical sense that suggests patients, illness and medication. It merely offers a way to conceptualise the need for
prodding and questioning until the problem is understood and that there may be negative results if diagnosis is not done properly. The role-play below became a very strong metaphor used in various situations throughout the story of healing.

**Tearing off the labels and diagnose properly**

**Activity:**
**Role-play: Wrong diagnosis – wrong treatment**

A woman has a terrible pain in her stomach and goes to a clinic. The doctor hardly asks any questions, examines her very superficially and quickly and without telling her what is wrong, gives her medication. She goes home and takes the medication.

That night she is in terrible pain and the family takes her to the hospital. She had an operation. It turns out that she was pregnant and the medication the doctor gave her should not be given to pregnant women. She lost the baby.

**Reflection/Input:**

Do we always make a proper diagnosis when we give our children ‘treatment’ for something that they did wrong in our eyes? Because, if we make a wrong diagnosis, we might give them the wrong ‘treatment’ – and we can kill the child’s spirit. It is therefore very important to make sure that the diagnosis we make is not just a label (such as lazy, stupid or naughty), because for those labels we will give one kind of treatment: punishment.

The first, and a very important, step is to find the symptom: a neutral description of what actually happened. We often do not do this, because it is easier to just give a label and treat him/her for that label (just as the doctor has done in the role-play). We have to look carefully what this child has really done. Only then can we start with the second step: to make a proper diagnosis. If we still need to do something, we can start with step three: think of a ‘treatment’ that will be good for the child.

We do not only diagnose our children’s behaviour through labelled eyes: we adults also do it with our own problems and screws. Instead of looking deeply into the mirror, we accept labels given to us throughout our lives (as individuals and as a group). We give ourselves wrong treatments and then we are surprised that our ‘treatments’ do not work!

This was practised by using a table that shows the difference between a labelled diagnosis with its treatment and a proper diagnosis, based on an unlabelled symptom. The treatment for the second diagnosis is radically different from the first treatment. The table below is a compilation of examples of diagnoses and treatments created by participants in the family programme⁶²:

**Footnote:**

⁶² *The same exercise regarding participants’ behaviour is discussed in greater depth in the next episode: Aims and strategies.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy diagnosis (label)</th>
<th>Pure symptom: what really happened?</th>
<th>Proper diagnosis</th>
<th>Treatment for the proper diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Label: Lazy           | Did not go to the shop when sent    | Scared of shopkeeper or something along the way (such as a dog) | • Ask the child first before deciding on treatment  
• Go with him to the shop  
• I must not always send the child: I can go too  
• Send the child when it is not so hot  
• Let the child rest first after school  
• Let the child play too  
• Give love and attention  
• Be an agent for the child |
| Treatment: A hiding   |                                     |                  |                                   |
| Label: Lazy and naughty | Dodged school                      | Teacher abused the children  
• Other children hurt her on the way  
• She was scared: she failed last week’s test  
• Did not do homework previous day – too scared to go to school | • Parent goes to school to speak with the teacher  
• Meeting with other parents to discuss problems with teacher  
• Assist the child with homework or get help if I cannot  
• Love the child  
• Talk to the parents of those children who bully her  
• Parent must attend parent meetings. |
| Treatment: No food for supper; a hiding | Fighting with other children and playing on the bed | Maybe the parents were always fighting and the child was copying it  
• The child was bored | • Check relationships in family: talk nicely  
• Sit down with child and talk and get his side of the story  
• Check your own example  
• Think of ways to stimulate child |

The difference between the treatments in columns 1 and 4 speaks for itself. A touching way in which a parent explained how she changed her treatment was:

The child did something unacceptable. Instead of beating or scolding, I took the child in my arms and found out what was wrong.

**Tearing off childhood labels**

Parents in the family programme contemplated how the punishment and hard work of their own childhood affected them as adults. Almost all believed that the harshness of their childhood made them strong. There were only a few who realised how negative this impacted on them:
Prompted to make wishes for how their parents could have handled them differently, they started to consider if gentleness might not have made them even stronger. This impacted heavily on what memories they spontaneously wished to make for their children.

After diagnosing their children’s behaviour, parents were invited to diagnose their own behaviour and two interesting remarks made during this process were: the ‘need to oppress’ and ‘a desire to revenge the punishment of own childhood’. The treatments for these? Learn to communicate calmly; respect the child’s programme and needs; and check own behaviour - the reds, greens, browns and shadows.

The diagnosis process in the Richtersveld was done while the community was creating the Richtersveld plant. This process was intense and contributed to increased awareness.

Proper diagnosis in the Richtersveld: where does the ‘red’ come from?

After working for months on the Richtersveld plant, the community started to work on the design of their development plan. There was a serious reservation about the planning process though: the screw or ‘red mess’ was not going to go away, because it was caused by outside forces. How could you plan with such a problem moving along with you all the time? These outside things were stealing all energy and focus and they felt that they had no control over it.

Two insights emerged from the lively debate elicited by this concern. Firstly, it is not helpful to make a simplistic diagnosis: did this problem really come only from outside? Why was it so easy to ‘infiltrate’ the community and upset all relationships? The possibility of an inherent vulnerability needed to be understood. After all, the ‘poisoned soil’ and ‘red card’ were widely acknowledged – and never was it suggested that they originated from ‘outside’ the community.

When doing planning it would thus be important to pay attention to this perception (outsiders being the problem) and instead to address the issues of the ‘soil’ and the red card of communication directly (as objective or strategy). This cannot be obtained through ‘things’ or money, but by starting with a process of healing from the inside. This community would have to make itself less vulnerable by doing something about how they communicate and how the leadership assert themselves and protect their community. It will make it much more difficult for ‘outsiders’ to foment conflict and division.

To discover an own desire, voice and ability to see through oppressive images of self suggests progress in the finding of an authentic self. It implies a willingness and ability to express problems...
without feeling scared that it could be seen as weakness, incompetence or failure. It also suggests that labels, shadows and projections are recognised and ‘shameful’ secrets faced. This constitutes a significant step towards healing. The screw is recognised, some tools acquired to get a grip on it - and it will be frustrating to stop here. The automatic response at this stage is an urge for this self to act and test its ability to change something. It is time to risk turning the screw in a new direction and see what happens. The next episode is looking at a way to move into carefully planned action.

6.6 Episode 4: From paralysis to risk and action

While being stuck in the oppressed and unconscious state, it is difficult to see any option or plan. In addition, action informed and driven by the inauthentic self is difficult to sustain and any setback might arouse a crowd of shadows, labels and projections. This poses danger to the initiative and ultimate failure will result in a new cycle of labelling and fatalism (in the spirit of the self-fulfilling prophecy). What is perceived as ‘solutions’ will remain futile until they are made for the authentic person.

Unconscious issues thus have to be taken into account as ‘risk factors’ in the planning of action. Much more is needed than calculations about the number of heads of cabbage or chicken that might constitute a profit or an analysis of external risk factors and economic conditions. It is also about the level of conscientisation of the person’s working with these cabbages and chickens. Unfortunately, shadows, labels and false selves are not easy to calculate. They can be respected though. This episode considers ways of planning action without undue risk – even though we cannot avoid risking at some stage. It is part of life.

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**From paralysis to planned action**

**Activity:** Moving from paralysis to planned action

The story is told with the help of the illustrations.

**Trapped (the screw): freeze - do nothing**

There is a problem or ‘mess’ and it is so overwhelming or maybe it is there for so long that we cannot think of a way to do anything about it. It is as if we just freeze: we do nothing, because we see no starting point or solution. Because we do nothing, the problem does not go away, but keeps on turning and turning, around and around – the screw.

**Desperate action: do something, anything – never mind what**

Sometimes, though, we are simply so unhappy, cross, sad or desperate that we have to do something – anything – immediately. We do not have an idea where to head to, but we start just not to feel so trapped. Often old recipes are followed, even though they have been proven to be unsuccessful (such
as fighting, eating, drinking or starting with ‘projects’). An image to explain this is to strike out wildly with our fists in all directions.

Without having any specific aim in front of us, we are obviously not hitting any set target. After a short while, everything is back to where it started – and most possibly an even worse situation, because we have caused damage with these wild actions or ideas. And we are exhausted! So, the screw is turning and turning, just as before.

**Alternative option: Focussed action**

Alternatively, we can decide to find a systematic and logical way to deal with the problem. This means that we first do some proper analysis (diagnosis), make sure we understand the problem well and consider lessons we have learnt in the past (such as those actions that did not work, because they were made for ‘little me’s’). If something did not work five times, why will it work now? We should not consider those as options.

After managing to understand what is the problem and who I am/we are, it is possible to start planning. The first step is to find the desire: what will it be like without this problem? This is turned into what we call an aim. When this aim is good (see next box), it is possible to decide on the steps that I will take to get to this aim.
The whole plan balances on the quality of the aim. How is a good aim defined and achieved?

The art of making a good aim

Activity:
A role-play or case study drawn from the real life experiences of the group is used to illustrate ‘desperate action’. An example is a mother wanting to talk to her neighbour about something the latter had done to her child. After a few sentences she loses her temper and starts shouting wildly about everything that has bothered her about the neighbour for years. It ends in a fight. Another scenario could be a group of community members who approaches their school principal or councillor about an issue, but the conversation leads to a whole inventory of wrongs and accusations. This ‘negotiation’ ends up aggravating the conflict.

After some reflection, the following input is made:

Reflection/Input: AIMS

Things to remember when making an aim:

- The quality of an aim depends on how good the analysis (diagnosing) has been done. If the aim is made for the wrong diagnosis, somewhere along the line it may go into a screw again.
- I cannot make an aim for what somebody else must do or how s/he should be. It is MY/OUR aim and it should be possible for ME/US to achieve it. For example, I cannot make an aim that says: My husband must respect me. I have no power over his feelings.
- When I start to think of steps to reach my aim and I get stuck, I might discover that I have not made a good aim. Then I do not give up: I just go back to my diagnosis and start to make a new aim.
- I cannot work with lots of different things at the same time. If there are many problems and they all need attention, I have to make separate aims and steps for each.
- The aim should never be just to punish or shout or revenge or humiliate another.
- Some problems will take years to solve. If my aim is to solve such a problem within a day, it will flop and then I will feel a failure. Instead, the problem has to be broken up in small bits and I start with one only – the easiest first. This gives me courage for the difficult ones. Then I deal with them one by one – until the whole problem is solved.

The usefulness of an aim:

- It helps us to focus and not to be overwhelmed and distracted by problems. It gives direction and can help us not to feel that the problem is never-ending and it does not even help to try.
- It helps us to be more assertive. Because the aim states clearly what we want to achieve it is easier to say what we want and stand our ground.
- It gives us a positive/assertive sentence to start a difficult conversation. Instead of saying “You must/should have … (blaming/accusing)” the first words can be: “I would like …”
Warning: It is impossible to make a wish if you constantly think: HOW will I do this? The HOW is coming later. If I discover later there is no way to do something, I go back and look at the aim again. By thinking of the ‘how’ all the time, I do not allow myself to be creative.

When the aim is defined, steps to achieve it are made.

The art of making steps/strategies for my aim

Activity: A practical example
The making of steps/strategies is illustrated through the following sketch:
We start with the aim. Then we make steps, as if we tell a story: I am going to do this first. Then I will do … And then I am going to …

Reflection/Input: Things to remember when making steps/strategies
- Strategies have to make a story: I will do this, then I will do that and after that I am going to do …
- While thinking of steps, I must FOCUS! I must not start doing things that have nothing to do with the aim – just because I want to do them.

When I struggle, it might be necessary to go back to my aim and check if it is a good aim.

The following example was used to practise this:

Aim: To lose weight
Step 1: Find out why I am overweight (for example what I am eating, when am I vulnerable and do I do enough exercise?)
Step 2: Identify ways in which one can lose weight (a type of research)
Step 3: Make a plan and think how I will stick to it (set targets, work out a plan and get somebody/the family to help me stick to it)

The above guidelines were used in both case studies. The scale differed. The result in the family programme was a series of sessions where each participant identified a debilitating problem (screw), diagnosed it properly, turned it into a positive aim and worked out steps to achieve this aim. This was done in group context. The same type of role-plays, case studies and inputs were used in the Richtersveld. Individual work was not possible in these village workshops. However, in an introductory activity participants were given an opportunity to practise the making of steps for a personal aim. They worked on a real-life case study, such as the ‘To lose weight’ aim. This prepared them for work on their communal plan.
The exercise was thus similar in both case studies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Family programme</th>
<th>Richtersveld</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define the problem</td>
<td>Each participant mentioned a problem that makes life difficult for her – the screw that keeps on turning and turning.</td>
<td>There was not enough development and this led to the request for the design of a development plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis: what is/causes the problem? (the diagnosis)</td>
<td>Each participant then considered what caused this problem, by diagnosing (analysing) the problem in more depth. A challenge was to see through the false images. In essence it was thus a process of conscientisation.</td>
<td>Through a process of conscientisation (the ‘Richtersveld plant’) the damage through the following was realised:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Legacy of the struggle to survive, isolation, dispossession, humiliation and disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Destructive communication, lack of creative debate and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The ‘soil was poisoned’ and the ‘red card’ everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The aim, or dream</td>
<td>The problem was translated into a wish or dream, which informs the defined aim.</td>
<td>A vision for the community was formulated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steps to get to the aim</td>
<td>Three steps, in story form, were defined to reach this aim.</td>
<td>Five main objectives were developed, each with a number of strategies and a number of projects for each strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant reflection and revision of aims and steps</td>
<td>Each person’s diagnosis, aims and strategies were constantly reported backed and discussed in the group. With their intimate knowledge of each other’s circumstances, this was useful, as they could hold up mirrors to expose labels, shadows and projections. Nobody could proceed without a ‘proper diagnosis’ and a ‘proper aim’.</td>
<td>There was a constant revisiting and reworking of aims, objectives and strategies, as well as the original diagnosis (the Richtersveld plant) to ensure an ever-increasing level of consciousness and the development of a whole story (plan) that makes sense for all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened? Feedback</td>
<td>In the next session, each participant reported back on what had happened since. Where things did not work out as planned, the group listened carefully and gave feedback – on top of the participant’s own analysis of what happened. Plans could then be adapted or new problems tackled.</td>
<td>Since governance structures collapsed shortly after the drafting of the plan, there was nobody to implement it. Subsequent leaderships still struggle to act – the ‘red cards’ are still flying around, kept afloat by the ‘poisoned soil’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following planning activities emerged from the case studies:
Aims and strategies in the family programme

Participants talked about intimate problems, such as marriage, their children (who struggle in school, appeared to be homosexual and have problems with discipline and even the law), fights with in-laws (who sometimes also sit in the circle), death of siblings and friends and financial or health problems. Some managed to state openly that they were scared about their own or their partners’ HIV status. Raw emotions simply poured out: anger, sadness, fear and hopelessness. These participants lived in closely-knit neighbourhoods or villages, but were still prepared to share intimate and serious problems. This indicates a high level of trust, not only in the facilitator and programme, but also in each other. It also shows the high level of despair: the screw was hurting badly.

A second observation from the activity ‘Making aims and steps’ was the high level of consciousness created through the process up to that stage. A participant would talk about her problem and make a diagnosis, whereupon the group would not hesitate to challenge this. An example is a participant’s complaint that her child is ‘cheeky’. The group members immediately lifted the mirror: “You have always been shouting and beating this child”. She accepted this feedback and eagerly started to define a new aim. She was taking responsibility for the nature of communication in her family.

