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Humanities, Knowledge Production and Transformation



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Alternation

**Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the
Arts and Humanities in
Southern Africa**

**Humanities,
Knowledge Production and
Transformation**

Guest Editors
Cheryl Potgieter
and
Gregory Kamwendo

2014

CSSALL
Durban

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Editorial: Humanities, Knowledge Production and Transformation

Cheryl Potgieter
Gregory Kamwendo

This edition of *Alternation* entitled: Humanities, Knowledge Production and Transformation essentially examines and engages with, (to borrow from the title of an article by Bert Olivier 2009), the critical and emancipatory role of the Humanities in the age of empire.

His statement that ‘it is no exaggeration that the humanities are under threat today’ (p 78) is shared by many. The call for papers and motivation for the special edition culminating in this publication is underpinned by the position that the humanities should not take on an identity of ‘victim’.

The global agendas which marginalise the transformatory and critical role of the humanities have to be challenged by the production and dissemination of knowledge. New knowledge (what is being produced) is crucial for the ‘survival’ of the humanities and equally important is (who) is producing the knowledge. A number of articles in this volume are authored by Black academics and this is an additional and important contribution to the transformation and production of knowledge and the humanities.

The articles in this volume vary in terms of topics and the theoretical underpinnings of the articles are diverse. However, the common thread is the re-imagining of the Humanities, the promise of what could be, for the common good of humanity.

As we write this editorial, we come to the conclusion that the articles in this volume engage with transformation of the humanities and thus also address challenges facing the African continent. There is thus a tacit link between humanities, higher education and the development of Africa.

Opening this journal volume, Nhlanhla Mkhize and Nobuhle Ndimande-Hlongwa engage ‘African Languages, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and the Transformation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education’. They argue that historically, higher education

in South Africa and Africa in general has relied on foreign languages; this has become a basis for social discrimination and inequality. They then review the historical development and current status of African languages and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in higher education. They argue that, in recognition of the plural and multi-vocal nature of the knowledge domain, the project to develop IKS cannot be meaningfully pursued without taking cognisance of local languages, as it is in these languages that the cognitive, philosophical, and other frameworks of the local people are embedded. African languages and IKS are indispensable to the transformation of the higher education landscape. Using anti-colonial theory and hermeneutics as theoretical frameworks, they discuss the progress that has been made in terms of implementing language policies in South African higher education institutions. They conclude with the recommendation to firmly embed African languages and IKS in higher education systems.

In their contribution, Gregory Kamwendo and Cheryl Potgieter engage a PhD programme for selected SADC countries currently being developed by the College of Humanities, at UKZN. The programme is targeted at four Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, with specific reference to disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences. An analysis of this capacity building initiative is situated within the realm of knowledge production and knowledge-based economies/ societies. Their article offers a motivation for the PhD programme. It also provides brief descriptions of the higher education situation in each of the four target countries. The PhD programme runs on the basis of the cohort model of supervision, and this model is outlined in the article. The authors also narrate some advantages, opportunities and challenges that are linked to the PhD programme. This capacity building programme is a contribution to the strengthening of the skills of African knowledge producers. It is also contributing to the reduction in dependence on the West as a training ground for African knowledge producers.

In her 'When Black Consciousness Walks Arm-in-arm with Critical Race Theory to Meet Racism and White Consciousness in the Humanities', Rozena Maart situates *the Black woman subject* as producer of knowledge by locating her within the very site – the university where knowledge production takes place. Raised and educated on the philosophy of Black Consciousness, which is key to how she enacts her knowledge, constructs it, and as a

consequence interrogates the site upon and within which she is expected to produce it, she takes the reader on a tour-de-Azania-a-la-Black Consciousness excursion by constructing the absence of the knowledge of White consciousness at the backdrop of the university's policy on transformation guided by its Transformation Charter. In doing so she situates the White woman and the White man as beneficiaries of apartheid, which draws upon racism as its key tenet, and how through the body, the flesh, agency, acts of racism are perpetuated, reinforced, and reproduced within the university much like outside of it, thus maintaining the very system of apartheid most White academics claim to be against. Invoking Tunisian scholar Albert Memmi's text, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, she draws analogies between the agent of racism and the agent of colonization and in the process revealing the salient features of 'the colonizer who accepts' begging the question, where is 'the colonizer who refuses'?

Lesibana Rafapa and Kgomotso Masemola focus their research on representations of the national and trans-national present in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow*. They argue that, as creative agents of knowledge production in the domain of humanities knowledge, South African writers such as Phaswane Mpe have the historical burden of participating in the transformation of knowledge in ways that revolutionize the role of artistic performance with a view to prompting social transformation. Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow* actively generates emergent grammars that underpin a transformational thrust through a distinctive transnational bent, where xenophobia and rural myopia are countered through a deliberative narrative of doubt cast on a putative insular South African-ness pitted against master narratives of national unity, on the one hand, and disruptive vectors such as HIV/AIDS and witchcraft, on the other. As a significant discourse that constitutes humanities knowledge, a novel such as Mpe's contributes to transformation of knowledge in its departure from, and disavowal of, a totalizing master narrative of nationalism, putting in place a macabre post-national struggle of dystopia. It specifically tests the limits of knowledge production and consumption around the topical issues of HIV/AIDS and immigration. It proceeds to show how Phaswane Mpe's novel has successfully debunked myths of a privileged autochthonous habitus. The novel eschews characterising unstable homologues of the rural and urban divide and, in like manner, the South African and 'foreigner' bar, as a starting point for meaningful knowledge transformation about immigration and the HIV/

AIDS stigma through transnationalism and transculturation of language by way of an idiom of intertextuality represented by a transnational bent.

In his 'Plastic Knowledges: Transformations and Stagnations in the Humanities' André Keet focuses his research on the crisis in the humanities and social sciences. Employing Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, he first argues that the challenges of the humanities and social sciences are internally constituted around their scholarship and the social practices of the agents and authorities of the disciplines. This is because these disciplines already produce the principles of their own production and *stagnations*, so determined historically. He proceeds to argue, via the interpretive scheme of Malabou's excavation of the concept of *plasticity*, which suggests that *transformations* are inscribed in the humanities and social sciences because their originary positions are *plastic*; their knowledges are plastic. Using the notion of *plastic knowledges*, and in speculative argumentative form, he formulates various interplays between *habitus* and *plasticity* to provide an explanatory frame for *transformations* and *stagnations* within the humanities and the social sciences.

Bert Olivier focuses his article on the 'network society', social transformation and the 'ecological rift'. He points to Manuel Castells' incisive analysis of space and time in the so-called 'network society' and argues that this has brought to light a stark contrast between those modes of space and time that are dominant today – what he calls the 'space of flows' and 'timeless time' – and older, traditional modes, namely 'the space of places' and 'experiential (or sequential) time, as well as a different, planetary time, called 'glacial time'. In his article, he explores briefly the transition to the newly dominant temporal and spatial modes, as well as their relation to what John Bellamy Foster has dubbed 'the ecological rift' – the rapidly widening gulf between nature and human society. In the course of the argument, he points to the role of humanities knowledge-production, and of knowledge production in general, in relation to social transformation, which for him seems to imply two kinds of social transformation. The first is the social transformation potentially and to a certain extent actually brought about by the kind of knowledge generated by the humanities (and one might add the social sciences), despite the tendency among practitioners of the humanities themselves, not to take them seriously. The second is the social transformation that occurs as a result of knowledge production generally, and more especially of a techno-scientific kind, which has, since the 1980s, laid

the material foundation for the transformation of society through electronically mediated communication systems. Evidence points to the fact that the latter kind of transformation, being situated at the ‘cutting edge’ of technological, economic, political and military power in the network society (which is itself the result of this transformation), is incomparably more effective in its transmutation of the very conditions of possibility of human society (space and time) than the transformation that could potentially emanate from humanities knowledge-practices. However, although the latter are far less powerful in their immediately perceptible social effects, there is nevertheless no reason to throw in the towel, as it were, because events unfolding at the level of ‘glacial time’, and responsible for the accelerating manifestation of the ‘ecological rift’, are likely to generate or cultivate growing receptivity to humanities-knowledge on the part of social actors. The article also addresses these closely related issues, with a view to affirming the enduring value of the knowledge generated by and archived in the humanities.

Focusing on the revolution in social media, Graham Stewart titled his contribution, ‘Here Comes Everybody: Humanities Computing Meets the Era of Social Media’. The article sets out to re-evaluate some of the themes raised in the *Alternation* issue on humanities computing that he guest edited in 2002, and to trace their subsequent evolution. To what degree can the meeting of literature and technology, however tentative, influence social transformation? He reflects on the themes of cyberspace and ‘collective intelligence’, ICTs and creative writing; virtual classrooms as open forums for discussion and dialogue; digital libraries to support research in the humanities; the Internet as a platform for promoting development, the advent of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and their implications for education in developing countries; making the information society accessible to all. The effects of the mobile Internet are wide-ranging and this article explores the extent to which knowledge production in the humanities may be able to harness the potential of the new digital ecosystem to effect social transformation.

Johannes A. Smit and Denzil Chetty focus their article on how the Humanities could be re-imaged in terms of interdisciplinarity and a proposed collaborative ‘digital Humanities’ in Africa. They point out that where student numbers and financial viability often trump the intellectualization of disciplines, the humanities more often than not find itself victim to higher

education ‘cut backs’. In addition, major shifts in society, brought about by the recent technology and globalization driven communications revolution, pose serious questions about the continued viability of sole reliance on ‘traditional’ communication approaches that have preoccupied humanities scholars over the years. Despite these anomalies, there are major attempts within Africa to strengthen and advance the contribution of the humanities to national life and development of the continent, such as the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), and the Ministerial Special Project for Humanities and Social Sciences in South Africa (NIHSS). While both these initiatives advance arguments for the importance of the humanities in the twenty-first century, very little attempt is made to engage with robust debates on the technological potential for reimagining the humanities in Africa. It is against this background that they aim to articulate a reimagining of the twenty-first century humanities as a ‘digital humanities’, thereby advancing an groups of scholars and researchers that engage ‘interdisciplinary’ research collaboratively – ‘collaborative’ knowledge production in a ‘digitalized’ environment. This new categorization of an interdisciplinary and collaborative ‘digital humanities’ serves as a proposal that could advance knowledge production on the African continent. To this end, the article draws on definitions of the ‘digital humanities’; an analysis of the current modalities of the digital humanities; an analysis of emerging trends in institutionalizing the digital humanities; and finally reimages the humanities in Africa with a focus on ‘interdisciplinarity’ and ‘collaboration’ in knowledge production.

Gregory Kamwendo focuses on ‘Language Policies of South African Accredited Journals in Humanities and Social Sciences’ and asks whether they are speaking the language of transformation or not. Within the context of the post-apartheid era in South Africa, the higher education sector (the main site of knowledge production), is undergoing transformation. The language factor, one of the central pillars of the apartheid days, ranks high on the transformation agenda. This agenda can, for example, be detected in key official documents such as the Constitution and the language policy for higher education. The national language policy has been transformed from two official languages (English and Afrikaans) during the apartheid era to eleven official languages (English, Afrikaans, and nine previously marginalized African languages). In the higher education sector, there is now a strong call to convert African languages into languages of scholarship. It is

against this background that he attempts to establish the extent to which South African accredited journals (as publishing outlets for knowledge producers) are pursuing the transformation agenda. To this end, the article critically analyses language policies of selected South African accredited journals. The study is confined to journals that lie within humanities and social sciences disciplines. The study indicates that 70 % of the journals are monolingual (English), 20 % of the journals are bilingual and 10 % are multilingual. In addition, there is no accredited journal that is published exclusively in an African language.

Denzil Chetty, Tennyson Mgutshini and Sunette Pienaar point out that we have seen the production of knowledge in the academe undergo fundamental change over the past decade. This change has challenged traditional disciplines, practices and policies that form the foundation of established educational institutions. In their article the authors focus on elements such as the interrelatedness of abstract and applied research, the transdisciplinarity setting, the heterogeneous institutional setting, increased reflexivity (i.e. a more dialogical processes), and new ways of assessing the quality of knowledge. These have all challenged the type of knowledge produced and facilitated within higher education. Additionally, critical disparities regarding the role of the community and critical stakeholders, and the purpose for which knowledge is produced, have received noteworthy attention. Within this transitioning environment, contradictory impressions of 'social accountability' and 'relevance' continue to place the humanities under a critical lens. It is against this background of purported transitions and increasing theoretical aspirations that the authors problematize and probe the prospects for a contextually relevant epistemology of knowledge production. While cognisant of the many theories and approaches that seek dominance within this field, the authors explore a Gramscian approach of 'organic' knowledge production within the humanities. In so doing, they explore the relationship between researchers and the researched through the critical lens of Gramsci's theorizing. Thus, they critically engage with the broader social and economic issues of knowledge capital, and positioning the humanities more critically within the broader domain of knowledge production.

In his contribution 'Education for Freedom' Shane Moran revisits elements of the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in order to begin to explore the connection between education and freedom. Freire is associated with a method of teaching basic

literacy and a philosophy of education. From a consideration of Freire's work in Latin America and Africa, the author sketches the debate around the reception and appropriation of his ideas. Then the article moves to locate his critical pedagogy within a tradition that sheds some light on his legacy.

Writing from a human geography perspective, Urmilla Bob and Edwin C. Perry argue for the transforming of human geography in the light of the embracing of Afrocentricity. Re-examining what constitutes valid knowledge and how knowledge is produced and used, the authors argue that these two factors are major focus areas in relation to the transformation agenda in higher education. Their article critically examines these aspects in relation to the discipline of geography with a special focus on human geography which is substantially influenced by the humanities and social sciences. The article specifically uses Afrocentricity as a methodological and conceptual framework to inform the transformation of human geography and provide insight into how to centralise African experiences and contexts in human geography teaching and research. The article has two main sections. The first section undertakes a critical reconsideration of human geography in the transformation context. The next section specifically examines the role of geographical research in advancing African scholarship. The article concludes that Afrocentricity provides a useful framework to critique accepted and widely used geographical categories and concepts; thereby rethinking what geographers do and the implications thereof, from a African-centred perspective.

Finally, Johannes A. Smit reviews the study of religion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, and Social Transformation. Initiated in 2000, the study of religion at UKZN, Durban campus, takes place via three programmes, viz. the undergraduate programme in Religion, and the two postgraduate programmes in Religion and Social Transformation and Religion Education. His article reviews some of the seminal considerations for developing programmes as well as the dynamics and main considerations that impacted on their actual development over the last ten years. Pointing to the legacies of apartheid, underdevelopment and de-Africanisation, the article reviews the programmes with regard to their multi-religious approach, and their focus on religion and development and religion and society. Content-wise it explains the rationales for both religion-specific and inter-, comparative or multi-religion modules. The article closes by summarising the critical theoretical perspectives and frameworks in terms of which

postgraduate research took place in a major research project on Religion and Social Transformation in the areas of religion and civil society; religion and counselling; religion, globalisation and poverty; and the southern African Religion and Culture Encyclopaedic framework. The author concludes by pointing to the critical perspectives that informed the founding of the programme in Religion Education.

In concluding and finalising our work as guest editors we were reminded of the appropriateness for this edition of *Alternation* of the following sentiment of Chamberlain and Vale (2012) ‘Like all quests for knowledge, understanding intellectual traditions can never be complete ... this collection is only a moment in our understanding’.

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African Languages, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and the Transformation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education

Nhlanhla Mkhize
Nobuhle Ndimande-Hlongwa

Abstract

Historically, higher education in South Africa and Africa in general has relied on foreign languages; this has become a basis for social discrimination and inequality. This paper reviews the historical development and current status of African languages and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in higher education. It argues that, in recognition of the plural and multi-vocal nature of the knowledge domain, the project to develop IKS cannot be meaningfully pursued without taking cognisance of local languages, as it is in these languages that the cognitive, philosophical, and other frameworks of the local people are embedded. African languages and IKS are indispensable to the transformation of the higher education landscape. Using anti-colonial theory and hermeneutics as its theoretical frameworks, the paper discusses the progress that has been made in terms of implementing language policies in South African higher education institutions. It concludes with recommendations to firmly embed African languages and IKS in higher education systems.

Keywords: Higher Education, Teaching and Learning, Transformation, Multilingualism, Humanities and Social Sciences, Hermeneutics, Anti-colonial Theory, Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to assess the progress that has been made regarding the transformation of the humanities and social sciences in South African higher education, with particular reference to African languages and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). Taking anti-colonial theory and hermeneutics as its theoretical departure points, the paper reviews the historical and current status of African languages and IKS in higher education. This incorporates an appraisal of the various legislative and policy frameworks, which guide South African higher education language practices. In view of the fact that language is a major vehicle of communication and inter-subjective understanding, it is argued that the transformation of the humanities and social sciences cannot be achieved without paying attention to language. Equally, indigenous knowledge systems that have been historically marginalised need to be foregrounded in order to explore their potential contribution to world knowledge. The paper begins with a brief discussion of the theoretical frameworks, followed by an explanation of the methodological approach. The position of African languages and IKS in the pre- and post-colonial educational eras is then discussed. A critical appraisal of the current legislative and policy frameworks to aid language and IKS curriculum transformation, as well as the various institutional responses, follow. The paper concludes with recommendations for embedding African languages and IKS in higher education.

Theoretical Frameworks

Anti-colonial theory and hermeneutics provide the theoretical anchors for this paper. As counter-oppositional knowledge, anti-colonial theory calls into question the nature of the traditionally accepted colonial experience as well as the consequences thereof (Dei 2012a; 2012b; Dei 2006; Wane 2008). Anti-colonial theory recognises that the encounter between the coloniser and the colonised was characterised by various forms of violence; this includes epistemological violence (Nyamnjoh 2012). The encounter led to the loss of land and mental colonisation through education in particular. The social and cultural fabric of the colonised was destabilised, and their ways of knowing and languages devalued (Wane 2008).

One of the aims of anti-colonial theory therefore, is to provide a criti-

cal analysis of the colonial and neo-colonial agendas that are embedded in social and cultural institutions, in order to make sense of the current lived realities of the colonised (Dei 2012a; Dei 2006). To this end, anti-colonial theory rejects the universalising tendencies of mainstream western knowledge traditions. This is not only to recognise that all knowledge systems are constituted socially and culturally, but to affirm the realisation that knowledge is never neutral. Knowledge serves certain interests (Wane 2008). Hence, anti-colonial theory critiques the social and power relations embedded in the production, organisation, validation and dissemination of knowledge (Dei 2006). Mindful of the historic devaluation of the knowledge systems and epistemologies of the colonised, anti-colonial theory calls for a radical transformation of the conceptual frameworks, syllabi, language policies, research methodologies, and other frames of reference, in use in the academy, in order to take into account the lived experiences of the colonised (Dei 2012a; 2012b).

The call to engage with indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and the past does not amount to reification nor does it mean a nostalgic, uncritical engagement with tradition. Hermeneutics (Gadamer 1975) is useful in elucidating this point. In general, hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation and understanding of texts. This includes written as well as non-written (oral) texts (Nabudere 2011). From a hermeneutic perspective, understanding is an inter-subjective process; it involves coming to terms with others' 'forms' of life or their horizons of understanding (Gadamer 1975). It is these prior, historical forms that make inter-subjective understanding possible (Foucault 1970). According to Gadamer (1975), interpretation should engage with the great thinking traditions that are embodied in historical texts. This requires the interpreter to enter into a hermeneutic circle. This means that in order to understand the whole, one needs to understand its constituent parts. Similarly, the constituent parts need to be understood with reference to the whole. Thus to interpret African languages and IKS with reference to foreign theoretical frameworks is to lose sight of this hermeneutic circle (Nabudere 2011).

From the above it is evident that understanding, from a hermeneutic point of view, is historical and perspectival. Using one particular worldview as their only point of departure, colonialism and neo-colonialism have sought to erase the contributions of the colonised to knowledge production, as well as their languages (Finch 1990). It is the task of an African hermeneutics

therefore, to reinsert African contributions to knowledge into the curriculum (Serequeberhan 1994). This also calls for the use of indigenous languages in knowledge production and dissemination. Far from a nostalgic return to the past, this is part of an ongoing, critical dialogue by means of which knowledge is constructed. Language is key to this process; it is through language, including living language or orality, ‘that humanity can dialogue with one another and come to a consensus about a new future’ (Nabudere 2011:90). This calls for the recognition and scientific development of African languages, which are the primary medium of communication for the majority in Africa (Nabudere 2011).

Methodology

Methodologically, this paper relies on a comprehensive review of language practices in higher education in the pre- and post-colonial eras. In particular, the documentary research method was employed (Mogalakwe 2006). This method refers to the analysis of documents containing information about the phenomena of interest to the researcher (Bailey 1994). Although this method is not common in the social sciences (Mogalakwe 2006), it provides useful tools to categorise, investigate, interpret and identify the limitations of physical sources, be they in the private or public domain (Payne & Payne 2004). For the purposes of this paper, various legislative and policy frameworks that guide language practices in higher education in South Africa were studied. Among the public documents that were consulted are: *The White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation* (DoE 1997), the *Language Policy Framework for South African Higher Education* (DoE 2002), the *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education* (DoE 2008), and the *Report Commissioned by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the Charter for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (DoHET 2011). Certain University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) internal documents, such as the *Transformation Charter* (2012) and the *College of Humanities Strategic Plan* (2012), were also consulted. These documents, buttressed by a critical review of the literature on language practices in Africa, provided a basis for the analysis of institutional progress with regards to the implementation of language policies, and hence transformation.

African Languages and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Pre-colonial and Colonial Periods

Prior to colonisation, education in African societies was holistic; it was part of the process to socialise youth to become competent and responsible members of society (Verhoef & Michel 1997). Education was meant to expose the youth to a range of social, cultural, economic, linguistic, medical, and other essential knowledge traditions. Linguistic competence was highly prized, as is evidenced by a number of specialisations that were available in the languages and the arts (Bâ 1981). Nabudere (2011) highlights the centrality of the word or speech (living language) in indigenous African thought, as does Bâ (1981), who argues that speech was considered to be of divine origin. As such, speech was ranked higher than other forms of discourse prior to colonisation, including the written word. In support of this, Gadamer (1975) argues that language is central to human understanding, as it is through speech that one can bridge the distance between differing horizons of understandings. Language and communication are therefore at the centre of human knowledge and understanding.

With the advent of colonialism and the slave trade, African indigenous knowledge systems and languages were systematically undermined in order to erase African contributions to history and knowledge production. African cultures and languages were considered to be ‘crude and heathen’ (Rwantabagu 2011). The practice of IKS, including the healing traditions of Africa, became a crime. As a result, these local practices went underground (Finch, 1990) and colonial governments imported religion and educational systems from their respective countries and imposed them on the colonies (Kamwendo 2010). Conversion to Christianity or another dominant colonial religion, a western-type education, as well as fluency in European languages, were considered to be the pinnacle of civilisation and enlightenment. Some of the natives who met these criteria went on to play a critical role in the administration of the colonies on their master’s behalf, thereby further ingraining the agenda of the colonisers.

Yet despite its association with civilisation and enlightenment, western-type education was not meant to harness the intelligence of the natives; it was not intended to equip them with the critical emancipatory tools needed to play a role similar to the one that had been played by the Enlightenment philosophers in Europe. Instead, colonial education was

geared towards inculcating the values and tastes of colonial societies into the local young people in order to train them to be of better service to the colonial powers (Wa Thiong'o 2005). Its primary function therefore was to assimilate and control; not to liberate (Kamwendo 2010; Rwantabagu 2011; Woodson 1933).

With few exceptions, education in Africa throughout the colonial period was carried out through the medium of European or foreign languages (Kamwendo 2010; Wa Thiong'o 2005). It is little wonder then that for the majority of indigenous Africans, education in Africa became not only a profoundly alienating experience, characterised by imitative as opposed to deep learning (Rwantabagu 2011; Woodson 1933); it was also a wasteful exercise as far as expenditure is concerned (Wolff 2010). This is borne out by the fact that, many decades after independence and despite the use of exoglossic languages, Africa remains the least educated continent (Zezeza 2002). Wa Thiong'o (2005) estimated the percentage of the population who are literate in the languages of the colonial legacy, such as French, English and Portuguese, to be less than 30%. This is partially accounted for by the general population's inability to master European languages well enough in order to use them effectively and competently for scientific and economic advancement (Kamwendo 2010; Wolff 2002). For many African learners, European languages constitute a major barrier to education; in some cases this also applies to the educators. Under these circumstances then, it is not surprising that many African learners exit the schooling system having acquired very little if any knowledge (Brock-Utne 2012; 2013; Qorro 2013). At this point it might be useful to explore the consequences of colonial education and language policies in Africa in more depth. We address this with respect to two particular points: *social stratification* and *marginalisation*.

Consequences of Colonial Language Policies: Social Stratification and Marginalisation

Alexander (1990; 2004; 2010) argues that racial, class, and gender aspects of language policy sustain and reinforce inherited social inequalities and national divisions in South Africa. For example, the use of Afrikaans and English as the primary mediums of instruction places White, Indian and

Coloured learners, who speak at least one of the two as their first language (mother tongue), in an advantageous position over Black (African) learners, the majority of whom speak the two as their second, third or even fourth languages. Denying African learners and educators the opportunity to learn or teach in indigenous African languages amounts to a violation of their Constitutional rights; it also impinges on their academic freedom (Zezeza 2006).

Further, the use of exoglossic languages creates elitism. The use of indigenous African languages is associated with inferiority and being 'uncivilised' while mastery of colonial languages is thought to be an indicator of superior intellect and civilisation *par excellence*. Wa Thiong'o (2005) notes how European nations imposed their languages on the conquered territories. In due course, European languages came to be considered the *sine qua non* of enlightenment and intelligence. In South Africa, the media alone provides ample evidence of how English-speaking Blacks take centre stage while people from the rural areas or townships, who may not have mastered English, are marginalised. It is not unusual to find black Africans ridiculing African sporting personalities who are not *au fait* with the English language, when they are interviewed on national television. On the other hand, an attempt by a person of European ancestry to speak an African language is generally met with applause and admiration, even if it is replete with errors. This example highlights how Africans have responded positively to their interpellation or recruitment as inferior subjects. By so doing, they participate actively in their own subjugation (Althusser 1971). Hopson (2003: 229) notes that 'language serves as a mechanism of social power'; it is a quintessential tool for cultural hegemony and social stratification. Gramsci (1971) defines hegemony as the processes and procedures by means of which dominant groups in society conceptualise, justify, and reward their way of life by ensuring that it is embedded in institutions of social and cultural life, such as the family and the school. This is nothing but an extension of colonialism by other means.

Wa Thiong'o (2005: 158) reflects critically on the British colonial mission in India (and other conquered territories). He refers to Lord Macauley, who championed the teaching of English in India in order to,

produce a class of natives, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, opinions, morals, and intellect, who would stand as interpreters

between them and the people they governed – a buffer between the real owners of the empire and the vast masses of the owned.

Mamdani (cited in Zeleza 2006) has referred to this as the ‘linguistic curtain’. This refers to a situation whereby language separates academics and intellectuals in general, from the working people. According to Zeleza (2006: 21),

This might be one of the reasons why African academics have tended to be organic neither to civil society, whose languages they often ignore, nor to the state, whose policies they sometimes oppose.

Similarly, others (e.g. Wa Thiong’o 2005; Vilakazi 2002) have been critical of the elite who are devoid of a spiritual, intellectual or sympathetic relationship with the African peoples. It is in this vein that Vilakazi (2002), and Hlongwa and Mkhize (2013), amongst others, have called upon the African elite, the men and women of the village (organic intellectuals), together with like-minded intellectuals of all persuasions, to free themselves from the vestiges of colonialism. This will enable them to perform the revolutionary task that intellectuals of other nations have executed with their native languages, and that is to develop African languages for academic and scientific use.

The exclusive reliance on European languages means that ordinary citizens are largely cut off from the affairs of the state, even though they are proficient in their own languages, which are the languages of the majority. With the vast majority of the population unable to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives, democracy remains an elusive ideal, as does the notion of human rights. Zeleza (2006) argues that there cannot be a robust discourse on human rights when the vast majority of the population has been barred from participation because they are not fluent in European languages used by the state. This also means that ordinary men and women of the village cannot influence the discourse on human rights (Zeleza 2006). In general, only a small minority comprising the African elite are involved in the production and consumption of what is considered ‘legitimate’ knowledge in all realms of thought (Wa Thiong’o 2005; Zeleza 2006). On the other hand, the knowledge that is produced by men and women of the village is not only pre-fixed with linguistic markers (e.g. ethno-botany,

ethno-psychology, etc.) to indicate its ‘inferior’ and marginal, ‘non-scientific’ status; like African languages it is also excluded from mainstream school and university curricula. Wolff (2010) notes that approximately 80% of the daily social, cultural, economic, and intellectual activities of ordinary African citizens, go unnoticed. At the same time, close to 70% of the rural population is marginalised from participating in nation building. Illiterate in European languages, their ability to access the knowledge and information that has become available globally as a result of the revolution in information technology, is also compromised (Chumbow 2005). Thus, the use of African languages in education will democratise access as well as contribute to the development of the nation’s human resources (Chumbow 2005; Wolff 2010).

African Universities in the Colonial and Apartheid Eras

The authors of this article have argued that education in Africa during the colonial era depended on exoglossic languages, but what about African universities? What role do they play in the production and dissemination of knowledge about the African continent, particularly from the perspective of the actors located in Africa itself? In an attempt to grapple with these issues it is important to note that the emergence of modern universities in Africa did not mirror the history of the development of universities in other parts of the world. Modern universities in Africa post-independence were not autochthonous; they were modeled on the West. Based on western ideological, philosophical and epistemological frameworks, universities in Africa were by and large assimilationist in character. To this day they continue to encourage various forms of dependences on the western world (Lebakeng, Phalane & Dalindjebo 2006; Zeleza 2006). For example, African universities continue to rely on foreign syllabi as well as European languages for the purposes of instruction and research (Kaschula 2013; Laird 2006). Kaschula (2013) notes that the early missionaries, intent on propagating the Christian faith, were the first linguists to teach African languages in South Africa. Later, during the apartheid era, white academics continued to be at the forefront of the teaching of African languages, with indigenous or native speakers of the language playing a subservient role. Zeleza (2006) points to a more profound influence by the missionaries and colonialism on African languages. He refers to how independent languages were formed from what were originally dialects of the same linguistic family (e.g. the separation of

the Nguni dialects such as isiXhosa and isiZulu) while other dialects were united, in line with the colonial and imperialist dictates of the time.

It is evident from the above discussion that colonialism has had a profound influence on African languages and identities. It stands to reason, therefore, that the intellectualisation of African languages and the transformation of the humanities and social sciences in general require an interdisciplinary intervention by linguists, identity scholars, and historians, to mention a few disciplines. The study of cross-border languages by scholars located in various countries in Africa is essential (Wa Thiong'o 2005). Indigenous scholars should be at the forefront of the study of indigenous languages and IKS. This will rupture the colonial idea that foreigners or outsiders understand the local peoples better than the locals can understand themselves (Dei 2002).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Higher Education

The impact of colonialism on African languages has been reflected upon at length. The humanities and social sciences in general, including indigenous knowledge systems, did not escape this influence. Reflecting on her experience of teaching Social Work at the University of Ghana, British academic, Siobhan Laird, notes how the library was overflowing with American and British textbooks, yet ironically, the social work challenges in Ghana are vastly different from those of North American and European nations. Of course, Ghana is but an example; it is not alone. The tendency to import textbooks from abroad is not limited to the Social Work profession; examples abound in psychology, classics, and philosophy, amongst other disciplines. Even history does not escape this European gaze. For example, prior to democracy, South African history textbooks began with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck, in what was termed the Cape of Good Hope, in 1652. The history of great African kingdoms in Ghana, Mali, and Mapungubwe, to mention a few, were conveniently ignored, thereby effectively writing African peoples out of history, apart from the history of their encounters with and subjugation to colonial forces.

Laird (2003) and Lebakeng *et al.* (2006) reflect on an even greater danger as far as the African intellectual project is concerned. They refer to the subjugation of humanities and social science data, collected from local African communities, by imported theoretical frameworks and

epistemological paradigms. Conceptual and epistemological transformation requires African universities to disentangle themselves from European memory (Wa Thiong'o 2005) in order to develop conceptual and theoretical frameworks from the perspective of Africa. Notable examples are already in place. Ramose (1999) amongst others, illustrates how the concept of Ubuntu can be used to understand various African phenomena including ethics, medicine, ecology, and governance.

The failure to develop indigenous languages for the purposes of scientific and scholarly discourse means that universities in Africa are not well-equipped to harness indigenous or local knowledge systems, which are deeply embedded in communities' values, ethics, philosophies and ways of life in general (Dei 2002; Gandolfo 2009; Nabudere 2011; Zeleza 2002). Exclusion of IKS from the curriculum expedites the death of local knowledge (Gandolfo 2009). Ultimately, the scientific, technological, as well as medicinal potential of these knowledge systems remain untapped and cannot be used for the purposes of sustainable development (Chumbow 2005). Most often, it is left to foreign researchers to mine IKS, using locals as research assistants. Wa Thiong'o (2005) notes that, when IKS are studied and coded in European languages, local communities, the original experts, and custodians of these knowledge traditions, are disempowered. In the end, local communities have to learn about their own knowledge systems from foreign scholars. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that the original meaning of IKS is often distorted, if not altogether lost.

Curriculum transformation and the intellectualisation of African languages are essential if African universities are to play a critical, transformative and emancipatory role in society, commensurate with the idea of the African renaissance (Mangu 2006). Having said this, it is important to heed Mudimbe who cautions against

the construction of Africa through Eurocentric categories and conceptual systems ... which produced enduring dichotomies between Europe and Africa, investing the latter's societies, cultures, and bodies with the representational or even pathologies of alterity (Zeleza 2006:16).

Similarly, Dei (2002) notes that Africa has not existed in complete isolation from the rest of the world; hence there is modernity inscribed in indigenous

knowledge systems and languages. This is an inevitable product of an exchange of ideas. Similarly, western knowledge systems in a range of disciplines including the arts, sciences, philosophy, religion, theology, and medicine, to mention a few, have borrowed liberally from IKS without acknowledging the source of this scholarship (Dei 2002; Finch, 1990). Thus, transformation in higher education also entails the interrogation and inclusion of the historic contributions of (African) IKS to civilisation and world knowledge in general, into the syllabi (Finch 1990).

The quest for integrating IKS in the transformation of the higher education sector by no means amounts to a rejection of other knowledge systems. Consistent with an inclusive indigenous epistemology as well as the hermeneutic and emergent nature of African knowledge traditions (Nabudere 2011), it is rather a quest for the recognition of the interpenetration of different knowledge traditions and their ongoing, dialogic relationship. By definition, indigenous African knowledge systems are dialogic, hermeneutic, fluid and emergent. Terms such as *ibandla*, *ingxoxo*, *lekgotla*, *inkundla*, *isigcawu*, *baraza*, to mention a few, all point towards a gathering of human beings in order to engage in a conversation to discover truth. Indigenous knowledge systems recognise the multiplicity of knowledges existing in all communities without imposing one knowledge tradition as superior to others, *a priori*. This has always been the preferred epistemological framework in most indigenous societies. Nabudere (2011) refers to the Kiganda proverb, *amagesi si gomu*, to support this. In its loose translation the proverb means, 'no one has a monopoly on knowledge'. Communication between different knowledge traditions can only be effected through language. As Nabudere (2011) opines, it is through language that one enters the life world of another; hence the development of African languages that are spoken by the majority of the population is essential in order to bring about true human understanding.