It is not always easy to find a positive aim if an issue is still too painful. It often required the combined skills and wisdom of the facilitators and the group to help a participant find a ‘positive’ aim. A participant stubbornly clung to her wish: “My sister died and the child was taken by the father. We [the mother’s family] want this child back”. A huge debate ensued within the group about the right of the father to have his child and the actual needs of the mother’s family. The group blocked this participant’s projected despair as she descended into a whirlpool of wild accusations and threats to steal the child and poison the father – until she reached bottom and was faced with the reality: “We miss this child. He grew up with us”. And they probably also missed the sister who died so young and whose child is all that was left for them. It was then possible to find a positive wish/aim: To ensure that the child visits us regularly. The story had a good ending, when constructive communication with the father was established and the child seen again. The group’s capacity to stay with her was deciding: if they accepted the projection and joined her with suggestions on how to ‘deal with this father’, she would not have been forced to take back what she wanted to project onto the father. There is deep suffering at the moment when the outlet of a projection is closed and it is thrown back at you. But it is the only way to truly own and then get rid of the pain inside.

A similar story was that of two sisters who were fighting terribly. During the diagnosis process the group discovered that both parents died shortly after each other and the fighting started soon afterwards. The sisters probably found no other way of mourning than projecting their sadness, fears or anger onto each other. This was pointed out and (according to other group members) they were since seen together – peacefully.
There were also the painful aims about the need for the love and care from somebody else: “I want my children to love me and care for me”. Almost all were in mourning in this time of dying: “My friend died earlier in the year and I keep on seeing her in front of me” and “Both my sisters died during the past year and I cannot forget them”. Then there were addictions that some needed to fight: “I want to stop drinking – something I did since I was in school”. Some were worried about their health, specifically the fear for HIV/AIDS: “I want to be myself again – I am always ill”. Accompanying this threat was the fear that their children would not be cared for properly if ‘something would happen to me’ and anxiety of not getting a decent funeral.

An intriguing story was that of the grandmother whose problem was that she battled with the “demands from the ancestors”. This woman wanted to finish building her house, but she was constantly getting messengers from the ancestors (through family members) with requests for traditional feasts and rituals – which swallowed all her savings. Her respect for the ancestors was unshakable, even though group members were clearly sceptical about these ‘messengers’ and seemed to believe that the relatives had been exploiting her. The first aim she defined was: **To be able to fulfil the requests from the ancestors and pray that they will not be cross if I take a long time to pay them back.** With the aid of the group she eventually managed to change this impossible aim to: **To finish my house.** Her first step was still a serious challenge: **To deal with the ancestors by telling them through the messengers to wait.**

The participants defined their aims during one session and had to work on the strategies/steps until the next session. When they returned for the second session, the team was surprised to discover how many aims had already been reached – even without strategies/steps. The conclusion was that this was possible simply because the problem was acknowledged and a pure analysis made. This alone managed to provide a grip on the screw. The participant who was so worried about her HIV status had herself been tested (fortunately negative). The one whose aim was **To be buried with respect** had joined a funeral society. Another had already visited the children of her sister who passed away earlier in the year. Her aim was **To ensure that they are taken care of.** The programme decided to tackle the issue of death and dying in group context and a general aim for all was made: **To manage death and dying.** All participants started to make what they called a ‘trunk’, a concept known in their culture. Precious items are kept in this trunk under the bed. For this aim they had to ensure that they have all vital official documents, especially those needed for children to access support and education. They also had to prepare statements about who the foster parents should be and then created ‘memories’: family trees, stories about the parents and family, photos, and so forth.

Some openly had to declare that their steps did not work: “I talked to my child, but she did not take me seriously.” There was indeed a long journey ahead for this family to win the trust of a child who had only known shouts, threats and beatings from both parents (according to other group members and eventually admitted by the mother too). The fact that she could admit that her aims and strategies did
not work is an accomplishment. It was done with sadness, but not with shame.

There was a huge sense of achievement. Each participant’s story (problem, diagnosis, aim and strategies) was written on a separate newsprint, so that she could take it home. Many reported that they shared these with their families, even those with whom they had a problem. One demonstrated how they started sleeping with “this newsprint under the bed, so that we remind each other, every time we start fighting.”

The making of aims in the Richtersveld was a communal activity.

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**The Richtersveld priority objectives**

A comprehensive development plan with five objectives and numerous strategies and projects were eventually drafted. What was significant about this plan is the prioritisation: the community’s first priority was their poisoned soil and bad communication. The first objective is to build a positive attitude and confidence and to improve communication. Objective two is about effective and visionary leadership and governance. This includes a strategy to establish a culture of reflection and learning. In other words, the first two objectives that this community prioritised involves their soul, ‘poisoned soil’, the ‘red card’ of bad communication and the desire to look into the mirror on an on-going basis.

The fourth priority/objective is about the social fibre, which also includes issues flowing from the roots and stem. Issues around assets, ownership and the economy featured as third and fifth objectives: the flowers can only be expected if everything underneath is healthy. This extraordinary prioritisation, I believe, is a result of the intense process of conscientisation, the facing of shadows and projections and the intensity of the diagnosis process (which resulted in the drafting of the Richtersveld plant).

This community has clearly chosen to start with their ‘soil and soul’.

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The making of plans, whether on individual or communal level, is a critical stage in the healing process. The smallest step taken is a form of victory, because the victory lies in taking the risk of trying – not in succeeding. In fact, the term ‘success’ needs to be treated with caution in healing work, since it elicits images of its opposite: failure. Instead, what is asked for is the concept of reflection. This is discussed in Episode 5.

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**6.7 Episode 5: Reflection without fear: a link to liberation**

Even though reflection is presented as the last episode, it is integral in and underpinning all the other episodes in the storyline of healing. It is used in a ‘neutral’ sense as an image that is reflected or ‘bent back’ towards the source and should not be conflated with terms such as evaluation, appraisal and assessment. These speak about an estimation of value, worth, fitness and quality, which comes too close to a verdict of success or failure – something that the healing approach has to avoid at all costs. Today, a mother reports with relief and pride that she has managed to talk constructively with her husband (a step in her plan). The next week, he abuses her terribly. Has this mother or her plan...
failed? Rigid categories, such as ‘success’ or ‘failure’, are not suitable for work with nuanced and complex material, such as the ‘soil and soul’ of people. The usual linear yardsticks cannot measure the subtlety of spiral movements, ups and downs, voids, bewilderment - or a bit of gentleness and the sparkle or fear in an eye.

The fear for failure, linked to any form of feedback, has to be balanced with the need to stand back and reflect on what has happened. It provides an opportunity for the individual or community to assess the readiness for risking a next step – or if it is necessary to wait a while and just be. The mother above cannot just proceed with her plan; she has to stay alive. In essence, reflecting and diagnosing have similar objectives: to see clearly and to see through hidden matter so that work gets done with authenticity.

In addition to the usual questions about reasons if and why a plan worked/did not work, the healing approach requires another set of questions. What labels and shadows jumped into the plan? What triggered them? Were there any projections? Were these issues underestimated or did they emerge as a result of the action? Was the risk too big? Was the timing right for taking the risk? By finding the courage to engage with integrity with these questions and dynamics, a new level of authenticity is reached and the possibility of liberation becomes a reality. It implies an understanding that even if the effort is judged (and might have failed), the self is never judged.

The quality of reflection is determined by the quality of information provided and by the quality of the ‘mirror’. Both are influenced by unconscious issues. The person reporting might fear that the report might imply ‘failure’ – and then reports only the good things or plain untruths. The mirror holder can distort the image through own shadows, labels and projections. The idea of safe and ‘neutral’ reflection is thus not easily accomplished.

Quality reflection remained a problem until the end of the intervention in the Richtersveld.

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Reflection in the Richtersveld

Reflection is practically impossible in the unsafe and hostile atmosphere in the Richtersveld community. Firstly, due to the strong belief (and stubbornness, as they admitted) that only they know ‘how things are to be done’ in the area and that this cannot be changed, little scope is left for honest reflection or to interrogate the way in which things are done in this community. Secondly, amidst so much conflict, destructive communication and mistrust, it is hardly conceivable that anybody would willingly talk about something that did not work out as planned. A mistake is fatal. It is perceived as a deliberate effort to undermine or damage the community or other individuals. And it will be laughed at.

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63 In community development practice, the usual questions refer to: objectives reached, targets met, budgets adhered to, profit, skills needed and so forth.
The community realised how damaging the inability to reflect was and actively planned for this in their development plan\textsuperscript{64}. On the other hand, through ongoing feedback and reflection on feelings, perceptions and action it was possible to cultivate another culture in the family programme. The result was an increased ability to talk about what worked, but also what did not work, and to seek support and feedback from the group and facilitators. The following are examples of such reports:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Participants’ relationship and communication with children} \\
\hline
\textbf{Labelling, rules and discipline} \\
We are still calling our children stout [naughty].  \\
My child (15 years) always sits still after school. I label him lazy.  \\
I do not label any longer.  \\
I remember the session and usually try to implement it, but sometimes I lose my temper.  \\
Sometimes I just want to get cross, but then I remember about the ‘right’ way of communicating and then I implement it.  \\
I took my child personally to school for the child to get used to the road and the school. I even went into the school to greet the teacher. (This was not a common thing to do.)  \\
I gave my child a stroke and he was very surprised. Is this you? he wanted to know!  \\
My child plays the guitar and the noise makes me mad. Now we agree that he can play, but only so many songs and at that volume.  \\
We make agreements with the children and every time they agree – but then they make ‘other things’.  \\
They do negative things, especially when the adults are around.  \\
It is because I have become too soft, that this child is now spoilt. They know I will not punish them. This ‘school’ has made me never to use the “stick” any more.  \\
The children even use the word ‘rights’ (It has to be noted that this word was deliberately never used in the programme. It is, however, used in campaigns, the media and in schools.)  \\
My 6-year old started a new way of refusing when I send him. It is different from when I used the stick. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Involving small children in the parent’s daily routine} \\
To support communication, it was suggested that parents try to involve the small children in the parent’s routine.  \\
I forgot all about this business of involving my child. Then, while I was washing the dishes, my child came to me and wanted something. I just wanted to push him away, when I remembered about the session. I asked my elder child to bring a chair and I let him stand on the chair next to

\textsuperscript{64} “Improved communication capacity and structures, documentation, facilitation and sources of information” (Project 1.4.1) and “Improve plans, practice and policy through a culture of reflection, monitoring and evaluation” (Strategy 2.5)
me. He dried the dishes. He did not do it very well. But I said nothing and did it properly when he was gone.

- I was sorting out beans before cooking it. I let my child help me to sort and he managed more or less. I did not correct the mistakes. Afterwards, I even threw away the few good beans with the dirty ones, not to make him feel bad.

- I was smearing the stoep. My child was helping me by bringing mis [dung] to the floor with a small spade. I did not enjoy this, because it was taking a long time. I then took a big basin and threw out a big lot of mis to smear, but still allowed the child to continue to bring it with his spade.

- I was cleaning the whole house (spring cleaning) and I moved away all the furniture. My child was helping me with a little broom – sweeping in all the corners I cannot reach.

- I chopped wood with my child. I was not very happy, because this was going very slow. But I was happy, because I did this task with my child. So was the child: she did not want to go to play.

- I fetched wood with my child. It was very nice. But this child picked up only the thinnest sticks. Then I taught her how to fasten them in a bundle and carry it home on her head. (Other participants told the group that they saw the two of them: the little one with the small bundle on the head and the mother with hers. They were walking home, when they saw them.)

- I allowed my child to cut marogo [type of spinach] with me. I let him use a plastic knife. It was nice. The father, however, was concerned that they would have to eat “rubbish food” if the child was involved. Because the facilitator warned us before to expect resistance, I explained to the father why it was done and that the food would be okay. He understood at the end.

- We tried to sweep the room together. This was not working, because the child was coming from the other end. (The group told her to move behind the child so that they did not fight.)

- My child was washing the socks and panties, while I did the big washing.

- I don’t have a problem left, since the group advised me to wash the child at night – instead of in the morning. The problem was that the child slept at school, as she could not sleep during the night. Washing her at night calmed her down and now her routine had improved.

- I made things in the house available for the children to do mantlwana [fantasy-play]. I had never allowed them before to play with my things, because I believed they would break everything. Now my fantasies were proven wrong: they did not break anything.

- I started to tell the child stories at bedtime and it was very nice.

- We made a soft ball and we played together. We enjoyed it.

- I started to get involved in the child’s fantasy play and in her conversations with herself.

In similar vein, the facilitators were prepared to share where they made programme – or not. In a direct question-answer activity the following emerged:

**To like myself:** They can say positive things about themselves and about their children – even in front of the child or other people (affirmation of this nature goes against the culture where boasting and pride are discouraged). They manage to assess and diagnose own behaviour – instead of focussing on what other people do wrongly.
Skills (assertiveness and managing family resources): They improved regarding ‘standing up’, even against people they have to obey – without getting cross. They sometime manage to be more assertive, but sometimes it is difficult. They also realised that the acknowledgement that you sometimes manage and sometimes not is huge progress: it proves an awareness of the problem, an ability to analyse own behaviour and less fear to talk about it.

Impact of past messages and healing the wounds of the past: They have become prepared to try things out that really scare them, for example to use new methodologies when they facilitated a session with the community or to disagree with a white person. They have started to understand negative patterns in their lives, for example why they were scared of or sensitive about criticism regarding certain things. One reported that she handled feedback better and did not feel so crushed by it.

Relationship with children: They started to listen to their children and asked them questions before assuming they were guilty of something. The child’s point of view is respected.

Instead of straight questions, reflection can also be done in an indirect and fun way. An example from the family programme is ‘The cloud over our heads’.

Activity:
The input is made with the aid of the sketch.

Reflection/Input:
Sometimes there is a type of cloud, shadow or monster that creeps up from behind and hanging over us until we can hardly see in front of us. This thing could be coming from childhood, even from the
ancestors, parents, school, apartheid or poverty. It makes it difficult to enjoy life and see our children as they really are. It can make us take revenge or compensate for our own childhood and in the process our children are forced also to live with this cloud.

**Where was the cloud before the programme started?**
For most the cloud was closing everything in front of them – it came down to their feet.

**Up to where did the cloud lift?**
For some, the cloud has lifted from the feet up to the waist, for others to the neck. For some it lifted to above their eyes: they can see a little light.

**What has changed?**
- They started to communicate better with their husbands and children. Some stopped shouting at their children. In addition, the children previously only talked to the mother, but now they are talking to their fathers too.
- Even though some found themselves still beating up their children, they knew better. In any case, the shoutings and beatings were not as bad as in the past.
- They diagnosed now instead of just acting out.
- Some managed to start talking about sex with their kids, something they did not manage before. “That wall of silence started to fall”.
- I started to attend parents’ meetings at school and to participate in activities at my child’s school. I help with donations, take things for social events, and so on – things I never did before.
- I am less afraid of the farmer and even asked him for something.

**What was left of the cloud?**
For some, the cloud was gone completely. Others still struggled to face the truth about their health (read: HIV/AIDS) and to communicate with their husbands, especially when they were drunk. Some still got cross very quickly and battled to control themselves. Some tasks were difficult, such as the making of rules. Some were a little bit more assertive.

Those who did not attend regularly, were jealous: they still sat with most of the cloud …

Another useful way of looking at attitudes, action and the self is through the metaphors created during the programme. It could be used to say what is difficult to say directly. A mother would for example tell the group that “I got a red from my husband.” She did not have to explain or use the more difficult words: “We had a fight”. It could be used to assess feelings about progress: Is the screw still inside and hurting? How much of it came out already? What did you use to get a grip on it? Is there
something else that you can try?