The Position of African Languages in the Post-Independence Era

The dominance of exoglossic languages has continued well into the post-colonial era (Kamwendo 2010; Zeleza 2006). This forces African children to express themselves in an idiom they are largely unfamiliar with (Prah 1998). This is despite several studies and research papers illustrating that children

learn better and develop faster cognitively and intellectually if they are taught in their mother or native language, especially in the early years of the child's education (Brock-Utne & Desai 2010; Chumbow 2005; Mkwizu 2002; 2003; Vuzo 2002a; 2002b). Proponents of the use of European languages in education have resorted to a number of arguments to justify this practice. We shall examine only a few of these since it is not possible to address all the arguments here. Chumbow (2005), Wa Thiong'o (2005) and Zeleza (2006) provide good summaries for the interested reader.

Inadequate Vocabulary to Express Scientific Concepts

Those who are against the use of indigenous African languages in education argue that African languages lack the technical vocabulary to handle the complexities of modern scientific and mathematical thought (Chumbow 2005; Wa Thiong'o, 2005). English is said to be the language of science and technology (Brock-Utne 2012, 2013). Anything short of the use of English or an established European language is associated with declining standards (Wolff 2010). Zeleza (2006: 16) posits that arguments of this nature reflect the 'construction of Africa through Eurocentric categories and conceptual systems'. This construction positions Africa as the antithesis of Europe. Thus, if European languages are developed and scientific, African languages must be under-developed and unscientific. It is important to note that all human languages are social constructions and hence no single language is naturally endowed with scientific and technical vocabulary. Brock-Utne (2012; 2013) calls upon African countries to learn from Asian countries such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia. These countries have successfully used their indigenous languages to teach science and mathematics (Pitman *et al.* 2010). Similarly, countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, China, South Korea, and Thailand are developing on the strength of their own languages in a range of fields including information technology (Batibo 2010).

In Africa on the other hand, millions of children enter the schooling system with minimal or no command of the language of instruction and further schooling does not appear to lead to improved skill acquisition (Brock-Utne 2012). The learners are by and large inarticulate, passive and devoid of confidence (Batibo 2010). Wolff (2010) attributes this underperformance to the fact that, post-independence, African educational systems seek to emulate models of education that were imposed by their

former colonial masters. Inadequate or poorly implemented language policies, lack of political will, and ill-informed educational advice from expatriates and the World Bank, who share stereotyped views of Africa, propound the problem (Brock-Utne 2013; Chumbow 2005; Wolff 2010).

There is no scientific evidence in support of the view that European languages are the only mediums by means of which scientific and mathematical concepts can be communicated (Wolff 2010). Cheik Anta Diop, who translated the theory of relativity into his native Wolof language long before the theory came to be known in most European states, has shown that no language has a cognitive monopoly on mathematical and scientific vocabulary. All languages are dynamic; they are capable of adapting to new realities. Research has established that no foreign language is as efficient as the mother tongue in transmitting knowledge (Chumbow 2005; Dakin 1968). The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Societies, under the leadership of Kwesi Kwaa Prah, has long advocated for the development of African languages for use in learning, including science. We touch briefly on some of these developments at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the latter sections of this paper.

Multiplicity of African Languages

The argument that the multiplicity of African languages renders instruction in the mother tongue impracticable is equally dismissed, as is the view that the use of African languages is an obstacle to national unity. Wa Thiong'o (2005) argues that linguistic diversity is not a peculiarly African phenomenon. The argument ignores the role played by colonial administrators in the demarcation of African languages; a process that led to the creation of independent languages from what were originally dialects of one linguistic family (Makoni *et al.* 2007; Zeleza 2006). There is no reason for the colonial borders to be regarded as sacrosanct. Border communities that share the same language, history, and culture could be harnessed for the purposes of national and African unity (Wa Thiong'o 2005). Similarly, Chumbow (2005) argues that the use of zonal languages that are closely related to the language spoken by the learners, are better than the use of foreign languages that have no relation to the learners' language. Alexander (1990) and Chumbow (2005) support the view that multilingualism can be used as a resource for nation building and continental unity if it is harnessed accordingly. For example, the

teaching of Kiswahili, a language spoken across a number of states in Africa, could go a long way in addressing instances of xenophobia that have been witnessed over the past few years in South Africa. Interventions of this nature require political will and investment in human and other resources. The shortage of adequately trained African languages teachers also needs to be addressed (Chumbow 2005).

Having reviewed the background to the use of exoglossic languages for educational purposes in Africa, and the consequences thereof, the remainder of this paper is devoted to national developments regarding the use of indigenous languages in South African higher education. As an illustration of these developments some of the ongoing projects at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) will be touched upon.

Repositioning African Languages in Higher Education within the Transformation Agenda

Twenty years after the first democratic dispensation, South African higher education institutions need to assess their response to the transformation imperative, as outlined in *The White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education* (DoE 1997). The Council on Higher Education (CHE), established in 1999 to advise the Minister on the shape and size of the higher education sector, is equally committed to transformation. *The White Paper* (DoE 1997) and *The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Progress Towards Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (DoE 2008), note that language is at the heart of equality, access and success in higher education. Vilakazi (2002) states that students whose mother tongue is not the medium of instruction in higher education are at a disadvantage. This is borne out by the statistics that have been released by the CHE report of 2013, which show that access, success, and completion rates in higher education continue to be racially skewed in favour of white students. The report estimated that under 5% of African and Coloured youth are succeeding in any form of higher education. The repositioning of African languages in higher education, premised on the link between language and cognition (Alexander 2004; 2010; Maseko 2008; Prah 2009), is thus indispensable if the inequalities of the past, including barriers to learning, are to be addressed.

African Languages in Higher Education: Enabling Policies and Frameworks

African languages have assumed a national imperative: the South African Constitution and various government policies reflect this. Amongst these is *The Language Policy Framework for South African Higher Education* (DoE 2002), *The Report on the Development of Indigenous Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education* (DoE 2003), *The Report on the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (DoE, 2008), the *Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences* (DoE 2011), *The Green Paper on Post-Secondary School Education and Training* (DoHET 2012a), as well the *Ministerial Advisory Panel on African Languages in Higher Education* (DoHET 2012b). Some of these policies and developments will be briefly discussed with the primary objective of highlighting the fact that, whilst there are no shortages of policies and frameworks, the disjuncture between language planning and implementation plans, poses certain challenges (Kaschula 2013).

The Language Policy Framework for South African Higher Education (LPHE) (DoE 2002) and *The Report on the Development of Indigenous Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education* (DoE 2003), spell out what is required of institutions in order to develop indigenous languages (Kaschula 2013). The *LPHE* (DoE 2002) requires academic institutions to provide the Ministry of Education with progress reports on the implementation of their language policies every five years. Similarly, *The Report on the Development of Indigenous Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education* (DoE 2003) probes the state of African languages in higher education. It recommends actions to be taken in order to promote the intellectualisation and development of African languages and in particular, their use as mediums of instruction in higher education. In accordance with the prevailing legislative framework, each institution of higher education is required to establish its own language policy, guided by the Constitution and the *Language Policy Framework for South African Higher Education* (DoE 2002).

The Green Paper on Post-Secondary School Education and Training (DoHET 2012a), recommends the teaching of African languages across disciplines at universities. It moves beyond simply justifying the teaching of

African languages in higher education, in that it makes provisions for how the languages could be incorporated into various curricula (Maseko 2014). Amongst others, it proposes the following: (a) African language proficiency as a requirement for professional training; (b) teacher training that focuses on mother tongue training for African language teachers, in order to ensure that the Department of Basic Education's mother tongue policy is implemented properly at primary school level; and (c) that university students complete a course in an African language as an integral part of their curriculum. The Department of Education and Training constituted the *Ministerial Advisory Panel on African Languages in Higher Education* (DoHET 2012b) to advise the Minister on the development of African languages as languages of scholarship. The panel was required to assess existing national and institutional language policies, their implementation, and barriers that hinder the development of African languages in the higher education sector.

Kaschula (2013) notes, however, that despite these impressive policy and legislative frameworks, and while almost all South African universities do now have language policies in place, challenges exist at the level of implementation plans and monitoring. A further challenge arises from the fact that, in the past, African languages were taught from a purely linguistic perspective; this led to a loss of interest amongst students. As a result, very few students graduate with African language majors from South African universities and this is more so at the postgraduate level. It is thus important to revitalise interest in African languages, especially amongst native speakers, at both school and university levels. Incentives for studying and researching in African languages should be made available. Buy-in from all stakeholders, especially at the senior management level, is crucial.

It is also important to mention the *Charter for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS)* (DoHET 2011). The *HSS Charter* was commissioned by the Minister of Higher Education to investigate the societal role that can be played by the humanities and social sciences in the post-apartheid era. One of the recommendations of the Charter was the development of six catalytic projects to foreground the role of the humanities and social sciences in society. Among these is a national multidisciplinary project on how indigenous South African languages could be developed in order to support concept formation and enrich social scientific thinking and pedagogy. Dr. P. Maseko and Prof. R. Kaschula of Rhodes University lead this collaborative project. It involves seven South African institutions of Higher Learning and

four African indigenous languages, spread across four provinces (Kaschula 2013). The Charter also recommended the establishment of regional doctoral schools and greater collaboration between African universities through what it termed the African Pathways Programme. It is envisaged that the African Pathways Programme will enable greater mobility of staff and students at the postgraduate level. The study of South African history pre- 1652 (prior to colonisation) is another major recommendation of the Charter. This is not surprising given the historical manipulation of African history for colonial purposes. In order to be truly emancipatory, the humanities should engage with African history from the perspective of the local actors, which will require cross-border collaborations. The Charter further recognises linguistics as critical to the study of the African humanities, as is the study of African classical civilisations.

Institutional Responses: The University of KwaZulu-Natal College of Humanities

South African universities have responded to indigenous knowledge systems and the African languages imperatives in varied ways. Best practices can be cited at Rhodes University, which houses the NRF SARCHI Chair in African languages, and at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), which hosts a Centre of Excellence in IKS. Furthermore, at UKZN, completion of an isiZulu module is compulsory for all undergraduate students as of 2014. Council approved the UKZN Language Policy in 2006 and the Implementation Plan is currently being revised. The UKZN Transformation Charter (2012) provides the justification for the use of isiZulu as an additional medium of instruction. Similarly, the Language Planning and Development Directorate has been mandated to advance the development of isiZulu as a language of teaching and learning. This includes terminology development.

The project entitled ‘Multilingualism to Promote Access, Retention and Successful Professional Training’ was part of the South African-Norway Tertiary Education Development Programme (SANTED) (Ndimande-Hlongwa, Balfour, Mkhize & Engelbrecht 2010). This project provided the University an opportunity to respond to issues pertaining to multilingualism in higher education. It is largely as a result of this project that the College of Humanities at UKZN has made strides in utilising isiZulu as a language of

teaching, learning, and research. As such, dual medium instruction in selected modules has been introduced. This is in line with the Strategic Plan of the College (2012-2016) to have 50% of the modules offered in the bilingual mode by 2016.

Apart from the taught degree programmes, which range from undergraduate degrees to doctoral degrees in the Schools of Arts and Education, a summary of which are provided in Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize (2013), the College of Humanities has sponsored a number of initiatives to support the development of African languages. Included in these are the following:

- **Towards a Pocket Dictionary of Zulu Linguistics:** The aim of this project, led by Dr. Langa Khumalo, is to publish a user-friendly, pocket size dictionary of linguistic terms in isiZulu and to create linguistic terms for use by language and linguistics scholars.
- **Igula Lolwazi:** Led by Ms Gugulethu Mkhize, this project seeks to produce a booklet and an online data base of isiZulu terminology, drawing from the culture and traditional beliefs of the Zulu people. The terminology will be used in the teaching of isiZulu undergraduate degree programmes.
- **Creation of Terminology Database for Translation and Interpreting, Lexicography, Terminology Development and Editing, Onomastics, Literature and Research:** The aim of this project is to produce isiZulu terminology for teaching terminology and editing, translation and interpreting, lexicography, literature, Onomastics and research. The project is led by Dr. Gugulethu Mazibuko.
- **English-isiZulu-Kiswahili Phrasebook:** This project, which was led by Dr. L. Rushubirwa, culminated in the production of a basic communicative phrasebook in three languages (English, isiZulu, and Kiswahili). The phrasebook was accompanied by CDs, also in English, isiZulu, and Kiswahili.
- **Manual and CD to Teach Basic isiZulu to all First Year Students:** This initiative was led by Prof. Noleen Turner and colleagues in

isiZulu Studies. It was developed as a response to the University Council's decision to make communicative competency in isiZulu a requirement in all undergraduate degree programmes.

- **Bilingualism in Anthropology Modules:** This project, led by Dr. M. Naidu, seeks to scaffold isiZulu material and isiZulu language teaching into selected Anthropology modules.
- **Integrating the use of isiZulu into the History Curriculum at UKZN:** Led by Dr. Marijke Du Toit, the aim of the project is to develop multilingual teaching resources and to introduce isiZulu as a medium of learning in History.
- **Cultural Heritage and Tourism-Innovative Initiatives that Support the Promotion and Intellectualisation of isiZulu Language:** This project led to the establishment of an interactive, completely bilingual (English/isiZulu) website, focusing on the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and tourism in Inanda, north of Durban.
- The ninth project involves the **development of key terms and bilingual teaching materials for language and literacy.** The primary objective of this project, led by Drs. Mthembu, Funeka and Nkosi, is to develop bilingual terms to be used in the teaching of Academic Literacy in Education.

All of the above-mentioned projects are contributing to curriculum transformation at UKZN and the intellectualisation of isiZulu in general, but what is most evident is that the development of isiZulu is not confined solely to the language discipline of isiZulu; it permeates a number of disciplines. This is essential not only for the sustainability of the initiative but also to avoid the stereotyping that is typical of African languages (Kaschula 2013). It is vital, however, to ensure that the projects outlined above communicate with each other so as to avoid duplication of efforts. Opportunities to share findings and best practice currently take place at the annual Teaching and Learning Conference of the University. Greater buy-in from all staff is encouraged to ensure that activities are not a reflection of individual interest and commitment.

These initiatives alone, however, are not sufficient to sustain the larger project at hand. The authors of this article hereby recommend the following so as to firmly embed African languages and IKS in higher education:

- It is important to validate African languages and IKS at the highest levels of higher education institutions. Publication in local and regional journals that use indigenous African languages should be encouraged and rewarded. This will rupture the political economy of knowledge production that rewards knowledge systems differentially.
- To ensure that the terminology and vocabulary that is being developed is sustained and put to use, institutions of higher learning should encourage students to write their dissertations and theses in African languages in fields that fall outside the languages, such as agriculture, nursing, and psychology, to mention a few.
- Students should be able to elect to write their examinations (including oral examinations) in African languages.
- It is important to liaise with professional bodies to ensure that African languages are made a compulsory requirement to attain the qualification. This will ensure that the introduction of African languages as a requirement is not resented by teaching staff and students on the grounds that the curriculum is already full.
- Advocacy at primary and secondary school level is important to ensure that native speakers take African languages as their home language subject up until Grade 12. This will ensure a steady supply of students who are well-equipped to study these languages at a deeper level at university.
- Communities should be established as sites of teaching and learning in line with community engagement. This will enable the study of IKS by the custodians of these systems.
- Indigenous experts from the community should be appointed as honorary staff and be invited to give lectures and partake as joint

research supervisors in their areas of expertise.

- Comparative interdisciplinary projects cutting across countries should be initiated to study indigenous languages (e.g. linguistics) as well as IKS. Multidisciplinary degree programmes across departments and between African countries need to be facilitated.
- Lucrative scholarships, bursaries and postdoctoral fellowships should be made available to incentivise the study of African languages.

Conclusion

This paper has relied on anti-colonial theory and hermeneutics to review the position of African languages and IKS in South African higher education. The colonial and apartheid eras were characterised by the dominance of European languages. Indigenous knowledge systems were also marginalised. The use of foreign languages continued well into the post-colonial period, as did models of universities based on western ideological, epistemological and theoretical frameworks. The authors of this paper have argued that this situation was facilitated by the African intelligentsia, who inherited the post-colonial African state. Arguments against the use of African languages were considered, followed by a discussion of various policy and legislative frameworks that enable the usage and study of African languages in the South African higher education system. Institutional initiatives to implement language policies and the challenges involved were discussed. While most universities have developed language policies, challenges at the implementation and monitoring level remain. In most institutions, language and curriculum transformation to embed IKS are yet to receive institution-wide buy-in. The paper concludes with recommendations for permanently embedding African languages and IKS in higher education.

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Capacity Building for Knowledge Producers in the Humanities and Social Sciences: A PhD Programme for Selected SADC Countries

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Abstract

The paper discusses a capacity building initiative (in the form of a PhD programme) that is being undertaken by the College of Humanities of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The programme is targeted at four Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, with specific reference to disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences. An analysis of this capacity building initiative is situated within the realm of knowledge production and knowledge-based economies/societies. The paper offers a motivation for the PhD programme. The paper also provides brief descriptions of the higher education situation in each of the four target countries. The PhD programme runs on the basis of the cohort model of supervision, and this model is outlined in the paper. The paper also narrates some advantages, opportunities and challenges that are linked to the PhD programme. This capacity building programme is a contribution to the strengthening of the skills of African knowledge producers. It is also contributing to the reduction of dependence on the West as a training ground for African knowledge producers.

Keywords: capacity building, cohort model of PhD supervision, humanities, knowledge production, social sciences

Introduction and Background

The paper discusses a human resource capacity-building initiative, in the form of a PhD programme, undertaken by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) through one of its four colleges, the College of Humanities. The initiative, championed by the School of Education, is taking the PhD programme to some Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states, namely: Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. This is a South to South (or Africa to Africa) initiative in contrast, for example, to the SANPAD initiative (Smit et al 2013) which is a South-North initiative. The UKZN's Africa to Africa initiative is a positive response to at least three calls. First, the initiative is responding to the UKZN strategic plan (University of KwaZulu-Natal 2012) which calls for internationalisation through the forging of strategic partnerships. Second, the PhD programme is also responding to a call made by the SADC protocol on education and training (SADC 1997) and the government of South Africa (Republic of South Africa 2011), encouraging collaboration and sharing of educational resources among African countries. The PhD project is an Africa to Africa initiative that aims at growing the next generation of African scholars and knowledge producers. As Altbach (2013: 326) has observed,

the majority of academic staff in developing countries do not hold a doctorate. While there are no reliable statistics available, only a minority of academics in developing countries hold a doctorate.

As such, there is an acute need to upgrade academics' qualifications and research capacity through the acquisition of PhDs. In addition, there is recognition and appreciation all over the world that a PhD can add value not only to academic institutions but also to non-academic work environments in the private and public sectors.

Naturally, African countries are concerned about the low number of academics who possess PhDs. Zimbabwe, for example, has taken a very bold step by demanding that by a specified date, all academic staff (as knowledge workers in higher education) should be in possession of PhDs. South Africa has also intensified the drive to have more academics as PhD holders. The desire to have an increase in PhDs at national level is evident in key South African policy and strategy documents such as the national development plan

(Republic of South Africa 2012a), the green paper on post-school education (Republic of South Africa 2012b) and the strategy for a knowledge-based economy (Republic of South Africa 2007). In a world in which knowledge-based societies are the preference, and also realizing the critical importance of a PhD as a tool for enhancing knowledge production skills and expertise, there is no doubt that the acquisition of a PhD is not a luxury (World Bank 2002). Higher education is now regarded as the engine of development in what is called a knowledge-based economy. Actually,

if knowledge is the electricity of the new informational international economy, then institutions of higher education are the power sources on which a new development process must rely (Castells 2001, cited in Botswana Tertiary Education Council 2006: 18).

The highest concentration of knowledge producers in Africa lies in higher education institutions such as universities. The role of higher education institutions in a knowledge-based economy is threefold. First, higher education institutions train personnel. Secondly, higher education institutions generate knowledge and disseminate it. Thirdly, higher education institutions build capacities and networks for accessing knowledge and adopting it to local use (World Bank 2002). It is through a PhD programme that an individual ‘practices and perfects the process of generating knowledge’ (Backhouse 2009: 266). So, if Africa is to increase the scale and quality of knowledge production, then the continent has to invest significantly in the training of knowledge producers who are equipped with PhDs. Knowledge producers who are trained in Africa and by a university (UKZN) that champions African scholarship should be able to respond more creatively to African realities than knowledge producers who are trained in the Euro-centric academic tradition.

In view of the importance of knowledge production in any society, capacity building for knowledge producers becomes a critical undertaking. This is especially true in Africa where the knowledge generation capacity is very low. It is against this background that in the current paper, we discuss a capacity building exercise currently being undertaken by the College of Humanities of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and targeted at four SADC member states. The paper is based on our direct experiences in setting up the capacity building programme. We have travelled to Botswana, Malawi,

Swaziland and Zimbabwe and held discussions with prospective PhD students and leaders of the relevant higher education institutions in those countries. We have also overseen the registration of some of the students into the PhD programme. In the process, we have had a lot of communication with potential and current students and other stakeholders. The current paper, therefore, draws its information from our experiences in these encounters.

The paper proceeds as follows. We begin by outlining the motivation for the capacity building project. After that, we provide brief profiles of the target countries in the following order: Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. In the next section, we discuss the cohort model of PhD supervision that has been earmarked for the target countries. This is followed by a discussion of what we consider to be advantages, opportunities and challenges that exist. We close the paper with a summary and conclusion.

Motivation for the PhD Project

The UKZN, through the College of Humanities is running the capacity building exercise through a PhD programme targeted at four SADC members. Three of these countries (Botswana, Swaziland and Zimbabwe) share borders with South Africa, and a good number of citizens from these countries go to South African universities for PhD studies (and even some undergraduate programmes). Later in this paper, we provide brief profiles of each of the four countries. The project did not start off as a College of Humanities initiative. It started off as an initiative of the School of Education, the largest School in the College of Humanities. Later, it became clear that prospective students in the PhD programme were interested in Education and other disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The PhD project then widened its scope to include all the six Schools in the College of Humanities: the School of Arts, the School of Applied Human Sciences, the School of Built Environment & Development Studies, the School of Education, the School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics, and the School of Social Sciences. In the process of setting up the PhD programme, it was also realized that some of the prospective postgraduate students were interested in pursuing a Master's degree programme. Whilst the original idea was to provide a PhD programme, it was later realized that a Master's degree programme would serve as a good feeder into PhD programmes. A Master's degree programmes should be considered to be a contribution to the training

of knowledge producers. To this end, a Master's degree (Master's by thesis only) is also offered in addition to the PhD programme. This Master's degree programme is crafted along the same lines as the PhD. Students on the Master's programme are also involved in the cohort model of supervision.

But what motivated the College of Humanities to embark on the PhD programme for some SADC countries? First, the College is mindful of the UKZN strategic plan which calls on Colleges to foster strategic partnerships as part of internationalisation, and 'allow the University to contribute to staff development in other African universities' (University of KwaZulu-Natal 2012: 11). Second, by coming up with the PhD project, the College of Humanities is responding to the SADC protocol on education and training which requires that at least 5 % of the student population in any university in the region should be international students (see SADC 1997). Third, South Africa, as the biggest economy in the SADC region, and endowed with the most developed higher education system in the region, has the capacity and obligation to assist other African countries in capacitating the next generation of knowledge producers/knowledge workers (see also Bolsmann & Miller 2008). One can also see the UKZN initiative as part of the broader transformation of higher education and also a change in the political image of South Africa. During the apartheid days, South Africa's security agents used to attack neighbouring countries, accusing them of harbouring liberation struggle movements. South Africa of the apartheid days was associated with destabilizing independent African states. In sharp contrast, the new and post-apartheid South Africa is one that is expected to promote peace and also serve as a locomotive that can pull other African countries out of poverty and lack of development. In our view, the PhD programme lies in the realm of internationalization, aiming at the consolidation of strategic alliances and the promotion of solidarity and regional integration at SADC level.

Target Countries

The starting point was when the School of Education initiated a South to South PhD collaborative programme with the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius (see Samuel & Mariaye 2014). The current paper is, however, based on what has been done after the creation of the Mauritius initiative. The School of Education, on behalf of the College of Humanities, is working on establishing doctoral

schools in four countries, namely: Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. In actual fact, the doctoral programmes are already in operation in Zimbabwe and Swaziland. The four countries targeted for the doctoral programme share a lot in common with South Africa. First, all the four countries are members of SADC. Second, three of the countries share borders with South Africa, thus they share proximity to South Africa. Third, all the four countries share a common British colonial history. As a result of this colonial history, all the countries belong to the so-called English-speaking African countries (also known as Anglophone countries). As such, students from these countries will not face linguistic challenges whilst pursuing PhD studies with UKZN. The fact that South African higher education uses English as the language for the delivery academic programmes is one of the factors attracting international students to study in South Africa or study by distant mode through a South African higher education institution (Kwaramba 2012). Fourth, all the four countries are landlocked, and also have South Africa as their major trading partner. Fifth, none of the four countries has a higher education system that is more robust than that of South Africa. It is, therefore, a common trend that some citizens of the four countries go to South Africa for postgraduate studies. In actual fact, after the demise of apartheid in 1994, the number of international students enrolling in South African universities has been on the increase, and the majority of them come from the African continent and the SADC region in particular (Bolsmann & Miller 2008; Republic of South Africa 2011; Kwaramba 2012).

Botswana

Botswana recognizes the contribution of higher education towards the transformation of the country into a knowledge based society (Botswana Tertiary Education Council 2006). The country has for a long time had one public university, the University of Botswana (UB). But now a second public university of science and technology has been established. In the teacher education sector, the UB and the colleges of education have been handling the undergraduate and postgraduate studies (Tabulawa & Pansiri 2013). This obviously put a strain on the UB in catering for the human resource development in education and other disciplines, especially in the postgraduate domain. In view of this strain, a second public university (a university of science and technology) has been established. The UB offers some PhD

programmes, but this is not yet fully grown. The postgraduate sector of UB is still young, hence weak in capacity (Bolsmann & Miller 2008). As a result, the majority of Batswana pursue their PhDs outside of the country, and due to geographical proximity, South Africa is one of the favourite choices.

Malawi

The oldest and largest public university in Malawi is the University of Malawi (UNIMA). The university is largely a teaching university and centred on undergraduate studies. The institution has over the years lost some very senior and competent academics. The losses have come through brain drain i.e. a number of academics of Malawian origin fled the country during the leadership of the late President Hastings Kamuzu Banda who ruled Malawi with an iron fist and severely muzzled academic and other freedoms (see Kerr & Mapanje 2002). Other well qualified Malawian academics went to foreign universities for greener pastures to attain better working terms and conditions. Other senior academics have been lost through deaths and retirements. All this has left UNIMA as a university that is in need of senior academics and PhD holders. The lack of adequate numbers of doctorate holders is not confined to UNIMA only. It is a feature of the other public and private universities in Malawi. The need for PhDs is, therefore, very evident. Apart from UNIMA, Malawi has three other public universities.

Swaziland

Currently, Swaziland has one public university, the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) (see Kwaramba 2012). This university was established in 1982.

For a long time, the University of Swaziland was the only university in the country. This resulted in many qualifying students failing to get admitted because of limited space (Mazibuko 2013: 217).

As a result, many Swazis are enrolled in South African higher education institutions and elsewhere. For postgraduate studies, UNISWA is very limited in its offerings, and South Africa is the destination for many who are in search of postgraduate programmes. Now new providers of university education have entered the scene: Limkokwing of Malaysia, Southern

African Nazarene University (SANU) and the Zimbabwe-based Midlands State University and others. The production of postgraduate qualifications, however, continues to be very low. This means that Swaziland heavily relies on foreign universities for postgraduate training (Mazibuko 2013).

The idea of a doctoral school/cohort started off with a discussion between the School of Education and a delegation of government officials (which included a principal of a teacher training college and the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Education). At that point, the Swazi delegation requested assistance and collaboration from the School of Education with regard to the formulation of a new Bachelor of Education programme. Through this programme, the college (which is a currently a diploma-awarding institution) would then become a degree-awarding institution. It was noted that for the college to graduate to this new status, academic staff qualifications would have to be upgraded. It was argued for BA holders, they would have to acquire a masters or even a PhD to be able to offer a credible B.Ed programme. Later, it emerged that it is not only Ngwane College whose staff needed upgrading of qualifications. Other institutions joined the quest for postgraduate training.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe boasts of a number of public and private universities such as the Bindura University of Science Education, University of Zimbabwe, Great Zimbabwe University, Lupane State University, Zimbabwe Open University, Midlands State University, Chinhoyi University of Technology, National University of Science and Technology, and others. There are also colleges and polytechnics (Kwaramba 2012). There is no doubt, therefore, that Zimbabwe has invested significantly in higher education. Zimbabwe has taken the decision that by some date, all university lecturers should be PhD holders. This has tremendously increased the demand for PhDs in Zimbabwe.

Cohort Model of Supervision

The traditional apprentice model (one-on-one master-apprentice model) of PhD supervision has been criticized as being inadequate to produce a more round and competent PhD holder for the modern world. In this model, a student (like an apprentice) learns the skills of research/ knowledge

production and knowledge dissemination from one supervisor (master). In some cases, two supervisors may be assigned to one student. There is now a shift from the apprenticeship model to that of a community of practice. The latter means that PhD training is not offered by just one or two supervisors but by a team of academics drawn from diverse disciplines, and that peers of the PhD student also contribute to the training (Nerad 2012). The cohort model of PhD supervision (see Govender & Dhunpath 2013) falls under this philosophy of PhD training.

Under the cohort model of PhD training arrangement, students will be assigned to individual supervisor(s). Either a student is given one supervisor or more than one member of staff can co-supervise. In addition, students are grouped according to cohorts. A cohort model means that the group will be together for period of three years. Apart from receiving supervision from personal supervisors, the cohort of students meets over weekends (Friday to Sunday). They meet between 4 and 5 weekends per annum. During the cohort meetings, students are taken through seminars on research theory and methodology. Facilitators vary from staff members, visiting scholars to former and current PhD students. There is a team approach. Students receive critique from fellow students and supervising staff. Students are able to revisit and refine their ideas. They have an opportunity receive extra support, in addition to the support provided by their individual supervisors. In no way does the cohort replace the supervisor, and students are advised to use ideas raised by cohort very wisely, through objective reflections with their individual supervisors. The cohort allows students to realize that they are not walking alone on the PhD journey. They are able to compare notes with other students, and even those who have graduated. The cohort meetings provide spaces for students (and supervisors) to celebrate together, cry together, and it can be a very rewarding activity. A Zimbabwean, Munyaradzi, commented that ‘the cohort system is the most convenient way for a host of Zimbabwean people who are eager to attain doctorate degrees’.

A cohort is expected to operate for 3 years. The cohort sessions are arranged as follows. The first year takes care of proposal development. In the second year, the focus switches to data generation whilst the third year focusses on data analysis and writing up of the thesis.

It is not only UKZN staff that will provide PhD supervision. Academic staff from the other participating countries can also co-supervise

provided they qualify. Such staff will have to be affiliated with UKZN through an honorary appointment. This position will allow the non-UKZN staff to supervise PhD students in collaboration with their UKZN counterparts. In this way, academics in the participating countries are given opportunities to gain experience in PhD supervision. It becomes another form of capacity building exercise.

On the other hand, one has to appreciate that the cohort model of supervision is not without its own challenges. For example, Govender and Dhunpath (2013) indicate that the cohort model of PhD supervision is capable of producing both harmony and conflict. Thus, by the end of the day, it is up to the users of the cohort model to ensure that it gives them the best outcomes. It is also important to stress that the cohort model of PhD supervision

supplements the one-to-one master-apprentice supervision with the collective expertise of a group of experienced and novice supervisors and student peers working collaboratively (Govender & Dhunpath 2013: 220).

Advantages, Opportunities and Challenges

There are some advantages, opportunities and challenges that are associated with the PhD programme. The first advantage is that students will not experience the stresses and discomforts of studying away from home. Backhouse (2009: 282) has documented the challenge of studying in a foreign country as follows: 'Those who have left families behind have the added worry about their families that detracts from their work'. By studying at home, students are able to enjoy the support of their families and other social sectors, something that is not easily available when one is studying outside their country. Of course, studying in one's own country does have its own disruptive tendencies. For example, one has to attend to family issues such as weddings, burials, clan meetings and others. Whilst South Africa has far much better higher education facilities than the vast majority of the African countries, some African students are scared of xenophobic tendencies and the high crime rate in South Africa. For such people, pursuing a PhD whilst stationed in one's own country shields them away from the harsh realities of xenophobia and crime. A student from an African country

studying at a South African university had this to narrate as his experience: ‘the only places that I find solace in are my study room at the [university] campus; when I am with my supervisor in his office and when I am in the library’ (Pithouse-Morgan *et al.* 2012: 84). On the other hand, one should also consider what one misses by shying away from pursuing a PhD on South African soil. One is, for example, not able to enjoy direct (face to face) social and intellectual interaction with other students. Whilst some international students in South Africa have been victims of xenophobic and crime, it is a gross exaggeration to think that each and every international student has a sad story to tell.

After the fall of apartheid, South Africa has become the big magnet that is attracting students, scholars, academics and intellectuals from other African countries (Republic of South Africa 2011, Bolsmann & Miller 2008). There is an expectation that students from other African countries will return to their home countries after graduation. ‘However, graduates are tempted to remain in the country and take employment in the local market’ (Bolsmann & Miller 2008: 227). This leads to brain loss on the part of the home country of the foreign worker. When students study in their own countries, chances of them migrating to South Africa are reduced. Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility of anyone trying to migrate to South Africa irrespective of whether they have a South African degree or not.

Another advantage is of a linguistic nature. All the four targeted countries (namely Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe) belong to the so-called English-speaking Africa (Anglophone Africa). As such, English is the common language of the academy shared by South Africa and the targeted countries. This, however, does not mean that English language challenges can be ruled out just because the target students come from the so-called English-speaking countries. Our assumption is that whilst students from the so-called English-speaking countries can face some language challenges as they pursue their postgraduate studies through the English medium, the challenge for students who come from non-English speaking African countries is bound to be more pronounced. It is only natural to expect students from Lusophone and Francophone countries to face more language challenges than their counterparts who come from Anglophone countries. A study conducted at Fort Hare University in South Africa made an investigation into the language challenges faced by Congolese French-speaking students. The study found that the Congolese students had problems

in understanding lectures and also had speaking problems. As such, they needed an English language support programme from the university (Mubembe 2012). It has to be stressed that even with South African students, the language challenge is not absent, especially amongst black South Africans. Language is one of the major hurdles that black South African students face as they try to gain epistemological access in higher education (Boughey 2005). A significant number of black South African students are linguistically underprepared to undertake university education through the medium of English.

There is an opportunity in the form of high level of commitment at institutional leadership level. For example, at one Zimbabwean university, the vice chancellor is very keen to see the programme bear fruits. A Zimbabwean university offered its support to its staff: ‘we have arranged for those who could not pay registration fees to be helped out by the University’, wrote a senior academic. The same enthusiasm was exhibited by higher education leaders in Swaziland and Malawi.

In addition, the PhD programme has received a positive reception. For example, from Botswana, Tshepo wrote: ‘This is a really good programme’. Writing from Malawi, Kondwani noted:

The individual or their institution will be required to meet all the necessary costs. However, note that the costs are minimal as the students will be required to pay tuition fees only and air ticket, no insurance costs as the training will be conducted in Malawi.

Another opportunity is that all is not about the PhD project. There is more beyond the PhD project. UKZN and higher education institutions in the four countries plan to collaborate and co-operate in other academic activities. It is in this regard that a Zimbabwean senior academic, said ‘My VC is keen to see a firm relationship extending beyond the PhD project. He has been inquiring how we are taking the relationship to higher level’. Indeed, beyond the PhD project, UKZN is working with institutions in the four countries to put in place memoranda of understanding (MoU). As part of internationalisation, UKZN provides for ‘collaborative ventures such as co-supervision of students, co-authorship of papers and joint applications for research grants’ (University of KwaZulu-Natal 2012: 10). In addition, there are also possibilities for other mutually beneficially activities such hosting of

academic staff on sabbatical and appointment of external examiners.

There are some challenges. One of them is the very advantage that the PhD student are physically located in their own home countries. The home is supposed to be a place of comfort, in contrast to the discomforts of studying in a foreign country. However, the home ground advantage can also turn into a challenge and/or disadvantage. For example, being in one's own home country means that one is in direct confrontation with the day to day demands of the family (and the extended family) life. For example, one has to attend to family events and issues such as weddings, bereavements and others. Such events can consume time and energy and shift away one's attention from the PhD. The work environment can also be so demanding that one may not have enough time to devote to the PhD study.

The lack of adequately equipped academic libraries is a challenge for students studying for a PhD outside South Africa. However, students on the UKZN PhD programme now have electronic access to the UKZN libraries. This means that as long as a student has good internet connections, they can access online library resources. One has to acknowledge that sometimes, depending on a particular country's situation, poor connectivity can sometimes frustrate students' efforts to remotely access the UKZN library. Going forward, the use of technology to support the PhD programme will have to be enhanced. The use of email, skype, video conferencing and other technologies will have to be brought in in order to support the students.

Summary

In this paper, we have discussed a PhD programme which the College of Humanities at UKZN is bringing to some SADC member states. We have provided the motivation for the project. We have also provided brief descriptions of the higher education situation in each of the four target countries. The PhD programme runs on the basis of the cohort model of supervision, and we have explained how the model works. Like any other undertaking, there are some advantages, opportunities and challenges that are linked to the PhD programme, and we have outlined them.

Conclusion

The training of knowledge producers, which is in line with the SADC proto-

col on education and training (SADC 1997), is a contribution towards regional integration. The initiative is specifically tailored (in terms of its venue of delivery, mode of delivery and model of PhD supervision) to be sensitive to African realities. Through this PhD programme, students will not have to be resident in South Africa, hence no need for student visas, and no need for food and accommodation costs that could have been incurred in South Africa. In addition, the students, by remaining in their countries, minimize chances of being seduced to migrate and work in South Africa, hence minimizing brain drain. We are of the view that this South to South (or Africa to Africa) initiative will contribute significantly to the education and capacitation of knowledge producers in the context of knowledge-based economies. As Africa is looking for opportunities to increase the number of PhD holders, the temptation to look up to the West for training opportunities can be real and strong. But this is one area in which an African solution should be brought in to solve an African problem through tasking African universities to train African PhD holders right on the African soil. It is in this way that UKZN is contributing to the reduction of dependence on the West as a training ground for African knowledge producers. This is also an act of intellectual liberation.

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When Black Consciousness Walks Arm-in-arm with Critical Race Theory to Meet Racism and White Consciousness in the Humanities¹

Rozena Maart

Abstract

This essay situates *the Black woman subject* as producer of knowledge by locating her within the very site – the university – where knowledge production takes place. Raised and educated on the philosophy of Black Consciousness, which is key to how she enacts her knowledge, constructs it, and as a consequence interrogates the site upon and within which she is expected to produce it, she takes the reader on a tour-de-Azania-a-la-Black Consciousness excursion by constructing the absence of the knowledge of White consciousness at the backdrop of the university's [UKZN] policy on transformation guided by its Transformation Charter. In doing so she situates the White woman and the White man as beneficiaries of apartheid, which draws upon racism as its key tenet, and how through the body, the flesh, agency, acts of racism are perpetuated, reinforced, and reproduced within the university much like outside of it, thus maintaining the very system of apartheid most White academics claim to be against, and better still, assert no longer exists. Invoking Tunisian scholar Albert Memmi's text, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, she draws analogies between the agent of racism and the agent of colonization and in the process revealing the salient features of the 'the colonizer who accepts' begging the question, where is 'the colonizer who refuses'?

¹ The full title of this article is, 'The Absence of the Knowledge of White Consciousness in Contemporary Discourses on Transformation: When Black Consciousness Walks Arm-in-arm with Critical Race Theory to Meet Racism and White Consciousness in the Humanities'.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, Black Consciousness, Derridean deconstruction, Black existentialism, African Studies, Gender Studies

Autobiography, biography and narrative have been underestimated in philosophical discourse yet given a particular kind of presence in literary criticism; in psychoanalysis without autobiography there is no unconscious to uncover and as such no mechanisms to account for what holds it together ... without autobiography psychoanalysis would not have its reason. We come to our workplace with biographies – with histories of oppression rooted within the history of colonialism and apartheid; to survive it as the oppressed, Black Consciousness as a movement was necessary, urgent, and instrumental to our thinking.

Hegel insists on the subjective moment, why else would self-consciousness precede consciousness of [the thing], Being or surrounding. Self-consciousness is thus the route, the stepping-stone to reason, and the latter – reason – the passage to absolute knowledge (cf. Hegel [1807]/ 1967/ 2014). Hegel's interpretation of the Kantian analysis of experience asserts quite emphatically that consciousness of self is 'the basis of the consciousness of anything whatsoever' (Hegel 1967: 217). However, as the history of Philosophy has revealed, consciousness of self, as racialised subject, has truanted outside of the text, written as absent, especially in view of the fact that philosophers like Hegel, Hume and Locke, to name a few, wrote on or commented on slavery yet did not situate their agency within the very system that they benefitted from. But what then is the relationship between consciousness of self and consciousness of the *Other* as we unearth power relations within the university setting that has a history of being raced?

Racism in the form of the trace, the hint, the gesture, the murmur – are all acts of atrocities. Non-verbal and emanating from within the body of the offending agent, are often present in the first encounter – gut wrenching, pathological, debilitating, potentially psychologically damaging – especially when White professors become acquainted with Black Consciousness scholars. One cannot treat the trace as an act which cannot be written because it is composed of physical and visual gestures more than verbal ones; the trace is an act which speaks directly to the conditions under which the Black consciousness woman professor works and it is from this state of flagrant racism disguised as hostility that she is expected to work without even the

slightest reference to how the traces of racism envelope her as she situates herself as a scholar – a producer of knowledge within humanities, working between and among literary fiction, political philosophy, critical race theory and psychoanalysis.

To trace the trace, to trace the contemporary trajectory of a historical trajectory, requires that both the subject as raced, and the unnamed, unclaimed agents of racism confront the inevitable – that the Black woman subject, schooled in Black Consciousness, is not going to participate in the process of transformation as a silent alibi – she will reveal the unspoken every-day enactment of racism in all areas of her production. Why should the product – knowledge – not reveal the climate, the conditions of its production, she declares?

In this paper I situate agency as key to the formation of knowledge production; I situate my agency as a Black woman professor schooled in Black Consciousness and determined to write Critical Race Theory from the very existential practice of racism itself, and I situate the agency of the beneficiaries of racism who do not situate themselves as agents of racism but who in fact consider themselves as non-racial. I use *her* and *his* interchangeably because both White women and White men are beneficiaries of racism and apartheid and both uphold it in very similar ways. My examination of my location – where I work as a producer of knowledge, how I work as a producer of knowledge, and the conditions under which such production take place, are problematized by examining what constitutes knowledge. As such, my examination of the theme within this broader collection is to unpack the terms employed to frame this discussion and to hold them accountable to the current focus on social transformation in universities across South Africa more generally, my own location at the university of Kwa Zulu Natal, from which I draw my examples more precisely, by simultaneously locating how I study race, gender and identity – key areas in the study of culture albeit the culture of society within which I live and the culture within which the Transformation Charter of my university is immersed. Throughout this paper, I employ critical race theory that draws upon the historical whilst unpacking the contemporary components of social relations in an attempt to examine a society that transitioned from apartheid to democracy for the first time in its history after three hundred and forty-two years of colonialism, and the microcosm of the university, which is but merely a slice from Marie Antoinette's cake.

The Black woman subject – whose consciousness is grounded in Black Consciousness – as scholar, writer, thinker, researcher, producer, is a subject that cannot be retransformed; she has already transformed under the apartheid regime. She is the Black woman subject who has been conscientized and politicized, guided by Black Consciousness, in order to take up her rightful place in a democratic society where she anticipated she would utilize all of her education and training to be an active participant in the production of knowledge. Who then is to transform?

The discipline of humanities requires a particular kind of understanding of what one studies within its framework and therefore what one produces in order for others to study. For the most part humanities is composed of relatively large schools that represent a grouping of departments, each with overlapping areas of interest but with the distinct focus on the study of human culture using critical methods as opposed to empirical methods, as is the case with the natural sciences. As such, depending on their variation, one can expect to study social relationships, human culture, arts, development and languages by employing methods that are primarily critical or speculative, and have a historical element, distinguishable from the more empirical approaches of the natural sciences.

Transformation Charters and/or Transformation documents are now fully entrenched in most South African universities; they are meant to provide a vision of a future, post 1994, and guide staff and students towards a process where each recognize the need to work together from the knowledge of a legacy of racism under apartheid, known to both the beneficiaries of racism and the recipients of racism. As such, the point of departure that the Transformation Charter at UKZN makes clear is one that openly declares the history of apartheid (cf. <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ukzn-transformation-charter>). However, I contend that whilst one can legislate for, and against, almost anything and everything one cannot legislate attitude! There is no reference made to how to address racist attitudes within the university context in any of the Transformation Charters adopted by South African universities, certainly not the UKZN one, nor any assertion as to how previous racist attitudes, despite the newly established context of democracy, still has the ability to stifle, thwart, alienate, humiliate and undermine Black professors to the point of exclusion and silence. UKZN, like most South African universities, retained its White academic staff; thus whilst apartheid got the boot, they did not. The history of apartheid itself speaks loudly and clearly to the systemic,

structural and institutionalized forms of racism that was alive and well within the university system; the question is, and remains, since the context of apartheid provided the breeding ground and the battlefield for racism to be enacted on every possible level, including within the university context, how by the sheer event of one person one vote will the university setting offer Black professors the possibility to work and produce knowledge, let alone thrive, at the backdrop of the experience of apartheid? As such, how will the production of knowledge – Black Consciousness knowledge – take place within conditions that has previously stifled its emergence? And, what will this knowledge look like?

It is generally understood that knowledge – ideas, verbal and in writing, already in circulation, accepted among peers who are engaged with the said idea, theme, concept – is treated as such, noted as intellectual property by the owner because its consumers recognize it as such. Knowledge production, like any form of production, requires a critique of the political economy out of which the said production takes place; the production of knowledge cannot be separated from the production of a product under capitalism, and Steve Biko would argue, *racial capitalism*² as per his analysis of Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Knowledge is an intellectual product; knowledge is produced by the workings of the mind. It is the condition of that mind – how it operates, the composure and history of its functionality and *the conditions* under which the mind labours that determines the nature of its production, and as such the product that is produced. The production of knowledge is a process whereby the labour of intellect is used to produce a product.

The production of knowledge, like all forms of production within the broader system of racial capitalism demands that we question the process. Who are the producers? Under which circumstances and/or under which historical conditions does production take place? These are crucial questions as one examines the role of the colonizer past and present when that colonizer

² Walter Rodney, in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, makes the argument that race was crucial to the development of capitalism for Europe; that it was the racialization of the African, the depiction of Africans as savages, that led to the deliberate exploitation of Africa by the Europeans. Biko uses a similar argument to critique the development of capitalism in South Africa, calling its development, racial capitalism.

is your colleague, the beneficiary of the very system of racism you are examining and that she claims to be against, alongside whom you work to produce knowledge within the humanities, where she remains the benefactor despite the newly democratic South Africa. Many a time, scandalized by the moral rather than the political implications with which it testifies to their compliance, White women colonizers, despite their identity as feminists, often display great verbal and physical gestures to indicate their disapproval of racism, yet how often is their public display of indignation accompanied by a programme of political action that also allows for self-interrogation and self-examination of their White privilege?³ Our university environment, set within the geographical region of Kwa Zulu, formerly known as Natal, described as ‘the last outpost of the British Empire’, is a breeding ground for this sort of moral display for English and Afrikaans speaking White South Africans alike. (cf. www.linscoot.co.za/outpost.asp).

For the present what needs to be noted, given the ways in which apartheid operated, is that White professors were taught by White professors before them; Black professors were also taught by White professors for the most part unless you were fortunate to be a student during the 1980s at the University of the Western Cape [UWC] (named by the Afrikaner police during the turbulent 1980s as ‘University of the wild Coloureds’, where I took my undergraduate degree), Fort Hare, and a few noted universities who employed a handful of Black scholars to teach and not only mark papers – those the apartheid regime ensured were educated toward servitude but rose above it. White South African scholars currently employed at universities in South Africa, as has regularly been verified despite the discomfort upon asking the question, have not been taught by Black professors and they treat the matter as ‘normal’ without even the slightest concern for what it says

³ I restate the question asked by Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* when he addresses colonizers who in their verbal protestations seem to be scandalized by the moral rather than the political implications of racism and who have no political plan of action for its dismantling. I ask the question of White feminist Philosophers in particular who work in the field of ethics, and who regularly claim their place at the table for anti-racist politics. See also Peggy McIntosh, ‘White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack’. Cf. www.deanza.edu/faculty/lewisjulie/White%20Priviledge%20Unpacking%20the%20Invisible%20Knapsack.pdf.

about the ways in which Africans and African scholarship is kept out of university institutions in South Africa. The most recent resurgence of articles in *City Press*, ‘Why are white professors silent on lack of black scholars?’ by Neo Lekgotla Iaga Ramoupi in November 2014, is certainly not the first to address questions of the absence of Black and African scholarship and the low numbers of South African scholars within Higher Education, especially those who are known for their Black Consciousness scholarship.

African scholarship does not in any way suggest that as scholars who work within the Southern African context we abandon or neglect the strengths of any scholarship, however mainstream, that we have been taught and upon which sound theoretical frameworks have been built;

African scholarship is the recognition that Africa is a continent composed of fifty-four countries whose histories have not been told in ways that convey its strengths but whose histories have been interpreted by its colonizers for the purpose of ensuring that its people are invisibilised or looked at as appendages of the very history that has shaped their lives.

African scholarship is the recognition that scholars and researchers of the continent need to work towards uncovering and unearthing the unnamed histories that lie buried in unmarked graves, in sand and earth, at the bottom of the transatlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans and envisioning a way forward that recognizes the past and build upon its unwritten heritage to fruitfully and purposefully educate the younger generation towards intellectual prosperity;

African scholarship recognizes that it cannot fruitfully develop in isolation nor can it ever prosper without the full and whole-hearted recognition that all forms of scholarship are connected and need to borrow from one another in order to stand testimony to their future place in history; African scholarship is an act of courage that recognizes that African scholars produce at the backdrop of the colonial experience of Black existence.

Whilst I am not in any way suggesting that Black scholars are by virtue of our racialised identities automatically drawn to African Philosophy, African Psychology or African Literature I am merely pointing out that the production of knowledge is produced from the site of usurpation of our ancestral land – the location, communally, physically, geographically and psychologically, out of which the knowledge emerges as knowledge, where the seeds are planted communally, where they grow from interaction with our families, our friends, our peers, wherein lie the particularities of our complex and extensive lived experience. And herein lie some of the falsehoods of

knowledge production because reason, a central ingredient in the act of thinking, demands that we have logic and that we are rational. I am fully aware that this is a contested debate in philosophy⁴. Charles Taylor, taking his cue from Martin Heidegger, has argued that reason should always have the faculty of disclosure – in other words, the revelation of how we make sense of everyday life.

Geography – and by this I mean place, space and location – and the production of knowledge as the mapping of the geography of reason⁵, are key factors in the maintenance of White Mythology⁶. Jacques Derrida is noted as a French Philosopher by European thinkers because they are determined to situate him outside of Algeria, where he was born. The last time I checked Algeria was still in North Africa, not the south of France. Apart from my personal, scholarly relationship with Derrida which spanned just over ten years, his autobiographical book written with Geoffrey Bennington, notes with painstaking detail how he was kicked out of school in 1942, at age 12, when Vichy declared that Jewish children could only constitute 3.7% of the French Algerian student population⁷. In the same text he offers an account of his mental collapse and hospitalization upon setting foot on the land of the Empire – in Paris upon entering the university system for the first time, which shows precisely, by his own admission, these experiences were drawn into how he developed his approach to examining, in a genealogical way, the history of the subject. Derrida has written at length of the colonization of

⁴ I refer here to the question of reason and unreason.

⁵ For further examination of the geography of reason, see Mignolo (2009); Dussel (1996); Gordon (2011). All three scholars make a similar argument of Europe claiming to be the centre of thinking, and European Philosophy claiming to be the conscience of logic – that it is within European Philosophy where we come to know the meaning of reason.

⁶ In ‘White Mythology (1973)’, Jacques Derrida argues that Metaphysics is created through the establishment of White Mythology – a creation that is due to ‘the white man takes ...’ a taking, an appropriation of Indo-European Philosophy to create the myth of White presence.

⁷ See book titled *Jacques Derrida* (1993) by Geoffrey Bennington wherein this particular event of Derrida’s expulsion from school as per the Vichy government’s demand to remove 96.2% of Jewish children from schools is chronicled.

Algeria by the French regime, and how he was not immune to anti-Semitism – both anti-Arab and anti-Jewish. It is with this scrutiny of the history of the subject and how the subject is situated historically that Derrida undertook to examine philosophical texts, reading them through other texts and holding them accountable to a process that philosophy later began to call deconstruction just as they pronounced his name alongside it because it was in his work – how he tackled it, where he examined the hidden, the forbidden and the repressed – that his experience of Being lie and with it, how he revealed the salient features of White Mythology posing as philosophy.

Racist normativity is nothing new – it is, in the new democratic South Africa, an off-the-cuff shrug of the shoulders immediately followed by, if you're a White liberal, the odd reference to the new in-vogue reading of Fanon, popularized by British academic Homi Bhabha, whose writing style has been hailed by White Liberals as superior (the Obama reference: a good writer, a good speaker, for a person of colour) due to his very obvious reliance upon English metaphors, his upbringing and schooling in the UK, and his insistence at maintaining a particular kind of discourse borrowed from Victorianism where the Black, African and colonized remain, as per the intention he argues but perpetuates – oversexed, mad or invisible⁸. So whilst

⁸ I refer here to the English texts upon which Homi Bhabha relies in order to stage his postcolonial criticism. His constant references to Shakespeare and the English classics, and the manner in which he asserts their significance, suggest that these examples are compulsory reading and only with solid knowledge of them can one effectively develop a critique of postcoloniality. Surely, he can look at the vast acts of atrocities committed in the name of Empire the British carried out in order to embellish his texts! Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues quite persuasively that to decolonize the mind one has to interrogate one's use of the colonizer's language. I am not arguing against the use of the colonizer's language here since I believe one can also make it one's own and inject it with one's one history of speaking it, I am rather critiquing the fact that there are many aspects of English coloniality (in the case of Bhabha) that one can point to in order to develop such a critique. It seems to me that entrenching Englishness is more evident when one relies upon it in order to further one's critique of postcoloniality itself defeats the purpose. Audre Lorde's infamous phrase, 'The Master's tools cannot dismantle the Master's House', rings with clarity in this paper.

Bhabha's work on Fanon brought him international notoriety the manner in which he has conducted his critique has concerned itself with ensuring that Englishness, and more poignantly Englishness steeped in Empire, is in charge of the critique of coloniality and postcoloniality. Race soon becomes absent within the critique – expelled from the text, truanting outside of it, ghettoized, tamponised, because this particular British postcolonial scholar put it there.

Argentinian Marxist feminist, Martha Gimenez, based in Boulder, Colorado, notes in *Marxism and Class, Gender and Race: Rethinking the Trilogy*:

We are, in Marx's terms, 'an ensemble of social relations' and we live our lives at the core of the intersection of a number of unequal social relations based on hierarchically interrelated structures which, together, define the historical specificity of the capitalist modes of production and reproduction and underlay their observable manifestations⁹.

In *The Racial Contract*, Jamaican-born professor Charles Mills – fellow colleague at the Caribbean Philosophy Association – argues that racism is at the core of the social contract and is not the misguided, unintended actions of illogical, oftentimes well-meaning White men, as many of us would like to believe (cf. Mills 1999). Racism, he argues is intentional and deliberate and an integral characteristic of the social contract – one he emphasizes persists to this very day. The social contract was popularized by philosophers like Rousseau, Locke, Hobbes and Kant. In *Of The Social Contract, Or the Principles of Political Right*, (1762) Rousseau argues that the best way to set up a political community in view of the difficulties commercial society encountered some of which he identifies in *Discourse on Inequality* (1754) is to overthrow monarchies and the hierarchies that they generate. *Of The Social Contract, Or the Principles of Political Right* is cited as being instrumental to revolutions in France and many parts of Europe as it argued against the divine right to rule, which monarchs believed they had. *Of The Social Contract, Or the Principles of Political Right* is also the text that influenced Thomas Jefferson when he wrote the *Declaration of Independence* (1776)

⁹ Martha Gimenez, *Race, Gender & Class* 8,2.:23-33.

and which prompted his election as the third president of the United States (1801-1809). Much like the beneficiaries of apartheid, despite his grandiose gestures – mainly verbal protestations without the possibility of placing his role as a beneficiary of the very system he criticized and sought to fight against at the center of his critique, Jefferson owned enslaved Africans until his death.

Transformation is not Negotiable

The now late, former President, Nelson Mandela's presidency was one that tried to actualize the vision offered by the Freedom Charter almost immediately upon taking office. This is evidenced by the Notice of 196 of 1995, 'The White Paper on Education and Training', where Prof. S M E Bengu began the process of addressing transformation vis-a-vie the Freedom Charter as early as March 15th, 1995 at a meeting held in Cape Town. The masses had waited long enough, and hence the first three years saw an abundance of ideas along with firm plans to put them into place, taken up by like-minded ministers all keeping their fingers on the pulse of the struggle for liberation still so fresh from the hands that voted for democracy. The Department of Education's White Paper 3, July 1997, notes in the forward, written by Prof. S M E Bengu, Minister of Education:

The transformation of the higher education system to reflect the changes that are taking place in our society and to strengthen the values and practices of our new democracy is, as I have stated on many occasions, not negotiable. The higher education system must be transformed to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs and to respond to new realities and opportunities. The White Paper outlines the framework for change, that is, the higher education system must be planned, governed and funded as a single national co-ordinated system. This will enable us to overcome the fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency which are the legacy of the past, and create a learning society which releases the creative and intellectual energies of all of our people towards meeting the goals of reconstruction and

development. I have no doubt that the journey is not going to be easy¹⁰.

What interests me, not only the passage I quote here, is the general tone with which the entire document was written and the language, which conveys a Marxist analysis, injected with the kind of critique of the materiality of race Robert Mangoliso Sobukwe, and Stephen Bantu Biko were known for (Biko 1978). There is a clear understanding of how social relations are transformed when the conditions for social existence is transformed, where creative and intellectual energies are released of ‘all of our people’. Dr. Bengu, at the end of the sentence, acknowledges: ‘I have no doubt that the journey is not going to be easy’. There is no plan of action attached nor a step-by-step process of how one dismantles the legacies of racism deeply entrenched within its agents nor was I expecting there to be. As such, what I have encountered in pursuing the process of transformation within my work environment is resistance to my expression of Being, and resistance in recognizing that the identities previously known to the agent of apartheid, is one he created alongside the system of White domination, which supported it and which supported him.

The Black Subject, the White Discipline

Gaining knowledge by direct or indirect means through observed phenomena – this is what is described as empirical research (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empirical_research). Yet, how does one conduct empirical research when your Black feminized identity is drawn into the very terrain where teaching, learning and research is conducted – within the university setting when neither you nor your colleagues are the subject of the research but where your interaction with them leaves you with little else but the determination to write about the very experience of racism you had just encountered, at their hands, on a topic you are working on ... often times, so too are they? How does one then write papers, produce research in the humanities as a feminist

¹⁰ See, ‘General Notice, Notice 1196 OF 1997, Education White Paper 3. A Programme For the Transformation of Higher Education’, Department of Education, Pretoria, 24 July 1997.

Philosopher and critical race theorist, when your attentions are always drawn away – from your formal research work into the setting where you work, where you are racialized and/ or where your racialization continues from the systemic, to the structural, to the institutionalised? In responding to this question, I take my queue from existential Philosophers – colleagues with whom I have been in attendance at the Collegium of Black Women in Philosophy [CBWP] – Kirstie Dotson and Donna-Dale Marcano, and Caribbean Philosophy Association members Lewis Gordon and Charles Mills, all of whom argue that the materiality of race places the Black professor in a position to account for her lived experiences within the very environment where she constructs existential Philosophy, and I would add where she writes on critical race theory¹¹. They all seem to agree – that the materiality of race allows the Black professor to situate herself as raced, and it is from that position that existentialism has to take its queue: from the acknowledgment of the politicization of presence, in the flesh, of the Black woman whose very existence offers existential Philosophy its lack. In this vein, I wish to draw attention to the ways in which Black presence, in the flesh – as teacher, professor, researcher, scholar – when accounted for within empirical research, is either treated with suspicion or as too much. In doing so, let me momentarily draw attention to the fact that many witnesses to the German holocaust, people who experienced the forced removal by the Nazis from the cities to the concentration camps, have written and published extensively within the humanities; some are scholars, many are not. There has never been any question about the validity of their experience and/or that the humanities is not enriched because of it. Rwanda, least we forget, was a territory assigned to Germany at the Berlin conference in 1884. Germany wanted the region but it was also claimed by Leopold II from the Belgian Congo, and thus, the conflict to own the natives and divide them accordingly began one hundred and ten years prior. The Rwandan genocide took place for approximately 100 days between April and July on 1994 – 20 years ago. A few years ago I met a young woman who lived through the process who had taken cover with her mother in a cave in a wooded area and had seen more dead bodies than she cared to remember. In writing a paper for submission on

¹¹ For an argument on the materiality of race see Charles Mills', *The Racial Contract*. See also the work of Donna-Dale Marcano (2012); Dotson 2014; and Gordon (2000).

the Rwandan genocide she was told to reference German scholars, the crème-de-la-crème of genocide studies, who had written on this – those who were not hunted down to be murdered nor witness to the event – and that she could not write of her first-hand experience because she was subjective. Her and I shared notes on this phenomena – that Black people are more often than not the subjects of racist and other inhuman atrocities and yet the protocol of research papers within the humanities, even in Black universities because we have inherited it from our predecessors who studied us and who continue to study us, suggests that somehow race and racism has to be studied under tightly managed research procedures devised and developed when we were the colonized. What Black people experience in a racist world is what is known as experience (I have also heard the word perception offered up as a substitute), and what White scholars do is theorize, produce knowledge, because they are appropriately detached. Gayatri Spivak’s essay ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ rings very loudly here. Spivak examines the power dynamics of race, class and gender involved in the banning of sati in India. Spivak notes that all we hear about sati are accounts from British colonizers or Hindu leaders of how oppressed women set fire to themselves, but we never hear from the sati-performing women themselves. This lack of an account by the women themselves leads Spivak to reflect on whether the subaltern can ever speak? Spivak (1998) and in particular the group who started subaltern studies, use the term to describe the social group who is socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. In the case of South Africa, the Black population of South Africa, I use the term *Black* as employed by Steve Biko in *I Write What I Like*, when writing on the divide and conquer tactics of the apartheid regime in its system of classification. Biko insists that it means all of us who are not settler colonials¹².

The Black Researcher and the White Space: Social Transformation and Resistance

Definitions of social transformation vary; whilst some focus on the process by which an individual alters the ascribed social-status inherited from parents

¹² See Biko’s use of the term Black as in *I Write What I Like*.

into a socially achieved status for themselves others refer to large-scale social change, such as in cultural reform or transformation, with the emphasis on social, economic, political and material. The first occurs within the individual, and as such the agency of the individual; the latter within the social system, which in turn also infringes on the individual and demands that the individual alters the ways in which she socially situates and locates herself, at each occasion, because of the conditions of her sociality has been altered, she has to make the adjustment and orchestrate her social performance to suit the new rule, regulation and or law (See document titled: *Stellenbosch University, Institutional Intent and Strategy, 2013-2018*; see also Jonathan Jansen's *Skin Apart: On the Complexities of Institutional Transformation*, University of the Free State , July 2012). My concern in this discussion is on the individual agent of White domination and how through her agency she recycles and reinvents her racism rather than refuse it under the conditions social transformation requires.

I am often asked whether there is a difference between the White man who is aware of his racist heritage, had joined the ANC back in the day, went on a few notable marches, became a leader among his White peers, expected Black people to give him the same consideration his peers gave him for being so special because he wrote about racist events then went home to his segregated White neighbourhood at night and received his segregated salary each month, allowed his maid who still used the outside toilet to call him by his name, took his children from his maid's bed at night because it is where they fell asleep while his wife, the marxist-feminist went to university to do her Phd and eventually wrote books called *Madams and Madams*¹³ while he continues to tell emerging Black scholars how to think about race, what critical race theory is, how to go about understanding post-apartheid South Africa, and the White man who is aware of the country's history, cannot be bothered to even give it a second thought, greets you in the corridor because you happen to be there, even opens the door for you, has not transformed his language, still uses the term 'lady' and not 'woman', and who attends events on race and gender as though it is a research meeting like any other? Needless to say, I await the answer to those questions myself –

¹³ The fictitious title is a play on Jacklyn Cock's *Maids and Madams*. In the introduction Ms Cock thanks her domestic workers for taking care of her children while she studied towards her Phd.

with baited breath. The descriptions above do not fit any one person they fit several with whom I share the same scholarly space in humanities. But why stop here? Let me return to the description of the former not the latter: among them there is the ardent leader of the pack – the White ‘leftie’ who expects that homage be paid to him, the White woman who is his wife or partner who says that she works from a non-racial framework, referencing the Freedom Charter at every opportunity she can, and tells you how oppressed you are just in case you have risen above your station before your time because she is not ready for you – she has not adjusted to the imposition of your Blackness; the ‘leftie’ who thinks that racism is about other people, not him, those who have never done work on race – White men who are less fortunate because they were educated at the low ranking Afrikaans universities where the poverty of language does not allow them to elevate their ignorance to the level occupied by those whose high-brow articulations, unlike their transparent intentions that are so well composed Wagner would blush, that the act of racism is as far away from their noses least it smell of the rotteness that it is. Then there is the aging ‘leftie’ tempered by age and of late insufficient White privilege who is angered by the reality that Freedom's children – our young Black students – do not recognize him as someone significant enough to warrant the kind of regard they offer the memory of Chris Hani or the manner in which their energetic youthful Black strides would come to an immediate halt if Winnie Mandela walked through the door. They walk past him without the slightest recognition of the person he wishes to be remembered as – that he was once master of the academy, and they unchaining from their histories of enslavement he benefitted from, why else would he expect any recognition at all? But let me be more precise: the everyday enactment of racism within the university institution has no boundaries and it does not end here.

Let me take you on a tour-de-working-in-humanities at UKZN. In the past three years I have worked in two buildings. Let’s begin with the moment you walk up the stairs into Memorial Tower building. Upon entering it, there is a marble wall of the names of White men who fought in the Second World War, listed on both pillars, least we forget. Memory – as the recollection of war, violence, conquer, empire, ownership of the land, and ownership of history – is therefore important as you enter this main building of the university. Like all apartheid memory, we either have days that we are expected to celebrate with our colonizers – as in Jan Van Riebeeck day (there

are several, this is merely one example) where the colonizer usurps your land, kills and murders your people, colonizes you and then gives you the day off to celebrate your demise with him! At Memorial Tower building staff and students enter the building under this physical structure – you enter it under the arch, under the banner of this measure of importance of violence and war for your land, and with the visibility of a list of these colonizers names engraved on each of the pillars at your side.

Then there is the place where I currently work on another side of the Campus – there, upon my arrival, on the White wall, in the corridor, my eyes caught a glimpse of two framed posters, the first one with the caption, ‘Bly Blank my Volk, Stem HNP’ [translation: Stay White My People, Vote HNP (Reconstituted National Party – the far right)]. Right Beside it was a framed poster of White men on horseback in attendance at an Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging [AWB] rally, the brother organization of the Ku Klux Klan. The presence of it took my breath away! I was stunned. I looked around and none of the White staff seemed the least bit concerned that I was even put out let alone horrified that I was to enter an environment where the emblems of White Supremacy were so forceful. When I recounted the event to my South African colleagues they were shocked and horrified, my American and Canadian colleagues found it almost impossible to believe (after all, I am an award winning fiction writer). My UKZN colleagues have tried to find another explanation as to why the posters were on the wall as they found it difficult to believe that they were there in the first place! The point of departure for their outright refusal to believe that the posters hung there in the first place stems directly from the fact that the space within which I work is meant to be one where race and gender are the two main focus areas. This is the institution of learning where we expect 47,000 students to prosper and frequent at some stage during the year, and the site from which we expect teaching, learning and research to take place. As a Black woman, this is the location from which I am meant to sow the seeds of productive labour where its product, knowledge, is packaged, valued, ready for dissemination, and circulated among students I am meant to mentor, guide, supervise and further the aims of African scholarship with. How can such an environment, fraught with liberties taken by White men and White women as decision makers of the present and the future, ever be conducive to effective knowledge production?