The red and green

- My husband was very happy about the red and green session. We did the session together. If anything nasty was happening I shout RED!! Or if it is nice GREEN!! So there is an awareness in my home and love.
- I explained reds and greens to my children. I said it was like a robot: You can go on when it is green, but red makes you to stop. I asked them to bring me all the greens they get in school. I'll help them if one of them gets a red in school.
- We have never sat together at the table in our house. I gave my husband this story of red and green and now he started sitting with us at the table and listen to our stories and we talk together. Since then my husband became more involved in the family.
- My children are now giving me greens, because I am giving them greens. If my children have a problem at school, I go there to check what is happening so that I can make sure they do not get any reds.

The skroef [screw]

- When I was on the road of the skroef, I used to keep quiet and then exploded in all directions. It could have helped if I had an aim.
- I know the skroef-road, but now see this new road with an aim.
- I thought I should tackle all problems at the same time – to get rid of them. Now I have learnt that I have to take them one by one.
- I learnt that if I have problems, I must help them to move, like turning a screw out. I must talk.
- I have talked and now I feel better, even if nothing had changed. I don’t even know why I feel better.
- I am satisfied and proud, because I am learning - I am on my way to find a solution.

Probably the most poignant remark came from a grandma in the programme: “I am very satisfied. I will take this paper and look at it and do the things on it.” The body language of this grandma when she took her newsprint at the end of the session was so touching: even though she could not read or write, she had total control over these words and walked off with this paper as if it were a sign of light – and she subsequently managed most of her steps.

There is a natural urge to celebrate the courage to take some steps and to get this recognised from outside. This links to an issue that is difficult to avoid in the community development field in South Africa: certificates.

The family programme: Certificates – an unexpected tool for healing

The facilitators of the family programme insisted that certificates be issued to participants at the end of
the year. I, as programme developer resisted: what could such a certificate indicate? ‘Qualified parent’ or ‘Healed person’? Eventually a compromise was reached: it would be attendance certificates, issued to those who attended a specific percentage of sessions. A beautiful colourful certificate was designed, with a list of session topics conducted and the name of the participant printed in fancy font. Ceremonies were arranged and it was a humbling experience (especially for me!): for most mothers it was the first certificate they have received in their lives and most have never seen their names printed (apart from on their dompasses and ID books). The pride was boundless. They could not put the certificates down and waited in anticipation for their children to return from school so that they could show it to them. The children were so proud of their mothers! They too held on to the certificates to show them around to their friends. Even though the certificate did not state ‘healed’, it clearly became a tool to facilitate healing.

Importantly, even though pride has a negative connotation in certain cultures and religions, it is described by some philosophers and social psychologists as “a complex secondary emotion which requires the development of a sense of self and the mastery of relevant conceptual distinctions” – which is not the same as happiness and joy (Pal, 2011). Maybe this is what could have been written on the certificates: a ‘sense of self’ has been un-veiled/de-veloped!

6.8 Conclusion

The stories told in this chapter show vividly how South Africans face on a daily basis the struggle to bridge many divides: history and future; black and white; rich and poor; male and female; literate and illiterate. An even more succinct picture emerged regarding the struggle to live with the false messages compounded over centuries. Communities continue to be stuck in the mud, the poisoned soil and screws of the realities of life at the margins.

But the storyline unfolding in this chapter also shows that it is not necessary to stay in the mud and be trapped in the screw forever. There are ways to work deliberately with these. It involves the work of looking at the labels, destructive strategies, projections, shadows and secrets that keep us hidden from ourselves. By facing these we start to fight for an authentic self – an own desire, voice, eyes. With the un-veiling of the self new challenges can be faced and action undertaken.

But it is also clear that the facilitation of such a process is complex. Each new layer of woundedness un-veiled exposes a new layer. What is needed to hold such a process together and to recognise the shrewd way in which the false images and shadows remain stuck or crawl back – literally just as we believe they have been brought to consciousness and have lost their power over us? The following chapter seeks answers on this question.
7 Prepared to facilitate healing

7.1 Introduction

The title of this chapter does not only refer to the practical and theoretical preparation of the facilitator of healing; it also looks at the preparedness or willingness to engage with this work. One has to be wise and brave to work with woundedness in the self and in others. It thus requires information (the manifestations of wounding, those of healing and how they interact), skills (how to deal with these manifestations) and also a desire and curiosity to see how the process unfolds. This asks for a special type of gentleness and compassion, but also the capacity to keep everybody protected and safe.

How can this be done? Two case studies (a family programme and the design of a development plan for the Richtersveld community) were analysed to distil elements that are critical in a healing approach. The first element emphasises the prominence of a storyline which explains the process – from woundedness to conscious action - which guides the process and can be shared by all involved. This element, with its ensuing episodes, was discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 6). Seven more elements speak to what is needed to prepare the facilitator of healing for this work. These are: (1) an appreciation of the dynamics of working with the personal in group context; (2) the principle that the facilitator has to start with own experiences and work; (3) an honest desire to know, understand and engage with participants, their stories, fears and hopes; (4) balancing the need to risk and the fear for failure; (5) the art of respectful facilitation; (6) the embracing of nothingness, chaos and moments of waiting; and (7) trusting participants with their own process of discovery and unfolding. Underpinning all of these is the critical aspect of reflection: none of these can be done without ongoing quality reflection.

A discussion of each of these elements is presented in this chapter.

To facilitate understanding and for the sake of clarity, I add this short glossary of terms used in this chapter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary for this chapter</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Healing facilitator or facilitator:</strong> the community development practitioner/worker (or in specific cases a researcher) who implements a healing approach. This may be done in addition to another designated task in a community development programme/project or healing work may be the main focus of this practitioner/worker.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The mentor:</strong> this term is used for the person who supports a team of facilitators and/or to whom they report. It refers to whatever title is used to indicate responsibility for the implementation of the approach in a mainstream community development programme: team leader, supervisor, coordinator, manager, coach, mentor and so forth.</td>
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7.2 Working with the personal-in-the-group

When community development practitioners/workers sit down with a group of community members, whom do they see in front of them? Do they see a group of individual persons, each with a unique story, experience, fears and dreams? Or do they just see a group of people, classified as ‘disadvantaged’, ‘the poorest of the poor’ and the ‘unemployed’ – and therefore per definition the ‘target group’ for community development initiatives? Indeed, for generations these are the people who have been grouped and stereotyped as inferior, not good enough to enter through the front door, sit on the park bench or get proper schooling. But: even though systemic oppression was introduced and maintained on institutional, structural and social level, the experience thereof is profoundly personal. It is happening to a ME. A four-year old child does not understand socio-economic structures: if there is no food in the house, ‘I am hungry’. A ten-year old child knows nothing about education systems: I have failed and dropped out of school. There is AN I who does not find work, still has a bucket in the outhouse and who stands for hours at a communal tap. In addition, this I is also formed in a family with its specific coping mechanisms, ability to protect its children against painful experiences and aptitude to create a gentle atmosphere - in spite of abject poverty and humiliating living conditions – or not.

Since wounding is experienced on personal level (even though it happens in communal context), healing is therefore also a personal experience. The question is if it would merely be a cheap alternative to individual therapy/counselling to work with healing in group context - or are there distinct benefits in working with the personal in a group context? From the data the latter appears to be the case. It is clearly not just a matter of resources. The advantages include the fact that group members share a context and history, which makes it possible for them to provide feedback and protect and support each other in the risky business of change.

Feedback from group members is useful to sift out the assumptions and labels from the actual issue that needs addressing. Since the group members all struggle in their personal ways with similar issues (for example with a lack of privacy, assertiveness and resources and with strained domestic relationships often in over-crowded spaces) they can put their heads together and help each other to find strategies to deal with the specific challenges that each is facing. The group can alert a mother that the problem of her ‘cheeky’ child might be a result of the way in which she and her husband talk to each other – because they see this family on a daily basis. When a participant loses heart because
she believed that her strategy did not work, the group is there to ask questions to lead to deeper understanding and new strategies. The mirrors that group members can hold up for each other are critical tools in the healing process.

Another advantage is that participants can protect and support each other, for example in implementing their plans. Some participants admitted that they cannot save money. When they are emotionally disturbed, they will take that money and just waste it. The group offers the option of designating another group member, who is known to be more disciplined, to keep her money for her and who is given the instruction not to give her the money under any circumstances (not even if she ‘pleads or threats’). Another wanted to stop abusing alcohol. With the support of the group she identified when she was most vulnerable: late afternoons and on weekends when her husband became abusive. The group members literally formed a wall of protection around her and started to look out for the signs and made sure she was not alone at these specific times.

I want to argue that one of the most significant signs of healing is an increased ability to give honest feedback and to accept feedback without resentment. It implies that the fear to risk has been reduced. A unique opportunity is offered by working with the personal-in-the-group.

Balancing the personal and the group is a challenge and it is easy for the group to swallow the personal. Community development initiatives mostly use geographical borders as basis for recruitment of participants, since they have to live within walking distance from each other. Unfortunately, this makes it easy to start treating group members as if they all share the same dreams, talents and emotions. Is it implied that, just because people live in the same street or village, all of them are interested in one type of project or that they think the same thoughts? Is it not disrespectful (or even insulting) to base a whole initiative on the assumption that people are the same because they are poor?

This was poignantly illustrated by an activity when each participant had to make her own budget. A participant surprised the group by insisting that for hair straightener is a ‘need’ and not a mere ‘want’ for her: she cannot face the world without it and would gladly sacrifice a meal to have her hair straightened. Suddenly, everybody started to explore with much more honesty what they perceive as non-negotiable. Even though the budgeting and income planning was a social activity, it is about personal preferences and dreams. This rich discussion would have been lost if a standardised budget were issued or imposed. Working together in that spinach garden thus has different meanings for each person involved. A healing approach cannot see the creating of the group as an aim: the social context supports personal learning, action and growth.

Recruiting participants from a closely-knit neighbourhood or village has the advantage that they share similar experiences and can help each other to recognise labels, shadows and projections. These
groups might support each other in times of distress, but this does not guarantee constant harmony! On the contrary, the price for living in such a closed community is high: a constant battle for scarce resources, secrets, gossip, conflicts and jealousy. Examples of the latter abound in both case studies. It is thus quite an art to keep the group together and make it safe for everybody to be free enough to do this work.

Being respected as a person and not merely as a member of a group labelled as ‘the poor’ or ‘the disadvantaged’ is thus something that a healing approach has to take very seriously. Without the personal experiences and stories, there is no work for a group. Without the group, there is nowhere to tell the story or find the critical reflective mirror for deeper insight and support for action.

The group context is equally important for the team of facilitators. This is where the value of a group and what works or does not work is learnt. The mentor holds this group and reflection on how this is done has great value: the facilitators get first-hand experience of how it feels to share intimate stories with others and to give/receive feedback. They also experience the relief and joy when debilitating shadows and secrets are exposed and neutralised amidst a circle of witnesses. This links to the next critical element: the philosophy of starting-with-self.

### 7.3 Start-with-self

There is no convenient training option to ‘learn’ how to facilitate the complex and open-ended work of healing. It is clear from the data that the most effective (and rewarding) strategy to learn how to do this type of work is for the facilitator to practise it in his/her own life. Facilitators have to go through a healing process to gain personal experience of the process of conscientisation and change. Not only is it motivating; it is essential for the quality and integrity of the work.

… *if we deny our own pain, it is all too easy to dismiss the suffering of others…*

[Instead, you need] *a spirituality of empathy, by means of which you relate your own suffering to that of others* (Armstrong, 2004: 306).

Starting-with-self increases the facilitators’ capacity for empathy. They can recognise a participant’s struggle and denial, because the day before they too have struggled with and denied their own issues during the team meeting. Witnessing such struggle cannot leave them cold. Similarly, it creates enthusiasm. While the family programme’s team was preparing for a workshop on how to manage the family’s resources, the facilitators become more interested in starting to implement the ideas than to prepare for the workshop. By the end of this planning session one of the facilitators commented: I would like to be a participant in this workshop! There is hardly a better facilitator than somebody who has already experienced the changes in his/her own life and who can talk about this with enthusiasm.
A critical reason for working-with-self is to address one of the biggest dangers in the healing process: unconscious issues of facilitators that can get into the way and cloud the story of the group. Facilitators might give advice, which is actually aimed at their own family, neighbours, partner or themselves. In this way the stories of participants are kidnapped. This can only be avoided through self-reflection and conscientisation – the basis of the work-with-self.

Where and how is start-with-self done in practice? The laboratory of the healing approach is the team of facilitators, with the mentor as a critical factor. Firstly, the mentor can address this directly. Below is an example of such input from the family programme:

It is important that I engage with my shadows all the time, so that I can stop to be scared of them, or be surprised by them. If I am used to the idea that I am capable of evil and that there is a lot of pain inside me, I will be better prepared if a mirror is suddenly held up in front of me while I work with a group. Only then will I be able to realise immediately that I am dealing with a shadow and I can calm down, telling myself: Okay, this is terrible, but after the session I am going to think carefully about what I saw about myself and find a strategy to deal with the shadow. Right now, I must focus on this woman’s story and let her face her own pain (not mine!) and help her to find her own solutions (and not the one I want for myself).

What do I do if my shock or pain is so severe that I lose control and start crying? It will be acceptable if I explain to the group that the participant’s story had touched a deep pain in my own life and that I am crying about my own pain. I can share my story with them if I want to. When I feel better, I can ask the participant to start again and we can look at her story.

What is NOT acceptable and a really dangerous thing to do is to believe that I cry about the participant’s story. Then I am projecting and this is deep down a form of betrayal. I am supposed to keep the group protected – also against myself. The whole group will be disturbed. How can I avoid this?

- While I prepare for a session, I have to anticipate what type of stories participants might tell to check what shadows in me might possibly be triggered. I have to work with them before the session. This should be a routine activity and part of all preparations.
- If I realise that the topic of the session is going to open up very sensitive issues, with which I have not yet dealt properly, I must arrange for a co-facilitator. It is wise to have another person around to take over when I am in trouble and in the process protect both the group and myself.

Secondly, when a new topic for discussion with the groups is decided upon, facilitators should start to look for examples of this topic in their own lives and experiences. These can then be translated into
case studies, role-plays or other activities through which the topic is introduced to the groups. An opportunity has to be created to ensure that at least some of the subconscious issues on a specific topic start to surface before they are done with the groups. If there is any sign that a facilitator is not ready to work with a specific topic, alternative plans have to be made. Such signs include an unwillingness to work with a specific topic or methodology and disproportionately strong emotions.

It does take a lot of courage to start-with-self. It is already hard to face painful experiences from the past and the destructive results thereof. To type it up as case studies and tell the story in front of a group of people is really brave. The support of the rest of the team and the mentor is critical in this regard. However, the reward is worth the effort. It creates a very special context and safety for the work. Community members often assume that these confident facilitators with all their energy and ideas do not struggle with any issues. Hearing the facilitator tell her own story of shadows and labels is powerful and encourages participants to open up without fear that they will be laughed at.

The start-with-self philosophy suggests a cascading model: because I am prepared to look into myself, I can support the next person to do it; because this person is prepared to do the same, s/he can support the next person, and so forth. There are aspects in such model that do not need to be cascaded though, for example facilitation and mentoring skills. The facilitators and mentor need to hold the whole process together and bring an outside perspective, which is imperative for the approach. The heart of this model is the work of increasing consciousness and change – and this is something that everybody has to start with. The following illustration explains such a model:

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65 The team has to decide if it should be known that it is the facilitator’s story; discretion is asked for to protect the safety of the facilitator.
Mainstream approaches normally start with C and/or B, where training is done and the content of A determined. This is then ‘taken to’ the participants/learners (in A). A praxis where everybody has to start with A is thus a very different approach. B and C are deeply influenced by the content and methodologies evolving in A. For the facilitation team there is a constant spiralling between these blocks: as insight grows in A, skills in B/C increase, which in turn allows a deeper level of understanding of A.