In my immediate scholarly space there is the White woman who

assumes her rightful place among the Black masses, doing community work in Black communities, writing about it, acquiring a doctoral degree in the process whilst refusing to situate her White identity because, in her own words, ‘why does it matter? Why do I have to say it?’ It is unthinkable that whilst she identifies Black people as Black she does not identify herself as White, because by virtue of her upbringing and unclaimed racialised identity she has been endowed with the ability to name her reality and not have it named for her – certainly not by the oppressed on whose behalf she speaks, gleefully. This is the woman who was schooled on the principles of the ANC and who speaks of herself in ways as though her racialised identity is non-existent, it never happened – it is Black people who have been racialised under apartheid, and therefore, in an attempt at working towards a non-racial society (her choice of words which she eagerly quotes from the Freedom Charter) she will proceed to carry out her project of liberating the Black masses who cannot possibly liberate ourselves because we have been oppressed. She is aware that I situate myself as a Black woman, born in the slave quarter of District Six at the Cape and apparently it makes her uncomfortable that I say it! She, accordingly, has told me, that she ‘does not find it necessary anymore. We are not living in the era of classification any longer. I don’t see how it is relevant anymore’. A few months after this exchange, we found ourselves talking about research and publications and again she reiterated, ‘I don’t see how I had been racialised by others playing a role in how I conduct my research’. I refer to her as *beneficiary number one* in this paper.

Then, there is the White woman who is oblivious to the fact that inequality and racism still exists in South Africa twenty years after the first democratic elections and frowns upon hearing that Black students ask questions about White presence within particular university spaces, looking completely puzzled as one explains that Black students have these concerns and do not feel comfortable around her because it is she who calls it ‘her space’. In response me putting forward their concerns she responds: ‘I don’t understand why’, she says. ‘Really? They are asking questions about race? Why?’ she says all at once amid her stammers. ‘Why would they say that?’ she continued. It is impossible for her to conceive that her White presence, along with several others in turn form an overwhelming majority, is questioned by students not only because each time a Black student enters the space she previously had the privilege of keeping White, she runs to lock her door and appears not the slightest bothered that we have

observed her act of White flight. When a potential funder visited, I thought it appropriate to invite some of our students. The funder asked why there were so many White women as staff members and I had no choice but to report on his question at our staff meeting. Once again, she sat cross-legged and awkward, stammered through her response, frowned and said: ‘why would he ask that? I don’t understand? I don’t know what to say ... that’s very strange’, she finally said. Let it be said that each and every time I have raised the issue of racism within the workplace with this White woman she has responded with silence – cold staring, cutting, silence. When she has been witness to me delivering papers wherein I clearly stated that my analysis is informed by Black Consciousness, she frowns, then later offers some response about how she did not understand the need to racialise the way that we work in the academy. On a recent occasion, a research event was advertised that required staff and students to attend; let me add that neither I nor the students who generally frequent this space thought that many people would attend as the topic under discussion is not something we identify as particularly pressing to the intersections of race, class, gender and identity. Be this as it may: one Black man showed up and there was no question that he could possibly be a student? The White woman in question approached him, kept her head back slightly sloping to the side, the posture appropriate to the proportion of condescension she released, and asked him, with indignant righteousness, ‘may I help you?’ In this paper I refer to her as *beneficiary number two*. The scenes of these crimes need further unpacking; it is to this unpacking that I now turn.

Unpacking the Absence of the Knowledge of White Consciousness Amid Social Transformation within the Humanities

When I began to do scholarly work as a feminist in my early twenties, almost thirty years ago now, it was often to the surprise of White women peers with whom I took my Masters degree at the University of York in the UK all of whom identified as feminists, that Black Consciousness as philosophy, and a consciousness of politics would be so central to my understanding of how systems of domination operate and are maintained and reproduced. During my twenties I became less interested in the study of racism as act, derivative

of the structural, systemic and institutional components and more interested in Biko's insistence, and use of the term *White conscience* to describe the actions of White Liberals in South Africa who claimed an awareness of race but who were not prepared to give up their White privilege; those who Biko often depicted as being completely oblivious to the ways in which their actions, however liberal they might think, conveyed their deep investment in the system of White domination of which they were agents even if they argued the contrary¹⁴. During my Phd years as I was studying world events of the 1960s, especially between 1966 and 1968, looking at how the Black Panthers emerged, the marches on the streets around the world in 1968, and the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania in December 1968 in the halls of the medical school of the University of Natal, I came across Jacques Derrida's essay on 'White Mythology'¹⁵. It is with these two influences that I began to pin-point what available race theory then, and critical race theory now (and of the last twenty years), did not articulate – that is, what I began to call White Consciousness since the late 1980s, which is also evidenced in the title of my Phd thesis, and the articles that subsequently followed from it, some of which include, 'The Theatre of Racism'¹⁶.

Often, the White woman as colonizer learns of the operation of White domination and through the Black Consciousness scholar, learns to question how White consciousness is instilled and perpetuated. As one White woman asked following a lecture I gave in 1991 in Ottawa, Canada, titled, 'When Black Consciousness Meets White Consciousness', when I taught there: 'Why is it that I have no knowledge of my White consciousness?' To which I replied, 'It is not the absence of White consciousness that you should concern

¹⁴ Biko makes reference to White Liberals throughout *I Write What I Like*.

¹⁵ In is Derrida's insistence on what the White man does: 'the white man takes', and Biko's reference in depicting 'white conscience' that I began to theorize White Consciousness; as such, the combination led to a particular interrogation of speech, writing and the imagination along with agency. See select Maart articles listed for further elaboration.

¹⁶ 'The Theatre of Racism' is the title of one of my chapters in *Strangers in the Mirror: In and Out of the Mainstream of Culture in Canada* wherein I offer a critique of the racist events at an Arts Centre in Canada as a theatre of racism.

yourself with but how you perpetuate this absence of knowledge'. Naming and claiming the unclaimed consciousness of being White is perhaps the best way to understand how White domination operates, for it is conscious in its attempts at subjugating Blackness. Now, more than twenty years later, I am still making the same articulations within my home country, of the ways in which Black Consciousness meets White Consciousness within the university setting, more precisely, within Humanities.

Not only does the example above apply to beneficiary number one and beneficiary number two in this paper but the salient features which mark their resistance in naming their White identities and recognizing that their silence – the absence of the words to say it – is what I call White Consciousness, keeps their benefactor status intact. It is not the everyday construction of racism, as an act, an event, a moment, an atrocity marked by its cruelty, that I am concerned with – we have been the objects of these acts of racism for so long in South Africa. It is, rather, the ways in which language functions to harbour White Consciousness [the absence of the words to say it], keep its bouyancy afloat, keep the thinking in circulation, shield and protect the beneficiary of White domination, keep her safe from the interrogation that Black Consciousness offers – from the words with which to say it (Maart 1993). Many of us still remember, whether through the enacting of the Steve Biko trial or by reading the transcript from *I Write What I Like*, that Black Consciousness language stood trial because Judge Boshoff tried to convict Steve Biko by referring to the language that Biko used, which Boshoff found unusual and an affront. Biko's words were chosen with care and historical precision; he connected the act to the actor. He did not only call White people settler-colonials, he also called them agents of White domination and beneficiaries of racism and apartheid. Biko situated the agent alongside his agency and insisted on naming agency in accordance with the ability to maintain the system. What I find problematic within the university setting is not my location among the beneficiaries of racism necessarily or how I constantly have to work head-on against their resistance toward transformation but how they continue to make the site of knowledge production one where they believe race does not matter (Biko 1978). The site of knowledge production – the university setting – is also one that has to produce African scholarship, and to ensure that students are educated toward prosperity within this framework and not to simply include African scholarship like a step-child sitting at the table after the main meal has been served. Black scholars are treated as the Oliver Twist of this tale of

When Black Consciousness Walks Arm-in-arm with Critical Race Theory

abundance where we constantly have to approach the table of White privilege, asking, 'please Sir may I have some more?' The absence of the knowledge of White consciousness is not only detrimental to the production of knowledge in the humanities but the paradigms that inform it needs to be reexamined.

What happens when Black Consciousness meets White Consciousness at the creation and the production of knowledge is that there is an immediate discomfort among White scholars, when one situates oneself as a Black woman who was born in District Six, the slave quarter of the Cape, and not allowed the acquisition of higher education to shame you into neglecting to mention where one is from. To note the history of one's enslavement alongside one's history of consciousness defies the purpose of White liberalism completely. Racism is meant to work; if and when it doesn't it bears testimony to the failure of the agent, and she will quickly remind you, reprimand you into speaking a language that situates her into a zone of comfort for she knows nothing else. If the agents of White domination have not sufficiently colonized you or oppressed you how can they then offer you the emancipation they believe you so rightly deserve?

Then, there is the element of unashamedness: because there are those among us who are not interested in withholding our histories of identity politics, how we came to describe ourselves as Black and came to develop a personal, intellectual and political programme to address the manifestations of racialization – that it is one borne out of struggle – and as such, it puts us in a position to be considered 'a problem'. W.E. B. du Bois' outcry in 1903, 'what does it feel like to be a problem' (du Bois 1903) to which Cornel West responds: 'No, Mister du Bois, it is not I who is the problem ... White Supremacy is the problem!' (<www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRZcfEToN-A>).

What happens when Black consciousness meets White consciousness is that it raises questions about when one situates race within the very *construction* and *production of knowledge* because one believes it ought to be there; when one presents it in the presence of White scholars for whom the process is foreign, alien or intimidating, one is placing them in positions of alibis, witnesses to their own demise, their lack, without their consent and as such posing questions about how the English language has served them as a currency of coloniality – if one thinks within a language – a language of White domination where your agency and benefactor status are hidden, silent, unspoken – how can one think outside of it;

When Black Consciousness meets White consciousness is about Black scholars bringing the history of struggle into the university setting, disrupting the neutrality of the universal subject, and asserting that race, and racialization, lie at the heart of the production of the absence of the knowledge of White consciousness, for which the beneficiaries of apartheid and racism do not have the words to say it.

In the particular cases I put forward and upon which I have reflected, revealing the absence of the knowledge of White consciousness becomes the product of knowledge itself. As such, when one places the subject's historical trajectory as indicative of the process by which knowledge production is fostered, one is saying that race, the subject as raced, lie at the heart of knowledge as wisdom and because the production of knowledge on this particular aspect of social relations is one-sided one is pointing to a lack, a deficiency, an inability to construct knowledge from the very absence of the words to say it. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the term 'lack', introduced for the first time by Lacan in 1955 – when the apartheid state with all its trimmings: usurpation, murder, colonialism, theft of land, violence, terror, fear, were already fully in place – refers to it in relation to desire – that lack is always related to desire since it is lack that gives rise to desire (Evans 2006). However, the lack that I speak of here begins to show within the White beneficiary when Black Consciousness scholarship rises to prominence; Biko who, equipped with a language that places the White man and the White man at the centre of the very act, the very event of apartheid, brings forth the conceptualization of the mind as the focus of the colonisation and gives us Black Consciousness as a consciousness of self, and not Other (Biko 1978). The dissemination of Biko's words on small pamphlets to schools on the Cape Flats like Steenberg High, where I was a student, is what influenced my generation as teenagers, and remains to be the foundation upon which my scholarship is built.

The anti-apartheid struggle took many forms; Black student leadership like the kind the South African Student Organisation [SASO] forged, under the leadership of Barney Pityana and Steve Biko, brought the noble White leftie (left of his White parents whose finances he accepts to fund his political stance against them) to a moment of lack when he realizes that despite the apartheid machinery, the Black masses could still rise to think, to think for ourselves, and we did not need the all White National Union of South African Students [NUSAS] leadership to lead us towards the liberation we sought from their oppression. My generation of Black Consciousness students of the 1970s and

the 1980s upon learning of this history thought it was all a horrible mistake, a theatre of cruelty disguised as satire! Could it really be true? And yet, what strikes me as particularly troubling is the Lacanian conceptualization of lack, and certainly as per my present-day examples within UKZN, is that the aging White male who, accustomed to being the *crème-de-la-crème* of anti-racism or non-racialist scholarship that he ‘created’ in our absence, experiences Black consciousness scholarship as a loss of his Being. Thus, what is the lack, the moment of loss, is the desire for Being. Lack is always a desire for Being, itself. How can the White man scholar, schooled on the gourmet diet of racism with an appetite for apartheid retain a sense of Being when the substance of his Being is being chipped away, slowly, even while he stays on at the university to ensure that young Black students give him the recognition he believes he deserves. The desire for Being for the White man and the White woman at South African universities determined to grapple with transformation, is a difficult matter: one I suspect is both traumatic and troubling.

The former agents of apartheid, still its beneficiaries, are not willing to allow others insight into the lives of the privilege they once lived; as such, they experience transformation, especially social transformation within the university alongside Black Consciousness scholars, as loss and with loss lack is the gaping whole, the emptiness, the feeling like one does not know one’s self because one’s license to ownership of the world has been revoked. I have seen many a White liberal scholar lose their temper (my Black consciousness speech accompanied by high heels and lipstick somehow seem to provoke it), try hard at maintaining a particular kind of decorum in my presence as I am constructed as the difficult and problematic, even ‘the ungrateful Black’. Lewis Gordon’s chapter, ‘Problematic People and Epistemic Decolonization’ (Gordon 2007) springs to mind and offers an astute account of the matter under discussion. Gayatri Spivak, in ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ wherein she elaborates on Foucault’s notion of the episteme (how within society things, events, are ordered in particular ways and as such produced with purpose and intention) draws our attention to ‘epistemic violence’ noting the ways in which the structural damage of colonialism is produced. It is the hearer in my work environment who is no longer the speaker; and the speaker, who had been the hearer, who now insists on speaking, and who in turn transforms the rule of speech – she offers testimony and declares this as scholarship, while the hearer becomes the seen, and the seer visibilises the racialised identity of the seen.

The uneasiness of this journey is measured by the resistance of the colonizer who refuses to untie himself from the system of White domination that offered him the best opportunity to attain power and privilege; the same colonizer who speaks disparagingly of the rising Black middle class, warning students that class is still at the core of the production process – be it the production of knowledge or the production of consumer products that facilitate materialism – failing ever so blatantly to address the difference between class and wealth. Black professors may have acquired the possibility to earn better salaries since the first democratic elections, some even on par with White professors who now scoff at the array of cars, which fill the university parking lot – the BMWs, the Mercedes, and Land Rovers. It is however, wealth – a deeply entrenched heritage of money handed down from one generation to the next – that the average White professor is still rewarded with on a regular basis, alongside the land, the forget-to-mention-farms *that they will never give up*, as they speak lovingly of their gardener whose pension they have supplemented with a few hundred rand a year – *pin money*.

When I took up my post in 2011 I immediately began to host events that discussed the Transformation Charter of the university and spoke to staff and students alike, each time trying to gauge the extent to which the process was in operation, however slight (see Transformation Charter UKZN). What I have learnt in the process is that transformation is a term used to assess the extent to which the beneficiaries of White domination have adjusted to the imposition of Blackness. To lament the advantageous prerogative of legislation, be it the introduction of Transformation Charters (or Transformation documents) of universities across the country post the brutality of White students at the University of the Free State [UFS] in 2008, is to expect that legislation, because it is the law, is meant to demand that those it is intended for – White folks who have never had to follow legislation designed to restrict their racism, deprive them of domination, curb their coloniality, is suddenly going to commit to unlearning their racism and White privilege and transform the way that they oppress Black people just because legislation expects it of them. Nowhere is agency mentioned in any of the Transformation documents I have examined. In perusing Transformation documents of a number of universities, each in their own tapered to the conditions that apartheid has produced in their particular province or city, it is clear that there is a complete lack of understanding that the process of

unlearning racism requires more than following regulations – it demands a complete altering of thinking and Being, and this process, much like racism and colonialism is deeply psychological in nature, which in turn requires self-examination and self-interrogation, and who would lead such a process? Better still, who would drive the agenda when universities now speak of stakeholders? Thus, depersonalizing the process of decolonization that the Transformation Charter at UKZN demands without having to name it means that racism and colonialism have been depersonalized *again!* All of what I have offered accounts of earlier on in this paper speak directly to Fanon's assertion of the negation of the colonized by the colonizers, even those who wish to fight alongside the colonized for their freedom. Walter Rodney and Amilcar Cabral in speaking of the impact of colonialism on Africans, spoke of 'a negation from history' (cf. Cabral 1966).

The protestors of May 1968 in Paris, a movement has to be linked to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and, which cannot be severed from the pavement politics which also linked the Black Panthers, and later the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania [December, 1968] to the very core of the psychoanalytic and philosophical nexus – that is, the relationship that consciousness has to politics, and both with a very decided focus on the mind. The May 1968 protestors were referred to as the protesters with a Freudian fling, as they made their interest in freedom very clear: *Egalité! Liberté! Sexualité!* (translation: Equality, Freedom, Sexuality), they shouted in the streets of Paris. We see here equality, freedom, sexuality, as the culmination of an expression of the idea of freedom itself – that relations between and among forms of freedom cannot be separated ... with one come the other. These were students of philosophy who were in attendance at the lectures of Jacques Lacan, where the unconscious was the focus for several weeks and who among them was pupil and protestor, Jean-Paul Sartre. Negation and repression are key terms, referred to as mechanisms of the unconscious by Freud; philosophers who draw on psychoanalysis are well aware that the main focus of Lacan's work is concerned with following on from Freud, primarily, expanding Freud's work on the unconscious. In the mid-1960s the Black Panthers began to speak about the mind as they were influenced by the writings of Fanon and Ngugi, among others of the anti-colonial era. As Black scholars, determined not to have callous acts of colonialism curl into the coronary functioning of our vessels, we are at risk of chastisement by non-Whites in positions of leadership, and those you seek to

pummel us into the ground by not behaving like freshly emancipated slaves grateful for the crumbs of the first stage of democracy¹⁷.

There is a spoken discourse on transformation and an unspoken one; The unspoken discourse is concerned with whether the agents of White domination has managed, within the given time allocated, to transform their beliefs in the inherent right to White privilege and all that it has brought in the past into one that embraces the rewards of freedom of the very people upon which their White identities are built. With respect to allocated, I am employing it here to indicate that Transformation Charters emerged when universities had to recognize the role they played in paving the way towards freedom and to an incident in 2008 that had the possibility of retrenching the process because of the deeply racist nature of the said incident. Can the Black woman scholar survive, thrive, and produce knowledge within this context?

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¹⁷ I use the term non-White here with intent to indicate how there are Black people who willingly accept this form of identification using White as the backdrop against which they see themselves as. And, as such, as a negation of White but certainly not Black and more importantly who are happy to play along as pseudo Whites whilst jumping on the bandwagon of the liberation struggle at their hearts content.

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Representations of the National and Transnational in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

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Abstract

As creative agents of knowledge production in the domain of humanities knowledge, South African writers such as Phaswane Mpe have the historical burden of participating in the transformation of knowledge in ways that revolutionize the role of artistic performance with a view to prompting social transformation. In our context, Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow* (2001) actively generates emergent grammars that underpin a transformational thrust through a distinctive transnational bent, where xenophobia and rural myopia are countered through a deliberative narrative of doubt cast on a putative insular South African-ness pitted against master narratives of national unity, on the one hand, and disruptive vectors such as HIV/AIDS and witchcraft, on the other. As a significant discourse that constitutes humanities knowledge, a novel such as Mpe's contributes to a project's transformation of knowledge in its departure from, and disavowal of, a totalizing master narrative of nationalism, putting in place a macabre post-national struggle of dystopia. It specifically tests the limits knowledge production and consumption around the topical issues of HIV/AIDS and immigration. It proceeds to show how Phaswane Mpe's novel has successfully debunked myths of a privileged autochthonous habitus. The novel eschews characterising unstable homologies of the rural and urban divide and, in like manner, the South African and 'foreigner' bar, as a starting point for meaningful knowledge transformation about immigration and the HIV/AIDS stigma through transnationalism and transculturation of language by way of an idiom of intertextuality represented by a transnational bent. We demonstrate throughout that transnationalism prompts a signification of cultural transformation in the novel under discussion, viz. *Welcome to our Hillbrow*.

Keywords: nationalism, trans-nationalism, post-apartheid South Africa, black South African identities, ethnic identities

Whereas Maithufi (2013: 10) discerns the virtues of variation, ironic distancing and defamiliarization in recent post-apartheid South African writing, this article concentrates on Mpe's distinctive handling of the black ethnic idiom as exemplifying distancing and defamiliarization through the creation of a transnational mise-en-scene that straddles Oxford in England, Hillbrow in Johannesburg and Tiragalong in Limpopo as a dimension of cultural transformation. Tlhalo Radithalo (2008: 94) has demonstrated that the setting of Hillbrow in novels such as Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow* (2001) and Kgebetli Moele's *Room 207* (2006), amongst others, indexes a transnational atmosphere because since 'the 1970s it was already cosmopolitan and multiracial, attracting many immigrants from the rest of Africa and the world'. In this context, the use of African language idiomatic expressions and proverbs that pervade *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* make reference, for example, to foreign African nationals as 'stretching their legs and spreading like pumpkin plants' (26) is sardonically derived from the Northern Sotho proverb *monna ke thaka o a naba* – meaning that a real African man should not have only one sex partner. For the purposes of this paper, and having taken stock of this translational element of this literary idiom, we glean or definition of transnationalism from Homi Bhabha (1992: 48), who theorizes the temporality of spaces such as Hillbrow as 'the hybrid location of cultural value – the transnational as the transnational'. This element of transnationalism in the idiomatic expression constitutes what has been recently described as 'a simultaneous internationalization and indigenization of representational temporalities' (Masemola & Makoe 2014: 63), especially at the point in the novel's plot after 'accidental' sex occurs with the main character Refentše, and the woman Bohlale makes the difficult suggestion that the two must confess to the cheated boyfriend. When in this debacle Refentše finds the confession idea difficult, Mpe uses the Sotho idiomatic expression meaning to quest for a suitable solution for a serious problem, 'scratching your head gently/ *ingwaya hlogo*' (52, our own back translation).

It is also noteworthy that after innocent Piet is accused falsely through the tricks of a quack diviner of casting spells on his cousin, Molori's uncle uses the Northern Sotho proverb 'witches have no distinct colour through which other people can recognize and identify them/ *moloi ga a na mmala*', meaning that Piet's denials do not mean that he is not responsible for sorcery; etc. to convince his incredulous nephew Molori that Piet is indeed a wizard. One way in which Mpe's English text evinces the writer's distinctive handling of the medium of the novel is through the use of black ethnic idiom as both survival signification and cultural refashioning, discourse cultural transformation. An idiom is 'an expression that has a meaning contrary to the usual meaning of the words' (Lustig & Koester 2010: 176). On the one hand, Sope Maithufi notes that such contrariness underscores 'variations and defamiliarizations' (2013: 5) necessary for survival of cultures; on the other, for Homi Bhabha (1992: 46) such contrariness of meaning is necessary for 'a radical revision of the social *temporality* in which emergent histories may be written'. The defamiliarized reinscription of the African language idiom of communal thinking in the trans-national post-apartheid public Hillbrow/Tiragalong/Oxford captures the nature of culture as expressed in the black idiom that records emergent histories:

Culture as a strategy of survival is both *transnational* and *translational*. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement It is translational because such spatial histories of displacement – now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of global technologies – make the question of *how* culture signifies, or what is signified by *culture*, rather complex issues. It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences The transnational dimension of cultural transformation – migration, diaspora, displacement, relocations – turns the specifying or localizing process of cultural translation into a complex process of signification (Bhabha 1992: 47).

Such localizing processes of cultural translation are also much in evidence in other post-apartheid novels such as Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995). For instance, in the instance where mourners are appalled by the caustic address by the youthful Nurse during a funeral, they express their disgust by

referring to the speaker as a young girl ‘who still smells her mother’s milk/ wa go nkga mekgato’ (18, our own back translation). This expression is derived from the Sotho idiomatic expression that I give, meaning someone is too young to speak as boldly and impetuously to his or her elders. African language idiomatic expressions are used consistently in Mda’s *Ways of Dying*, too, like ‘destroy the stomach/ntšha mpa’ (76, our own back translation), meaning doing an abortion; and in referring to the main character Noria as someone thoroughly thrashed by the world/ *a bethilwe ke lefase* (79, our own back translation), meaning from the ethnic identity perspective that in her adulthood ventures she had been dogged by misfortune.

It would be useful to consider that the negative connotation attached to induced abortion within black ethnic cultures should be read into the former expression due to its nature of being an African language idiomatic expression, as this is how abortion is viewed from the Africanist perspective of the speakers of the languages in which the idiomatic expression is found. The idea of being dogged by misfortune in the latter idiomatic expression used in Mda’s prose should also be understood in relation to the African traditional regard for the spiritual role of parents and ancestors in the prosperity of those who customarily revere them. Only in this way can the events of the novel and characterization of Noria be fully grasped beyond what the Englishness of the text conveys at first glance to a reader not using the approach of this paper. Although there are subtleties and nuances in the characterization, the same idiomatic signification of cultural transformation applies to *Welcome to our Hillbrow*.

Recognising the validity of the observation that ‘Mpe’s Hillbrow [lies] at the nexus of Western, post-colonial, and South African traditions of mapping’ (Ogden 2013: 194), we deem it necessary to also consider the radical proponents of evidence of a rather uncompromising transnational identity who assert that black post-apartheid identity as portrayed Phaswane Mpe’s post-apartheid novel is so eroded that ‘educated and urbanised individuals should no longer identify’ with and share beliefs having to do with ‘a common and accountable response to that which the community represents’ (Clarkson 2005: 454). For while critical and creative canons of South African literature have been reshaped on the anvil of contact with the political priorities of exile and the diaspora, it has maintained the one commitment necessary: the universal humanity that writers of African literature, from Chinua Achebe to Dennis Brutus – indeed from Es’kia

Mphahlele to Phaswane Mpe – inscribe into a national consciousness as a ‘world literature’ that foregrounds global concerns that affect diverse cultures (Smit 2010:36).

Further to corroborate this vacillation between the national and the transnational in the ‘national-world literature’ axis, in one place the ‘in-between signification’ of a transformative literary idiom has been elucidated as a complex struggle in the form of a simultaneous belonging and becoming: ‘This struggle often means that the options of operationalizing identity-making (becoming) or identification (belonging) in narrative’ (Masemola 2004: 49). This axis, in another place, has been described as underwriting emergent history ‘as a particular history that ...undertakes two simultaneous processes: *becoming* (identity-making) and *belonging* (identification) because the greater political society’ had rejected claims ‘of a citizen to a common identity’ (Raditlhalo, 2007: 336). Therefore the tension between belonging and becoming manifests as contrariness or restaging of ‘insider’ versus ‘outsider’ values in the literary idiom of Phaswane Mpe.

In a recent study, Michael Dash explores an understanding of Patrick Chamoiseau’s notion of the novel as the discursive terrain of the author as a ‘warrior of the imaginary’, where the ‘the artistic work is far from being useless as it acquires a special purposefulness, an ethical efficacy’ (2012:116). Such efficacy is inextricably bound to the imperatives of knowledge transformation, in that superstitions that fuel stigma around HIV/AIDS are challenged by emergent histories of cultural transformation of the Hillbrow narrative: Phaswane Mpe creates characters who carry the effects of a traditional cosmology that ceases to be wholly relevant in the rational account of either HIV/AIDS infection or African migrants in Hillbrow without attenuating the force of the idiom that accompanies it . Ethical efficacy in Mpe’s novel reveals an interesting connection between writers and the governance of a country and its imaginary; for it is in this connection that Mpe’s work gains transformative credence as a ‘self-reflexive’ and thus ‘introspective work’ (Rafapa & Mahori 2011: 157) in both its idiom and temporality

Where Dash is saying that every society needs writers as a primary security group ahead of the police and the army to resist ‘annihilation’ (Dash 2012: 116), it becomes all the more clear that Mpe’s work resists internecine African annihilation that springs from the nefarious wells of xenophobia. If the space of Hillbrow is enlarged by a migrant African presence whose

occupation of space is defined solely by suspicion-driven violence, then Mpe successfully produces a narrative of knowledge production which ostensibly creates relationships that are romantic between black South Africans and Africans from the rest of the continent by creating a transnational mise-en-scene on which xenophobic blame is obviated. To be precise, the South African woman Refilwe goes to Oxford Brookes University England to study for a Masters in Publishing and Media Studies, in which setting she meets a Nigerian man with whom she falls in love and also discovers that both of them have been infected with HIV/AIDS before they met. Mpe's epistemic struggle against xenophobia, stigma and ignorance is therefore launched from a transnational axis bereft of suspicion and blame. The autochthonous myths of South African national 'authenticity' are tested and new knowledge of African presence is posited to redefine relations beyond an oversimplified and autochthonous national space:

Welcome to Our Hillbrow, as a work of art, has in simple narrative terms, reconstructed ordinary experiences of the people in post-apartheid South Africa by portraying the issues that South Africans are faced with on a daily basis. These are issues such as crime, the scourge of HIV/AIDS, the glaring presence of foreign nationals and its consequences, xenophobia and prejudice as well as the exponential rate of unemployment. The novel achieves this by its employment of ordinary characters such as students, who are at the periphery of the spectacle of grand political circles. Mpe presents these characters and their problems in a manner that mirrors the challenges of ordinary South Africans in the post-apartheid era In the novel there is a call for introspection primarily among members of the black South African citizenry (Rafapa & Mahori 2011:169).

In the same vein, there is something quite telling in the observation by De Kock when he says that the period after 1994 South African literature 'ushered in a much bigger world' where 'the desire was to step beyond the enclosure of the "national"', which can also be described as 'the "struggle" terrain' (De Kock 2011: 22). The interest of this study is to probe how the depiction of black identities in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* affiliates or disaffiliates to such a struggle-united national consciousness until the death of apartheid in 1994, and how such a black group identity fares in

the post-apartheid era described by De Kock (2011:22) as characterised by a 'transnational turn.' Besides a disavowal of parochial notions of South Africanness and xenophobia in the wake of melding cultures, this paper seeks to probe to what extent identities of black South African nationals in Phaswane Mpe's post-apartheid novel are reoriented under the transnational orientation.

Commentators on South African literature written in English profess contradicting states of the identities of blacks both during what De Kock (2011) calls anti-apartheid nationalism until 1994 and post-nationalism after 1994. For Mphahlele (2002: 253), prior to 1994 anti-apartheid nation building included the act 'to unify the ethnic groups into a strong nationalist base': a view that finds resonance later in Pommerolle and Simeant (2010:91), in their assertion that 'transnationalism ... does not dilute national and cultural identities; rather, it encourages the assertion of identities that can be legitimately claimed as proof of having constituencies'.

What counts as common in the post-apartheid novel necessarily ranges itself against rigidities of both nation and identity. Hence the cautionary stance with respect to transnationalism and identity:

The increasingly invoked notion of 'transnationalism', referring to various kinds of global or cross-border connections, currently frames the view of numerous researchers concerned with migrants and dispersed ethnic groups. 'Identity', although it has long been one of the slipperiest concepts in the social scientist's lexicon, can suggest ways in which people conceive of themselves and are characterised by others. Transnationalism and identity are concepts that inherently call for juxtaposition (Vertovec 2001: 573).

Mpe's novel in its narrative scheme and characterization of relationship tests the 'parculairity' of conditions of South African national 'identity' and its 'others' in its representation of the Hillbrow setting:

By the 1990s Hillbrow was considered either a sophisticated melting pot of culture, class, and ethnicity or a decaying cityscape of violent crime, drugs, prostitution, and AIDS. In this it embodies today the best and the worst of contemporary South Africa, but the real test of its significance for the new nation is the high proportion of African

migrants – primarily Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, Nigerians, and Malawians - making up its population (Green 2005: 5).

Unlike De Kock (2011) who views nationalism as dissolving under trans-nationalism in the post-apartheid era, Mphahlele (2002) sees it discontinuing due to an implicit descent to ruralism. In *Welcome to our Hillbrow* doubt is cast, however, on rural inclination as a default backlash on which is shaped local African identity. A poignant point arises, according to Ogden, ‘when Refentse and Cousin discuss the role of foreigners in Hillbrow, their conversation does not come across as a staged debate about xenophobia but as an argument that says as much about Refentse as it does about local conditions’ (2013: 200). At base, both Ogden (2013) and Mphahlele (2002) seem to suggest that collective African identities at the lower level of ethnicity continue to exist after apartheid, yet threaten national unity due to a ruralist undercurrent that, by its nature, is exclusivist and expansionist. In the post-apartheid era, according to Mphahlele (2002: 255), such a nationalism among blacks can be strengthened by adherence to ‘unchanging truths that lie at the core of movements’, and can be weakened by ‘rural compartments’ and ‘trying to govern by ethnic exclusion.’ When one considers that nations are themselves ethnic identities of a higher federal order (cf. Anderson 1991), the ethnic identities of blacks before and after apartheid may be seen as lower-order nationalisms that had to be subsumed into some kind of multi-ethnic nationalism inspired by the struggle against apartheid. Moderate champions of post-apartheid trans-nationalism such as De Kock (2011: 26) concede to the ‘trans’ in trans-nationalism creating ‘a cusp between the national and what lies beyond it, not a severance.’ Traces of national identity, according to this position, remain even in public spaces characterized by a trans-national identity like the post-apartheid one.

A propos the above, it is necessary to probe to what extent the reconfiguration of social spaces in Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* has both tested and consolidated the commitment to universal ethical efficacy in the face of xenophobia. While analyzing the novel in pursuit of evidence of trans-nationalised black identities, it should be worthwhile to plumb for signs of resilient ethnic identity. A decoding of such signs of collective ethnic thinking will help facilitate intercultural communication demanded by at least two clusters of cultures intersecting in what the novel communicates to the reader through its setting.

Translational Rural Ethnic Identity in the Urban Milieu

In his novel *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Phaswane Mpe (2001: 48-9) reveals that,

You discovered, on arriving in Hillbrow, that to be drawn away from Tiragalong also went hand-in-hand with a loss of interest in Hillbrow. Because Tiragalong was in Hillbrow. You always took Tiragalong with you in your consciousness whenever you came to Hillbrow or any other place.

The rural village of Tiragalong is depicted as an embodiment of surviving African customs and traditions while Hillbrow is synonymous with urban and metropolitan African living. This is not to say that the urban environment of Hillbrow does not boldly mediate the rural customs of Mpe's characters when they migrate, true to Gluckman's observation in his study of Africans' rural-urban migration that 'rural custom and practice are effective, though much modified by the demands of the urban situation' (1963:76). The main character of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Refentše, embeds a miniature tragic story through a demonstrated passion for short story writing. Refilwe's character dies of HIV/AIDS related ailing after what popular gossip judges to be a morally lose life that she embraces upon arriving in Hillbrow. There is the idea of Refentše's character in his short story virtually committing suicide through her abandonment of traditional African morals when upon arrival in Hillbrow, reverberating throughout the many layers of storytelling in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Mpe's stylistic manipulation of language use links the culturally positioned views of suicide to an Africanist eschatology in which suicide is viewed with repulsion (cf. Mbiti 1987).

The character Refentše literally commits suicide when he 'resolve[s] to tumble down the twentieth floor' of his flat (55). Refentše's former village girlfriend Refilwe goes to study at Oxford, only to return emaciated with full-blown AIDS (118). The motif of suicide is reinforced, as Refilwe's illness is judged as 'the fruit of sin' (112). Mpe ingenuously links the recurring theme of suicide to the social functioning of idioms and proverbs. Mpe's searing satire against the holier-than-thou African community of Tiragalong cannot be appreciated in its complete fullness unless his dexterity with language use is marshalled.

The challenge for readers or interpreters of texts using idioms of

languages other than the predominant medium the novel purports on the surface to be written in ‘is to understand the intended meanings of idiomatic expressions and to translate them into the other language’ (Lustig & Koester 2010:176). Which means, although Mpe’s novel is written in English, the ethnic idiomatic expressions in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* need to be ‘doubly back translated’ into the ‘other language’ – which this time is paradoxically the very English language in which it is written. The discourse of the novel may not be understood fully if nothing is done about the presence of such culture-specific idioms in its style. According to Lustig and Koester (2010:13), ‘Communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meanings.’ This is why the indigenous African idioms in Mpe’s novel should be interpreted, their cultural context interpreted properly so that the text and the reader ‘create shared meanings’ within a community of interpretation.

When his cousin leaves him alone in a flat the first day he sleeps in Hillbrow, Refentše asks himself ‘Will they come back?/naa *ba tla boa?*’ (9, our own back translation). In Northern Sotho idiom, the question *naa ba tla boa?* (will they come back, ever?) implies that they may die any minute due to the high violence levels in Hillbrow’s perilous nightlife. Failure to decode the cultural source of this expression may lead to misleading conclusions that Refentše’s cousin has an unreliable character and may run away from the newcomer Refentše, perhaps because he sees the village bumpkin as a burden. In traditional rural life where initiation is practiced, the agitated question asked is usually whether the boys going for circumcision ‘*naa ba tla boa?*’, meaning, ‘will they return alive?’.

A similar danger of under-decoding the discourse of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* might arise if the Northern Sotho proverb ‘a corpse is always de-skinned on someone else’s back’ */letlalo la motho ga le bapolelwe fase* (45, our own back translation) is not detected as a proverb. What the proverb says is that generally or usually, no death in traditional African communities is accepted as natural. Specifically in relation to the plot of the novel, the proverb points out that the killing of the old woman on accusations of witchcraft following Tshepo’s death by a lightning bolt and his mother’s, apparently through shock on hearing the sad news, is baseless. By the same token, no reader of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* will blame Refilwe’s unrelenting hope that Refentše will one day return her undying love after they have re-united in Hillbrow, if the Sotho proverb ‘there was always a return to

the ruins; only to the womb was there no return/ *maropeng go a boelwa; go sa boelwego ke teng*' (82, our own back translation) is interpreted fully for what it means. The proverb means that generally, there is no folly in the act of one returning to something from which one earlier sulked, provided that the misunderstanding has been cleared. It is helpful, in this particular instance, that Mpe predicates the proverb with the words 'She knew, like all Tiragalong, that ...' (82), thus hinting that the dialogue or opinion is not at all individually attributable to the character Refilwe and does not simply apply specifically to her particular case.

A communal perspective of the novel is enhanced through such a sustained expression of societal sanction by means of proverbs and other Sotho idiomatic expressions. The effect is that even when dialogue ostensibly proceeds from the mouth of an individual character, it is not individual opinion that is uttered. Clarkson (2005:453) hints at this kind of individually expressed communal dialogue in his observation that 'In a traditional African worldview ... the notion of liability, or responsibility, is intensified to result in an understanding of the self *crucially* as an agent of cultural continuity.'

Idioms or any cultural forms in more collectivist cultural groups like those of indigenous African cultures represented by characterization in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, are almost always cited to lend a sense of the echo of a communal ring to all approaches, opinions and resolutions of individuals and groups in day to day living. This, while they are mostly averted in similar linguistic events in more individualist societies such as the European in order for credit, in the case of the latter, to reside accordingly in the individual. The fact of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* being a novel written in English and apparently English sentences actually containing African language idioms should warrant caution against factors that handicap successful cross-cultural communication or, indeed, transcultural critical literacies. In their explication of cultural-level dimensions that facilitate or inhibit cross-cultural communication, Gudykunst and Lee observe that 'individualism-collectivism is a major dimension of cultural variability used to explain differences and similarities in communication across cultures' (Gudykunst & Lee 2003:9). The reading I adopt in this discussion of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* attempts to facilitate such a communication across cultures that we here illustrate.

It is thus worth examining what is described in this paper as transnational and translation temporalities of belonging and becoming in the post-apartheid black idiom of Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, such as they

constitute a dimension of cultural transformation. Lucy Graham an analyst of post-apartheid South African literature, includes Mpe in the category of writers who show not ‘just fixed locations in space, but also trajectories through time-space’ (Chapman 2001: 9). This is an indication that both fixed identities and trans-nationally de-identifying existences can be found in the narrative of Mpe.

Owing to a different focus in critical interventions, some interpretations of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* by critics such as Clarkson (2005) have, by default and good reason, not paid any serious mind to traces of localized ethnic identities among the urbanized characters around whom especially the novel’s careful critique of the societal taboos around HIV/AIDS – is mounted. This at first may appear as a grave omission, as *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* makes it clear that HIV/AIDS, xenophobia and disillusionment are central to the novel’s concerns. For Clarkson (2005: 454), ‘the background beliefs of the community of Tiragalong are challenged to the extent that Mpe presents them as nothing more than a toxic brew of superstition and xenophobia, with little purchase on or authority over the very people they supposedly unite.’ Such an observation leads Clarkson to add that ‘t is hardly surprising that *educated and urbanized individuals should no longer identify with these beliefs*, or share them, or that they should no longer feel obliged to offer a common and accountable response to that which the community represents’ (Clarkson 2005: 454, our emphasis).

Failure for any reader to prioritize the interpretation of the cultural context of humanity metonymised by the non-English idiomatic expressions, in and by itself creates a possible communicative barrier between the text and the reader. The African language idioms of even English language expressions in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are symptoms of a continuing black ethnic cultural sensibility among the urbanized characters of the novel. The description of culture as ‘a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and social practices, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people’ (Lustig & Koester 2010:25) affirms that the individually expressed communal verdicts on societal matters handled in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* symbolize a culture other than that regularly transmitted through normative English. Given that ‘*Welcome to our Hillbrow* is constructed within what remains a rare and idiosyncratic mode’, where ‘the second person as it is used in the novel does not take on the extradiegetic address of an omniscient author to the reader’ (Green 2005: 9) it is worth considering a

dialogic feature of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* identifies with what the writers Gudykunst and Lee (2003:15) define as collectivist communities whose communication is indirect ‘and read[s] other people’s minds’ when they communicate in their in-groups.’ The use of the idioms of the indigenous languages through which the characters in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are shown to communicate is a symptom of such collectivist communities’ way of communicating, known for indirectness and the assumption of communally shared meanings in a message.

Conclusion

In recognition of what Johannes Smit has aptly described as the defining character of the priority of diversity in commitment to universal humanity, in which the African writer decries ‘the deformation and mutilation of humanity’ (2010:48), this paper has so far attempted to demonstrate that there is a need for readings of the novel that recognize continuing relevance of ethnic and/or multiplicitous African identities in the trans-national post-apartheid public space, for the aspect of intercultural communication also forming part of the discourse of the novel. A Intercultural communication needs to be consciously attended to in situations where ‘large and important cultural differences create dissimilar interpretations about how to communicate competently’ (Lustig & Koester 2010:52). Competent communication between Mpe’s novel and the reader on the balance of its semblance and similitude can best be possible if the barrier of non-English idioms is consciously attended to as the search for the emergent meanings of a new broader, transnational African signification of social consciousness is forged.

As demonstrated in the analysis of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* throughout this article, the notion of trans-nationalism that is congruous with the depiction of South African black post-apartheid identities cannot be an extremist one dismissing the contribution of ethnic identities in some nationally inflected trans-national public space. Mpe’s discourse on trans-nationalism that can be derived from the literary idiom of cultural transformation in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is more in line with theorists like Vertovec (2001), read in tandem with Pommerolle and Simeant (2010:91), in their assertion that ‘Transnationalism ... does not dilute national and cultural identities; rather, it encourages the assertion of identities that can be legitimately claimed as proof of having constituencies’. Suffice to conclude

that the idioms of transnationalism in Mpe's narrative should be seen through the prism of the 'cultural differentials' of race, history and gender that are neither totalizable as nouns that are South African nor binaristically opposed to nouns denoting African foreign nationals like *makwerekwere*:

These cultural differentials are more productively read as existing in-between each other. If they make claims to their radical singularity or separatism, they do so at the peril of their historical destiny to change, transform, solidarize. Claims to identity must never be nominative or normative. They are never nouns when they are productive; like the vowel, they must be capable of turning up in and as an other's difference and of turning the 'right' to signify into an act of cultural translation (Bhabha 1992: 55).

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Plastic Knowledges: Transformations and Stagnations in the Humanities

André Keet

At the limits of reflection, the value of knowledge, it seems, depends on its ability to make any conclusive image of the universe impossible (Georges Bataille 1988: 25).

Abstract

The crisis in the humanities and social sciences seems to preside over the gradual ends of public debates and the inhibitions of social imaginations and *transformations* in higher education. Employing Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, I first argue that the challenges of the humanities and social sciences are internally constituted around their scholarship and the social practices of the agents and authorities of the disciplines. This is because these disciplines already produce the principles of their own production and *stagnations*, so determined historically. My reasoning proceeds, second, via the interpretive scheme of Malabou's excavation of the concept of *plasticity*, which suggest that *transformations* are inscribed in the humanities and social sciences because their originary positions are *plastic*; their knowledges are plastic. Using the notion of *plastic knowledges*, and in speculative argumentative form, I formulate various interplays between *habitus* and *plasticity* to provide an explanatory frame for *transformations* and *stagnations* within the humanities and the social sciences.

Keywords: Knowledge, plasticity, habitus, humanities, social sciences, transformations, stagnations

Introduction

To speak about the Humanities and the Social Sciences (HSS) as an ailing or cantankerous intellectual and practical exercises, has become commonplace. The ‘crisis in the humanities’ has taken on articulated forms in a variety of ways throughout different historical periods, especially in the form of lectures, reports, books and scholarly articles on the subject. Bell (2010: 69) notes that

in 1922, Austrian art historian Josef Stryzowski lectured in Boston on ‘The Crisis in the Humanities as Exemplified in the History of Art’ [whilst] in 1964, British historian J.H. Plumb published a volume of essays entitled *The Crisis in the Humanities*. Between 1980 and 2000 a ‘crisis in the humanities’ was discussed more than a hundred times in the pages of major scholarly journals.

Bell thus (*ibid*) asks:

Is there anything new to be said about it? Has the hypochondriac finally come down with a life-threatening disease? [...] Certain forms of apprehension do seem built into the very structure of the modern humanities.

Indeed, what new can be said about this hypochondriac amidst a battery of reports on its illnesses over the past 25 years (Academy of Science of South Africa [ASSAf] 2011 Consensus Study on the Status of the Humanities in South Africa and the 2001 Charter for Humanities in South Africa). In this paper I explore how the maladies of the humanities and social sciences can be linked to the ‘substance of contemporary humanities scholarship’ (Bell 2010: 72) and scholarly dispositions; an argument which is also, *inter alia*, forwarded by ASSAf’s Consensus Study (2011: 125 - 126):

[First], [t]here is a crisis in the Humanities reflected in declining student enrolments, falling graduations, and decreasing government funding (in real Rands) within institutions of higher learning. [Second], [t]he evolution and administration of government policy in the post-apartheid period has systematically benefited Science,

Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (the so-called STEM disciplines) to the exclusion and even detriment of the Humanities disciplines in the country. [And third], [t]he Humanities within institutions of higher learning are in a state of intellectual stagnation and singular innovations notwithstanding, have remained in this moribund condition for more than 15 years.

There are thus not simply external influences working in on the ‘crisis of the humanities’, but rather an internally constituted ‘crisis’ of intellectual stagnation. However, the intellectual challenges are not limited to the humanities, but afflict most of the disciplines in different ways as expressed in works such as the *University in Ruins* (Readings 1996); *Scholars in the Marketplace* (Mamdani 2007); *Between Race and Reason: Violence, Intellectual Responsibility and the University to Come* (Susan Searls Giroux 2010); *The Closing of the American Mind* (Bloom 2008); *Achieving our Country* (Rorty 1999); *Our Underachieving Colleges* (Bok 2006); and *Universities in the Marketplace* (Bok 2009). One can argue that the ‘legitimation’ crisis of the humanities is simply the most protruding articulation of a series of structurally-anchored challenges within higher education globally. If we accept that the writings of the authors that Bell (2010: 71) cites use the Habermasian notion of ‘legitimation crisis’ that refers to periods when the ‘organizational principle of a society does not permit the resolution of problems that are critical for its continued existence’ (see Heath 2004), then the ‘legitimation crisis’ in relation to the humanities suggests that its disciplinary organisation - its substance and effect - works from the inside to express its ‘crisis’ outwardly. The ‘legitimation crisis’ in the humanities, properly understood as part of the broader challenges within higher education globally, links not only with the state of scholarship within the humanities. It also joins up with a set of disciplinary practices within which money and power coalesce to provide ‘pathways for the transmission of privilege’ with the academy as a key mechanism for the ‘sharing of the spoils of hegemony’ (Wacquant 1996: xii), and at the same time presents such spoils as acquired rights. Once such a stage is reached, the purposes of the humanities are not only internally compromised but falsely expressed as a predicament solely brought about by external factors.

The main argumentative posture of this paper suggests that there is a constitutive link between the *crisis* and *scholarship* within HSS. The crisis in

the humanities and social sciences seems to preside over the gradual ends of public debates and the inhibitions of social imaginations and *transformations* in higher education. Employing Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, I first argue that the challenges of the humanities and social sciences are internally constituted around its scholarship and the social practices of the agents and authorities of the disciplines; the disciplines already produce the principles of their own production and *stagnations*, so determined historically. My reasoning proceeds, second, via the interpretive scheme of Malabou's excavation of the concept of *plasticity*, which suggests that *transformations* are inscribed in the humanities and social sciences because their originary positions are *plastic*; their knowledges are plastic. Using the notion of *plastic knowledges*, and in speculative argumentative form, I formulate various interplays between *habitus* and *plasticity* to provide an explanatory frame for *transformations* and *stagnations* within the humanities and social sciences. Stated differently, the scholarly stasis in HSS joins together with these various economies, and through this, sets up the general architectonics of the 'crisis in the humanities'. This paper suggests that HSS can only begin regeneration by way of *plastic transformations* as a function of its own renewals and as a result of a critical analysis of its own social structures.

Habitus and the Academy

Elsewhere I (Keet 2014a) observe that, more so than any other social and intellectual arrangement, the disciplines permeate the life of the university. Academics and students are streamed; professional, academic and student identities are constructed; scientific authorities are established and maintained; social statuses are affirmed; social spaces are mapped out; recognitions, rewards and sanctions are distributed; and epistemic injustices legitimated. The disciplines and their authorities thus create lineages and streams by which certain groups are more speedily advanced within the disciplines and the academy, not simply on the basis of a fictitious conception of merit and excellence, but also on the basis of the self-perpetuation of the interest of groups who are already in power. It is thus surprising, perhaps not, that universities often underestimate, or deliberately misrecognise the steering authority of power (symbolic, social, cultural and intellectual) and money as reproductive forces of stagnant practices. These practices, in many instances, present themselves as transformative within the contexts of the demands for

democratic principles. However, far from it, they merely mask how cultural capital,

inhere [s] in the person of its bearers [t] he fact that it ‘manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition’ makes it uniquely suited to legitimizing the continued inheritance of social privileges in societies (Wacquant 1996: x).

The set of legitimating practices that are emerging, via HSS, ensure the active presence of past privileges within the faculties. Those who benefit from the powerbase provided by academic and other capital do not simply want to rely on the carnal force of such power. Rather, the expression of privileged positions, historically determined by political, social and economic orders requires a justificatory framework that converts such privilege into ‘rights’ so as to normalise its exercise (*ibid*: ix). Such exercise is not only influenced by the agent’s social structures, or social, cultural and symbolic capital, but also results from the cognitive structures that agents invest in their actions and representations (Bourdieu 1996: 2). Thus, the social and cognitive structures of the authorities and academics of the disciplines combine into a meaning-making framework that justifies certain academic practices. But these are achieved without conscious effort because the *habitus* of the academy and its disciplines always-already produces the principles of its own production which are historically determined.

Though over (mis) used, Bourdieu’s (1981a: 94) notion of *habitus* remains one of the most productive interpretive schemes for reflecting on the academy: its practices and its knowledge generation processes; and inertia to change. Though we generally think of ourselves as free agents, the regularities of social practices do not support our agency claims; whether these are racist practices, sexist practices, non-discriminatory practices, or other practices of exclusion and inclusion. Thus Bourdieu (Grenfell 2010: 50) remarks: ‘all of my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?’ Enter the notion of *habitus* as:

[S]ystems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations

which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor (Bourdieu 1981a: 94).

If Menand (Bell 2010: 71) is right in stating that trying to reform the contemporary university ‘is like trying to get on the Internet with a typewriter’, then it is in the concept of *habitus* where he may at least find some of the answers. The practices produced by the *habitus* within the university tend to ‘reproduce the objective structures of which they are the product; they are determined by the past conditions which have produced the principle of their production’ (Bourdieu 1981a: 95). It should be clear why, for those who adhere to ‘romantic’ notions of human agency, *habitus* presents a ‘cynical’ and downright ‘unproductive’ scheme. They will do well to note that limited change in the primary practices of universities and their reproduction of privilege and exclusions (in general, a trend away from social justice imperatives) has occurred in post 1994 South Africa, despite an array of policy and other interventions. ‘New’ higher education leaders and administrators, despite their best efforts, have not been immune to the way in which university practices produce the principles of its own production and thus remain ‘regular’. Even higher education spaces that by one or other measurement are being regarded as transformed, more or less ‘produce’ university practices as products of their ‘historical-objective’ structures, albeit on a changed *topography*. Thus, *habitus*, like Foucault’s *discourse*, seems to me a much more authentic basis from which to ‘think’ the very possibilities of higher education transformation, which, in the logic of some, it has rendered *impossible*. Such bases may become differentiating mechanisms by which we are able to discern real change from its *simulations*; a task at which we have become flimsy.

For the purposes of this paper, it is the way in which Bourdieu brings his considerable analysis to bear on the *academy* that is of great interest. In *Homo Academicus* Bourdieu (1988: xi) attempts to ‘exoticize the domestic through a break with his (the academic) initial relation of intimacy with modes of life and thought which remain opaque to him because they are too familiar’. Bourdieu believed that an analysis of the social structures of the

academy would disclose the categories of its self-understanding and the social derivation of thought that it employs (*ibid*: xii). Only on this basis can it (the academy) expect to make decisive progress. Such progress, however, is dependent on whether academics are capable of studying the ‘historical conditions of [their] own production, rather than by some form or other of transcendental reflection’ (*ibid*), and in doing so, can gain ‘theoretical control of [their] own structures and inclinations as well as over the determinants whose products they are’ (*ibid*). Here, Bourdieu, speaking figuratively, hits the nail on its head: forms of research that are associated with ‘transcendental reflections’ have flooded the academy post 1994 without shifting its practices in any ‘other’ direction. A wave of ‘self-indulgent narcissism’ (*ibid*) presented in research within the academy emerged as a function of *habitus* which steers, as a result of its anti-historical reflection, academics to reinvent their biographies to justify and therefore morally manage their present practices that remain, largely ‘regular’. History and its future are made present on *their* terms; thus, the durable dispositions endure.

When making sorties into ‘relativistic’, fashionable intellectual trends, what stands out is an academic spirit credited with licensing all sorts of self-indulgent research, ‘reflections’ and intellectual hide-outs. In spite of its vast pool of valuable insights, these trends tend to weaken epistemological vigilance and as such, hinder the academy in reinvesting in ‘scientific practice its own scientific gains’ (*ibid*: xiii). In short, it is difficult to bring together the production of knowledge (about the social world within the academy, which ordinarily’ if not for *habitus*, should lead to *transformations*) with the academy’s inertia to change which results in its *stagnations*. Bourdieu (*ibid*) suggests the following: First, academics belong to an academic field;

that site of permanent rivalry for the truth of the social world and of the academic world itself, and by the fact of occupying a determined position within it, defined by a certain number of properties, an education and training, qualifications and status, with all their concomitant forms of solidarity or membership.

Second, this ‘belonging’ ‘provides an opportunity for the conscious neutralization of the probabilities of error which are inherent in a position’ (*ibid*); like a conscious construction of ‘insights and blindness’ (*ibid*). Third,

there is a tendency not to ‘credit science, when it encroaches on the world of the scholar’. This suggests a link between the will to know with the will to power, which in the end disallows analyses into the individual and collective defence mechanisms of the academy itself (*ibid*: xiv). This

often takes the form of an operation of negation, and through which agents aim to maintain in being, for themselves and for others, representations of the social world which clash with the representation constructed by science (*ibid*).

That is, academics are seldom responsive to empirical research about the academy itself.

This analysis is central to Bourdieu’s study of the academy. For him *habitus* combines two approaches that should never have been dichotomised in HSS. First, ‘as an objective structure [that is] grasped from the outside [and] whose articulations can be materially observed, measured, and mapped out independently of the representations of those who live in it’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 7-8). However, as much as society has an objective structure ‘a materialist science of society must ... [second] ... recognize that the consciousness and interpretations of agents are an essential component of the full reality of the social world’ (*ibid*: 9); it is the interplay between objective and subjective factors that merges into one movement. But, if we are to proceed in scientific enterprise, we require a non-narcissistic reflexivity because ‘we are implicated in the world [and thus] there is implicit content in what we think and say about it’ (Bourdieu 1997: 9). Bourdieu has little faith in ‘reflection’ that turns thought onto itself because not even had the most militant doubt is capable of disrupting presuppositions:

The unconscious is history - the collective history that has produced our categories of thought, and the individual history through which they have been inculcated in us. It is, for example, from the social history of educational institutions (a supremely banal one, absent from the history of philosophical or other ideas), and from the (forgotten or repressed) history of our singular relationship to these institutions, that we can some real revelations about the objective and subjective structures (classifications, hierarchies, problematics, etc.) that always, in spite of ourselves, orient our thoughts (*ibid*).

Our thoughts are oriented by the categories produced by history: any reflection that does not account for this is not ‘reflection’ at all. The ‘overproduction’ of reflection-related inquiries in South African universities may precisely be of this ilk. At issue here is that reflection must be shown to be demanding; as it actually is in real life. An authentic assessment of the academy may ensue from such ‘demanding’, ‘non-narcissistic’ reflection:

[T]he most effective reflection is the one that consists in objectifying the subject of objectification. I mean by that the one that dispossesses the knowing subject of the privilege it normally grants itself and that deploys all the available instruments of objectification (statistical surveys, ethnographic observation, historical research, etc.) in order to bring to light the presuppositions it owes to its inclusion in the object of knowledge (*ibid*: 10).

In essence, Bourdieu (1995: 72) is establishing an ‘experimental science of the *dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality*, or more simply, of incorporation and objectification’. The dialectic between objectivism and subjectivism requires the objectified subject; which means that academics are meant to break with the familiar intimacy of their own thought. A reflexive posture constituted by objectification may now be possible. Thus, when academics study the academy they are now able to view the scientific field ‘as a system of objective relations between positions already won (in previous struggles) [...] [it] is the locus of a competitive struggle, in which the *specific* issues at stake is the monopoly of *scientific authority*’ (Bourdieu 1981b: 257). Such authority is linked to ‘legitimate’ academic knowledges that have specified credentialising authorities by which truth and validity are established. It follows then that all disciplinary practices are ‘directed towards the acquisition of scientific authority (prestige, recognition, fame, etc.)’ (*ibid*: 259-260) which draw their legitimacy from ‘the relative strength of the groups whose interests they express’ (*ibid*: 264).

A set of implications ensues from Bourdieu’s study of the academy. First, scientific authorities are established and maintained and social statuses are affirmed by the reproductive power of *habitus* within the academy. And though the academy ‘works’ within the ‘inherent’ transformations of knowledges, its practices are determined by *habitus*, so historically

constituted and are thus *stagnant*. Second, such possibility of knowledge transformations is slim on the basis that academics seem not to study their own social structures to disclose the categories of their self-understanding and the social derivation of thought that they employ. Bourdieu calls for scientific reflexivity as opposed to naive self-analysis to construct an

equally rigorous and uncompromising political economy of the [...] [academy] [...] in order to uncover its invisible structure, to locate the specific forms of capital that are efficient in it, and to raise our collective awareness of the hidden determinisms that regulate our practices as symbolic producers (Wacquant 1990: 687).

It seems as if academics in the natural and social sciences and humanities are caught in a double-bind: first, they are oriented by *habitus*; and second, they lack the methodological and intellectual dispositions and tools to study the hidden determinants that constitute their own *habitus*. But, even though Bourdieu suggests that it is difficult to transform the academy and its knowledge processes, his ultimate aim is for academic struggles to ‘increase the autonomy of the scientific field and thereby the political responsibilities of its participants’ (*ibid*: 681). He wants ‘a rupture with the doxic acceptance of the existing academic world that may help open up new spaces for intellectual freedom and action’ (*ibid*). Those, such as Bruno Frère, (2011: 247) who ‘deliberately’ misread Bourdieu to set up a paper tiger that ostensibly suffocates the theoretical and practical possibilities of human agency, fail to appreciate the intricacies of *habitus* as ‘the link not only between past, present and future, but also between the social and the individual, the objective and subjective, and structure and agency’ (Grenfell 2010: 51).

I will now turn to a discussion that relates the insights of Bourdieu’s analysis of the academy to the ‘crisis’ in HSS. Bell (2010: 73) suggests that *History* is on an ‘interpretive cul-de-sac’ that demands a new paradigm. He (*ibid*) extends this ‘crisis’ further:

I myself can hardly claim an expertise over ‘humanistic studies more generally,’ but my recent experience as a dean in an American research university gives me every reason to think that the sense of

drift and uncertainty felt by so many historians is shared by humanists in other disciplines.

Though there may be sporadic optimism for HSS to renew itself, the upsurge in innovative scholarly work to back up these sanguinities is absent. We can thus logically argue that the dearth of novel research programmes contributes to the ‘crisis’ in HSS. Apart from its negative academic consequences, this pattern necessitates the question: ‘[W]hy and how [has] critique in the service of social justice [...] been hollowed out of post-apartheid politics’ (Jacklin & Vale 2009: 1-2). However, what they (*ibid*: 5-7) refer to as the ‘complicity of the academy’, is narrowly interpreted within the managerialist strictures of neo-liberalism; the re-organisation of the universities in line with these strangulations; and the consequent marginalisation of HSS. What is absent from such analysis are the disciplinary practices and conditions created within HSS that make its abrupt ‘present’ marginalisation possible. Thus, JM Coetzee’s (2013: xiv) argument in a foreword to Higgins’s *Academic Freedom* (2013) that we need institutions ‘where teachers and students can pursue unconstrained the life of the mind’, lacks, with a few exceptions, historical counterparts in social reality during the Apartheid era where such pursuits were demonstrated as ‘good for the individual and good for society’ (*ibid*). That is, HSS in higher education with a historical pedigree of social justice would have been less vulnerable to its own contemporary crisis. Is this not what Lalu (Department of Higher Education and Training, Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences, 2011: 26) intimates, that when one wants to defend the HSS ‘we would have to be careful of what was being defended’. Thus, despite a marked trend amongst academics and higher education institution managers to reconstitute their biographies in alignment with the ‘historical-critical’, the empirical expression of such in social reality, historically and otherwise, in the main, does not actually exist.

In the Jacklin and Vale (2009) publication, Neocosmos (2009: 112) dwells, in my reading, unintentionally closest to the dilemma at the heart of HSS crisis, if viewed from a scholarly perspective. The streaming of public debate in post 1994 South Africa into a human rights discourse that resulted in the social sciences and politics operating in the absence of an emancipatory project, according to Neocosmos (*ibid*), affirms Bourdieu’s logic vis-à-vis *habitus*, if one considers that an emancipatory project may, largely, never have existed in HSS in pre or post 1994 South Africa. There seems to be a

seamless continuity pre and post 1994 within HSS, as far as the logic of its scholarship is concerned. But, this claim is problematic in itself as Neocosmos (*ibid*: 115) suggests, since there might have been elements of a critical science in history. This is true, I will argue, only insofar as HSS has avoided being tied to ‘state politics’; something I think it failed to do historically and continues to do so now. It is precisely its dependence on conditions relating to ‘state politics’ that cast doubt over its entire scholarly enterprise. Why, one wonders, in a world where the need for the ‘emancipatory’ should be overwhelming, do knowledge formations require state steering conditions to be critical and innovative? Is the academy not ‘miseducating’ itself? I suggest that one response to these questions lies with the way in which the academy has constructed a notion of politics in mimicry to the state (see Keet 2014b), as a poor alternative to ‘real’ emancipatory projects viewed as an authoritative politics outside the state; in other words: a politics of *political outsides*. Therefore, unlike Neocosmos (2009: 115), I argue that what is evacuated from HSS is not *politics*, but ‘politics’; an argument that may explain the dilemmas of higher education in general. Thus, the recoil of HSS further into the ‘descriptive’ and the ‘given’ (*ibid*) is unsurprising if analysed against *habitus* and the social structure of the academy. The moribund condition of HSS has been imported from the past and projected into the future; serving a matrix of cultural, academic, political and financial economies within South African higher education. The *stagnation* that inevitably follows the entrenchment of these economies undercuts the transformative movements ‘inherent’ within knowledge; a state of affairs productively interpreted via the schemata of *habitus*. How are we to respond to this? I propose, following Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (1997), to *retreat* HSS in the same way as *retreating* the political; the two should go hand-in-hand. In this regard I (Keet 2014b) explore explore a ‘retreating [of] the political’ (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1997) that wants to *retreat* from the political to *re-treat* it, to think it again in a new way, or to reinvent its actual conditions (Sparks 1997: xxvii). To withdraw, in this instance, means to displace the political in order to redraw its contours. The academic enterprise, in particular HSS, seems unable to *retreat* and thus *re-treat* itself; therefore, something cannot be ‘set free or unburdened’ (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1997: 131). Would it be too farfetched to suggest that HSS has lost its capacity for unburdening or, that it never had such capacity? Perhaps this is the reason why HSS continues to slip into positioning the state

as the ‘unifying horizon for all political representation’ (see Keet 2014b), including that of itself? If, as Neocosmos (2009: 115) argues, that politics is absent from HSS – and absent from life – because it is systematically removed by liberal democracy, why has HSS not *retreated* the political and reinvented its actual conditions? Rather, what we have seen is a research trend in HSS with an inclination towards social justice *lite*¹. This *lite*, as a notion indicating weight and substance, expelled the *political* from its midst as evidenced by the new intellectual currents in reconciliation studies, development studies, political studies, sexuality studies, queer studies and so forth. This, as argued in the Jacklin and Vale (2009) compilation, seems to be a general trend in HSS. If this state of affairs is a function of *habitus*, then one of the options available to us is to study the social structure of the academy to uncover and work against those internal mechanisms that limit the autonomy and thus, the political responsibility of academics. On this basis, we may proceed to initiate, or rather explore, the unlimited transformative potential of HSS as encapsulated in Malabou’s concept of *plasticity*.

Knowledge, Plasticity and Transformations

Malabou argues that the ‘future of the humanities as a future of plasticity, [...] is already woven into the humanities - and into disciplinarity as such - from the start [...] [P]lasticity indicates malleability, suppleness, and being “susceptible to changes of form”’ (Williams 2013: 8). It seems that such transformative potential is not demonstrated and realised, despite the significance assigned to HSS. Such importance is consistently argued in scholarly and research endeavours. These include Menand’s (2010) *The Marketplace of Ideas*; Nussbaum’s (2010) *Not for Profit*; the ASSAf report (2011); and the Report on the Charter for the Humanities and Social Sciences (2011). Previous to this, a range of influential intellectuals such as Derrida and Foucault argued that the humanities are

endowed with the task of ‘critical resistance,’ of ‘analyzing and reflecting upon limits,’ [...] the humanities infinitely resist the determination of a demarcated ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ because the very

¹ This notion was first articulated by Willy Nel in a bilateral conversation in August, 2012.

questioning of borderlines and the power that enforces them comprises the most critical task of the humanities (Williams 2013: 7).

With no pre-determined boundaries the humanities have a democratic condition but have chosen disciplinary imprisonment by which, within *habitus*, its practices have become regular and non-plastic. What Neocosmos (2009: 114) reads at *political disorientation* and moribund ‘social thought’ make perfect sense within the reproduction mechanisms of *habitus* as far as university spaces and the academy are concerned, especially within the context of a humanities academy that may never have ‘realised’ the plasticity of its own domain, and the concomitant political and social responsibility that ensue from it. The mouldable and pliable ‘borders’ of the humanities which should have been its transformative apparatuses have become its rigid contours as produced by *habitus* and as an interplay between agents and structures; it has lost its engagements with ‘frontiers’. Thus, Malabou (2009:1) identifies the threat to the humanities as follows:

The frontier between the humanities and sciences has to be redrawn. This because the most accurate concept of the frontier is today being elaborated and articulated by science, and no longer by any of the disciplines that constitute the humanities. Science is gradually becoming a discourse on limits, thus depriving the humanities from their own content or task. I will insist upon the field where this re-elaboration is the most visible and spectacular, i.e. neurobiology, where ‘plasticity’ characterizes a new epistemological, ontological and political mode of being of frontiers.

Most of the contributions in the Jacklin and Vale (2009) compilation, but especially the contribution of Neocosmos (2009), as well as the findings of the ASSAf report (2011) and the Report on the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences, suggest an inclination long in the making of Malabou’s intellectual project. That is, ‘[t]he future of any kind of discourse or of discursive practise, be it philosophical, literary or scientific, is linked with the plasticity of its limits and frontiers’ (Malabou 2013: 1). In my reading, these contributions and the reports argue, *inter alia*, that HSS has ‘lost’ the ‘plasticity of its limits’. This may explain the link between ‘crisis’ and ‘scholarship’ in the humanities. Nevertheless, one is tempted to ask: Of what

is this ‘loss’ a function? Bourdieu would argue that this ‘loss’ is not arbitrary; it is not simply a result of an ‘incapacity’ of thought, neither is it merely an outcome of external factors. The loss is a product of *habitus*, perpetuating the loss of something that actually did not exist previously in the South African academic context. Malabou does hint at this ‘double-loss’ in arguing that the humanities have always been ignorant of their plasticity. In *What Should We Do with Our Brain*, she (2008: 1) argues that ‘[t]he brain is a work, and we do not know it’. To awaken the consciousness of the brain *as* history, what we may call ‘constitutive historicity’ which is ‘nothing other than its plasticity’ (*ibid*: 4), one has to acknowledge its transformative ability (*ibid*: 16) which can be extended to an ethical dimension (repair) and a political one (responsibility to receive and give form) (*ibid*: 30). Disciplinary practices in HSS can thus be seen as sets of behaviours that are unaware of the plasticity of the disciplines themselves. Thus, when she argues for the frontier of the sciences and the humanities to be redrawn, Malabou (2013: 1) suggests a dialogue with neurobiology, in

which the concept of plasticity (under the name of neuroplasticity) is central [...] [t]his dialogue is necessary in order for the Humanities to resist the threat that weighs upon them (i.e. their being designated as useless and unproductive), in order for them to avoid being swallowed, or eaten alive, by science without even being aware of it.