The first condition for supporting another to do healing work is thus to establish a relationship with the authentic self. Not only does it result in a true desire to share this experience with others, but enhances critical qualities needed to undertake a journey of discovery and un-veiling with others—thus true development.

7.4 Gentle curiosity: a respectful desire for un-veiling and development

The integrity of the approach depends on the willingness and ability to find out how participants see themselves, their world and the nature of their relationships. What shadows, labels and projections cause them sadness and fear and what makes them happy or excited? A real desire to know what participants think and feel is very different from waiting for them to say what the facilitator wants to hear.

This implies that the facilitator must want to know the participants, be interested in the direction in which the process takes them (development, in other words). The facilitator has to sense when s/he attempts to let participants risk more than they can handle. This implies a gentle curiosity in the facilitator. Such an empathetic interest also needs to be cultivated amongst participants to enable them to care for each other (which emphasises the importance of group work for personal healing).

The desire to know is not enough: skills are needed and have to be cultivated. How this can be done is now investigated.

7.4.1 ‘Finding out’ who participants are

Instead of suggesting to participants how they should deal with a specific issue (for example assertiveness, conflict or communication), the healing approach proposes to start with ‘finding out’. What are the participants’ understanding and experience of this issue? Based on this information, subsequent action can be considered. For example, the family programme wanted to work on the link between woundedness, false desires and the lack of assertiveness. Instead of starting with an input/theory on the need for and nature of assertiveness, they started by finding out in which situations and why participants lacked assertiveness, how they felt about it and if they wanted to change this. This implies a type of ongoing baseline research throughout the process of healing. The
The significance of this approach is that people are not judged for how they have always been, believed or acted: they simply provide information about their experience of assertiveness and based on this awareness, they can take a next step - or not, if preferred.

The aim of asking questions is truly to understand participants and not to find out what they cannot do or fail to do. The latter can be read as a suggestion that they have been found lacking or were making mistakes all along. An example of this is found in the family programme. Through some oversight, the facilitators did not follow their own principle and practice when they introduced the idea of school readiness – probably because it was already months into the programme and they might have assumed that they knew the participants well and that all felt quite safe. The session started with a question: What can you do with/for your children to help them to be ready for school? The activities led nowhere and eventually frustrated both facilitators and participants. Through subsequent reflection, the team realised that they did not start with ‘finding out’. The way in which the question was asked suggested that parents should have been doing something regarding school readiness. Since they were not meeting this expectation, they might conclude that they were failing to be good parents. The team had to start all over again and develop a new session, in line with the principle: start where people are and do not allow feelings of failure.

The team was more careful when they addressed the issue of the punishment of children, which is a very sensitive issue. Parents were invited to tell stories about their own childhood memories, which included an activity to show through role-plays how and for what their parents had praised and punished them. Amidst all the fun and laughter it became clear: there was a lot of punishment and very little praise. The reflection on how this impacted on them now, as adults, surprised the facilitators: participants were not angry about this punishment, because they believed that the harsh punishment made them strong. The team had to think seriously on how to respond to this, because it was evident that parents intended to raise their children with harshness in order to make them strong. Eventually, it was decided to give this back to the groups with the question: What do you wish that your parents had done instead? All of them wished that their parents had talked to them first – at least to find out why they were late, did not get the things from the shop, dodged school or failed the test. Without any input, parents intuitively realised that it might be a good idea to talk to their children too. This opened the door for a series of sessions on how to communicate with your child. It also opened the door to start considering the idea that gentleness and affirmation might make you even stronger than harsh punishment.

In some cases research is the actual project (as has been the case in the Richtersveld) and engaging with woundedness has to be planned carefully and subtly. Research can create a special opportunity to interact with woundedness. The Richtersveld process started with a comprehensive community-based planning, which was informed by various structured activities with members of the community. The facilitator has the choice to simply go through the activities and record the answers - or to make a
deliberate effort to find out as much as possible, by paying careful attention and digging a bit deeper. This is only possible if there is a desire to engage on this level. It also yields a very different type of data.

The healing approach is based on an honest desire to understand who participants really are, stripped of the attached false images and labels. It is not a ‘needs assessment’, which is often done to justify pre-determined plans. It is about what community members want to change in themselves and what they perceive as possible. Great care has to be taken not to make any promise for a specific outcome. The process therefore depends on the depth of this discovery – which brings us to the fine art of ‘digging’.

7.4.2 The art of digging

In both case studies the term ‘digging’ was used to describe the process of asking questions to help participants to open up. Digging is clearly an art that requires gentleness, insight and focus – more in the archaeological sense of the delicate un-veiling of hidden bones and artefacts than of powerful digging in the garden. It implies that the facilitator cares enough to want to know, while being careful not to damage anything by being too intrusive or by threatening participants’ space and privacy. This is especially important when group members live in a closely-knit community and exposure of intimate information can disturb relationships.

In essence, the art of digging has to do with inquisitiveness and care: do I really care enough and do I really want to know? Am I curious and concerned if participants managed with what they intended to do? Do I note when participants hold back on information and wonder why? Is it the group or me they do not trust or is it the process? Is the information too difficult to say out loud? What are they not saying? Not offering information may also subconsciously be a test for the facilitator: do you care to know? Is there a cultural aspect to consider? It might be the custom to relate significant experiences in the style of a dramatic dialogue. The one telling the story opens by saying only a sentence or two; a sigh and silence, while waiting for the follow-up question; the question is asked; silence; more information is given; silence while the suspense is growing – and thus the story unfolds. If questions are not asked, this story will never be told. The facilitator needs the wisdom to wait, ask, listen, be quiet and to make the right move to keep the process going. What does this wisdom entail?

Firstly, facilitators have to be able to note that/when it is necessary to dig by being attuned to signs of denial, fear or lack of understanding: superficial, vague or irrelevant information is provided; an inappropriate joke is made; eyes are cast down or hands wrung anxiously; an inability to speak; withdrawal; moodiness; absenteeism; and when the participant does not manage to name the real issue but instead refers to labels or projects issues. All of these send out a message and this message has to be heard. Without exploring, it is impossible for participants or for the facilitator to gain insight. An example of ‘irrelevant’ information was found in the family programme. Participants
had to talk about assertiveness and one participant mentioned that her child failed his test. Did she understand the concept of assertiveness? Was she so concerned about this crisis that she could not think about anything else? Is it possible that the problem was indeed about assertiveness, but she could not express it as such because it was not yet conscious? The art is to decide what to do with this information. The facilitator could ignore the remark and help the mother to find another more ‘relevant’ example of assertiveness. S/he could allow discussion on the problem of this specific child’s test (which would frustrate the others who were eager to discuss their prepared stories on assertiveness). Or some empathetic digging could be done around the reasons for failing the test, which might develop into a rich discussion on problems at school and the general problem of parents who struggle to stand up against the teachers (which is essentially an assertiveness and confidence problem).

Secondly, it is important to sense in which direction to dig: where did this message come from? An understanding of the impact of labels, stereotypes, shadows and projections is assumed. A subtle way of finding the direction is to mirror back what a participant has just said or revealed through body language and to wait for a clue that can lead to the next step: ‘I hear that you want to …’ or ‘I see that you are very angry …’.

Thirdly, the facilitator has to know when to stop the digging - before a participant/the group starts to feel unsafe. Nothing good will come from forcing an issue before the person is ready to move into that direction or space. This day may not come during or through this process and that has to be accepted and respected. There is no deadline or specific space for healing.

There were incidents during sessions in the family programme when the facilitators felt overwhelmed by the stories of participants. There was a realisation that some of these wounds that were opened were too difficult for them or the group to handle. They could not refer these participants to professional services, because social and counselling services are either insufficient or non-existent in these rural areas. The team tried to deal with these cases as best as they could, because the alternative was hardly an option: do not start digging in the first place and leave the wounds to fester.

The fourth issue is focus. The facilitator has to remember throughout why this information is needed. The focus is firstly on the broad story of healing, but also on the aim of the specific topic. For example, when the group is working on communication, it is important to take care that the focus is on communication and what relates to it. An experienced facilitator can risk going broader and lead a straying discussion back, but this is dangerous for the novice facilitator. It is indeed tempting to allow an interesting story to ramble on and on. But it is not useful. Thorough preparation helps, as well as some type of illustrated session structure to support the facilitator to stay focussed.

Lastly, it is important how questions are asked. Some questions may close the potential for further
digging or they might elicit stories/answers that cannot be trusted. By suggesting that a situation might have caused the participant anxiety, the easiest response would be to confirm this. This firstly closes the potential for further exploration (for the participant as well for me, the facilitator). Secondly, I cannot perceive any response on such a question as authentic. In essence, a projection has been invited.

The art of digging is best learnt through personal experience. The start-with-self philosophy is again useful. The way in which the mentor helps facilitators to talk about their own issues serves as illustration and can further be enriched by structured reflection on how and if it works, what causes discomfort, alternative questions that would have elicited different information and how else it could have been done. This is further enhanced through on-site observations by the mentor and other members of the team. Reflection on how digging is done with the groups is critical to master this art.

This raises the issue of the role of the outsider and witness to become aware of hidden information.

7.4.3 Additional eyes: the outsider and witness

Can one open up old wounds and diagnose the self without support? This is by implication suggested by the idea of a ‘bottom-up’ approach: the ‘people know best what they want/need’. I want to argue that there is a critical flaw in this argument. A high level of consciousness is required to truly ‘know what you want/need’, because without such awareness the needs and wants are defined for the labelled and shadowed aspects. Where should this consciousness come from in communities? It is almost impossible to un-veil own labels and shadows without a deliberate process. The work of building consciousness asks for a horizontal approach and this in turn requires an outsider.

It can come as a surprise to participants that an outsider ‘sees’ them so accurately. After presenting my first impressions about issues in the Richtersveld to the community (through the metaphor of the plant), they remarked: “This is truly what we look like. How did the miss manage to see under the ground?” This emphasises the difficulty in seeing the self with all its shadows and secrets without support. The information was there – what was lacking was an outsider with the desire to see and who was prepared to lift the mirror. It cannot be taken for granted that the outsider will be accepted: the mirror can be too much to look into, especially if it is not held with empathy and gentleness. If not, the image – or the outsider - will be rejected.

The family programme shows a complicating factor: the level of outside-ness. As is the case in most community development programmes, the facilitators were drawn from the communities in which they work. They can easily assume that they fully understand the participants’ situation and viewpoints. However, this assumption might be false: even though they might share a history, lived experience and unconscious matter (for example stereotypes and labels), these still need to be brought to consciousness – both in the facilitator and the community members. The danger is thus real that the
facilitator assumes to know how participants feel and fail to ask the critical questions to elicit true feelings and experiences. This is where the presence of a mentor, who is more likely to be an outsider and cannot claim familiarity with circumstances and cultural nuances, becomes critical – not only for the community, but also for the development of the facilitators.

An important role of the mentor is to be sensitive about the issues that escape the notice of the facilitators. The facilitators in the family programme were often puzzled when the mentor became excited or upset about information that they deemed insignificant: for them it was ‘normal’ - life. This was especially the case when the subtler manifestations of oppression emerged, such as the fatalistic acceptance of stereotypes and labels.

The outside eye of the mentor is therefore useful to pick up when the facilitators do not sense the need for deeper exploring. It was called ‘half-stories’ in the family programme. An example is the participant who proudly announced during check-in that her husband was no longer labelling their child. Satisfied with this, the facilitator moved on to the next participant. The mentor picked up that this was a half-story and asked a follow-up question: Now, what does he do instead? He simply gives the child a hiding - without calling her anything.

Similarly, the wounded need witnesses, not only for what happened to them in the past, but also for what happens during the process of healing. Somebody is needed to believe their stories and note the moment of transcendence – however fleeting it might be.

The outsider/witness can also act as catalyst. This was experienced when participants were asked to relate personal experiences with white people: some stories were unbearably difficult to tell. I, as white person, then invited the participant to pretend that I was this white person who had caused the pain (such as the farmer, shopkeeper, housewife or doctor). Everything that has never been said to this person could be said or shouted out to me, as substitute white person. These stories were sometimes suppressed and festering in the unconsciousness for decades. The release was immediate and intense, accompanied with a huge flow of energy. It was also noted that some of these stories had actually been told and retold many times – but only within the group. The telling did not affect the level of consciousness though, because the ‘inside’ group could only offer confirmation of the pain and no new insight or relief. It is the presence of an outsider/witness with an empathetic desire to know, that made a difference. Without this opportunity, no un-veiling would have happened and these wounds would have continued to fester into the next and the next generations.

The next critical element identified is the issue of risk – and its ever-present companion: failure.
7.5 Engaging with the dilemma of risk and failure

One of the most difficult aspects to deal with in a healing approach is the problem of risk. This can be understood in the context of systemic and structural oppression, inequality and deprivation which have taken place literally over centuries. Through dehumanising and humiliating policies and arrangements (for example an education system aimed at limiting the reaching of potential), labels of inferiority were attached to the majority of people in our country. The combination of these realities made it very difficult to successfully explore their own value, develop trust in their own efforts and to achieve success. In addition, the less-than-satisfactory success rate of community development interventions and service delivery by outsiders has further eroded the hope that anything they attempt can succeed.

The perception of a 'history of failure' can leave individuals, families and communities paralysed: there is not much hope or reason to believe that things can change for themselves or their children, either through a personal effort or through some outside intervention. Is it worth taking a risk that might add a 'failure' to your life?

‘... and I get stuck in the destruction over and over, ruining all my projects and relations because no seed can grow because I have never been good enough, there is no ground I can trust’ (in Brinton Perera, 1986: 21-22).

Healing work challenges participants/communities to try out something new and to risk change - and a new wound. This needs to be done carefully to avoid the strengthening of negative labels, whether it is done through suggestions that past/current efforts have not been good enough or by seducing participants with unrealistic promises for the future.

Wounded communities and individuals create some kind of equilibrium to survive and cope with past and current pain and challenges. The healing process disturbs this comfort zone and causes discomfort, bewilderment and strong emotions. To add to the complexity: healing is seldom smooth sailing. It vacillates between spurts of activity, progress and bliss and relapses into despair, inertia, doubt and mistrust (shadows have a cunning way to fight back!). When these ‘negative’ moments and perceived setbacks are interpreted as failure, the healing process as such is experienced as a failure. Resentment against those who have brought this process, the facilitator of healing, may result. Even though this is a projection, it is real for the facilitator, who is in any case also fighting their own shadows and labels. Of critical importance at this stage is: how does the facilitator respond? And, in turn, what reaction does this elicit from the participants?

The complicated steps of this dance have to be investigated:
How do participants show that the process is causing too much discomfort?
 According to the data, doubt and fear about the process are communicated through sudden withdrawal, mistrust, suspicion, hidden messages and absenteeism. In line with the idea of the self-fulfilling prophesy, they (unconsciously) test the integrity of the facilitator and the process: Will you come back if I stay away once? Will you accept me as I am? Will you just leave or reject us, because we do not behave according to your expectation?

How does the facilitator instinctively respond?
The hurt facilitator starts with a counter-attack. This can be done by labelling ‘these participants’ as lazy, not serious, unreliable, unthankful, unwilling to change or stubborn. Alternatively, the facilitator may become pedantic - you should not be like this – which confirms old messages and power relations. Another expression of the facilitator’s pain is to withdraw from the group, which in effect constitutes rejection – and this is the last thing the participants can afford.

If the process spins into this type of cycle, a lot of careful work is needed to create the courage to risk opening up and working with the self again. It is therefore important to take deliberate action to avoid this from happening in the first place. A major task of the mentor is to ensure that the team does not lose trust in the process and understands the complex interplay between the manifestations of the original wounding and the manifestations of change and healing.