Malabou builds her central conceptual frame on her reading of Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel is generally regarded as the most methodical thinker of the post-Kantian period and ‘the first great philosopher to make *modernity* – in all its historical, cultural and philosophical complexity – his subject’ (Speight 2008: 1). Hegel’s thought is sometimes described

to have a *dialectical* character [...] when ‘it is shown that there belongs to some subject matter or other, for example the world, motion, point, and so on, some determination or other . . . but further, that with equal necessity the opposite determination also belongs to the subject matter (*ibid*: 56).

Malabou’s (2005: 13) creative reading of Hegel proposes a

dialectical composition of such concepts as the ‘future’, ‘plasticity’, and ‘temporality’ form the *anticipatory structure* operating within subjectivity itself as Hegel conceived it. To distinguish this structure from the future as it is ordinarily understood, we will name this structure ‘to see (what is) coming’, [...] It is an expression that can [...] refer at *one and the same time* to the state of ‘being sure of what is coming’ and of ‘not knowing what is coming’. It is on this account that ‘to see (what is) coming’ can represent that interplay, within Hegelian philosophy, of *teleological necessity* and *surprise*.

To avoid the standard but crude interpretations of *Hegelian dialectics*, one can, using Hegel’s own words, argue that a subject matter, ‘at one and the same time’, has a ‘determination’ and an ‘opposite determination’. ‘To see (what is) coming’ has the ‘determination’ of *teleological necessity* and the ‘opposite determination’ of *surprise*. Thus, ‘to see (what is) coming’, becomes, for Malabou, the central motor scheme of her project where the interplay between *teleological necessity* and *surprise* ties in well with Hegel’s philosophy. Derrida (Foreword in Malabou 2005: ix), in expressing admiration for his student’s project, paraphrased Malabou’s project when she used the French expression ‘to see (what is) coming’ (*voir venir*) as follows:

To see (what is) coming’ is to anticipate, to foresee, to presage, to project; it is to expect what is coming; but it is also to let what is coming come or to let oneself be surprised by the unexpected, by the sudden appearance of what is un-awaited.

Derrida (*ibid.*: xi) further notes that between the two

contradictory senses of ‘to see (what is) coming’ there is an *Aufhebung*, or a *sublation*, of one meaning into its other [...] the factor, the modality, that demonstrates this mobile and self-contradictory ambiguity of ‘to see (what is) coming’, is its *plasticity*. The ‘to see (what is) coming’ is plastic.

The Dialectic is Plastic

The *dialectic* also connects Bourdieu’s *habitus* (e.g. the interplay between the

objective and subjective) with Malabou's *plasticity*. Whereas Bourdieu provides us with ways of 'seeing' the challenges of transforming the academy through the lens of *habitus*, Malabou's *plasticity* suggests a transformative inscription in knowledge itself and combines with Bourdieu in the aim to 'increase the autonomy of the scientific field and thereby the political responsibilities of its participants' (Wacquant 1990: 681), so I would argue. Somewhere else I (Keet 2014c) engaged with Malabou's notion of *plasticity* along the following lines. Malabou's (2005) *The Future of Hegel* re-introduces the concept of 'plasticity' to mean 'a capacity to receive form and a capacity to produce form' (Malabou 2005: 9). Plasticity also refers to a philosophical attitude that Hegel described as a 'sense of receptivity and understanding on the part of the listener' (*ibid*: 10) which Malabou (*ibid*) paraphrased as the reader and interlocutor being 'receptive to the form, but they in their turn are lead to construct and form what they hear and read'. She interprets Hegel's dialectic as a process of plasticity, 'a movement where formation and dissolution, novelty and anticipation, are in continual interplay' (During 2000: 191). Hegel's dialectic does not lead, as generally interpreted, to a closure, but to a future that is open (*ibid*: 192). The dialectic is regenerated as a forward movement because of its 'plasticity' (Crockett 2010 xii). On the *regenerative* inscription of transformation into dialectic, Malabou (2011: 88) suggests that 'regenerative plasticity does [...] speak to us today of [...] regeneration without sublation', without *aufhebung*. In this instance, Malabou argues 'plasticity' in relation to the neurobiological sciences via the plasticity of the brain; the insights from 'regenerative medicines'; and the biological capacities for regeneration in, for instance, the 'salamander' (Malabou 2011). In essence, for Malabou (2008: 17)

[...] with plasticity we are dealing with a concept that is not contradictory but graduated, because the very plasticity of its meaning situates it at the extremes of a formal necessity (the irreversible character of formation: determination) and of a remobilization of form (the capacity to form oneself otherwise, to displace, even to nullify determination: freedom).

If we understand *plasticity* as set out by Malabou above, the future of HSS is then the future of plasticity, so inscribed. Thus, the tasks of HSS to facilitate critique at its own limits and frontiers require regeneration, or initiation.

Malabou (2013: 2) suggests three limits: ‘the limits of knowledge, the limits of political power, [and] the limits of ethics’. To be at the limits and to think at the frontiers, presumes an outside; a space partly delineated by the natural sciences. The challenge, according to Malabou (*ibid*) is that we constitute ‘frontier’ in ways that ‘always already rigidifies the meaning of the outside, and consequently of the inside as well’. She intimates that *plasticity* is undermined right from the start ‘by the fixity and determination of the spaces it is supposed to limit in a supple and malleable way’ (*ibid*). The logical consequence of this line of reasoning is that HSS has limited itself, as evidenced by the absence of innovative scholarly projects that disallow ‘genuine crossings, genuine formations of plastic borders *between* the inside and the outside’. Here, the ‘crisis’ emerges more as self-constituted and less than externally determined. The continuity between pre and post 1994 HSS in higher education in South Africa is now obvious; the pre and post 1994 crisis of the HSS is *one and the same*.

HSS are plastic knowledges; the human is plastic which means that it gives itself its own form, that it is able to transform itself, to invent and produce itself, and that it is nothing but this very process of self-formation

[and if HSS] have to be at the frontiers, as we said to begin with, it is to the extent that, according to the plasticity of the human, they have to recreate constantly their own being and meaning. Transformation here doesn’t mean the transformation of something pre-existing but the very emergence of what has to be transformed. (Malabou 2013: 3).

Malabou here seems to suggest a double transformation: first, the *emergence*, the way of creating the very being and meaning of HSS needs to be transformative; second, this *transformative* and its result that is yet to emerge need to be transformed ... a continual recreation at *plastic frontiers*, the knowledges are plastic. However, the *emergence*, that is, the ‘plasticity of criticism, implies [that there] is a priority of fashioning over being, the priority of transformation over what has to be transformed’ (Malabou 2013: 3).

Though Malabou (2013) sets up the *transformations* in HSS within its own knowledge formations, her main thesis is that HSS has not taken up the potential of its own *plastic frontiers*, which has resulted in *stagnations*; it

is thus at risk of being ‘swallowed, or eaten alive, by science without even being aware of it’ (*ibid*: 1). Here, she thinks of the tendency of neuroscience ‘to overpower the fields of human sciences ([e.g.] neurolinguistics, neuropsychanalysis, neuroaesthetics, or of neurophilosophy)’ (*ibid*: 5). Malabou (2008: 17-29) identifies three plasticities in relation to the brain: developmental plasticity (the formation of neuronal connections); modulational plasticity (the brain and its history); and reparative plasticity (the brain and its regeneration). If we insist on all three plasticities, the *historicity* of brain constitutes, via interplays between mental and social structures, the very possibility of *habitus*. The ‘durable dispositions’ are made durable by the brain as its own history. Thus, inasmuch as the *plasticity* of the brain suggests the *plasticity* of knowledge frontiers, the social practices of the academy are unfortunately rigidifying this very *plasticity*, through *stagnations*.

Conclusion

How did it become possible for inscribed, *transformative plasticity* within HSS to be abandoned within the academy? This seems to be exactly the point made by research reports on HSS. Bourdieu would suggest that our incapacity for ‘objectivication’ may be a contributing factor to this state of affairs. Foucault (as quoted by Malabou 2013:5) would argue that what is missing is a ‘critical ontology of ourselves (within the academy) as a historico-practical test’. Malabou would reason that HSS has never grasped the *plasticity* of its knowledge formations and frontiers.

At the very conceptual heart of our dilemma, is the non-emergence of a productive *dialectic*: between objectivication and subjectivication; between determination and its negation; and between formation and the remobilisation of form. *Plasticity* could be imprisoned by *habitus*, even if *habitus* suggests a limited *plasticity* itself. One could argue that Malabou herself caps *plasticity*, via the historicity of the brain, in line with Bourdieu’s *habitus* that is historically determined. Both Bourdieu and Malabou point to the *dialectic* between *transformations* and *stagnations* in the academy, and in HSS in particular; a Hegelian determination that has an equal opposite. If we read Hegelian dialectics through Malabou’s eyes, then the transformative forward movement of the *dialectic* is towards an open *plastic* future, and not a closed one (as orthodox readings of Hegel surmise), because the *dialectic* itself is *plastic*. If we then summon *habitus*, we have to do so to uncover the

challenges, with its limited possibilities, in all its complexities and economies that make up the social structure of the academy. When we summon *plasticity*, we would do well to do so by exploring the infinite transformative potential of HSS that is at *one and the same time* restricted, dialectically, by the state of scholarship within the disciplines themselves.

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The ‘Network Society’, Social Transformation, and the ‘Ecological Rift’

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Abstract

Manuel Castells’s incisive analysis of space and time in the so-called ‘network society’ has brought to light a stark contrast between those modes of space and time that are dominant today - what he calls the ‘space of flows’ and ‘timeless time’ - and older, traditional modes, namely ‘the space of places’ and ‘experiential (or sequential) time’, as well as a different, planetary time, called ‘glacial time’. In this paper I explore briefly the transition to the newly dominant temporal and spatial modes, as well as their relation to what John Bellamy Foster has dubbed ‘the ecological rift’ - the rapidly widening gulf between nature and human society. In the course of the argument, light may be cast on the role of humanities knowledge-production, and of knowledge production in general, in relation to social transformation, which seems to me to imply two kinds of social transformation. The first is the social transformation potentially and to a certain extent actually brought about by the kind of knowledge generated by the humanities (and one might add the social sciences), despite the tendency among practitioners of the humanities themselves, not to take them seriously. The second is the social transformation that occurs as a result of knowledge production generally, and more especially of a techno-scientific kind, which has, since the 1980s, laid the material foundation for the transformation of society through electronically mediated communication systems. All the evidence points to the fact that the latter kind of transformation, being situated at the ‘cutting edge’ of technological, economic, political and military power in the network society (which is itself the result of this transformation), is incomparably more effective in its transmutation of the very conditions of possibility of human society (space and time) than the transformation that could potentially emanate from humanities knowledge-practices. However, although the latter

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are far less powerful in their immediately perceptible social effects, there is nevertheless no reason to throw in the towel, as it were, because events unfolding at the level of 'glacial time', and responsible for the accelerating manifestation of the 'ecological rift', are likely to generate or cultivate growing receptivity to humanities-knowledge on the part of social actors. The paper will address these closely related issues, with a view to affirming the enduring value of the knowledge generated by and archived in the humanities.

Keywords: art, capitalism, ecology, glacial time, literature, sequential time, social transformation, space of flows, space of places, timeless time

There is a new, yet to be realized form of development waiting to replace the development that has brought us to this sorry pass of destabilizing the very natural matrix that gave birth to the human species, and that is the transformative emergence of ecological intelligence (Anonymous).

The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis (Dante Alighieri).

Introduction

Manuel Castells¹ is not the only one who has demonstrated that a revolution in information technologies was responsible, in the late 20th century, for altering the material base of society, but in *The rise of the network society* (1996; 2010) he has done so with a combination of empirical evidence and theoretical acumen that is exemplary for the social sciences and humanities. One of the themes he explores there, is that the information revolution has created the foundation for global economies to become interdependent, in the process altering the relationship between economy, society, politics and

¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have also done so in their far-reaching trilogy, *Empire* (2001), *Multitude* (2005) and *Commonwealth* (2009).

culture. This is not all that has been altered, concomitantly with the emergence of the ‘network society’, however. Significantly, the very experience of space and time has been structurally altered in this social and economic milieu, in a manner that can be linked to the emerging information-technological changes. I would like to argue here that Castells’s account of such modified experiences, correlative to different, newly dominant modes of time and space (compared to earlier modes), foregrounds social transformations that bear on the question of social cohesion as well as that of the very future of human society in its relation to the natural environment.

This contrasts sharply with the kind of transformations that one might hope would follow from, or at least be made possible by, knowledge articulated and archived in and by the humanities and the social sciences. Such transformations, if they occur at all, are usually the result of interpretive engagements with texts of various kinds, or – in the case of the social sciences – of reflective interaction with social reality at various levels, including those of the family and a diverse array of other institutions. How should ‘transformation’ be understood here? Hans-Georg Gadamer’s (1982) hermeneutic approach is invaluable in this regard, while John Bellamy Foster *et al.* (2010) remind one not to expect too much of it, given a certain ‘crisis’ in the social sciences (and one might add, humanities; this is addressed below). To understand what Foster (*et al.*) means here, one has to place it in the context of the present planetary ecological crisis, but not before reconstructing the main contours of Castells’s ‘network society’, which has emerged over the last few decades in the course of a major technological transformation of the social world.

The Network Society, the ‘Space of Flows’ and ‘Timeless Time’

Although there are several examples of literary and cinematic artworks which can be read as aesthetic counterparts to Castells’s *The rise of the network society* (1996; 2010), I shall not here dwell at length on such a reading². In

² Elsewhere (Olivier 2013) I have tried to demonstrate the correlation between two literary artworks – Ishiguro’s *When we were orphans* and Gibson’s *Neuromancer* – and co-constitutive theories, including Castells’s on the ‘network society’.

the present context it is more relevant to focus on the novel structural dynamics of the 'network society', although one can note in passing that these, as uncovered in Castells's work, resonate with the way it was anticipated aesthetically in a literary work of science fiction more than a decade earlier, namely Gibson's *Neuromancer* of 1984 (for a sustained account of this, see Olivier 2013). Both texts worked to construct a force-field of sorts, within the projection of which a new 'distribution of the sensible' (in Ranci re's phrase), that is, a transformation of the extant social world, was made possible. What are its salient features?

A brutal condensation of the relevant parts of Castells's text – the first of a trilogy – will have to do, given its enormity. First, what has driven this transformation has been a technological revolution, which Castells describes as follows (2010: Chapter 5, Introduction):

...the integration of various modes of communication into an interactive network...in other words, the formation of a hypertext and a meta-language which, for the first time in history, integrate into the same system the written, oral, and audio-visual modalities of human communication. The human spirit reunites its dimensions in a new interaction between the two sides of the brain, machines, and social contexts³.

As Castells observes, the emergence of the 'information superhighway' has modified the character of communication fundamentally. Nor has it left culture unaffected – through the mediating function of communication the new technological system, with its increasingly 'global reach, its integration of all communication media, and its potential interactivity is changing and will forever change our culture.' The development of interactive communication was the culmination of several decades of development of mass media, with television playing the central role in this process. Castells dwells at length (2010: Chapter 5, Sections 1 & 2) on the establishment of the mass media, their reciprocity with culture and society, as well as their

³ Leonard Shlain (1998) has explored the societal transformation brought about by the transition from (the valorization of) alphabet literacy (left-brain dominance) to the increasing (right-brain) dominance of the audio-visual image since the beginning of the 19th century.

diversification into decentralized ‘new media’ in the 1980s, from where they morphed into the 1990s phenomenon of the multi-media.

One cannot ignore the importance of the transition, clearly delineated by Castells, from a unidirectional television culture, with little room for diversified reception on audiences’ part, to a diversified, multi-choice reception culture. The direction of development was from relatively passive reception towards a more active role in recorded film- and programme-choice, and finally participation in media culture through the personal recording of ‘family events’ and ‘home movies’⁴. Nevertheless, ‘interactive communication’ between senders and receivers would only be actualised, Castells points out, beyond the development of computers, through the technology that enabled computers to ‘communicate’ with one another, that is, through the internet.

Castells’s account of these developments (2010: Chapter 5, Section 3) foregrounds the sheer speed with which the establishment and global expansion of the internet has occurred, compared to radio and television. The millions of computer networks which exist around the world today, he points out, accommodate the ‘whole spectrum of human communication, from politics to religion to sex and research – with e-commerce as the centerpiece of the contemporary Internet.’ If it is kept in mind that this multitude of qualitatively and functionally distinct networks were inter-connected to and by the internet by the end of the 20th century, after a mere 3 to 4 decades of development, it is an astonishing achievement⁵.

This astonishing volume of virtual communicational traffic, characterized by lack of overall organization, prodigious purposive and

⁴ As an aside, one should note that Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 457-458) have a different perspective on the participation of audiences in television programming and reception. They highlight the relation between consumers and the new informational or cybernetic machines, of which humans as consumers are said to be ‘constituent parts’ (p. 458), instead of being only users. For them, this amounts to a new kind of enslavement. John Thompson (1990), too, contributes to an understanding of the social consequences of the growth in electronically mediated communication in the context of its implications for the functioning of ideology in modern culture.

⁵ The internet has its roots in the US military project, ARPANET, which was developed in the 1960s.

membership diversification, as well as, largely, spontaneity, might lead one to expect increased attempts at limitation and control by various 'authorities' such as governments and corporations. Yet, with the exception of a few cases, it appears that, by and large, they favour the further expansion of these networks (Castells 2010: Chapter 5, Section 3). Nevertheless, one cannot ignore Hardt and Negri's (2001: 298-300) claim that the tension between the horizontal, 'democratic' aspect of the internet and its vertical, 'oligopolistic' aspect (concerning intermittent attempts at its control) is an irresolvable one⁶. There is another tension which is addressed in Castells' work. It concerns what he (2010: Preface to the 2010 Edition, IV) calls the 'transformation of space and time in the human experience', specifically where he distinguishes between 'the space of places' and 'the space of flows', on the one hand, and between ordinary, lifeworld time and 'timeless time', on the other.

The 'space of places' denotes the historically familiar sense of space as a material precondition of social interaction that proceeds in ordinary lifeworld time-sequence, and of architectural space-modulation into place. The 'space of flows', by contrast, marks a novel form of spatiality, characterized by simultaneity, regardless of physical distance, and is related to social interaction that has been fundamentally modified by advanced communication technologies. This form of space is intimately connected to what Castells calls 'timeless time', which emerges where experiential time sequences are blurred in contemporary practices such as 'flexi-work' and quasi-instantaneous financial transactions. For present purposes it is significant that Castells (2010: Preface to the 2010 Edition, IV) also points to evolutionary, planetary, or 'glacial time' – a concept connected with the ecological movement – which increasingly clashes with the demands of 'timeless time' in the network society. This is significant because in every case an originary human or 'natural', experience (of time and space) is juxtaposed with an experience which is not natural in this sense, but is technologically mediated.

Could be expected that, with the advent of the 'network society' new modes of spatiality and temporality would emerge? Because space has always

⁶ Related to this, there is the paralyzing communicational 'differend' (Lyotard) between the agencies of 'Empire', on the one hand, and the 'multitude' on the other, as far as the practices of democracy are concerned. See Hardt and Negri (2005), and Olivier (2007) in this regard.

been the ‘material support of simultaneity in social practice’, one might expect this to remain so today, which means that people occupying the same space in a city can communicate in the temporal here and now. However, this does not mean that the ‘space of places’ is still the dominant mode of space in the network society. It is well-known in social theory that ‘All major social changes are ultimately characterized by a *transformation of space and time in the human experience*’ (Castells 2010, Preface, IV; bold in original). It is therefore not surprising that there have been some fundamental changes in the spatial structure of cities. It is clear from Castells’s work that the changed (and still changing) structure of cities and their adjacent areas into *metropolitan regions* (Castells 2010, Preface, IV; Chapter 6, Section 4) is itself a function of the ‘space of flows’, introduced by communication technologies. One is increasingly witnessing the emergence of metropolitan *regions* that surpass mere metropolitan *areas* because they usually consist of several of such dense residential metropolitan areas, together with non-metropolitan areas such as open spaces and agricultural land, instead of the traditional city, with its identifiable urban centre, surrounded by mainly residential suburban areas. Moreover, they are multicentred, given various types of functional importance of different metropolitan nuclei, and vastly exceed traditional cities in population. Castells singles out the largest global metropolitan region as that which stretches from Hong Kong to Guangzhou – the South China metropolitan region with approximately 60 million inhabitants⁷. In his discussion of this metropolitan region Castells (2010: Chapter 6, Section 4) observes that ‘Mega-cities are the nodal points [of metropolitan regions], and the power centers of the new spatial form/process of the Information Age: the space of flows’.

Metropolitan regions like these are the urban embodiment of the network-character of this new type of society. They manifest what Castells’ (2010, Preface, IV) calls a:

... new form of spatiality [that I]...conceptualized as the *space of flows*: the material support of simultaneous social practices communicated at a distance. This involves the production, transmission

⁷ William Gibson anticipated this kind of mega-city region in the image of The Sprawl, in his pioneering science fiction novel of 1984, namely *Neuromancer* (1995), and its sequels, *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*.

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and processing of flows of information. It also relies on the development of localities as nodes of these communication networks, and the connectivity of activities located in these nodes by fast transportation networks operated by information flows.

In his theorization of this novel, now dominant spatial mode Castells (2010: Chapter 6, Section 5) approaches space as '*crystallized time*'. From this perspective, '*space is the material support of time-sharing social practices*'. This does not only apply to the virtual spaces (or 'cyberspace') of the internet, but to the spatial mode that is dominant in the material (sub-) structure of mega-cities themselves. This is why Castells claims that this new kind of mega-city can be understood as a *process*, articulated through 'flows' of various kinds – 'flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds, and symbols'. Furthermore, 'Flows are not just one element of the social organization: they are the expression of processes *dominating* our economic, political, and symbolic life' (Castells 2010: Chapter 6, Section 5). Hence, he defines the novel, dominant spatial mode as follows:

The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. By flows I understand purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society. Dominant social practices are those which are embedded in dominant social structures. By dominant structures I understand those arrangements of organizations and institutions whose internal logic plays a strategic role in shaping social practices and social consciousness for society at large.

Castells proceeds to indicate that what one might call the logic of domination appears in the space of flows in a twofold manner: the elites establish 'their own society' (secluded communities, exclusively priced real estate, spatially restricted, networked, subcultural, decision-making interactions such as those in exclusive restaurants or airport lounges, and on the golf course), and they create a culturally distinctive 'lifestyle' intent on 'standardizing' and unifying the symbolic spatial environment of elites globally (e.g. international hotels

with similar room-design and decoration⁸).

The kind of space familiar to everyone, which still exists side-by-side with the space of flows, is the ‘space of places’, referred to earlier. Despite the dominance of the ‘space of flows’, (most) people still live in places. This dominance does not leave the ‘space of places’ unaffected, but alters its dynamics and existential meaning. This is apparent in the example of Tokyo, which successfully resisted the colonization-tendency of the space of flows when the people of the city rejected the corporate elite-sponsored World City Fair in 1995 (Castells 2010: Chapter 6, Section 7). Castells (Chapter 6, Section 7) defines ‘place’ as follows: ‘*A place is a locale whose form, function, and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity*’. His discussion of the *quartier* of Belleville in Paris illustrates how ‘spaces of place’ function in providing people with a sense of (multicultural) community and rootedness. Its plural communities have, through interaction and a variety of spatial uses (such as ‘active street life’), historically constructed it as a meaningful place, effectively resisting intermittent threats such as that posed by the vanguard of the corporate elites, namely urban gentrification. Needless to stress, there are many similar examples, from all over the world, of place-space asserting itself in the face of the onslaught of the space of flows. Others are less successful, as in the case of Irvine, California, where globalization and concomitant localization interact in complex ways, so that Irvine is indeed still experienced as a place, but this has increasingly been assimilated to home-space, with flows-space incessantly encroaching on other places. Castells (2010: Chapter 6, Section 7) articulates the consequences of the impact of the increasing domination of the space of flows as follows, and this serves to illustrate the extent to which the information-technology revolution has transformed extant society:

Experience, by being related to places, becomes abstracted from power, and meaning is increasingly separated from knowledge. There follows a structural schizophrenia between two spatial logics that threatens to break down communication channels in society. The dominant tendency is toward a horizon of networked, ahistorical

⁸ Jason Reitman’s 2009 film, *Up in the Air*, thematizes the kind of life spent largely in the ‘space of flows’ – airports and standardized hotels – as well as the toll it takes of people who have no option but to live in this space.

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space of flows, aiming at imposing its logic over scattered, segmented places, increasingly unrelated to each other, less and less able to share cultural codes⁹. Unless cultural, political, *and physical* bridges are deliberately built between these two forms of space, we may be heading toward a life in parallel universes whose times cannot meet because they are warped into different dimensions of a social hyperspace.

What Castells terms the 'timeless time' induced by the 'space of flows' is even more dehumanising than the latter. He contrasts it with the 'clock time' of the industrial era, and with experiential time, or the time of natural rhythms and familiar connections between past, present and future (Castells 2010: Chapter 7, Section 1). 'Timeless time' has always been inherent in capitalism as regulating ideal, of course, given the constant approximation of timelessness, or the overcoming of time-constraints, in the sense of minimizing the time-lapses between production, distribution, sales and consumption (see Harvey 1989: 141-172; as well as Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 32-34). Since the creation of a world market of virtual, if not actual, instantaneity, when the markets of all countries were connected through a global computer-network in the 1980s, this sustained attempt to overcome the constraints of time (and space) has been intensified without interruption. What Castells calls a new 'time regime' (2010: Chapter 7, Introduction) is therefore connected, like the 'space of flows', to the new communication technologies, which can be seen as constantly striving, like capitalism, towards the optimal minimization of time-lapses.

Contemporary societies, according to Castells (2010: Chapter 7, Section 1), are still largely under the domination of 'clock time', which was developed along different, but related trajectories by industrial capitalism and communism, respectively. This mode of time-dominance which has been fundamental to industrial capitalism over the last century (2010: Chapter 7, Section 1) is being challenged today, just as the familiar 'space of places' is being eroded by the 'space of flows' of postmodernity. Castells puts it this way (2010: Chapter 7, Section 1):

⁹ Except in the sense of an overarching, globalizing set of supra-cultural codes, which tends towards, but does not quite achieve, cultural homogenization, given its complex, often hybridizing interactions with local cultures.

This linear, irreversible, measurable, predictable time is being shattered in the network society, in a movement of extraordinary historical significance. But we are not just witnessing a relativization of time according to social contexts or alternatively the return to time reversibility as if reality could become entirely captured in cyclical myths. The transformation is more profound: it is the mixing of tenses to create a forever universe, not self-expanding but self-maintaining, not cyclical but random, not recursive but incursive: timeless time, using technology to escape the contexts of its existence, and to appropriate selectively any value each context could offer to the ever-present...Compressing time to the limit is tantamount to make time sequence, and thus time, disappear...Capital's freedom from time and culture's escape from the clock are decisively facilitated by new information technologies, and embedded in the structure of the network society.

Castells's (2010: Chapter 7, Sections 1 to 9) traces the emergence of 'timelessness' or what Harvey calls (1989: 147, 240, 260-283) 'time-space compression' in, among other fields, capitalist transformations of financial investment and speculation, which depend upon the temporal acceleration of financial transactions to the nth degree for the optimalization of profits (frequently with devastating effects upon entire economies and the concrete lives of people; see in this regard also Žižek 2009: 67-68, on capital as the 'real' of capitalism), and in the increasing turn towards the reduction and flexibilization of work time, for various interrelated reasons (such as the increase in the workforce, including women's entry into the labour market, and the introduction of sophisticated technology), but always with one end in view, namely an increase in profitable production. Castells (2010: Chapter 7, Section 9) provides a succinct summary of the areas where he has traced the transformation of time: 'Split-second capital transactions, flex-time enterprises, variable life working time, the blurring of the life-cycle, the search for eternity through the denial of death, instant wars, and the culture of virtual time, are all fundamental phenomena, characteristic of the network society, which systematically mix tenses in their occurrence'.

'Virtual time' (Castells 2010: Chapter 7, Section 8), is important

here, given that 'the culture of real virtuality' displays two ways of transforming time: simultaneity and timelessness, which are perceptible in computer-mediated, interactive communication, in the intermingling of times in the media, and as temporal immediacy in global media transmissions. Hence, Castells proposes (2010: Chapter 7, Section 9):

... that *timeless time*, as I label the dominant temporality of our society, *occurs when the characteristics of a given context, namely, the informational paradigm and the network society, induce systemic perturbation in the sequential order of phenomena performed in that context.* This perturbation may take the form of compressing the occurrence of phenomena, aiming at instantaneity, or else by introducing random discontinuity in the sequence. Elimination of sequencing creates undifferentiated time, which is tantamount to eternity... *Timeless time belongs to the space of flows, while time discipline, biological time, and socially determined sequencing characterize places around the world, materially structuring and destructuring our segmented societies.* Space shapes time in our society, thus reversing an historical trend: flows induce timeless time, places are time-bounded.

Castells's ostensibly anachronistic use of the term 'eternity' clearly means the tendency inherent in the emergent temporal mode, to overcome the constraints of sequential, lifeworld-time as far as possible. Lest one should succumb to the impression of technological determinism here, he reminds one that social resistance to 'the logic of timelessness' also occurs, for the sake of regaining control over certain social interests. Among other things, this is noticeable in a concern for the relation between humanity and the natural environment. Referring to what, in the work of Lash and Urry, is called 'glacial time', or the 'long-term and evolutionary' temporality that connects humans with the prehistoric past and an unpredictable planetary future, he continues (2010: Chapter 7, Section 9): '...the opposition between the management of glacial time and the search for timelessness anchors in contradictory positions in the social structure the environmentalist movement and the powers that be in our society...'

This admittedly brief reconstruction of Castells's analysis of space and time in the network society, whose structural dynamics are fundamen-

tally informed by electronically mediated communications, suggests, first, that natural-scientific knowledge and the technological innovations it makes possible are at the basis of the thoroughgoing transformation of global societies today. Like it or not, one cannot ignore it, because it affects the lives of everyone. Moreover, it raises the spectre of a confrontation with those who seek to recuperate and protect the humanity-preserving 'space of places', together with experiential time and 'glacial time', which marks the relation between humans and their life-supporting environment. There is a disconnect between the discursive practices operating in the domain of the 'space of flows' and its temporal counterpart, 'timeless time', on the one hand, and those discursive practices predicated on the 'space of places' and experiential time, embedded in the natural rhythms of life. In this regard Castells (2010: Chapter 7, Section 9) refers to:

...the conflictive differentiation of time, understood as the impact of opposed social interests on the sequencing of phenomena. Such differentiation concerns, on the one hand, the contrasting logic between timelessness, structured by the space of flows, and multiple, subordinate temporalities, associated with the space of places. On the other hand, the contradictory dynamics of society opposes the search for human eternity, through the annihilation of time in life, to the realization of cosmological eternity, through the respect of glacial time. Between subdued temporalities and evolutionary nature the network society rises on the edge of forever.

Castells's work drives the point home, that the disjunction between the space of flows/timeless time, on the one hand, and the space of places/experiential time/'glacial time', on the other, is a manifestation of the consequences of one of the most far-reaching transformations of society in recent history, and one which the human sciences are in a position to address – even if they cannot undo the disjunction in question. Why far-reaching? Because everyone on the planet, social elites as well as working class people, is subject to a sustainable planetary ecosystem and biosphere, on which the disjunction between the 'space of flows'/'timeless time', on the one hand, and 'glacial time', on the other, is bound to have a major impact, given the systematic technological distancing from the earth and from place-oriented

communities that accompanies the former¹⁰. The human sciences face the task of disseminating an informed awareness, if not a thorough understanding, of what is at stake here¹¹. Only such an awareness, accompanied by social and cultural practices predicated on the irreplaceable value of what Habermas (1987: 119-152), following Husserl, calls the 'lifeworld', can foster a sustained resistance to the momentum of the 'space of flows' towards totalization.

The Ecological Rift

'Anthropocene', the term coined just more than ten years ago by Paul Crutzen, a Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist (Foster *et al.* 2010: 12), denotes the new ecological period, following the end of the Holocene, when humans became the principal force driving changes in the planetary system. I say this because the Holocene ('New Whole'), or stable geological period of about 12 000 years between ice ages, came to an end around the Industrial Revolution of the late 1700s, which is exactly the time when humans moved into the position where they are capable of affecting life on earth as we know it. Unfortunately the Anthropocene may turn out, if scientists working in the area of the geo-sciences are correct in their assessment of what are now called 'planetary boundaries', to be a mere flicker in terms of geological time.

¹⁰ See in this regard Germain 2004, for an investigation into the technological drive to overcome human dependence on the earth.

¹¹ One of the most informative and persuasive sources in this regard is undoubtedly Thomas Princen's (2010) remarkably argued appeal to people across the world to 'tread softly' by learning to live ecologically and economically within their means, instead of 'overconsuming' (which belongs with the 'space of flows'). If there were to be an incremental turning to such a way of living, the conflict of interests referred to earlier could conceivably be dissolved. Paul Hawken, in *Blessed unrest* (2007) believes that we are already witnessing a vast global social movement, intent on getting beyond what is widely perceived to be a global crisis, taking shape, albeit 'under-the-radar'.

James Hansen, regarded as the leading climatologist in the US, explains the reason for this bleak prospect in his book, *Storms of My Grandchildren* (quoted in Foster *et al.* 2010: 11-12):

Planet Earth, creation, the world in which civilisation developed, the world with climate patterns that we know and stable shorelines, is in imminent peril. The urgency of the situation crystallised only in the past few years. We now have clear evidence of the crisis ... the startling conclusion is that continued exploitation of all fossil fuels on Earth threatens not only the other millions of species on the planet but also the survival of humanity itself — and the timetable is shorter than we thought.

In *The Ecological Rift – Capitalism’s War on the Earth* (2010: 13), John Bellamy Foster and his co-authors remind one that most people think of the ecological crisis today almost exclusively as climate change, which is prominent in the news because it poses virtually insurmountable problems for capitalism. In fact, however, climate change is but one of nine ‘planetary boundaries’ that have been scrutinised by natural scientists in recent years. These are decisive for sustaining a biosphere in which humans can exist securely. The other eight are chemical pollution, biodiversity loss, change in land use, global freshwater use, stratospheric ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosol loading, the phosphorus and nitrogen cycles, and ocean acidification. Although two of these – chemical pollution and atmospheric aerosol loading – still lack reliable physical measurements, distinct boundaries have been established for the other seven.

These planetary boundaries are subject to on-going global processes, and scientists at the Stockholm Resilience Centre have found that three of them have already crossed their respective boundaries, namely climate change, biodiversity loss and the nitrogen cycle, all of which can therefore be regarded as representing a ‘rift’. Although stratospheric ozone depletion threatened to become such a rift in the 1990s, it has been stabilising of late, but global freshwater use, ocean acidification and the phosphorus cycle are fast approaching rift status. Moreover, ocean acidification, climate change and stratospheric ozone loss are seen as ‘tipping points’, which would be capable of destabilising the earth system (when certain levels are reached) by introducing sweeping qualitative changes. The boundaries for the other four

processes are viewed, not so much as 'tipping points', but rather as points at which irreversible environmental degradation would set in.