Firstly, facilitators might need constant reminding that communities/participants have been chosen for intervention because they are hurt. So, they will respond/act like hurt people and cannot be blamed for this – however painful it is for the facilitator. This does not exclude, though, that in-depth reflection is needed to determine if the reaction of participants is not justified, because there was something amiss with the chosen content/methodology or the style/quality of facilitation. Was something said that offended some participants? Did the facilitator unconsciously project his/her own issues onto the group? Was there too much or too little control, causing participants to feel unsafe? There can also be a simple explanation for participants’ behaviour: they might have been upset by an incident in their area that is unrelated to the programme. Or it could indeed be that old shadows in group members were fighting back – which is actually a sign of healing. An aim of such a reflection session is to separate the issues of the participants from those of the programme and from those of the facilitator. This type of reflection is vital and precious.

Secondly, the principle of ‘NO FAILURE ALLOWED’ underpins all action and interaction. Participants may in no way get the impression that they are not good enough. Such message can come subtly through irritated or impatient body language or a facilitator who does not seem willing to listen, pay attention or care. It can also come through careless preparation or content/methodology that is too risky. A message can also be conveyed indirectly (and unintentionally) by suggesting that the participants should be different from who they are. One way in which this is done is to moralise and
preach: if only you had ..., you would not now ... Apart from implying that the receiver of this message is guilty of something, the message seldom includes practical instructions on how to ‘improve’. Rhetoric and jargon are doing the same. Messages such as ‘we must respect each other’ and ‘the community must take responsibility’ are powerful because they sound noble and cannot be disputed. But they imply failure and suggest some kind of ‘model’ in which the audience (persons and communities) should fit. In the family programme, the metaphor of a box was used to illustrate the issue of conformity to ideals that veil the true self.

The box in which we should fit

Some social and moral force determines the shape and size of a box and in this box all of us are expected to fit. When we are stirred by a yearning to be free from the confinement of the box (expressed through rebellious action, illness, depression or lethargy), our ‘disobedient’ arms and legs are forced back into the box – either through some form of treatment (therapy or medication) or through punishment or a moralising sensor. The ‘treatment’ of the healing approach is quite the opposite: it questions the reality, validity and fairness of the box. Should there be a box in the first place? Who was it that determined what this box should look like? Should we be required to fit into it or should we find our own form? Is it fair to have to fit? Healing suggests that we can only discover our authentic selves and obtain true liberation if we can live without the box.

Moore says about moralism: it is “one of the most effective shields against the soul, protecting us from its intricacy. There is nothing more revealing, and maybe nothing more healing, than to reconsider our moralistic attitudes and find how much soul has been hidden behind its door” (1992: 17).

Thirdly, an expectation should never be created that life will soon be easy because of participation in this healing process. It is so tempting to seduce participants with promises, because it is often driven by the need of the facilitator to be the messiah, saviour or simply to be useful. We cannot guarantee anything, not even true healing (on the contrary, it does not exist). It is only when more parts of the authentic self emerge that the participant can determine the direction of his/her own healing. It will all depend on the courage of the participant to stay with the process and on the facilitator’s ability to be a gentle and wise companion. The only promise that can be made is that the process will be turbulent, sometimes disheartening and even painful – but also exciting and maybe sprinkled with moments of awe.

It is better to anticipate the possibility of difficulties than to get nasty surprises. If the latter happens, there is scant hope that there will be courage to try again. By anticipating potential problems while action is planned, it might be possible to de-personalise the result: ‘the action failed’ should never be conflated with ‘I am a failure’. This further emphasises the importance of starting with small structured risks, such as trying to make a rule with a child. Based on the tiniest proof of success the capacity and willingness are built to risk again – and bigger.
Lastly, the skills necessary to facilitate reflection should not be underestimated. If participants do not feel safe, it is unlikely that they will share problems that they have experienced with their planned action. When critical information on what happened during action is hidden, because participants fear that their efforts will be ridiculed, nothing can be learnt, new labels are created and the fear for failure increases. Maybe the preparedness to reflect on what did not work is a significant indicator of healing since it gives an indication of liberation from internal labels and oppression.

This brings us to the fifth critical element: the skill of facilitation.

### 7.6 The art of ‘making it easy’: respectful facilitation

When I was appointed as facilitator in the development field I did not know the word ‘facilitation’ and discovered in the dictionary that it means ‘to make easy’ (Oxford advanced learner’s dictionary, 1990). It still fills me with excitement that it is my work as facilitator to make things easy. I have also learnt since that it is a serious business and quite difficult ‘to make things easy’ when you want to work with the complexity of woundedness.

‘To make it easy’ asks for a combination of attitudes, insights, knowledge and practical skills. The intention of this section is not to compile a list of facilitation techniques, since these can be found in most handbooks and manuals on facilitation. The emphasis is on what is essential when working with healing.

Five interlinked issues regarding facilitation stand out in the data: focus, preparing, a collection of images, activities and metaphors, respect and the ‘right’ attitude. The issue of focus can be looked at from different angles: focus on the participant/s; on the point of discussion (for example the direction of digging); and on the broader story of healing. A summarised version of the session/activity, especially when in illustrated format, can help facilitators to focus.

Without preparation, the facilitator loses focus and starts to panic – with all the dangers that this may entail. An aspect of preparation is to translate all concepts and terms used in the planned activities into the language of the participants – before the session. It might involve the development of metaphors or culturally-specific expressions, idioms and illustrations to ensure that there is a common understanding of these concepts. An example was the development of the expression ‘to take out and throw’ for the concept of ‘projecting’.

Few of us have the capacity to walk straight into the past or face who we are. A collection of expressions, images, activities and metaphors provides the safety needed to express what cannot be explained in normal language. It gives a bit of distance and removes feelings of fear and failure
and the talking becomes a non-threatening game, interspersed with laughter and tears. There is probably more revealed than realised in a game. Everybody understands immediately that something significant has happened when somebody announced that ‘our soil is so poisoned’, ‘I have given my child a big red this week’ or ‘my shadow came in the way’. Even when no intimate detail is provided, it is clear that empathy and care are required. These metaphors are also useful during reflection: are you giving more greens out nowadays? Are you getting any? Is there any change in the level of poison in our soil?

A document ‘The facilitator as juggler’ was drafted by the family programme team. It was the result of a brainstorm activity to consider why participants lose interest and/or drop out and what the facilitator could do to ensure that ‘balls’ are not dropped and the rhythm lost. It is interesting to note how many of these referred to respect for the participants: the facilitator arriving on time; inviting participation instead of giving instructions; making everybody feel safe and free to participate; affirming everybody’s contribution; being patient with participants who struggle; being prepared and organised (not reading from notes, understanding the activities well, having facilitation aids ready); arranging seating to ensure that eye contact is possible; and not being busy with a cell phone. Lastly, the following was emphasised: to really want to know who the people are with whom you are working and what they have to say or show you about themselves.

The facilitators made a list of ‘what can go wrong’ and thought of ways to deal with these. The potential problems included fights amongst participants; somebody who laughs when another opens up and talks about pain; a seriously painful incident described as a joke; and when the group gets overwhelmed by emotions. It is significant that most suggestions on how to deal with these were coming from the realm of attitudes:

- Be passionate, caring and full of energy and spark.
- Believe in the process – which depends heavily on the start-with-self process.
- Be sensitive about difference and power imbalances, especially race, gender, age and different educational levels.
- Have lots of fun, even while working with pain. It makes the difficult work not only bearable, but enjoyable. A delicate sense of humour is one of the best ways to ensure safety and productive working. (Note: humour is also dangerous, as it can be in bad taste, cause hurt, be used to hide/deny and be culturally-insensitive.)
- Recognise small miracles and rejoice in them.
- Be creative: constantly look for new ways of working, for new activities and metaphors and avoid simply repeating a set module or manual with different groups. The context will be changing constantly. Each group is different, as is each facilitator.
- Record information to indicate that what people are saying is important.
- Acknowledge all contributions - even when somebody tries to entertain the group with his/her pain. First, thank the person for sharing the story. Then do some digging to find out why this is
told as a funny story. This person has not for nothing chosen to tell the story in the first place: it is crying out to be heard. The participant can benefit only if the story is understood.

‘Making it easy’ is thus a real art! It asks for a fine balance between focus, flexibility, skill, firmness, care, compassion and lots of respect for the process. This includes an ability to expect moments when things do not seem to go as planned, which brings us to the sixth element: embracing nothingness, chaos and waiting.

7.7 Embracing nothingness, chaos and waiting

An important but difficult element of the healing approach is the ability to trust the process. There is no guaranteed route or outcome. There are times when it appears as if nothing is happening. Then there are those times when everything seems to be chaotic or there is extreme discomfort.

This brings to mind the concept of liminality, which stems from *limen*, the Latin word for threshold (*Cassell’s Latin Dictionary*, 1906). In anthropology, liminality refers to the quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs during rituals (Your Dictionary, n.d.). You are literally between a previous way of being, of how you construct your identity - and a new identity and perception of self. Healing can thus be similar to a rite of passage with its turbulence, excitement, losses and anticipation.

There is hardly any comfort inside this state of transition. However, the discomfort is important for sustaining the process: while being comfortable it is too easy to seek refuge in the old patterns. Discomfort keeps alive the challenge to take on new and bigger risks. Everybody in the process has to expect these periods so that they are not feared or perceived as a sign of ‘failure’. Wanting to go back to the previous state is normal, inevitable and part of the process. The days when nothing happens, the moments of stillness and just ‘sitting around’ and apparently waiting for nothing are important: these are times for introspection, catching up with self, of observing and drinking in the life experience of the group/community; of contemplating the next step; and of finding new energy. A lot of courage is needed to ‘do nothing’: it is so much easier ‘to do’, to chase the deadline, find the required number of participants or produce the set number of heads of cabbage or chickens. Similarly, the chaos needs to be allowed, which implies refraining from the want to control the process.

The facilitation team plays a critical role in these periods. They too have to embrace these times as part of the process and perceive both nothingness and chaos as critical phases for unconscious material to surface and a new phase to emerge. It does require much from the facilitator just ‘to be’, to sit and wait with the participants until the way forward presents itself. It is the time to be the companion and witness.
One of the most time-consuming phenomena of the healing process is the constant revisiting of old issues. It is almost impossible to move slowly enough. Participants often return with totally unexpected reports on what they have managed/not managed since the previous session. They might have tried out a new idea and ‘it did not work’, which necessitates the opening up of a whole new layer of old shadows and labels or even the revisiting of the content of the previous session. These might turn out to be decisive issues that have remained unconscious and that would continue to prevent moving on. Finding a new equilibrium on which the next step can be built could keep the group busy for weeks.

The work of healing is thus neither neat nor fast. When everything seems to run out of control, an experienced facilitator can adapt and think on his/her feet (or do nothing and wait), but inexperienced facilitators need some order to feel safe. When their carefully planned activities and digging move into an unexpected direction or if the ‘story of healing’ as such spins out of control they will naturally be in trouble. Should they steadfastly continue with their original plan and ignore the chaos? Since this is not really an option it is important that chaos, disruption and ‘time-out’ periods are envisaged and that an appropriate response is prepared and the necessary support is available (from the team and the mentor).

Linked to this is the issue of conflict that seems to be common in close-knit and isolated communities, as was the case in both case studies. It is impossible to continue with any topic while there is tension in the group. It slows down the work considerably and simply cannot be ignored. This implies a certain tolerance for confrontation and skills to deal with conflict.

It is important that nothingness/chaos/waiting is not conflated with ‘failure’. The mentor plays a key role in this regard: everybody in the team needs to understand that healing work cannot happen without chaos and discomfort: everybody’s comfort zone has been threatened; shadows are exposed and fighting back; labels are torn off and the scars glare naked; and projections are thrown back – a rather uncomfortable parcel in any hand. Facing the self is tough. The effect on relationships within a small community or family can be disrupted as a result. All of these should be expected, recognised and taken care of with great empathy. There should be no surprise in this regard. In addition to the task of preparing everybody for the possibility of chaos and periods of inactivity, the mentor has the responsibility to check and alert all when this type of situation is sensed somewhere in the programme. Again, the start-with-self model is useful: if the team can reflect constructively and deal with this type of disruptions, facilitators are better prepared to sense and handle such periods and incidents in their groups.

The last critical element speaks to the heart of the healing process – and development: to allow and trust participants to embark on their own journeys of discovery and unfolding.
7.8 Trusting participants with their own process of discovery and unfolding

*Don’t repaint him with your present arrogance and complacency* (Xingjian, 2002: 181).

The importance of bringing to consciousness what is hidden and distorted is a theme that runs through the process of communal healing. This does not only apply to the participants of a communal process, but also to those who are facilitating the process. The significance of the latter is that the facilitators of healing are also struggling with the false images of self and the many ways in which these are lived out, suppressed or projected. Since facilitators introduce new ideas, ask questions, reflect images and determine the style of the process, they have immense power. This position of power can easily be exploited, even if it is not deliberate or explicit. The desire to ‘make a contribution’, ‘help my community’ or ‘uplift the community’ might point to an own need for affirmation.

Even more subtle is the temptation for facilitators to use the participants’ stories to deal with their own unconscious matter or to turn the participants into an audience for their own stories. An example comes from planning during a team meeting in the family programme. A facilitator admitted during a team meeting in the family programme that she could hardly control herself when participants told their stories the previous day. She would have liked to share her own story there too and was sad that she could/did not (the mentor co-facilitated). It is significant that this facilitator reached a level of consciousness where she not only realised that her shadows were triggered, but also the inappropriateness of throwing them onto the group. She waited for her own ‘group’, the team of facilitators, where it was safe and appropriate to share her story.

It is not a problem if the facilitator becomes aware of unconscious issues while working with the group (in other words if the group becomes a mirror for the facilitator) – as long as the group is not ab/used to deal with these. The facilitator cannot ‘kidnap’ the participant’s story and to help him/herself. In the process the participant cannot find a plan for her own life. On top of this, the group (and the facilitator) might perceive this as empathetic and understanding – until increased insight leads to the discovery that the facilitator has used their stories for his/her own shadows. This might be experienced as betrayal of their trust.

If the facilitator tries to make participants follow his/her path, instead of allowing them to find their own path, the healing process is negated: a ‘new’ false self is created. Instead of supporting others to discover themselves, participants/communities are yet again forced to live in the image that another has created for them – they are back in a box, even if it is a new one. This road can only lead to new misery.

This is beautifully described by Armstrong who tried for many years to follow the road that others have convinced her was the ‘right’ journey for her:
... instead of finding my own path, I had to follow somebody else’s. Instead of striking out on my own, I had conformed to a way of life and modes of thought that had often seemed alien. As a result, I found myself in a waste land, an inauthentic existence, in which I struggled mightily but fruitlessly to do what I was told.

The great myths show that when you follow somebody else’s path, you go astray. The hero has to set off by himself, leaving the old world and the old ways behind. He must venture into the darkness of the unknown, where there is no map and no clear route. He must fight his own monsters, not somebody else’s, explore his own labyrinth, and endure his own ordeal before he can find what is missing in his life (Armstrong, 2004: 300-303).

Participants and communities have to be trusted with their processes of discovery and unfolding. Yes, the facilitator is there and essential to make this easier, but s/he does not own the process or the person that emerges from the process. When participants try to shake the facilitator off, it should be seen as a huge compliment and not as rejection: the participants feel trusted to ‘set off’ by themselves in search of what has been missed or missing before in their lives.

The mentor has the difficult task to protect the integrity of all processes. Continuous and proactive reflection is needed within the team to ensure that that the work in the groups remains ‘pure’ and is not ‘contaminated’ by facilitators’ needs to be leaders, saviours and messiahs. It is through the modelling by the mentor that the facilitators experience how it feels to be trusted (or not). They learn how it feels to be left alone, how important the timing is and how it feels when you are not trusted. If the facilitators have experienced the feeling of being trusted, they will understand that the participants deserve the same trust – and have an idea how to facilitate this.