When confronted by such stark, ominous-sounding statements in texts written by reputable scientists, one can easily feel overwhelmed, or sceptical, depending on one's knowledge of the way such scientific claims are established. To begin with, sceptics should be reminded that scientists worldwide are largely in agreement about these findings today, and secondly, that it is for good reason. While the precise sequential manifestation of irreversible environmental degradation cannot be delineated because of the complexity involved, however, there are a number of things that can, and have been, reasonably precisely ascertained through careful measurement and modelling. Johan Rockström and his associates in Stockholm (including Crutzen and Hanson) have established three values for each of the seven (measurable) 'boundary processes' referred to above, namely a pre-industrial value (or levels reached before the beginning of industrial capitalism), a boundary level value, and a current level status value (Foster *et al.* 2010: 13-14).

For example, the pre-industrial value of climate change was 280 parts per million (ppm) carbon dioxide atmospheric concentration. The boundary proposed for this is 350 ppm, beyond which it should not go if the tipping point of events such as catastrophic sea level rise were to be prevented. Its current status is already 390 ppm, which means it is well beyond the tipping point. The loss in biodiversity is measured by extinction rate, or the number of species lost per million species annually. The preindustrial, or 'natural' rate was 0.1-1 per million; the estimated boundary is 10 per million per year, and the current rate of species loss is above 100 per million annually (almost 1000 times the preindustrial 'natural' rate). The third process that has crossed its boundary level, the nitrogen cycle, concerns the number of tons (in millions) of nitrogen removed from the atmosphere for industrial use per year. Before the discovery of the Haber-Bosch process for such removal in the early 1900s, the amount taken from the atmosphere was 0 tons. The estimated annual boundary for avoiding irreversible deterioration of the planetary system is 35 million tons, and at present the amount removed per year is 121 tons (Foster *et al.* 2010: 15).

These are only the figures for the three boundary processes that are already at extreme levels – what one should keep in mind, is that all these processes, or rather, all their effects in nature, are interconnected in almost

incalculably complex ways, and scientists can only prognosticate to a certain degree what might result from the extreme conditions that already obtain. As Foster and his fellow authors state, however (p. 15),

In each of these extreme rifts, the stability of the earth system as we know it is being endangered. We are at red alert status. If business as usual continues, the world is headed within the next few decades for major tipping points along with irreversible environmental degradation, threatening much of humanity. Biodiversity loss at current and projected rates could result in the loss of upward of a third of all living species this century.

Add to this the well-known interconnectedness of living species in terms of food-dependence (the ‘food chain’), which has incalculable consequences when species are removed from this interlinked network of life, and it hardly takes a genius to understand that the world as we know it may undergo not-so-pleasant mutations in the not too distant future.

The Crisis in the Social Sciences (and the Humanities)

One might think that, faced with all the evidence amassed by natural scientists, only hinted at above, humanity would hasten to change its way of living as a matter of urgency. Surely, with the incontrovertible evidence facing one, the search for alternatives to an economic system that takes more out of the earth system than it can put back, must already be on, since it is clear that people must learn to live within the boundaries identified by these scientists – boundaries that other scientists can, and have, tested. The science is clear; the future is not. Or so one would think, on the supposition that humans are ‘rational’ creatures, who would squarely face the implications of the evidence referred to above.

Unfortunately, the very cluster of sciences that one might expect to enable one to take the matter further in the light of the alarming findings of the natural sciences, seems to be struck by inertia, or worse, by complicity with the very economic forces that are driving ecological degradation. Why don’t human scientists support their natural science colleagues in this regard? Foster *et al.* (2010: 18-19) explain:

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Tragically, the more pressing the environmental problem has become and the more urgent the call for ecological revolution...the more quiescent social scientists seem to have become on the topic, searching for a kind of remediation of the problem, in which real change will not be required. Although thirty years ago it was common to find challenges to the capitalist exploitation of the environment emanating from social scientists who were then on the environmentalist fringe, today the main thrust of environmental social science has shifted to ecological modernization – a managerial approach that sees sustainable technology, sustainable consumption, and market-based solutions (indeed 'sustainable capitalism') as providing the answers...

Thus as natural scientists have become more concerned about the detrimental effects of the economic system on the environment, and correspondingly radicalized, asking more and more root questions, social scientists have increasingly turned to the existing economic system as the answer.

Foster *et al.* (2010: 20) then raise the obvious question, namely, why (even environmental) social scientists have become inactive, torpid and apathetic in the face of the looming ecological crisis. This compels him to scrutinize the 'persistent weaknesses that permeate social science' (p. 20), and to relate this to the present crisis. First, social (or more broadly, human) science has been handicapped by the *social* itself being unavoidably its object of investigation, and crucially, that this investigation, together with what is regarded as acceptable or unacceptable, 'tends to be filtered through the dominant institutions and structures of the prevailing hierarchical social order' (p. 20). Unavoidably, therefore, the human sciences are marked by uncritical sluggishness – it is a function of what Freud (2006: 130) called the 'death drive', which always tends to return to a previous position, or what Foster (p. 20) calls '...the system's commitment to stasis in its fundamental social-property relations'. Although social scientists sometimes manage to evade the censorship of the dominant culture to articulate critical ideas, according to Foster *et al.* (2010: 20) these are usually directed at 'marginal issues', with little effect on the core-structure of society. And where they dare to confront the power-nexus directly, social scientists' claims are denied the general validity they require to affect mainstream society, with the result that they

cannot unhinge dominant social and economic practices¹².

Foster *et al.* (2010: 20-23) devote a lengthy discussion to the reasons adduced by well-known scientist and social critic, J.D. Bernal (in the 1950s), for the veritable irrelevance or ‘backwardness’ of the social sciences, compared to the natural sciences in the 20th century. Bernal wasted no time in dismissing the most common reasons given for this weakness, namely: (1) that experimentation is (supposedly) impossible in social science, (2) that value judgments being involved in the human sciences is a serious inhibition, (3) that reflexivity in the human sciences (humans being subject and object simultaneously) predetermines scientific failure, (4) that the unmitigated complexity of human society militates against its scientific understanding, and (5) that society is always becoming or changing, thus precluding the discovery of ‘fixed laws’ (as in natural science). Instead, Bernal argued, these characteristics made the social (human) sciences ‘distinctive’, but in no way prevented them from advancing. The ‘underdevelopment’ of these sciences, he claimed (Foster 2010: 21),

... could be attributed almost entirely to the fact that they were seriously circumscribed by and often directly subservient to the established order of power, and specifically to the dominant social/property relations...Despite important advances and revolutionary developments, social science in ‘normal times’ has been more about maintaining/managing a given social order than encouraging the historical changes necessary to human society, where social capacities and challenges keep evolving...

Social science thus often enters a relatively dormant state once a new system of power is established. A new class-social order, once it surpasses its initial revolutionary stage and consolidates itself, demands nothing so much as ‘the bad conscience and evil intent of

¹² A pertinent example is Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and punish* (1995), with its trenchant critique of ‘panoptical’, ‘carceral’ society, where people are said to be ‘reduced’ to ‘docile bodies’, which failed to bring about any significant change in the dominant power regime.

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apologetics' – since the main goal from then on is to maintain its position of power/hegemony¹³.

Bernal's explanation for the tendency of the human sciences to 'capitulate to the status quo', avoid 'alternative perspectives' and degenerate into 'harmless platitudes with disconnected empirical additions' (Foster 2010: 22) resonates with Jacques Lacan's (2007; see also Olivier 2009) theory of the four discourses – those of the master, the university, the hysteric and the analyst. According to Lacan, the master's discourse is the dominant discourse of any given historical era (in the Christian middle ages, that of the Church, in the modern era that of the nation state, and in postmodernity, the economic discourse of neoliberal capitalism), while the university discourse, which is predicated on the (illusory) systematic unity of all science, has historically served the master's discourse. The true discourse of science, however, is encountered in the questioning discourse of the hysteric, while the analyst's discourse mediates between hysterical questioning and new, but importantly now relativized, master's discourses (more or less corresponding to Kuhn's paradigmatically 'new' science). The pertinence of Lacan's schema for the present theme of the human sciences' effeteness is obvious: just as Bernal has identified the true obstacle to their historical scientific relevance as lurking in their neurotic subservience to the currently hegemonic order, Lacan has unmasked their tendency, to play the slave to the master¹⁴.

¹³ One is struck by the parallel, as described here, between the development of society, from 'normal' through 'revolution' to a 'new' social system, from then on supported by the human sciences (on the one hand), and Thomas Kuhn's (1970) description of the way in which natural science develops, from paradigmatically 'normal science' through 'revolution' to paradigmatically 'new' (normal) science, on the other.

¹⁴ Lacan was talking about *all* the sciences, of course, not just the social sciences, which, given the natural sciences' less direct linkages with society, one could interpret along Kuhnian lines as primarily a reference to the majority of 'normal' scientists' allegiance to the paradigmatically dominant, 'normal' science. Today, however, there are certain 'applied' branches of the natural sciences that undeniably serve the master, too, such as physics and chemistry departments at universities which are enlisted to further the development of military technology through their research.

The Humanities and Personal/ Social Transformation – Gadamer and Ranci re

In light of Foster’s timely reminder that the social sciences (and I would include the humanities here) tend to be hamstrung when it comes to taking action in the light of ‘knowledge’ of a certain kind, is there any well-founded indication that the humanities (or more broadly, the human sciences) can overcome this paralysis? If you are prepared to think creatively and laterally – transferring the knowledge gained in one field to another – the hermeneutics (interpretation-theory) of Gadamer proves to be fruitful. In brief, what I would like to argue, is that his work offers a model for the humanities as far as conceiving of the transformation of the subject, and therefore of society, is concerned.

In *Truth and method* (1982: 39-114) he recuperates the truth-capacity of works of art in the face of the subjectivism that has tended to suffocate it since the one-sided reception of Kant’s relegation of art to the realm of taste, to put it somewhat drastically. To account for the universality of aesthetic judgement, Kant (1969) had to sacrifice the epistemic value of art, reserving this for what he called ‘constitutive judgments’ about things existing in the empirical world of experience. This did not deny art a valuable role concerning the experience of beauty and the sublime, but essentially these were located on the part of the subject. By contrast, both Heidegger (1975) and Gadamer offer striking arguments to rehabilitate art and rescue its ontological and epistemological credentials: art *does* impart to one knowledge of the nature of things.

Gadamer’s (1982: 91-108) phenomenological analysis of art commences with the phenomenon of play, which is treated as a ‘clue’ to ontological explanation (of art, but also eventually of the thoroughly linguistic character of the human life-world), and is said to display a constitutive ‘to-and-fro’ movement within the defining parameters of playing according to internal rules. In the case of ‘free play’ these rules are not explicit, but manifest themselves when a player transgresses unsaid, implicit rules, the flouting of which causes the play or game to stagnate, as when, in the children’s game, ‘Cops and Robbers’, a player refuses to ‘die’ when he or she is ‘shot fair and square’.

While play instantiates a ‘closed world’, however, art, which exhibits a similar structural dynamic as play, ‘lets down’ one of its four walls, as it

were, to enable an audience, a reader, listener or viewer to enter the world constituted by the signifying structure comprising the work of art. In the case of drama, for example, 'The audience only completes what the play as such is' (Gadamer 1982: 98). Moreover, this insight, that art, '...by its nature, exists for someone', amounts to what Gadamer (1982: 99) describes as the 'transformation into structure' – the relative 'permanence', durability or 'repeatability' of art; not only music, dance, cinema and drama, but all art, from literature (which may be read repeatedly) to architecture (which may be inhabited as if it is 'performed' like a musical score; Harries 1980: 43).

The link between the truth-function and the transformative capacity of art becomes clearer where Gadamer (1982: 100) observes: 'Thus the transformation into a structure means that what existed previously no longer exists. But also that what now exists, what represents itself in the play of art, is what is lasting and true'. This is the first sense of transformation that is important here – the way that art transforms something which may be familiar from ordinary experience into something else, with heightened ontological valence. Think of the way that colour, which is ubiquitous, and hence taken for granted in quotidian experience (except for colour-blind people), assumes a transformed appearance in certain paintings, such as the series of paintings at the Yale Art Gallery in New Haven, (USA) by constructivist Josef Albers, which juxtaposes colours in comparatively novel configurations, with the effect of making colour conspicuous in its chromatic being, as if for the first time. Art transforms things 'back into true being' (Gadamer 1982: 101; see also Olivier 1987).

What is important to be noted here is that Gadamer has removed all traces of popular aesthetic subjectivism, according to which it is the *artist* who transforms the spectator via the work of art; instead, the emphasis is placed on the work of art itself, in which the things of experience are transformed, and in the receptive and interpretive engagement with which the listener is transformed in turn, in a second sense of 'transformation'. Gadamer (1982: 100) remarks:

... transformation means that something is suddenly and as a whole something else, that this other transformed thing that it has become is its true being, in comparison with which its earlier being is nothing. When we find someone transformed we mean precisely this, that he [or she] has become, as it were, another person.

I cannot think of a better example of this in (cinema-) art than that of the actress-character, Maya (Melina Mercouri) in Jules Dassin's film, *A Dream of Passion* (1978), who struggles to identify with the character of the ancient Greek sorceress, Medea, in the tragedy by that name, who kills her children. It is only when she grasps, through a series of conversations with an American child-murderess in a Greek gaol, that such an incomprehensibly abject act can only be understood as the mother's attempt to protect the children from a worse fate – in both cases, being raised by an unfaithful husband-father – that she is able to identify with her character in the play. This happens through the realization that, when she aborted a child years before, both to save her acting career from the burden of a child, and to protect the child from being subject to its vagaries, she was also guilty of murdering her own child. As a 'transformed woman' she is finally able to interpret the role of the eponymous Medea in Euripides's tragic drama. Correspondingly, it is not unusual for women (and even empathic men) who witness this film, to be 'transformed' by its 'transformation into structure' of the reality of being a mother who adheres to a set of values to which she also subjects her children. The sense of 'transformation' which stresses the fundamental, irrevocable change in a person when she or he subjects themselves to the 'transformed' world of the artwork, is apparent here. It instantiates what Gadamer (1982: 274) calls 'application', or the third stage in the interpretive process, beginning with implicit 'understanding', followed by explicit 'interpretation', and culminating in 'application', which '...always involves something like the application of the text to be understood to the present situation of the interpreter'. (Obviously 'text' here means any work of art, in as far as it comprises a configuration of signifiers that can be interpreted, whether in lexical, visual or auditory form).

One could add another, for South Africans more pertinent, instance of an artwork whose reception is likely to 'transform' members of an audience, namely Athol Fugard's (1984) drama, *Master Harold' and the boys*, where the friendship between Hally (Master Harold) and the two black men working in the tea room, Sam and Willie, is explored against the backdrop of the apartheid system. The image, recalled during a conversation, of Sam and Hally flying a kite (made by Sam) together, as well as the metaphor of ballroom dancing (which both Sam and Willie practice), with partners in perfect unison, embodies what Habermas calls an 'ideal speech situation' (Thomassen 2010: 10), and functions powerfully as a contrast to

the divisive force of apartheid. It is easy for members of the audience to identify with the situation as long as amiable relations exist between Hally and the two African men, but when things start going wrong, because of news that Hally's tyrannical father is returning home, and Hally projects his own (past and anticipated) pain on his two friends – insisting they call him 'Master Harold' – the identification process becomes problematical. The viewing (especially South African) subject initially experiences vicariously, through the act of identification with the characters, the joy and relief of ideologically undistorted relations, until this makes way for apartheid ideology crashing down on the characters, and the audience, through the 'command' by the 17-year old boy that he be addressed as 'Master' by the two grown men (ironically referred to as 'boys' in the apartheid context). The initial identification is therefore problematized, making way for an uneasy realization that the very person (Hally) with whom one identified (as a white South African), has shifted position, giving rise to various modes of self-reflection, depending on the viewer's own symbolic and experiential horizon of meaning. Whatever the result of the self-reflection, though, it is bound to be transformative, given the germ of hope implanted by the dramatic action, that race-relations need not suffer under racist ideology, but can indeed be modelled on the guiding metaphor of 'flying a kite' or dancing together.

As quasi-theoretical literary counterpart of these examples of personal transformation, the account of the traumatic impact of apartheid practices on an old shepherd's life, from Antjie Krog's *Country of my skull* (1999: 320-327), may serve to illustrate how reading a quasi-theoretical, documentary text may equally occasion a transformation of consciousness, and ultimately of ethical praxis, on the part of the reader. The old shepherd was testifying before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that, years after the event, he still failed to comprehend the sense of an evidently traumatic visit to his home by members of the South African security forces, and expressed the desire that someone should end his life if a satisfactory explanation could not be provided for what was to him the inhuman behaviour of these security policemen. The case, movingly evoked by Krog's description, is sufficiently powerful to bring about a degree of critical reflection and introspection in readers which could potentially transform one's ethical and political praxis. Why? In reading and understanding the trauma inflicted on the old man, that is, the shattering of his life-worldly symbolic horizon by coercive and violent behaviour on the

part of security officers (emanating from an inhuman ideological-symbolic worldview, namely that of apartheid), the reading subject tends to identify with the old man's position. Importantly, this entails assuming the shepherd's axiological perspective, according to which human beings ought to treat one another universally in a human and humane manner, that is, with respect for the other's dignity, regardless of race or gender. Personal transformation (of consciousness, but also of political praxis), if it occurs, emanates from identifying with this perspective.

The different meanings of 'transformation' which figure here are captured well by Herbert Marcuse (1978: 8, 9) where he says: 'The aesthetic transformation is achieved through a reshaping of language, perception, and understanding so that they reveal the essence of reality in its appearance: the repressed potentialities of man [humanity] and nature. The work of art thus re-presents reality while accusing it'. Again: 'The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality...to *define* what is *real*. In this rupture, which is the achievement of the aesthetic form, the fictitious world of art appears as true reality'. The experience of this on the part of an audience, Marcuse (1978: 36, 44) says further, (potentially) brings about 'a change of consciousness' – one that differs qualitatively from the 'administered consciousness' of the exploitative order (of capitalism). This resonates with Ian Parker's (2011) claim, that psychoanalysis could bring about a 'revolution of subjectivity' in the subject – which he conceives of as a process in the course of which the subject examines his or her own relation to power – and which may prepare the subject for a social revolution. Parker insists that the two kinds of revolution are not identical, however.

One may wonder in what way Gadamer's account of art's transformative capacity, via its play-structure, could function as a model for the humanities (and perforce also the social sciences), or to be more precise, for the kind of knowledge that is generated by and archived in the humanities. It does not really require a prodigious leap of understanding, however, to realize that the knowledge encountered in the humanities – from the study of literature and the other arts, through linguistics, philosophy, history, anthropology, theology, classical (culture, art and literature) studies, communication theory and others – may conceivably be thought of, on the model of art itself, as raising extant reality to a different niveau of being. In the case of the art-theoretical disciplines, this involves raising an already artistically transformed reality to a new level through interpretive or analytic

engagement, while, in the case of disciplines such as history, philosophy and linguistics, what is raised to the level of reflective comprehension is an aspect of human reality itself, whether in the guise of communicative or linguistic utterances, historical 'events', or phenomena such as beauty, death, love, power, anxiety and a host of others.

What makes the modelling of the humanities on art tenable, I believe, is precisely the fact that historical, theological, linguistic, communicational, literary-theoretical knowledge could potentially have the same transformative effects as art, first by transforming extant reality by ordering it according to discipline-specific discursive criteria, and secondly by enabling an epistemic or cognitive transformation on the part of someone who engages with a humanities-discipline on its own terms. I should stress that this is a modelling, however, and not a claim regarding the identity of the arts and the humanities (which comprise the study of, *inter alia*, the arts). Where they differ, is on the question of transforming *worldly* things into *fictional* entities with transformative ontological implications, on the one hand, and transforming either so-called '*factual*' states of affairs, or multi-layered 'events', or texts, interpretively into discipline-specific *discourses* – although an aestheticist argument could be constructed, to the effect that the latter discourses and the fictional artworks share a common aesthetic root, and that by implication, such scientific disciplines are no less fictional than works of art (see for example Megill 1985).

To clarify what is at stake here, one can turn to the work of Jacques Rancière, where a different deployment of the concept, 'aesthetic', is encountered – one which attributes to both theory (as found in the human sciences, for instance) and art (literature, cinema, architecture) a similar transformative capacity in relation to each other and to the world. Rancière (in Chapter 9 of *Dissensus*: 2011a), restates Schiller's assurance that the foundation of art and of life is to be found in the aesthetic in this way: '...there exists a specific sensory experience that holds the promise of both a new world of Art and a new life for individuals and the community, namely *the aesthetic*'. The key to understanding what he means lies in his resurrection of the etymological meaning of 'aesthetic', namely 'to perceive' (from ancient Greek, *aisthanesthai*) which implicates the sensory world, as his words suggest. For Rancière, the aesthetic is in fact the realm where art and the political come together, in the sense captured by what is probably the most familiar phrase from his work, namely 'the distribution of the sensible'.

Joseph Tanke (2011: 74-75) provides an illuminating account of its meaning in relation to the arts:

The distribution of the sensible is the system of divisions that assigns parts, supplies meanings, and defines the relationships between things in the common world. One such part belongs to art, with the larger distribution prescribing how the arts relate to other ways of doing and making. As such, the distribution of the sensible defines the nature of art, along with what it is capable of...the arts, even those thought far-removed from the political concerns of the day, can play a role in transforming the world. Art challenges what is sensible, thinkable, and hence possible, on the condition that it not surrender its identity as art.

This has to be seen in conjunction with Rancière's contention, that the arts, at any given time in their historical development, can only be grasped adequately as 're-partitioning the sensible' by placing them in a line of convergence with contemporary theories, the latter constituting the conditions of their comprehensibility, and *vice versa* (Rockhill 2011: 5). In Rancière's (2011: 31) words, 'The simple practices of the arts cannot be separated from the discourses that define the conditions under which they can be perceived as artistic practices'. Rancière therefore thinks in a historicizing manner, but without naïvely reducing artworks and literary texts to the empirical conditions of their production. This would make of them mere documents archiving historical developments. Instead, acknowledging their historical contingency while simultaneously affirming their specificity and the mutual implication of art and theory, explains their intelligibility, and, one may add, their discursive efficacy or purchase on social relations in space and time.

What one might label the 'horizontal' relation between artworks, on the one hand, and the contemporaneous philosophical-theoretical works discursively expressing their conditions of intelligibility, on the other, therefore enable one to make sense of such works of art and of literature, but also of the theoretical works in question, for Rancière. His own highly innovative philosophical work is a case in point, which has made a reappraisal of the relations between art and philosophy or theory possible.

He also recognizes another plane of historical significance, namely a

diagonal one that intersects with the horizontal plane and initiates what Rockhill (2011: 6-7) describes as a process of 'historical cross-fertilization' – what Rancière '...has elsewhere referred to as the complex intertwining of the horizontal and the diagonal dimensions of history'. This occurs when, for example, Aristotle's notion of art – which falls within what Rancière labels the 'representative regime of the arts' – demonstrably intersects with the literary texts and artworks, as well as the philosophical texts of a different historical era, in this way transmitting conceptual forces to the latter that unsettle or disrupt their intellectual, artistic and literary-historical specificity. As Rancière puts it (quoted in Rockhill 2011: 7):

Opening this dimension that cuts across so-called historical contexts is essential to grasping the war of writing...and its stakes in terms of the distribution of the sensible, the symbolic configuration of commonality.

The transformative social and political functioning of such cross-historical conceptual displacement and disturbance, as well as the relation between art and theory at a certain time, can therefore be articulated by what has been pointed out earlier, namely Rancière's notion of 'the distribution of the sensible', keeping in mind that this expression brings together art and politics via the aesthetic, which unites art and the 'sensible' (social and political) world.

Recall the significant transformation of the social world in the present era – the 'rise of the network society' (Castells) – discussed earlier, to which I have to add that Rancière employs another, related, concept which clarifies how such transformations are made possible, to wit 'dissensus', or rather, 'dis-sensus'. Not surprisingly, for Rancière (2007: 560), 'dissensus' is also an aesthetic issue. In the first place, it means disagreement or difference of opinion, but more importantly, it denotes a 'tear' or 'rupture' in the sensible world, in other words, a clash or conflict between one sensible order and another. If I understand him correctly, it appears that what Rancière has in mind here is a conflict between one distinct way of organizing or 'ordering' the world revealed to us by the senses, and another such ordering – a struggle between two 'sensible' orders in the additional sense of what is regarded as being commonsensical. This means that 'dis-sensus' drives a wedge between divergent ways of 'distributing the sensible', each appealing

to its respective adherents, that is, the people whose apprehension of the world is calibrated and attuned to a particular organization of the sensible. At the same time, the ‘dis-sensus’ that an artwork causes, and which is accommodated in correlative theoretical works, has a transformative effect on social and political relations. Think of the ‘dissensus’ introduced into the world – the artworld, but also the broader cultural and socio-political world – by Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937), or by Shakespeare’s *Richard the Third* (circa 1592; 1997), on the one hand, and its philosophical counterpart, Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (1532; 2006), on the other. In the force-field created between these two texts, a new mode of understanding power-relations was opened up – one that introduced a radical moment of dissensus into the fabric of society by ‘re-partitioning the sensible’¹⁵.

The human sciences, working in conjunction with the arts, are capable, in other words, of bringing about a transformative ‘re-distribution of the sensible’ in extant social reality – one that could conceivably provide impetus to the already existing social movement (Hawken 2007) intent on counteracting the deleterious ecological effects of consumer/industrial capitalism in its contemporary guise, which includes the ‘space of flows’.

It is significant that Rancière (2007: 560) regards ‘dissensus’ as a matter of poetic invention, which, given its meaning of ‘interrupting’ the domain of the sensible, he understands as a dis-placement or rupture of existing ‘places and identities’ (2007: 560). This implies that dissensus is a political matter. Because art and literature are sites of ‘poetic invention’ *par excellence*, this means that art or literature, too, is a political matter. It is a distinct manner of parcelling out or ‘partitioning’, the sensible world, in conjunction with corresponding philosophical, theoretical, art- and literary-theoretical discourses, projecting the contours of possible worlds that may not even exist yet. These theoretical or human-scientific discourses lend art a quasi-transcendental dimension by providing a multi-dimensional hermeneutic key to its comprehensibility, describing the historical and epistemic conditions in light of which it is to be understood as art or literature. The work of Castells (1996; 2010), discussed earlier, is a

¹⁵ One could add two powerful cinematic works of art here – Cameron’s *Avatar* and Hillcoat’s *The Road* – both of which introduce ‘dis-sensus’ into the existing discourse of neo-liberal consumer capitalism, with potential transformative effects on audiences. See in this regard Olivier 2011.

particularly pertinent instance of such a human-scientific discursive grid that lends intelligibility to certain literary texts (see note 2), in this way contributing to a 're-partitioning of the sensible', or in less novel terms, to an understanding of a different kind of transformation of the contemporary social world, namely its technological transformation.

Conclusion

It is in the face of such a pervasive transformation of society that the human sciences and the arts are called upon to recuperate the human *lifeworld*, characterized as it is by the involvement of people in it as participants instead of onlookers, and by axiological integrity that may differ in qualitative specificity from one society, community or culture to another, but which shares a common structure. Habermas describes the lifeworld as follows (1987: 124):

... we can think of the lifeworld as represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns. Then the idea of a 'context of relevance' that connects the elements of the [or a] situation with one another, and the situation with the lifeworld, need no longer be explained in the framework of a phenomenology and psychology of perception. Relevance structures can be conceived instead as interconnections of meaning holding between a communicative utterance, the immediate context, and its connotative horizon of meanings.

In other words, instead of conceiving of the lifeworld, as Husserl did, in terms of intentional structures of consciousness, since the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy and the human sciences generally, we have been free to articulate its defining features in linguistic terms instead (as Habermas suggests, above) – something which bestows upon the human sciences (and the arts) a recognition of their extraordinary power of linguistic-aesthetic intervention in it, corroborated by Rancière's notion of the (aesthetic) 'partitioning of the sensible'. One should not neglect this power.

As argued earlier regarding the work of Gadamer and Rancière, the human sciences (humanities and social sciences), together with what is arguably their life-blood, namely the arts, have the potential to initiate, cultivate, and disseminate the kind of knowledge and the kind of experiences

which are transformative in their own right, first regarding the lifeworld, but from there to other levels of society. We therefore (again) have two kinds of transformation here – one, the sweeping social transformation, engendered by the information and communication-technological revolution of the late 20th-century, described by Castells; and two, the transformation that resides, as sustained possibility, in the human sciences and the arts. Unless universities actualize the opportunities that present themselves in teaching and research – opportunities to transform people (their students) into knowledgeable ‘activists’ for the cause of preserving a recognizably human world (the lifeworld) against the encroachments of the newly dominant modes of space and time – the chances are that the circumference of this human lifeworld, with its familiar spatial and temporal parameters, will continue to shrink in the face of the ‘space of flows’ and ‘timeless time’.

There are many other aspects to a human world worthy of the name, of course, such as democratic values, non-racism and non-sexism. However, my guess is that, should the ‘space of flows’ become all-encompassing (in this way subjecting all these values to its imperatives), they would have to play second fiddle to priorities such as combatting the replacement of culture- and ecology-specific interests with those of a generalized, uprooted, ‘timeless’ global ‘non-culture’ of flows, which has already proved itself to be the mortal enemy of life itself.

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Here Comes Everybody: Humanities Computing Meets the Era of Social Media

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Abstract

This article sets out to re-evaluate some of the themes raised in the *Alternation* number on humanities computing that I guest edited in 2002, and to trace their subsequent evolution. To what degree can the meeting of literature and technology, however tentative, influence social transformation? We reflect on the themes of cyberspace and ‘collective intelligence’, ICTs and creative writing; virtual classrooms as open forums for discussion and dialogue; digital libraries to support research in the humanities; the Internet as a platform for promoting development, the advent of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and their implications for education in developing countries; making the information society accessible to all. The effects of the mobile Internet are wide-ranging and this article explores the extent to which knowledge production in the humanities may be able to harness the potential of the new digital ecosystem to effect social transformation.

Keywords: humanities computing, mobiles for development, M4D, massive open online courses, MOOCs, connectivism, cyberspace.

Preamble

Literary scholarship sits uneasily amidst the discourse of 21st century social media. It was no different in 2002 when I undertook (assured of a sceptical reception from many of my peers in literary studies) the guest editing of an *Alternation* number on Humanities Computing in the third year of the new millennium (2002 *Alternation* 9,2). Vestiges of the first Internet bubble,

swollen by the feverish 90s were by then conspicuously evaporating, and the hype of hypertext exposed as the imposter many in the Humanities had suspected it of being all along. In my introduction to the edition (Stewart 2002:2), I go on to lament the lacuna between the discourse of literary studies on the one hand, and information technology on the other, that militated against productive interdisciplinary research. Literary academics shrank from the prospect of IT being employed as instrumentation (or a source of research material) for literary study. Attempts to formulate a middle ground where notions of creative writing, literary history or online learning could be contested and critiqued continued to be hobbled by mutually incomprehensible lexicons and conceptual frameworks. So, recently, on returning to an online literary database project abandoned in the mid 2000s, I was bemused at how little change in attitude was apparent almost a decade later. Even though e-book sales (considered a non-starter in 2002) have by now begun to rival and outstrip print, entire libraries of literary titles are now available online, and new literary titles are published in a penumbra of Twitter chatter, a gulf still remains between literary research, and that of ICTs. I remain convinced that there is a world of promise buried in this (inter-) disciplinary ravine. Rigorous exploration the interstices between creative writing, criticism and the store of current and previous writing in the vast repository of the Internet - continues to offer a space for reclamation and re-discovery for societies like our own with histories distorted by political disruption, social engineering and injustice. Like the Cemetery of Forgotten Books in Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind* (2004) this overlooked storehouse of South African wisdom, scholarship and creativity could feasibly be restored to public access using new technologies. Sitas and Mosoetsa (2011: 39) is surely thinking of a neglected archive much like Zafón's when he calls for a national project to

address [...] the fact that most of the formative work in the HSS of the period from the 1950s to the late 1980s remains unpublished as manuscripts or PhD and Master's theses gathering dust on shelves in the country and overseas.

In reference to online resources of arts, culture and heritage, Mzamane (2008) recognises that ICTs 'flight [...] a number of concepts of extreme importance

in knowledge production for social transformation'. The social commentary channelled through novels, poems and drama, but actively suppressed or marginalised during South Africa's colonial and apartheid eras, possesses latent transformative potential.

This article takes some of the themes of the 2002 *Alternation* edition as a starting point for exploring the impact of a new digital environment on theory and practice in the humanities and in education. To what extent have the assumptions expressed by the original contributors provided reliable pointers for subsequent understanding of the relationships between society and the digital world? We trace continuities between theories of cyberspace, optimisation and Connectivism in establishing a theoretical foundation within which the humanities and the information society may be considered. Online learning and the role of ICTs in social transformation are examined in the light of current proliferation of Internet-enabled mobile devices. What are the benefits and the threats inherent in becoming immersed in a networked digital world?

Digital technology is an ideal vehicle for reclamation scholarship, as for instance 'the need for a project to recover ... lineages of knowledge production from the 1950s to the 1980s' (Sitas & Mosoetsa 2011:40). While the efforts of post-colonial writers like Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka to effect social transformation through the re-centering of African literature and creative industries were attenuated by limited resources at home, South Africa, by contrast, boasts a robust and growing ICT infrastructure, on the back of which collaborative media, as a driver for humanities knowledge production, should be able to flourish. Internationally, examples abound of dedicated online social groupings exerting influence by mustering the assistance of large numbers of like-minded supporters via social media. The 'Here Comes Everybody' of Clay Shirky's notion of a connected world (Shirky 2008) refers to the power residing in the 'wisdom of crowds' (Surowiecki 2004) that can be tapped and curated through the use of technologies such as wikis and social media aggregators. Community related social networks, steeped in local culture have proliferated on the Web. Disruptive social media technologies have sparked social transformations in the Arab world, while Connectivism (Siemens 2005) has spawned the MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) phenomenon with its potential to transfigure education on a global scale.

The Meeting of Humanities and Technology

To what degree has the meeting of the humanities (and in particular, literature) and technology, however tentative, influenced social transformation? In this article, the lens of hindsight is applied to papers contributed to the 2002 *Alternation* number on Humanities Computing whose authors argued that the impact of technology on literature was already widely to be seen, and its effects on society likely to be various and profound.

A thematic strand linking the articles in the 2002 *Alternation* number on Humanities Computing was the assumption that new electronic communication networks would transform society in significant ways, and that the humanities would make a significant contribution to such change. The 2002 authors explored humanities forays into the digital realm – via literature, education and information science (amongst others). In retrospect, the articles can be seen to reflect two broad conceptual frameworks, one of which is articulated by Fanie de Beer (2002:12-34) and the other by Rembrandt Klopper (2002:277-299). De Beer proposes Cyberspace as a theoretical construct for his argument, drawing on Pierre Lévy's notion of 'collective intelligence', and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, while Klopper extends linguistic optimality theory into the era of electronic communication by proposing a new theory of the Optimisation of Human Communication.