7.9 End notes on the findings

It was the aim of the data analysis to search for elements that are critical when the implementing of a healing approach is considered. Eight elements were identified and they were divided into two broad categories. The first is the need for a storyline that carries and contains the process (some ‘episodes’ are suggested). The other seven deal with the complex task of facilitating a healing process and explore what it implies to be ‘prepared’ to facilitate healing.

What stands out from the data is that healing is not an intuitive process. One does not just wake up one morning with the desire to reach a higher level of consciousness and then start doing it. It is complex work, that requires a carefully designed journey – in spite of the fact that neither the destination, distance, duration nor the condition of the road is clear. This practice clearly does not involve promises of solutions, resources or wealth. It promises little more than moments of awe as the self is emerging from all the veils that have kept us from ourselves for too long.
The last section of this chapter brings the findings of Chapters 6 and 7 into conversation with the literature reviewed in the first four chapters of this study.

7.10 Discussion: The data in conversation with the literature

Through this study we have listened to various voices, expressing their views on the social health of our country, on community development globally and in South Africa, on the theories of communal wounding and healing and on options to conduct research. We have also listened to the voices of community members in two case studies. We now consider if these voices have been in harmony and if there are any discords. It appears as if there is significant congruence between these voices, even though the volume and emphasis differ on certain issues.

The picture of woundedness, painted in Chapter 4, confirms the struggle of participants in the case studies to deal with the cuts and losses caused by oppression, deprivation and inequality – on material, mental, social, spiritual and psychological levels. It is especially the loss of self that is difficult to overcome. This was clear from participants’ battle to diagnose their own behaviour and to define an authentic desire. They kept on labelling themselves, often in terms that point to the internalisation of oppressive messages and the acceptance of hardship and deprivation as ‘normal’. The new dispensation has not sufficiently managed to stop the dance between oppressor and oppressed, which implies that the dream to become ‘the boss inside’ (Freire) has not been replaced by a desire to become the authentic self.

It is regrettable that our democracy did not bring fundamental changes - or as some scholars suggest: a new rupture. Instead, in the sections on community development and wounding a scenario was sketched where plasters are offered by those who are inflicting the wounds. I have called this ‘Forced and frustrated remedies’ (Chapter 4). These are seen in the many dormant plans in the Richtersveld and the scepticism of families about the latest ‘projects’ that might again result in little more than promises and dwindling hopes. Redress, development and aid can indeed become new forms of mud, moving cunningly into hidden crevices of the minds and lives of communities. Liberation, the carrot which has sustained the struggle against oppression, is turning into a disappointment. We have noted this in the overview of the South African context in Chapter 1: the aggressive protests, violence, nihilism, poor education and fatalistic behaviour. This confirms fears about empty and false liberation and liberation-for-the-sake-of-the-leaders/organisation, articulated by authors like Freire, Steve Biko and Fanon. This is a particularly devastating form of wounding, because it is so difficult to recognise and to accept emotionally.

Scholars on healing agree that the process of healing does not offer the option of return. The cut resulting from wounding is too comprehensive to ‘go back’, especially after prolonged periods of
oppression and loss as in South Africa. The Richtersveld community could not find the future in their effort to repair the losses of the past. They will have to realise that moving forward will only be possible if they can find an image of a different future— which requires an understanding of the significance of the original loss. Families oscillate between the desire to revenge, to return to old ways, to accept and the urge to pursue the ever-elusive benchmark set by the oppressor (the West-is-Best and white-as-the-norm, as described in the Anti-bias framework). This can only change when the alienation from the self is broken and the authentic self is liberated.

There can thus be no authentic action without acknowledgment of the inauthentic. This depends on the level of critical consciousness. The concept of conscientisation is explored in detail in the literature and the data and the pictures that emerge are similar. Scholars like Freire, Guishard, Watkins & Shulman and Ledwith perceive conscientisation as a movement from an unconscious acceptance of messages from the past (and perpetuated in many ways until today) to a state of higher consciousness. It starts from the premise of a state of magical or naïve consciousness, where the oppressed experience their reality as fate and inevitable. In the methodology of Human inquiry this is called a movement from primitive subjectivity or naïve inquiry to critical subjectivity, where distortions of past distress and political oppression are exposed and a new complex picture allowed to emerge (Reason). In both case studies this ‘dead knowledge of alienation’, the sterile labels and accepted images of the self, were gradually broken down as the yearning for healing and action grew.

In the data the metaphors of ‘red and green’, the ‘poisoned soil’, the ‘browns’, labels, shadows, projections and the screw were used to make the work of conscientisation digestible. Many days were spent to find an authentic desire, voice and eyes through the process of ‘diagnosing’. It was found that without this work the future will be approached with and for the inauthentic self. This is complex work: aims and strategies had to be revisited repeatedly because the original ‘diagnosis’ was constantly clouded by labels, projections and denials resulting from ongoing woundedness. In addition, no stable long-term picture is possible— which is consistent with the hermeneutic premise that the search for meaning does not yield a permanent answer. Just as one layer of the self is un-veiled, a new layer is exposed. This is particularly true for groups who find themselves in multiple target group positions, as was the case with the communities involved in the case studies. They are targets regarding racism, sexism, classism, literacism, linguicism and more. All of these need to be exposed and worked through.

An important aspect of the process of conscientisation is to move out of a perception of a ‘personal problem’ to an understanding of unjust and deliberate socio-political systems as the root of the current reality. Only when the belief in the false labels and an inevitability begins to crumble and the work of healing can start (Guishard; Watkins & Shulman).

The idea of the personal as embedded in the social is suggested by the interpretive interactionist
epistemology within which this study is situated. Scholars like Abrams, Atkinson, Cabrera and Watkins & Shulman argue that personal healing is not only possible but desirable in communal context. The data further confirms that you cannot tell your story without the context of a group; it needs to be shared. Neither can the group function without personal stories and actions. One is in need of mirrors to reflect the situation back with new insights. Group members help each other to say what has not been said and to support each other in the action each has planned, especially when things do not go according to plan. Reflection is not imaginable without the filters provided by the group. The absence of such filters is perceived as a fundamental loss during the wounding process (Chapter 4): as the culture and relationships were eroded, protective filters for the individual disappeared. A communal healing process can provide such a filter – even though it might be very different from the original filters lost during violent subjugation, dispossession and oppression.

Voices were not found that make a link between woundedness, the courage to risk and the fear for failure. There is acknowledgement of each of these issues, though: Norwood-Young is concerned about the fear for failure in the NGO world; Kraybill highlights the risk to trust after conflict and the danger of an ‘obsession with success’ is mentioned by scholars working in the methodology of Reflexivity. Moore, for example, challenges researchers to work with the ‘failed interview’. I considered if we could link the problem of apathy or inertia resulting from on-going oppression and hardship (described in the literature on liberation psychology) to risk and failure. I am, however, not convinced that the problem of risk-failure is necessarily similar to that of apathy/inertia. Is the paralysis of the latter caused by the lack of courage to risk failure – or simply by giving up hope? Are they to be addressed in the same way? Scholars thus acknowledge the potential damage when failure is not faced on organisational and departmental level. However, a link is not made between a legacy of woundedness and the impact thereof on the courage and capacity to risk on personal and communal level. Yet, this problem was almost tangible in the data, for example when participants and facilitators were faced with the challenge of trying out something new. It was easily turned into the assumption that they have failed in the past. ‘Innocent’ questions were interpreted as accusations, for example of not being good enough parents.

There is consensus that the process of healing cannot be approached in a naïve or spontaneous manner. Scholars like Puljek-Shank and Atkinson point out that community members normally do not express a need for or request programmes on wounding. There is an acute awareness of physical hardship and indignities, as expressed in the huge number of service delivery protests in South Africa. But there is hardly any evidence of how the many other layers of oppression (psychological and social) impact on the perception of self, the world and everyday strategies, abilities and attitudes. The Richtersveld community was amazed by the process of the Richtersveld plan and wanted to know how I managed to ‘see under the soil’. Since the manifestations on psychological level are

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66 This challenges the popular myth and jargon of ‘bottom-up’ development, which argues that ‘the people know best what they need’.
unconscious, deliberate work is needed to bring awareness first. If this is not done, the wounding remains unconscious and will continue to fester over generations (Puljek-Shank and Atkinson). There was indeed no ‘request’ for healing work in either of the case studies: it was through the process of conscientisation that a yearning for healing was developed and expressed. We can conclude from the data and the literature that the work of healing has to match the deliberateness of the wounding process.

While acknowledging the importance of a deliberate and conscious process, the data agrees with the many voices in the literature who insist that healing cannot be forced into a specific direction or into set timeframes. This was clear from the description of the dilemmas of community development (Chapter 2): we have to consider the wisdom of putting up bulls-eyes first – and then miss the target. A fine balance is required between guiding the process deliberately and consciously and allowing an authentic picture to emerge. Holding these two simultaneously is an art. This is augmented by the methodological framework of this study: no single reality or truth can be assumed, because reality is multilayered, complex and ever-changing. Instead, the purpose of our intervention is to grasp the subjective worlds, meanings and interpretations of individuals, positioned within their social context. It is significant how the perceptions of the self have changed in participants throughout the processes in the Richtersveld and with families. As layers of labels and shadows were torn off, new realities and potential selves emerged. Instead of trying to force this process quickly into a specific direction, we could consider looking very carefully until we see the screws and labels and only when we identify our action, we can put the bulls-eyes on top of them - and celebrate.

Such work is only possible through ongoing processes of reflection/reflexivity, dialogue and inquiry - or ‘digging’, as it is called in the case studies. It is firstly a serious challenge to reflect a pure image, untainted by assumptions, power, judgement, needs or the ego of the facilitator. New false selves can be created or the authentic can remain un-veiled. This process requires intense inner work and consciousness in the mirror holder. In this study the mirror holders are the community development practitioners/workers, facilitators of healing, mentors and group members/participants.

The analysis of community development in South Africa (Chapter 3) highlights the dangers if reflection and reflexivity do not receive adequate attention. A culture of reflection was carefully cultivated in both case studies. The original analysis of the self (or more accurately: the false self), the understanding of the manifestations of the wounding and resulting attitudes and behaviour, as well as the planning of action were embedded in reflection and mirroring. Reflection on the implementation of action can be seen as the culmination of the healing process: it implies that you can look at yourself and your efforts without fear of rejection or failure, or to be seen as inferior. The self is no longer equated with the effort/action: even if what I have planned did not work, I am still intact, fully human.

In addition, the processes unfolding in the data are consistent with the suggestion in the Dialogical
approach that we should not focus on the **finished product, but on the process or journey**. It is more about the disruption of distorted messages and power imbalances. It is thus important to bring together the voices of the facilitator and the group members in a type of dialogue where no voice dominates or manipulates. It also allows us to work with emotions, with ‘troubled knowledge’ and to elicit counter-responses. It is especially important in the second episode of the unfolding story, where hidden, denied and projected emotions and perceptions are surfacing. Scholars working in the Menippean Dialogue point out that this is a process of making a picture together. This is in stark contrast to what we have seen in mainstream community development, where communities are often informed who they are or should be/come, what they need (for example redress, stimulated children, literacy or a vegetable garden) or what they should be doing.

Through the questioning of the self, new aspects are discovered and parts of the self ‘made strange’, which changes everything, but in turn requires the beginning of a next stage of un-veiling. This reflects the spiralling movements of the hermeneutic circle. Understanding is not permanent: a new insight might last only a moment, but it provides the impetus for the next wave of questioning and answering.

‘Digging’, listening and questioning are critical elements of the healing approach, but also a serious challenge. The data talks about ‘the art of digging’, the unearthing - in an archaeological sense - of unconscious material that has been carefully hidden, denied or projected. But fragile pieces can be broken by even the softest brush: even more so the ‘soil and soul’ of an already wounded person or community. Scholars like Peavey, Fopma, Ledwith and Kaplan agree that the way in which questions are asked and answers listened to is truly an art. Skilfully asked questions and careful listening can make us hear the silences and muted messages; they turn the mirror to make the wounded see themselves from new angles and to be surprised about what had always lurked inside them, waiting to be made conscious. After all, the slightest movement changes the whole picture in the kaleidoscope. The case studies have certainly provided all involved with colourful pictures, astonishment and wonder about themselves – but some have looked on ‘in horror’ too. For this to remain a safe process, a special type of facilitation is required.

The data and the literature acknowledge the expertise required to **facilitate** a process of healing. A number of dangers that the facilitator faces are highlighted throughout this study: projections, prescriptions, playing the messiah, doing ‘good’, abuse of power, the voyeur, mothering, symbiosis/co-dependency, mistrust in participants’ ability to make progress and be liberated and using the participants for own healing. There is general consensus that the facilitator has only one weapon to combat these dangers: self-knowledge. This implies constant work on his/her own level of awareness. The uncovering of the facilitator’s deepest motivations has to be seen as a task in progress and not something to obtain through a quick training course. The support of the team and mentor is vital in this regard.
The **role of the mentor** is not often mentioned in the literature. It was only referred to in Chapter 3, where the lack of mentors in the Community Development Workers programme was pointed out. In the data however, the role of the mentor is perceived as pivotal. The mentor holds the healing process together, cultivates a culture of reflection/reflexivity, ensures the safety and preparedness of the facilitators, brings an outsider view, holds the mirror for the team and even the participants where necessary, and senses where unconscious material is surfacing in a destructive way.

The data suggests an additional role for the mentor: as the outsider and witness. The role of the outsider has traditionally been perceived as negative, due to the negative connotations to the concept of ‘top-down’ community development. The Social healing tradition was instrumental in the deconstruction of the role of the outsider by highlighting the importance of a horizontal approach: conscientisation requires the ‘outside’ perspective. From inside (the ‘bottom-up’ approach) new insights might not emerge – or as Kaplan describes it: the circular flow of the argument is not broken. I want to use the metaphor of the continuous stirring of the same soup in the same pot by the same people: stories are told, retold and recycled. No discernible aspect is discovered that can be analysed to allow assumptions and unconscious material to surface, which can inform authentic action/change. For this to happen, a stranger might be useful.

The issue of witnessing is mentioned by scholars in the field of healing. The field of community development usually operates in within-group context (often literally within geographical borders) and a witness is not often available. The data suggests that the concept of the witness can be brought into this field through the mentor/outsider. In the two case studies, there was the additional advantage that the mentor was a white person – thus from the oppressor group. This witnessing was valuable since it validated painful experiences and created an opportunity to voice old cropped-up and mostly unconscious stories and emotions in the presence of ‘the other’. I did not find a discourse on the potential/dangers of a facilitator from ‘the other group’ (for example a white facilitator in a black group).

The embracing of a healing approach does not only challenge personal and communal assumptions; it challenges institutional and policy frameworks, the jargon and the untested assumptions that determine policy and programme design in mainstream community development.

There is agreement between the literature and the data on the issue of the potential damage when the framework, plan or manual is replicated without considering the context. A single plan would not have allowed for discovery and personally planned action and analysis as observed in the data. In Chapter 2, the pre-set plan and international framework were identified as part of the dilemma that

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67 I have to add that the way in which some authors describe the role of the facilitator might actually imply that they might be referring to mentors. The near-absence of the term might thus be due to different terminologies used and not an indication that this is not perceived as important.

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hampers mainstream community development’s capacity to engage with the complexity of wounded communities and to encourage un-veiling. Since the plan/idea/framework has been ‘sold’ to the community as a solution, the community has no choice but to perceive themselves as the problem when it does not work as planned/promised. This was observed in the many plans gathering dust in the Richtersveld. It was different in the individually designed plans of the family programme: they clearly owned their plans and ideas – and the results, even if negative.

Maybe we have been trapped for too long in the certainties that we have the answers for others, know how fast our plans should reap success and that we can measure the outcome. Alternative voices in the community development discourse suggest that we refrain from the focus on measuring. In the data we note that the courage to try is so much more valuable than the outcome. Dignity can be regained – without having to resort to ‘the proof of profit’ in an income generation project, which has been elevated to the ultimate evidence of success. On the contrary, the ability to reflect and the dignity implied in this action are in my opinion critical conditions for making this ‘profit’ in the first place. There are not many voices in the literature who have joined me in this tune though.

Instead of taking out the measuring tape, healing asks us to take out empathy and mirrors. It is about that newsprint with ‘aims and strategies’ under the bed and the ‘red and green’ cellophane permanently ready on the dressing table (or even just in the mind). These influence our decisions on how to live and react differently: Am I going to punish the child - or am I going to create a nice memory at this moment? Maybe for too long we have ignored the possibility of awe and wonder and the mysterious capacity to bring out the silenced stories so that meaning can return to lives that have been lived and perceived through tainted glasses for many generations.

7.11 Conclusion

The cunning way in which the mud creeps into every action and perception of the oppressed, as described in the literature review, is clearly illustrated in the findings of this study. The self is obscured and lost in an effort to deal with the realities of unrelenting oppression, inequality and hardship. Not even liberation could stop the screw from turning and turning, perpetually.

However, it is clear from participants’ stories that it is feasible within a community development initiative to start a process to gain back the authentic desire, voice and ability to see the self untainted. This experience of looking at the self, stuck for so long in the mud – or the screw – is vital for planning and action. The wounded does not ask for or enjoy the exposure, but once it starts happening, the yearning to move away from the mud, to get out of the screw, is unavoidable. Something gets unstuck, the false messages about the self are crumbling – and the ultimate liberation is finally possible.
The data augments what the literature has pointed out: this is no smooth journey and no undue promises should be made. The struggle to see the self clearly, from all the angles through which the obscuring has happened in the first place, is complex and a challenge – not only for the wounded and oppressed, but for those who facilitate the process. Just as one starts to rejoice in the un-veiling of one layer of woundedness, the next layer appears. It requires willingness, curiosity and empathy to stay with this process – and to truly see what is un-veiled.

A mother in the family programme proudly reported:

I used to chase my child away when he wanted to hug me. I just thought of getting dirty. Now I allow this and I enjoy it. I feel just like a white woman.

Few remarks in the data have filled me with greater sadness. It captures the true cunning and tragedy of wounding and generations’ of oppression. It also emphasises the urgency for and difficulty of facilitating a process of healing in our community. A special type of consciousness, vigilance and craft is asked for to elicit such information and then to recognise the complex layers of woundedness that it conveys.
8 Conclusion: Un-veiling the ‘soil and soul’ - and the self

The expression ‘wounded community’ is commonly used in South Africa, but I only realised the complexity thereof while working with some of the most vulnerable people in our country. It was clear that they are poor. Yes, discrimination and inequality deprived them of proper education and exposure to economic opportunities and they live in uninspiring spaces, without the dignity of the most basic services. But what struck me as most painful was the image they have of themselves – and of me, as a white person appearing in their world from the ‘other South Africa’. These images do not have anything to do with reality: they believe about themselves what they heard about themselves. Just as I believe the messages I have received about myself. Even though the messages we got about ourselves were very different, the result for all of us is the same: lives lived out of false messages.

I started to look for ways to understand and to work directly and consciously with these false messages and to discover those parts of us that have been forced to remain dormant as a result. How does this impact on our capacity to risk? To what extent have these externally imposed messages caused shame and fear? How does it impact on our relationships to others and the world, on the choices we make and the strategies we concoct to cope with life?

The mirror is a useful metaphor to work with the loss of self and the finding of the authentic self. We can be looking in cracked mirrors and see distorted reflections of self. Somebody can hold our mirrors at unjust and misleading angles, because the holder of the mirror has the power to falsify. The image can be obscured as we look at self through another’s mirror. For me, the most powerful image of the mirror comes from Miller and even though it is from a different context, it is useful for the facilitation of a healing process:

The mother gazes at the baby in her arms, and baby gazes at his mother’s face and finds himself therein … provided that the mother is really looking at the unique, small, helpless being and not projecting her own introjects on to the child, nor her own expectation, fears, and plans for the child. In that case, the child would not find himself in his mother’s face, but rather the mother’s own predicaments. This child would remain without a mirror, and for the rest of his life would be seeking this mirror in vain (Miller, 1987: 49).

The healing process is in essence an opportunity to look at the authentic self in a new mirror. Community healing facilitators are mirror holders, who consciously hold up the mirror for participants to see their authentic selves reflected. But this is a position of immense power and one of the biggest challenges of the healing approach: to ensure that facilitators do not ‘contaminate’ the mirror with their own false self images, fears, needs, ambitions, shadows and ‘predicaments’. If this happens, it will be the ultimate betrayal, because the facilitator will steal from the wounded community an opportunity to
find the self, healing and liberation.

This study set out to investigate whether it is possible for the field of community development to be valuable and worthy holders of the mirror for our wounded communities. If not/not sufficiently so, what can be done to change this and ensure that there is deliberate engagement with this complexity?

8.1 The research process

I started this investigation by looking for the meaning of the word development and traced it back to the Latin root velo, which means to veil, cover up, envelop or conceal. Develo/develop is the process to undo this: un-veil and uncover. On the other hand, modern dictionaries explain development as: growth, expansion, increase, teach, change, modify, complicate or amend.

The next step in the research was to find out which of these two interpretations of ‘development’ is guiding mainstream community development. Which would be best to facilitate engagement with the multiple layers of wounding resulting from our difficult history of on-going oppression and inequality? Do we have theoretical and practical frameworks that can inform a communal healing process - in the sense of un-veiling and uncovering? I looked for answers in the theory and approaches in development and community development, globally and in South Africa (especially in the dominant state-led programmes). I then turned to the literature on communal wounding to get a better understanding of the comprehensive losses resulting from generations of violent subjugation, colonisation, the messages of oppression, dehumanisation and discrimination and the impact on the oppressed and oppressor today. Lastly, I looked at how the concept of healing is perceived in different disciplines and by various scholars and to identify available and applicable healing frameworks.

Through the literature review I distilled an understanding of woundedness as the veiling of the authentic self, and healing as a search for consciousness. This implies a full circle: the quest for consciousness brings us back to the process of un-veiling/development – and therefore development-as-healing. Can such healing be done on communal level? This question informed the aim of the data analysis: to search for key elements of a communal healing approach that can be implemented by mainstream community development practitioners/workers.

I used a variety of qualitative research methodologies (bricolage, reflexivity, human inquiry and a dialogical approach) to search for answers in the data. A case study method was used. The two case studies (a family programme and the design of a development plan for the Richtersveld community) were community development programmes and the data is therefore applicable to discern information for an approach in this field. The method used for analysis was secondary thematic analysis. The

68 This meaning corresponds to the Afrikaans word for development: ont-wikkeling
study chose a specific focus regarding the following issues: community development and grassroots level work (not professional therapy or counselling); social and personal levels of wounding/healing (not structural or institutional); and the broad community who was/is exposed to on-going systemic oppression (not acute trauma work).

I now present the main findings of this study.

8.2 The research findings

I integrated the different aspects of the literature review and the results of the data analysis to formulate the overall research findings.

8.2.1 The cunning of communal wounding: the loss of an authentic self

We cannot look at communal wounding in a simplistic way. It is not only about the acute reality of physical and material oppression, deprivation and poverty; the psychological losses may even be more debilitating and lasting, because it poisons the very ‘soil and soul’ of communities. This is accomplished through deliberate strategies of the oppressor to devalue everything dear to the oppressed and to convince them of their inferiority. The ultimate victory is when the oppressed loose the authentic image of themselves and start to see themselves through the eyes of the oppressor. The internalisation of these messages manifests in different ways: destructive strategies; acceptance of false labels as the true self; pain/dehumanisation turned into shame or are denied and hidden; parts of the self (positive and negative) are left un-activated or un-chosen as shadow material; and the pain and humiliation are projected onto others, systems and the self. The latter often results in horizontal violence. In the meantime, the oppressors also believe the messages they have been spreading for centuries and have internalised the image of themselves as superior; they too, live out of the false self.

An additional complication for the oppressed is that remedies aimed at ameliorating the wounding often turn out not to address the wounding – but compound them in cunning ways. This is most likely to happen when a remedy is not aimed at the authentic, but at the false self. Or it draws on the projected needs and shadows of the leaders, developers, managers and policy makers who design them. An example is the struggle for liberation, often fought for over generations. It might turn out not to bring freedom for the true self, because it was not aimed at finding the self but at becoming like the oppressor or at satisfying the ‘false selves’ in the leaders. Legislation may be adopted to outlaw oppression, but the various forms of oppression are merely driven underground from where they continue to exert immense power. These modern forms of oppression and the manifestations of internalised oppression interact in a complicated pas de deux, which is difficult to bring to consciousness. Participants in the case studies responded very emotionally to the discovery that their long struggle has left them with a new struggle: against a false freedom that continues to poison the
8.2.2 Mainstream community development

Community development practices and frameworks, internationally and in South Africa, are not engaging significantly with woundedness. The norm is pre-determined plans within strict timeframes, focussing on the economic. The dominant state-led programmes in South Africa are increasingly aimed at service delivery, welfare and poverty reduction through income generation projects or cooperatives. Since the survival rate of the latter is low, these practices and approaches may actually compound the wounding. It is especially dangerous when the failure of the initiative/project is experienced as personal failure, thus confirming negative messages about self and the value of own efforts. While the above picture of woundedness-healing is confirmed and richly illustrated in the case studies, it is near-absent in mainstream community development literature. Documents might open with descriptions of the oppressive past and make references to ‘psychological scars’, but there is limited reflection on the nature of these and how the field may/could interact with them.

There are, however, alternative voices in the field who suggest a new way of thinking about community development and who highlight the urgent need for the authentic self to emerge. They are concerned about the denial of complexity, the lack of doubt, and the focus on action and success – which per definition excludes in-depth honest reflection and the slow unfolding processes needed for the work of healing. The Social learning tradition, for example, emphasises the expertise required for this work, as well as the need for a horizontal approach and an outsider view. Freire warns that programmes, which have little or nothing to do with the preoccupations, doubts, hopes and fears of the oppressed, may increase the fears of the oppressed (1996: 76-77).

8.2.3 Healing: the un-veiling and embracing of the emerging self

Healing is not about a yearning for a previous state or condition. The yearning is for a new state of being. The literature on healing and the alternative voices in community development confirm the most basic finding from the case studies: critical consciousness and un-veiling are essential for bringing about healing, for removing the poison from our ‘soil’ so that we can start to see flowers. Once something has been brought to light, it cannot return to the shadow – even if the light temporarily goes away. This is the beginning of the work. Through the art of conscious seeing “we change nothing of what is seen, but everything changes, because we see that which was invisible to us before” (Kaplan, 2002: 26).

There is no condition that we can call ‘healed’ and no insight gained or progress made is permanent. It can be lost moments later. Healing wants to see the emergence of the authentic self and this is done by removing veil after veil, attached through generations’ of oppression and deliberate wounding. It is clear that this type of process is as complex as the process of wounding and healing work requires a special type of expertise, dedication and attitude.
Based on the literature on healing and the data from the two case studies I have distilled the following common patterns found in healing approaches: consciousness about the wounding and the results flowing out of the internalisation thereof (such as untrue/unfair labels); the mourning of missed opportunities and broken relationships; the contextualisation of individual stories (as embedded in historical, political, economic and gender realities); the creating of a yearning to break out of these destructive and obsolete strategies and patterns; making available practical tools to turn the yearning into action; the ongoing creating of safety to allow for personal reflection and feedback; and the preparation of the facilitator to accompany communities on this venture. The latter includes the ability to: recognise masked emotions (for example anger for fear or sadness); sense where the false self is talking or if fixation with the oppressor or wounding dominates; block and return projections (own and participants’); resist the temptation to be saviours, heroes or messiahs; and allow participants to go on their own journeys.

It was also clear from the literature and the case studies that the work of communal healing cannot be approached naïvely: there are a number of realities that need to be considered carefully to avoid further damage and wounding. I now briefly discuss some of these.

8.2.3.1 The link between risk, failure and desire

'Imagine a city where there is no desire. ... A city without desire is ... a city of no imagination. Here people think only what they already know' (Carson in Zembylas, 2007: 331).

The issues of risk and failure run through the entire research, as cause and as effect. In essence, every intervention in communities asks the wounded to risk yet another wound. There is the possibility that their own effort can fail. They can be seduced by unrealistic promises and over-optimistic schemes or they may have misplaced trust in the energy and confidence of development workers, activists, researchers and planners. It is therefore imperative that the healing approach works carefully with these issues.

Linked to risk is the identification of an authentic desire – not the desire of the false self, but a desire that is informed by careful reflection and analysis of unconscious matter. Important to note is that desire can be seen as negative: the desire for something that is lacking. But it could also be seen as ‘productive’, a principle of creativity and movement that can form the basis of transformation and healing. But desire does not only come with the possible pleasures: it comes with unavoidable risks as it disturbs the normal (Zembylas, 2007: 332-333). Signs of this can be seen in processes to compensate communities for losses incurred through colonisation and oppression. When these actions and claims are initiated, are they accompanied by deliberate processes to define an authentic desire? Or are they coming from the desires of the false self? If it is the latter, we should question the healing potential thereof: the risk is too big and new wounds may be inflicted.
8.2.3.2 The start: self-knowledge
Facilitators of healing do not heal or bring solutions. They observe and reflect – and most importantly, their work depends on the depth of their self-knowledge. Any healing approach has to start with the facilitator of the process – what was called the start-with-self principle in the data. The danger is especially real when facilitators are drawn from the community in which they are working and where they share participants’ experiences, physical conditions, past and present indignities, fears and anger. A facilitator may hijack participants’ stories to deal with own pain and needs - a guaranteed recipe for failure and damage somewhere along the road.

8.2.3.3 Creating clear mirrors: from recording to reflection and reflexivity
The healing approach hinges on the quality of mirroring, reflection and reflexivity. It has to be done by all: participants, facilitators, mentors and management. Reflection in turn depends on the quality of the information gathered, recorded and reported and how it is presented. This links to the issue of risk and failure and the *pas de deux* between oppressed and oppressor. To counter any allusion of being ‘not good enough’ or inferior the oppressed have a low tolerance for ‘negative’ information and an obsession with ‘success’. Oppressors, on the other hand, have a vested interest to prove their own efforts to be superior - and in the process belittles the effort of the ‘inferior’. These are tunes that do not form a harmonious song together!

The irony is that ‘it did not work’ is a wonderful source for reflection and learning - provided it can be stated without undue emotion. This phenomenon was noted in the state-led South African community development programmes, where the ‘good news’ motto apparently has to deliberately inhibit the revealing of ‘bad news’. The fear for failure was also found in the case studies. As a result of active engagement with the issue of failure and constant emphasis on mirroring as a tool to work with the self, the quality of information provided by the team and by participants became a strength in the programme.

Recording, reporting and representing are thus loaded concepts, which deserve all our attention. Reflection cannot be done on oblique or skewed information. This further links to the issue of reflexivity, which takes reflection a step further: it questions the attitudes and assumptions underpinning the approach. Without reflexivity, there is scant hope for real change or for what development actually sets out to do: un-veil.

8.2.3.4 Spirit of adventure and tolerance for uncertainty
Healing work asks for a spirit of adventure and tolerance for uncertainty. It is a challenge for those who need certainty, have to be in control and who have the desire to fix something quickly. It requires working without the certainty of a pre-determined plan and clearly described instructions captured in a neat manual. Healing is an exploration into the unknown for each person involved. If this process is manipulated or kidnapped by the facilitator’s need for security or a programme agenda, new falseness is created and nothing gained. The data confirms the excitement amongst the participants and team
when new information on the ‘soil and soul’ was unearthed; as improved ‘diagnoses’ were made; and when new possibilities for action and healing emerged.

**8.2.3.5 The outsider and a horizontal approach**

The process of un-veiling depends heavily on the mirroring of self. This is almost impossible without the support of an outsider who can hold the mirror at new and strange angles. This challenges the notion of an exclusively ‘bottom-up’ development approach, because from the inside the same view is constantly recycled. A horizontal approach is thus asked for. Internally recruited facilitators, drawn from the community, are vital for the process, but they might also be too close to participants’ circumstances and legacy to recognise unconscious content. This is where a mentor or team leader, who is less likely to be a total ‘insider’, can be very useful.

**8.2.3.6 The personal in the social**

Communal wounding happens in a social context, but it manifests not only in the social: the individual person is wounded. As Gladstone *et al.* argue: “many social care programs are ineffective because they do not account for the perspectives and attitudes of the individuals served” (2007: 434). There are specific advantages to communal healing work when the personal is addressed in group context: the potential for mirroring, confirmation and recognition of historical and current realities, support and sustainability.

**8.2.3.7 Conflating survival and resilience with healing**

People do survive in spite of terrible hardship. This capacity, as well as inherent assets, resilience and capabilities, is emphasised by scholars and in several community development approaches. However, I argue that survival should not be conflated with healing. Firstly, it can lead to the glossing over of the woundedness. Some strength- and asset-based community development research and approaches emphasise resilience. The question from a healing approach is: is this actual engagement with the tragedy of communities having no choice but to resort to desperate strategies? Secondly, inflating the value of the ability to survive might further compound the oppressive message of inferiority: survival is all that the oppressed can expect – nothing more. Thirdly, an emphasis on survival ignores the tendency of the oppressed to design and maintain survival strategies aimed at outwitting and undermining oppressive legislation, regulations, realities and other people. The satisfaction that comes from the success of these strategies might contribute to a (desperately needed) sense of power and strength, but could also perpetuate the cycle of wounding: such strategies are focussed on the oppressor and not on the liberation of the self. It beats the power system in a petty way and keeps the spirit alive – but it does not confront the power. Fourthly, unreflective confirmation for the resilience and survival capacity of the wounded community by outsiders can enhance damaging and obsolete strategies. Instead, through rigorous reflection and the creating of consciousness this capacity can be channelled into constructive life projects.

**8.2.3.8 Wounding as risk factor in the planning of initiatives/projects**

The manifestations of wounding, such as the living out of false messages, fear to risk and destructive
projections, have an impact on all aspects of life – including participation in community development initiatives/projects. Wounded communities are vulnerable to seductive schemes, unreflective remedies and promises of quick fixes and instant wealth offered by community development initiatives, redress programmes and activism/campaigns. We cannot just calculate hectares, costs and profit: we need to consider the ability to manage risk, disappointments, setbacks and power relations. How strong is the need for affirmation and the destructive power of the shadow? We have to ask if our plans have been made by/for the authentic or the inauthentic self. A set-back in the project may be internalised as personal failure. The subsequent damage may be as serious as the original wounding in participants, because it not only confirms old messages in participants: it breaks down trust in their judgement on whom and what schemes to trust with their own issues and development.

8.2.3.9 Healing work with leaders, managers, policy makers and planners

If leaders, managers, policy makers and planners are not consciously aware of the pain and struggle for an authentic self in the communities, they may continue to plan for the ‘wrong’ people: the false selves. In addition, they might be acting of their own false selves – unaware of their own pain. It is only when they have been through the experience of becoming aware of their own hidden matter that they might deliberately prioritise this work in our wounded communities. This links to one of the basic conditions of a healing approach: the facilitator/leader thereof has to start with self69.

8.2.3.10 Attachment to unconscious material: resistance

We are attached to our shadows and labels, because we have built our life strategies on and around them. When healing work brings shadow material to consciousness, we have to let go of everything that was part of this. Even when these shadows and surrounding strategies cause immense discomfort, they are known to us and the loss thereof leaves us bewildered – and momentarily without new strategies. Even though white people may applaud non-racist legislation and fear an accusation of being called a racist, I have seen them struggle in group work to find ‘benefits for us when racism is gone’. Similarly, black participants were battling to think of ‘ways in which we hinder the ending of racism’70. Both groups were angry with the question and resisted working with it. It was only when shadow material and projections started to emerge that examples started to flow and both groups could face the full tragedy of what oppression has done to us all. Without this type of discussion and awareness, we are going to continue to struggle and wound each other and ourselves in this country. The potential of development-as-unveiling lies in the facing and uncovering of this hidden material – not in avoiding them or suggesting that ‘this is now history’ and we need to move on.

8.2.3.11 Fighting racism and oppression

The fight against racism and other forms of oppression requires fine footwork. The oppressor and oppressed are old acquaintances. Established patterns of behaviour - of attack, withdrawal and defence - have been established over generations. This is further complicated by the fact that people

69 An example of such work is the leadership programme described by Cabrera (2003).
70 The same activity applies to other forms of oppression, for example men and women regarding sexism.
experience multiple forms of oppression or are simultaneously in a target group (oppressed) and in a non-target group (oppressor), for example black men (sexism non-target/racism target). To address and break these patterns is essential if we want to break the false messages, let the authentic self emerge and bring about transformative healing. But this is complex work – on a par with the complexity and cunning of the wounding process.

Oppression cannot be addressed without addressing it directly, naming what happened/happens, mourning the losses and establishing new messages. It can also not be done by only one partner in this relationship: both oppressor and oppressed have to face the results of oppression. Because the oppressed suffer the obvious consequences of the oppression in everyday life (inequality, poverty, lack of opportunities and so forth), intervention programmes in community development are almost exclusively aimed at the oppressed. This implies that they are expected to work ad infinitum with their wounding – while the oppressors continue with their lives, almost unchanged. It is thus clear that oppression cannot be addressed without the presence of the oppressor or through programmes aimed at deliberate redress. Anti-oppression frameworks suggest a two-tiered approach: within-group work (where the oppressed and the oppressor work separately with the manifestations of oppression) and cross-barrier work, where they work together. I did not find evidence of this in mainstream community development practice.

I now look at key elements of an approach that heeds the above.

8.2.4 Key elements of a communal healing approach

From the analysis of the data I have identified eight elements that are key to a healing approach. They are:

1. The importance of and need for a guiding storyline, which guides/focuses the process and keeps all motivated and involved;
2. The importance of working with personal wounding/healing within group context;
3. The principle of starting-with-self to ensure quality facilitation and to protect the integrity of the process;
4. An empathetic desire to un-veil the true self (of mentor, facilitator and participants);
5. A balance between the fear to fail and the need to risk;
6. Making the journey easy for all (facilitation);
7. The embracing of difficult moments, chaos and nothingness as part of the process; and
8. Having trust in participants to find their own authentic being – and thus liberation.

These elements provide a critical link between the technical world of planned community development and the ‘soil and soul’ of community. Flowing out of the findings, are the conclusions that I have arrived at.
8.3 Conclusions: communal healing within community development

The main conclusion of the research is:

It is possible for community development to engage with the complexity of woundedness in communities that it works in – provided that there are certain aspects in place: an understanding of the manifestations of wounding and key steps needed to facilitate a process of healing and facilitators who are sufficiently prepared to do this work. This implies effective mentoring.

It is important to note that I do not anticipate or suggest that mainstream community development in South Africa would accept healing as a core activity. The question we need to answer is thus: how can a healing approach be integrated into existing programmes and approaches and how can these programmes be adapted to prevent further damage? I investigated the concept of a personal practice framework as potential strategy: if awareness and sensitivity about woundedness and healing can be created in practitioners/workers it may be possible to introduce this approach into mainstream practice through the ‘personal touch’ of the practitioner/worker. My conclusion is that all practitioners/workers should be introduced to the idea of engaging with woundedness and healing to sensitise them and create enthusiasm. However, I also concluded that on its own this strategy cannot suffice: the work of communal healing requires a deliberate approach and depends heavily on mentoring, a supportive team and the group context to facilitate mirroring, reflection and the principle of start-with-self. Only the most experienced facilitators will be able to maintain this approach on their own and in isolation.

The more viable option is to integrate the idea of healing into the ‘core project’ (for example chicken farming, literacy or income generation), either as starting point, to underpin it or to enrich it. This was the case in both case studies: the focus of the family programme was to create a gentle childhood for small children and in the Richtersveld to design a development plan for the community. I cannot imagine setting out into a community to recruit participants for a project called ‘Healing’. Work with wounding and healing should be as integral to the community development project as it is to the daily life of the members of the community.

The core project provides the material for the storyline to unfold. This implies the adaptation of activities, illustrations and metaphors to fit the project focus and environment71 (for example farming or literacy). The same applies to the issue of scale and duration. Two very different approaches developed in the family programme groups (which comprised ±10 participants per group) and the Richtersveld, where the whole community was involved (groups of up to 50). The duration of intervention was also different. These factions need to be considered and adaptations made to a basic approach. An activity such as ‘Aims and strategies’ is suitable on personal level (in the family programme), but was not applicable in a community planning process, as was the case in the

71 The metaphor of Richtersveld plant, for example, speaks to this community, but would have no meaning in an informal settlement: they will need their own metaphors.
Richtersveld. As participants gain understanding of how their own lives got stuck and how to develop strategies to move out of paralysis, they can start to apply these same techniques to the project life cycle. It will be interesting for participants to reflect on how their shadows, labels and projections impact on their project – and vice versa.

It was clear from the data that grassroots facilitators sometimes struggle to contain the emotions and the danger is real that they might not be able to deal with the wounds that are opened during activities with participants. Should this work not remain in the hands of the professional therapist and counsellor? The literature shows concern about the effectiveness of these professional services in working with individuals out of social context. In addition, we are dealing with the reality that professional services are in any case not available or sufficient in the areas where community development operates. It is clearly no option to simply leave the wounds to fester. There is no perfect solution. My conclusion from the data is that the collective wisdom of the group of participants, combined with careful facilitation, mentoring and reflection, was mostly sufficient to deal with potentially dangerous moments and the absence of the intervention would not have been better.

The role of the mentor is pivotal in the healing approach. It involves the aligning of energies, expectations and processes and the protection of everybody involved, as well as the integrity of the approach. Various processes are to be held concurrently: the building of self-knowledge in the facilitators and in the mentor through the complex start-with-self process, the growing consciousness in each participant, the unfolding dynamics of the team/groups, the design of the content and methodology (flowing out of the work in the team and in the groups), the maintaining of reflection, the translating/adapting of the storyline into appropriate language and activities – and the relationship between all of these.

The study identified a few areas which need further research.

8.4 Recommendations for further action and/or research

Some findings and conclusions elicited new questions or point to gaps that still need deeper exploration. I suggest that the following aspects are further researched:

**The concept of development and community development:** How are these concepts perceived by communities and community workers? How could varying interpretations impact on interventions?

**Mentoring system:** Such research needs to include: recruitment criteria; preparing/training of mentors for this role; support system for mentors; optimal number of facilitators per mentor; design of guidelines to ensure implementation of key elements of the approach on daily basis.
**Woundedness in community development programme/policy design:** Research can include but should not be limited to:

- the link between woundedness and the survival rate of community development and socio-economic interventions;
- the manifestations of woundedness as ‘risk factors’ in project design (for example the danger of projected feelings of inferiority and the ability to risk and deal with disappointment/setbacks);
- the struggle to define an authentic desire versus superficial needs assessments and wish lists;
- the potential of redress as a tool for healing (for example compensation in land reform);
- guidelines for the adaptation of content and methodology for various types of community development initiatives (for example income generation, education, health and planning);
- options and strategies for the integration of a healing approach, for example as an introduction activity, embedded in certain/specific activities; structured sessions; and/or informal integration into existing activities.

**The quality of reflection and reflexivity:** The cultivation of a culture of quality recording, feedback, reporting and reflection on all levels of the programme: community members, facilitators, mentors, managers, leaders and also funders. The case studies only dealt with reflection amongst group members and in the facilitator team and cannot make recommendations as to how this culture can be expanded to all involved.

Certain **technical issues** regarding programme design were not investigated, but since they are important for the introduction of a healing approach, I suggest that they are further researched:

- **Recognition of training:** the healing approach relies heavily on in-house training and mentoring, which are not accompanied by certificates and credits that could further the careers of facilitators. This requires in-depth consideration of alternative options that can acknowledge training as a tool for transformation and not merely for standardisation and professionalisation.
- **Assessment and evaluation:** the work of healing is too subtle for the current paradigm of ‘measuring’ through a list of assessment criteria. Either the approach ‘fails’ since it cannot prove any impact (when a tear or a twinkle in the eye is all there is to show for many hours of intense work!) – or it loses its integrity through adaptations aimed at complying with lists of indicators to be ticked off. Alternative options are needed to turn assessment and evaluation processes into opportunities for learning, reflection and healing.
- **Replicability and scale:** the intensity, emergent and long-term nature of healing work is its strength and its weakness. The process cannot be attenuated to once-off training modules and hand-out manuals – but it cannot be exclusive. An important question for reflection is thus: what needs to be replicated: models or lessons? Appropriate responses need to be developed for the demand to replicate and/or expand.
- **Sustainability:** this normally refers to the sustainability of the organisation or project, while the healing approach demands another level of sustainability: maintaining the increased
consciousness created in each participant and team member. This does not exclude the sustaining of the group though, as it might turn out to be an appropriate strategy to sustain the personal healing brought about in participants. The idea of a ‘healing society’ was introduced in the family programme to encourage participants to take care of each other (through structured mirroring, problem identification and planning). Unfortunately, there was no opportunity to test this concept. Even though there were signs of success, there were also signs of reluctance: participants lacked motivation without structured and safe facilitation.

Cross-barrier and diversity work in community development: Research can investigate if community development is the appropriate field to engage with cross-barrier and diverse groups (for example over racial and sexual divides, with leaders, politicians, managers and so forth). The case studies focused only on within-group work. If it is seen as appropriate, further research will be necessary to design such an approach, which has to deal with power differences and the need for diversity in the facilitation teams (to match those of the composition of the group). If community development should not do it, who should?

A healing approach for men: from the discourse on masculinity and men it appears as if further research is needed on within-group work with men to engage directly with their woundedness. It further appears as if the motivation to work with men is often to improve their behaviour (less violence against women, gender rights or to be better fathers) and not to address their wounding per se.

8.5 The mandorla: a metaphor for healing

For me, one of the most moving metaphors for the process of healing is the mandorla. It is the almond-shaped overlap between two circles, which represents the merging of two opposites. In the context of this study these opposites could refer to the states of woundedness/healing, inferiori/superior, the false/authentic self and the 'soil and soul'/exterior or material. For one person to try to live in both is hell: the tension is too much. But this is where the old symbol of the mandorla can help us: it binds the two opposites together. When we start with this process of becoming whole and healed, the overlap is small, just a sliver. And it may disappear again - within seconds. But we have experienced it and if we work with others in a group, they become witnesses who can remind us later of this special moment. If this happens again and again, the mandorla becomes more permanent and it grows. As we get used to the idea that it will shrink but also grow all the time, we do not panic when it gets smaller. It will grow again if we continue with the work of un-veiling. Total healing would be when the two circles overlap totally – but we know that this is not possible. As the mandorla grows, we also start to discover that all along there had actually been only one circle: the messaged one about ourselves was mere illusion.\footnote{Based on a description of the mandorla symbol by Johnson (1991: 107-110).}
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