De Beer's article 'Inventive Intellectual Adventures in Cyberspace', which opens the *Alternation* number on Humanities Computing presents a compelling - and prescient - argument for a theoretical framework appropriate for humanities computing within our current 'sociotechnical context' (Bell 2011:98), an enveloping network that has grown exponentially over the ensuing decade. De Beer explores the notion of 'cyberspace' - a term coined in the 1980s by science fiction author William Gibson (2012:45) - by postulating an ontology shaped by an increasingly ubiquitous Internet, which evolves as both repository and laboratory for a utopian collective intelligence. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, and Lévy, de Beer contemplates a theory of being in which inter-connectedness in the 'vast, unlimited field' of cyberspace (de Beer 2002: 19) creates a new culture ('Cyberculture' Lévy 1997) in which social relations are transformed within a world of digital networks. Cyberspace is characterised by what de Beer calls 'irreducible plurality' (de Beer 2002: 14) and he goes on to associate popular terms for

the Internet (the ‘Net’ or the ‘Web’) with Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the rhizome, where connections and relations and dimensions are re-configured; and the world, subject and object are defined in radically new ways.

De Beer’s sense of the deeply altered relationship between the subject and information in the digital realm is addressed from a different angle by Klopper, another contributor to the 2002 *Alternation* number on Humanities Computing. Like de Beer, Klopper (2002:279) proposes an integrated theory of communication, in this case a convergence of the ‘code systems used in nonverbal, verbal, written and electronic communication’.

Both De Beer’s notion of hypermedia and collective intelligence, and Klopper’s theory of cultural evolution through enhanced person-machine interaction find a common thread in the more recent Connectivist theory (Siemens 2005), which is gaining influence in today’s pervasive online digital environment in which MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are connecting huge groups of people around learning activities that in turn generate new communities who then collaborate in building new knowledge. Connectivism views knowledge as ‘residing in networks of humans and non-human appliances, whilst leaving space for human agency.’ (Bell 2011:100).

De Beer and Klopper anticipate Siemens in several key respects. For instance, de Beer envisages new technologies ‘... like ‘knowledge trees’, provid[ing] us a means by which to share knowledge with others and meet them in democratic cyberspace’ (de Beer 2002:24). Like Siemens, de Beer is optimistic about the disposition of the new cyberspace – what we might call Web 2.0 or social media today. His ‘democratic cyberspace’ anticipates Surowiecki’s notion of the ‘wisdom of crowds’ (Surowiecki 2004) underpinning significant social constructs as diverse as the Arab Spring and Wikipedia. Klopper, however, strikes a warning note in his references to ‘panopticism’ (2002:292), the capability, inherent in the Internet, to see anything, anywhere and at any time. Recalling Foucault’s use of the term as an image of modern society’s impulse to regulate and normalise (Foucault 1977), Klopper raises the prospect of a dystopian technocracy, equipped with Orwellian ‘big brother’ -like surveillance and control. Chilling corroboration of Klopper’s unease can be seen in the extensive secret state eavesdropping and data mining activities revealed by Edward Snowden in 2013 (Greenwald & MacAskill 2013: 1).

Like de Beer, Siemens expects communication technologies to bring

about changes not only in degree (more information, more connections) but changes in kind (a completely new relationship between subject and object). In her article 'The Space(s) of Hypertext Fiction' (2002:36), Rita Wilson reminds us of Marshall McLuhan's injunction to avoid the 'numb stance of the technological idiot' (McLuhan 1964:18) by recognising how the distinctive *medium* of new communication technologies (rather than the content) has the power to reshape human consciousness. Wilson pursues this line of thinking by extending to the 'technologized word' (2002:37) of the Internet Walter Ong's (1988) observation that the shift to a literate culture in the 5th century had profoundly changed human communication. To live and understand fully, according to Ong, humans need proximity as well as distance: Wilson regards the Internet as fulfilling this need both in its form and its function (2002:37). Clay Shirky, commenting on new digital communication networks and their influence on society, identifies a similarly deep-seated change inherent in the growth of social media: 'The social urge to share information is not new [...] The improvement is there, but it is an improvement so profound that it creates new effects' (Shirky 2008:148).

The 'new effects' referred to by Shirky are to be felt throughout society, and education is no exception. The educational ecosystem is changing. In his chapter 'In Praise of Scribes', Shirky (2008:66-67) points out that in the 15th century, the revolution in thinking during the Protestant Reformation in Europe was not directly caused by the invention of printing. Yet without that new technology and its dramatic impact on the wide and rapid distribution of the written word, the shift in the European intellectual landscape would not have been possible. To understand social change brought about by new technological capabilities, Shirky suggests, we need to hold those two thoughts in our head at the same time. The social consequences of technological change are slower and less visible than the tangible technological artefacts themselves, but equally profound.

The entire basis on which scribes earned their keep vanished not when reading and writing vanished, but when reading and writing became ubiquitous. [...] The spread of literacy after the invention of movable type ensured not the success of the scribal profession but its end (Shirky 2008:79).

In 2013, the educational word of the year was an acronym: MOOCs. The

technology that drives Massive Open Online Courses is every bit as revolutionary as movable type was in the mid-1400s, and as with the printing press, the social effects may sometimes be imperceptible, but are nevertheless inexorable. As early as the 1970s, the first effects of ICTs on society could be seen in a rise in unemployment caused by the rapid collapse of hot metal typesetting and its replacement by computer-based photo-compositing processes. In the last few years, professional photography along with one of its iconic founding companies – Kodak - failed to adapt to the change to digital and have similarly been rendered obsolete. While in 2003 digital cameras were still considered a rarity, a decade later they are components in almost every mobile phone. Behind the immediate social effects such as job losses loom the larger unanticipated consequences such as wider publicity for dissent and protest, more widespread and intrusive surveillance assisted by the popularity of social media (see comments on the ‘panopticon’ above) and the emergence of internet bullying. MOOCs are a sign that ICTs have suddenly caught up with Higher Education (or more accurately, HE Institutions) in the same way that the established music industry was first challenged in 2000 by the revolutionary peer-to-peer file sharing system introduced by Napster. Although Napster collapsed after a legal onslaught by record companies, those same companies have themselves now almost completely given way to a new, distributed business model through digital distribution platforms like iTunes and Spotify. In the last few years, print and broadcast media have also had to adapt to the proliferation of social networking. As a result of such pressures, universities have had to devise organisational strategies to embrace online learning in response to students and employers who expect online tuition, and courses that will address proficiency in technology applications and information literacy. Moreover, the pedagogical principles underlying new developments in e-learning speak to student-centredness, especially the development self-directed and life-long learning (see the discussion of Siemens’ Connectivist theory, below).

There is an established body of research in online learning, and the recent excitement over MOOCs should not eclipse the valuable findings of e-learning developers and practitioners over the last decade. At a recent conference on MOOCs held at MIT, one of the keynote speakers, e-learning educationalist and one-time Vice-Chancellor of the UK Open University, Sir John Daniel, showed a graph entitled ‘Hype Cycle for Online Learning?’ (Daniel 2013:31-32) depicting a steep rise in the curve over the last year. Of

course the key to the point he was making is in the word ‘hype’. The recent frenzy over MOOCs, he pointed out, ignored the excellent development work in e-learning over the last fifteen years. He argued forcefully that the valuable findings of e-learning developers and practitioners should not be overlooked when rolling out the new MOOC offerings to vast audiences (the word ‘tsunami’ was often used in describing the effect of the MOOC movement on HE education worldwide). George Siemens underscores Daniel’s view:

MOOCs have much to learn from literature in online learning. Online learning researchers have an opportunity to engage with new research methods (analytics) and new datasets to test existing theories and improve design/teaching/learning practices (Siemens 2013:21).

While Daniel’s point of view is understandable for those who have been accustomed to designing and using virtual classrooms in their teaching and research, caution about some of the claims made for MOOCs may be tempered by the upsurge of interest in online pedagogy that has resulted. Increased interest in MOOCs is a response to the lack of experience most educational institutions have had in digital learning. It has very suddenly brought to the attention of universities worldwide the implications for the enhancement of educational practice that the ICT revolution can offer. Many longer-term effects of the rise of MOOCs have yet to be realised, but it is already possible for students anywhere in the world to follow courses offered by some of the world’s top educators based at MIT, Harvard and Berkley amongst others. According to Nancy Pappano in *The New York Times* (2013:1) student MOOC registrations number 4.7 million for Coursera, and 1.25 million for edX. These are only two of the major platforms. Undoubtedly, the current institutional fondness for MOOCs is being driven by powerful economic motives, and the threat to educational quality has long been recognised. In her article in the 2002 *Alternation*, Susan Spearey touches on just this issue:

... university administrators tend to view the virtual classroom as a potential vehicle for increasing revenues and extending student populations beyond the reaches of geographic catchment areas, often at the cost of depersonalising and dehumanising the learning experience ... (Spearey 2002:57).

Spearey's pedagogical practice, as she goes on to elaborate in her article, is designed precisely to subvert the negative potential of educational technology to which she alludes – the tendency to distance the learner and mechanise the process of teaching and learning. By contrast, Spearey's course in South African literature is built around online student interaction through social media tools. Her course features discussion assignments and promotes student engagement in online seminars, facilitates participation, and exploits the archiving features of the virtual classroom to encourage the creation of a rich resource consisting of seminar write-ups that students may refer to later when undertaking assignments. The social media features that promote connections amongst students both within specific learning platforms and in the wider Internet environment (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) are key to the ultimate success of MOOCs and online education in general. Spearey's design foreshadows the essential characteristics of a MOOC:

Internet-based teaching programs designed to handle thousands of students simultaneously, in part using the tactics of social-networking websites. To supplement video lectures, much of the learning comes from online comments, questions and discussions. Participants even mark one another's tests (Waldrop 2013:1).

George Siemens, an early pioneer of MOOCs, proposes his theory of Connectivism as an advance on three established learning theories: behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Siemens finds these frameworks inadequate to address learning within the context of technology. Connectivism suggests that the relationship between the individual and society, and, in turn, between the humanities preoccupations with literature, learning and the archive have been fundamentally shifted by changes in communication technology. For the purposes of the present discussion, Siemens' Connectivism (Siemens, 2005) provides a convenient conceptual framework to evaluate from a current perspective the range of articles that make up the *Alternation* number on Humanities Computing nearly a decade ago, and explore the question: To what extent has the meeting of literature and technology influenced social transformation? As has been argued above, the notions of collective consciousness (de Beer), and the enhancement of human optimality through technology (Klopper) may be viewed as leading to a more unified notion of human and social relationships in a digital age. The

thread from Deleuze and Guattari, through de Beer and Lévy to the current Constructivist thinking of Siemens and Downes makes a persuasive argument for regarding Connectivism (Bell, Siemens, etc) as the most promising theoretical model for contemporary digital humanities with its blend of learning theories, technology and society. Recent educational theory, including Connectivism, demonstrates the value of theory that looks beyond the classroom in order to embrace change in society at large. Siemens argues the essential link between Connectivism and society thus:

Connectivism sets up a framework against which education (and by extension, society) must face the deluge of information that the digital age confronts us with, with the necessary intellectual tools to produce a cohesive narrative. The fragmentation of information needs a high level of making well-considered connections – this is the task of education, and to change education is to change society (Siemens 2011).

Siemens has argued elsewhere:

... on many levels the challenges that society faces center around education - and the ability to create people of ethical character is an educational concern. In fact we've dropped so much on the education process it's amazing that it functions as well as it does. If we have a problem with teenage behavior it's an educational problem. If we have some other country that's doing a really good job with math scores and we haven't - that's our educational problem. So education is the first whipping post for everything that goes wrong within the societal structure ... (Siemens 2010).

Steven Downes also makes explicit the association between learning and developing society

In connectivism, there is no real concept of transferring knowledge, making knowledge, or building knowledge. Rather, the activities we undertake when we conduct practices in order to learn are more like growing or developing ourselves and our society in certain (connected) ways (Downes 2007:1)

We have seen the extent to which de Beer's notion of connected cyberspace and 'collective intelligence' has proved to be a convincing framework for re-thinking relationships between knowledge, society and technology. There is an echo in Kerckhove's observation '[the Internet] ... will bring new forms of consciousness and will put pressure on the educational systems in order to make them deal with the changes' (Kerckhove 1997:90 in Resende 2002:147). This article set out to re-evaluate some of the themes raised in the 2002 edition and trace their subsequent evolution by examining – against the backdrop of Connectivism – the relationship between social transformation and digital technology. The benefit of hindsight has allowed us to recognise themes that continue to be significant against the backdrop of an environment characterised by rapid change.

The fictions of Jorge Luis Borges have long been favoured by those working in the field of digital humanities. Borges' evocations of the relative and the interconnected, intersections of regularity and chaos, order and ambiguity have a special affinity to users of the digital networks that are becoming the new ecosystem within which the humanities operate. Sitting at a recent conference attending to the speaker at the podium, the present author had a momentary Borgesian sense of unease and disassociation as part of an audience subjected to a scrolling projection of Twitter feeds on one screen, while multimedia clips illustrating the talk appeared simultaneously on another. Writing of our tendency to overlook the more pervasive and enduring effects of technology change, William Gibson says that where postwar science fiction often featured the 'rocket ship' and the 'electronic brain', '...in retrospect [they] got it most broadly wrong: All eyes were on the rocket ship, relatively few on the electronic brain. We all know, today, which one's had the greatest impact' (Gibson 2012: 246). Gibson goes on: 'There's my cybernetic organism: the Internet. If you accept that 'physical' isn't only the things we can touch, it's the largest man-made object on the planet [...] And we who participate in it are physically a part of it' (Ibid 253).

Klopper's prediction that improved Internet access would have a profound impact on South Africa's brick and mortar universities has taken some time to materialise, but the current surge in research and comment on MOOCs underscores his foresight. By 2010 in the United States, almost one third of post-school students were studying at least one course online and evidence of similar trend can be seen in South Africa ('UNISA is changing ...: Undergraduate students must do a compulsory online course;

postgraduate coursework is now largely online'. UNISA 2013). While Klopper applauds the prospect of the 'democratisation of knowledge acquisition' for South Africans, he adds a caveat that this process depends on the improvement of the country's electronic network services. The persistence of the digital divide that effectively shuts off the majority of South Africans from the Internet continues to retard progress towards that ideal. Internet World Statistics reveal that in 2012, Africa had 7% of world Internet users (de Argaez 2013). Within Africa, at 17.4% penetration of total its total population, South Africa lags behind Kenya and Nigeria (both at 28%). Despite the infrastructural obstacles, there are notable examples of transformational digital humanities practices. The rapid growth of mobile connectivity in developing countries, particular in Africa is the subject of widespread interest in the context of development and social transformation (Greyling & McNulty 2011; Donner 2010). Donner comments on the ubiquity of the cell phone 'even in many small villages, and in the poorest neighborhoods of the megacities of the Global South, the mobile device has become more commonplace than extraordinary' (2010:2). Immediate benefits to developing communities through access to mobile phone communication range from improved health and medical information to microloans and systems that send alerts to signal danger from natural disasters or political turmoil. Donner frames his notion of M4D 'mobile telephony for socioeconomic development' (2010: 1) within the wider scope of research into ICT4D (Information and Communication Technologies and Development). Han (2012) challenges the narrative of optimism that tends to characterise M4D endeavours. He argues that the communities identified as the beneficiaries of mobile technology are often not consulted on development initiatives, and their voices not heard in the discussion around such projects. The generally positive attitude towards mobile technology reflects a specious 'myth of infinite benefit' discourse around the role of technology in development. Han refers to a survey of mobile-in-development literature by Qiu (2007) who identified two dominant themes:

- (a) techno-determinist studies that emphasize the revolutionary potential of mobiles; and
- (b) strong social-shaping studies that see mobile phones fitting into existing social structures (Han 2012:2062).

Instances of development initiatives that resist the techno-determinist ap-

proach highlighted by Han tend to incorporate development design principles that proceed from community needs, and embed the voice of the beneficiaries in the planning and ownership of projects.

One such example is the Ulwazi project that exemplifies the use of technology for both cultural and social advancement while literally incorporating the voices of the community in which it operates. The Ulwazi project (Greyling & McNulty 2011) promotes the generation of online indigenous knowledge databases by members of local communities. Operating within the eThekweni Library system, libraries perform an ‘anchor role as custodian of the knowledge resource’ (Greyling & McNulty 2011:258). Learning, development and historical narratives converge in this project, based on the municipality’s policy of community participation in knowledge production and the necessity of projects being shaped by needs analyses conducted in the community:

We were made aware of the needs in the communities; their lack of digital literacy, their lack of empowerment, the lack of digital skills, their lack of knowledge of their own communities, the fact that their indigenous knowledge was getting lost at an alarming rate (Greyling in McNulty 2012:52).

Recognising that a dearth of African content on the World Wide Web disadvantages Africans in participating in the growing knowledge economy, thereby constraining their potential contribution to social transformation, the Ulwazi project aimed to build the ICT skills of members of the local community, so that they could, in turn, use the new technology to record interviews with community members on local history and culture. By adding to an online database of user-generated content, the community could begin to reclaim and preserve indigenous knowledge that may otherwise have been lost. The growing importance of the M4D movement is that web technologies are now more accessible as mobile devices and networks spread. If communities are able to appropriate digital technologies, they are more likely to harness them for their own purposes:

Urban migration has disrupted how information has historically been passed down the generations As mobile devices become ubiquitous in Africa, the need for this type of regional and language-

specific content, and the tangible link it provides between communities and their multiple pasts, becomes all the more important (McNulty in Firth 2012:21).

Another project that put technology in the hands of an impoverished community to develop information gathering techniques is the M-Ubuntu schools project. By equipping teachers with the training and the means to set up digital libraries in their classrooms, pupils were able to use mobile phones to access existing learning materials and create their own. Haagen and Lindzer (2010:1) noted improved teacher morale as a result of mastering a wider range of teaching techniques. There were also improvements in student motivation, but lesser gains in literacy. In a related project, Ridder (2010:2) encouraged Mamelodi primary school pupils to use their phones to compose a story about their memories of their time at the school (100 word story - 'These Are My Memories') (Ridder 2010:2). Pupils then recorded interviews with their classmates and teachers, and added photographs of the school and the people they interviewed. By centering learner activity around the pupils' own experiences and community, project leaders relegated the technology to a subordinate role. Learners were able to extend their compositional and research capabilities by using the multimedia tools (built-in cameras, audio and video) to collect data, document field trips and generate content like multimedia stories and reports.

Other noteworthy mobile development projects include Dr Math, the cell-phone mathematics tutoring programme that runs on the instant messaging system, MXit, and MobileEd, launched in 2006 which enables learners to SMS a search term via their phones to the service, which then calls them back and 'reads' information accessed from Wikipedia (CSIR 2009). An experiment in gauging the appeal of an online novel using a cell phone device was *Kontax: a teen m-novel*, part of project entitled 'm-Novels for Africa: A South African Case Study' (Vosloo 2009). Vosloo first published *Kontax* (in English and isiXhosa) on a cross-platfrom Mobi site that could be accessed via GPRS-enabled phones or computer browser and later on MXit. Feedback by Vosloo's readers included the following animated comments:

Kontax is the most exciting thing that i've ever experianced i mean im not holding heavy book anymore its me and my phone ... I think

this is the nxt best thng since sliced bread, cnt wait 4 the next chapter.its rly interestn, i cnt stand readn a novel bt this is diffnt coz its jst lyk facebook (Vosloo 2009:22).

Euphoria about the possible future development trajectory of mobile technology is, however, tempered by serious constraints relating to access. At present, despite predictions of cheaper and more available wireless networks, the continuing high cost of mobile data has severely impeded the sustainability of the two M4D projects described here. Neither state nor private sector provision has alleviated inadequate Internet access (or addressed unaffordable mobile connection costs). There is a body of opinion that is suspicious of an over-emphasis on market values and business models in ICT development. Han's research (2012:2063) points to the important distinction to be made in the South African context between 'ubiquity' and 'affordability' in assessing the effective use of mobile technology in development. Han quotes the leader of an NGO assisting street children, expressing her frustration about the cost of cell phone use: "It's too expensive. It's extortion. It's disgusting because ... they're just exploiting people." (Han, 2012:2063). Gurumurthy and Singh (2005:7) have questioned the value of the ready-made solutions approach advocated by developed countries for developing nations in the ICT arena. The enthusiastic promotion of ICTs as solutions to abolishing poverty and speeding up development in the South 'came from the new ICT-fascinated technocrats as well as from some more informed social and political thinkers' (Gurumurthy & Singh 2005:7). It is well to bear in mind this as yet unresolved tension in considering future ICT and mobile projects that purport to empower impoverished communities.

The element of social conscience in Humanities knowledge production is articulated by Dale Peters in her article in the 2002 *Alternation* number on Humanities Computing:

To meet the demand for knowledge, seen as a key to prosperity, the goal of higher education is to provide opportunities for lifelong learning, to create second chances. To achieve the goal of this social contract, the collaborative effort of all those involved in Humanities research is aimed at high quality education and information access to

all people, regardless of social class, the ability to pay, or their location (Peters 2002:109).

Conclusions

A digital knowledge society must serve a democratic, inclusive and empowerment agenda. In the words of George Orwell in *Why I Write* (1946):

Political purpose. — Using the word ‘political’ in the widest possible sense. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other peoples’ idea of the kind of society that they should strive after.

This paper has argued that the effects of today’s ubiquitous mobile communications confirm the accuracy of some of the theoretical positions of the contributors to *Alternation* in 2002, especially those predicting the transformation of social relations in a networked digital environment. It has been shown that advances in information technology since 2002 provide the humanities with tools for unprecedented access to collaboration and new knowledge production that in turn have profound implications for social transformation. The literary and cultural projects described here were selected because they exemplify best practice in embracing social networking to ensure community participation and collaborative design. Projects such as Ulwazi and M-Ubuntu (see above) illustrate Connectivist principles by using technology to shape creative work and to help develop a knowledge society. On the downside, there are clear signs that covert state-sponsored digital surveillance and data mining threaten to subvert the networked communities of a new ‘democratic cyberspace’. Equally harmful to social advancement are the commercial and political factors that deny adequate Internet access to the citizens of developing nations.

Humanities scholars are – sometimes justifiably - suspicious of technology-driven influences in education, libraries and publishing, often characterised by task orientated, instrumental approaches that reflect the forces of commercialisation and commodification of higher education. Yet there is growing evidence that the vast expansion in electronic networks is altering the power relations between communities, large corporations, and the State. While the MOOCs phenomenon has been driven by wealthy United

States universities and foundations aimed, amongst other things, at ensuring their own competitiveness in the longer term, MOOCs can equally be regarded from the perspective of a developing country, as proof-of-concept exercises in how access to undergraduate education could be increased to meet urgent educational needs. Rafael Reif, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (and a major stakeholder in the edX MOOC) believes economies of scale will not harm the quality of education:

I strongly believe that by capitalizing on the strengths of online learning, we will make education more accessible, more effective and more affordable for more human beings than ever before (Reif 2013:45).

Research on the state of technology in influencing humanities knowledge production and social transformation in Africa, and South Africa in particular, would benefit from a survey of development projects in the region that combine ICTs and the humanities. Such a survey would be an important first step in setting a research agenda that could promote wider acceptance of digital and social media as essential humanities research tools.

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Reimagining the Humanities in the Twenty-First Century: Towards an Interdisciplinary and Collaborative ‘Digital Humanities’ in Africa

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Abstract

The Humanities should be re-imaged in terms of interdisciplinarity and that as a collaborative ‘digital Humanities’ in Africa. Where student numbers and financial viability often trump the intellectualization of disciplines, the humanities more often than not find itself victim to higher education ‘cut backs’. In addition, major shifts in society, brought about by the recent technology and globalization driven communications revolution, pose serious questions about the continued viability of sole reliance on ‘traditional’ communication approaches that have preoccupied humanities scholars over the years. Despite these anomalies, there are major attempts within Africa to strengthen and advance the contribution of the humanities to national life and development of the continent, such as the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), and the Ministerial Special Project for Humanities and Social Sciences in South Africa (NIHSS). While both these initiatives advance arguments for the importance of the humanities in the twenty-first century, very little attempt is made to engage with robust debate on the technological potential for reimagining the humanities in Africa. It is against this background that this article aims to articulate a reimagining of the twenty-first century humanities as a ‘digital humanities’, thereby advancing groups of scholars and researchers that engage ‘interdisciplinary’ research collaboratively – ‘collaborative’ knowledge production in a ‘digitalized’ environment. This new categorization of an interdisciplinary and collaborative ‘digital humanities’ serves as a proposal that could advance

knowledge production on the African continent. To this end, the article draws on definitions of the 'digital humanities'; an analysis of the current modalities of the digital humanities; an analysis of emerging trends in institutionalizing the digital humanities; and finally it reimages the humanities in Africa with a focus on 'interdisciplinarity' and 'collaboration' in knowledge production.

Keywords: Digital humanities, knowledge production, interdisciplinarity, collaboration, digitalization.

Introduction

Over the past decade, we have witnessed an increase in discourses addressing the state of the humanities. A classification of these discourses reveals two emerging trends. In the first trend much of the debates centre on the demise of the humanities as an academic area of scholarship within a progressive and 'market' driven higher education sector. Nussbaum (2010: 2) aptly captures this in the following:

The humanities and the arts are being cut away, in both primary/secondary and college/ university education, in virtually every nation of the world. Seen by policy-makers as useless frills, at a time when nations must cut away all useless things in order to stay competitive in the global market, they are rapidly losing their place in curricula ... Indeed, what we might call the humanistic aspects of science and social science – the imaginative, creative aspect, and the aspect of rigorous critical thought – are also losing ground as nations prefer to pursue short term profit by cultivation of the useful and highly applied skills suited to profit-making.

For Nussbaum the transposition of the humanities to the fringes of higher education is largely the failure of the humanities, by its very nature, to compete and occupy these ideological and market driven spaces. It is to this end that Nussbaum (2010) describes the state of the humanities as a 'silent crisis'. Belfiore (2013: 27) builds on Nussbaum's thesis by further contending that the humanities is faced by an 'image problem' of relevance,

it has ‘lost credibility and gone astray in a self-indulgent sea of arcane jargon, impenetrable “theory” and non-communicative language’. It is for Belfiore, (2013: 27) this very preoccupation that has ‘undermined the traditional formative function of the humanities’. Pannacker (2012) further problematizes the state of the humanities by arguing that the current pressures placed on the humanities result in a ‘narrowing of the intellectual range’ of graduates who must become extremely specialized in order to compete in the academic labour market. Thus, the humanities is not about the ‘balanced-cultivation’ of the whole person, it is intensely market driven and often a costly professional training for positions that are unlikely to be available to graduates (Pannacker 2012)¹.

In the second trend we find an ‘activist’ approach, which attempts to reposition the humanities from the ‘*fringe*’ to the ‘*locus*’ of higher education ideological advancements, by contending for a ‘humanities-based’ education that possesses wealth-knowledge and social-regeneration potential (cf. Davis 2012; Belfiore 2013; Olson 2013).

In the African context, we find this second trend taking a formidable position amongst the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), who contend that in a complex neo-liberal globalization, amidst rapid urbanization; poverty; evolution of gender relations; evolution of spirituality and the role of religion in modern societies; the emergence of knowledge societies; and the information and communication technologies (ICTs) revolution, the challenges confronting Africa is not to only understand how these new transitions affect society, but also how to become an African continent amidst these transitions (cf. CODESRIA 13th General Assembly Report). It is to this end that CODESRIA positions the humanities as a significant contributor in addressing the twenty-first century challenges faced in Africa, amidst the important position that knowledge plays in development, and the ‘vulnerability’ of Africa, as a result of its ‘marginal’ position in the world of knowledge.

¹ For further discussion on the shifting academic labour system, see Bousquet (2008) ‘How the University Works: Higher Education and the Lower Wage Nation’; Donoghue (2008) ‘The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities’; and Grafton (2010) ‘Humanities and Inhumanities’.

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A further advancement of the second trend can be seen in South Africa, where the downscaling of human and social forms of scholarship have culminated with a lack of intellectuals who play a leading role as Africans together with other developing societies in Africa and the South to solve local challenges. This decline in scholarship has posited a humanities and social sciences intervention, which was turned into a special project by the Ministry of Higher Education and Training. This Ministerial Special Project for the Humanities and Social Sciences culminated with the June 2011 'Charter for the Humanities and Social Sciences'. The critical role that the humanities could be playing in South Africa is most aptly stated by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade E. Nzimande in his 'Foreword' to the Charter:

While it is debatable whether the humanities and social sciences (HSS) in South African universities is in crisis, it is clear that, on the whole, it could and should be a lot stronger in order to play the role it could be playing in the development of our society, our economy and our intellectual life (Nzimande 2011: 5).

Nzimande (2011: 6) attributes the 'weakening' state of the humanities to the 'rapid changes our society has undergone'; 'the changing nature of the universities and the expectations of academics'; and the 'increased commodification of knowledge'. To this end, in December 2013 the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) was formally constituted to advance the vision of the Charter and address some of Nzimande's observations. Part of the objectives of NIHSS is to establish communities of scholarship; to strengthen South-South collaborations in dialogue with Northern counterparts; and to establish catalytic projects that open up new areas of research, which have transformative implications for the curriculum in the humanities and social sciences. While the production of knowledge features very strongly in the objectives of NIHSS, there is clearly a lack of articulation on the impact of technology and its affordances to offer an alternative model of the humanities in South Africa (and Africa) that can serve its 'transformative' goals.

Both CODESRIA and NIHSS clearly articulate the contextually relevant questions for Africa in terms of the critical positioning of the humanities in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable lack of robust debate connecting the humanities in the twenty-first century, the crisis of knowledge production, and the affordances rendered by the technological revolution in Africa².

It is against this situational context of (1) the marginalization of the humanities; (2) a critique of its relevance; and (3) the contentious position and desire for the reinvigoration of the humanities in Africa, that the authors envisage articulating a reimagining of the humanities in the twenty-first century. Thus, this paper advances a ‘digital humanities’, which offers potential for interdisciplinary and collaborative knowledge production. In order to attain the above, this paper will firstly provide a definition of ‘digital humanities’, followed by an analysis of the current modalities of the digital humanities, and an analysis of the emerging trends in institutionalizing the digital humanities. Finally we contend that a reimagining of the humanities in Africa should take place through a contextualizing of the the technological affordances of interdisciplinarity and collaboration in knowledge production.

Defining the ‘Digital Humanities’

An analysis of the literature surrounding the ‘digital humanities’ reveals a multifaceted and complex literary and ideological space, with scholars often contesting the very nature of the concept.³ The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0 (2009) provides the following definition of the ‘digital humanities’,

² While acknowledging this ‘lack’ within CODESRIA and NIHSS, the authors of this paper believe that both initiatives possess the potential to advance the scope of what is being articulated in this paper as a reimagining of the humanities in the twenty-first century through the ‘digital humanities’. It is to this end, that the authors offer this paper as a preliminary discourse exploring the potential of a ‘digital humanities’ in Africa.

³It should be noted that while the concept ‘digital humanities’ is fairly new and coming to the fore more strongly within the past decade, its field can be traced back to decades of academic preoccupation with ‘humanities computing’ or ‘computational humanities’ (cf. Svensson 2009).

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Digital humanities is not a unified field but an array of convergent practices that explore a universe in which: a) print is no longer the exclusive or the normative medium in which knowledge is produced and/ or disseminated; instead, print finds itself absorbed into new multimedia configurations; and b) digital tools, techniques, and media have altered the production and dissemination of knowledge in the arts, human and social sciences.

It is in the context of the above definition that the manifesto positions the digital humanities in an inaugural role to shape digital models and scholarly discourse, and innovation in knowledge production, in an environment in which the university is no longer perceived as the sole producers, custodians, and disseminators of knowledge and culture. The manifesto highlights the shifting terrain of the humanities in the twenty-first century technological era and contends that the digital humanities is still an 'emerging' field, with much needed exploration on how the humanities may 'evolve' through engagement with various technologies. To further grasp what is implied by 'digital humanities', we turn to a few leading voices that have influenced the digital humanities discourse over the past decade.

Cohen (2011) defines the digital humanities as

the use of digital media and technology to advance the full range of thought and practice in the humanities, from the creation of scholarly resources, to research on those resources, to the communication of results to colleagues and students.

Cohen's definition of the digital humanities accentuates three critical elements. The *first element* of Cohen's (2011) definition is 'resources', which implies much more than a library or repository, it is the combination of search tools; metadata; cross-referenced collections of information; interoperability of digital repositories and archives; and the platform on which we are allowed to access such tools and information. The *second element* of Cohen's digital humanities is 'research'. While the digital resources make the whole approach to knowledge in the humanities easier, accessible and searchable, it does not eliminate the need to analyse and read the information. Research within the digital humanities allows one to filter through data in a more accurate and informed manner in order to compare all

the depositions relating to the specific subject matter (Cohen 2011). The *third component* of Cohen's definition is 'communication'. This implies the sharing of information once results are obtained, i.e. via open source platforms, social media sites, and so forth, where researchers, scholars, students and members of the public have access to the information (Cohen 2011).

Kirschenbaum (2012: 56) defines the digital humanities as,

a scholarship (and a pedagogy) that is publicly visible in ways to which we are generally unaccustomed, a scholarship and pedagogy that are bound up with infrastructure in ways that are deeper and more explicit than we are generally accustomed to, a scholarship and pedagogy that are collaborative and depend on networks of people and that live an active 24/7 life online.

Kirschenbaum's definition of the digital humanities emphasises the social undertaking in establishing online communities – i.e. networks of people, who collaborate through working together, sharing research, arguing and competing.

Fitzpatrick's (2012: 12) definition of the digital humanities moves the discourse from 'networks of people' to 'a nexus of fields'. For Fitzpatrick, the digital humanities is

a nexus of fields within which scholars use computing technologies to investigate the kinds of questions that are traditional to humanities (Fitzpatrick 2012:12).

Fitzpatrick's 'nexus of fields' highlights the 'interdisciplinary' nature of the digital humanities by including scholars of history, musicology, performance studies, media studies, and other fields that can benefit from collaborating on traditional humanities enquiry through use of computing technologies.

Spiro (2012: 16) contends that given that the digital humanities include people with different disciplines, methodological approaches, professional roles, and theoretical inclinations, it is impossible to settle on a single definition of the digital humanities. Hence, for Spiro (2012: 16-17) in defining the digital humanities, one should think in terms of a 'flexible'

statement of values that can be used to communicate its identity. It is to this end that Spiro identifies the following values:

- (a) *Openness*: a commitment to open exchange of ideas, the development of open content and software, and transparency (2012: 24).
- (b) *Collaboration*: a free flow of information which allows people to build on ideas and think together in new ways to solve social problems by tapping into ‘collective creative potential’ (2012: 25).
- (c) *Collegiality and Connectedness*: the humanistic element which focuses on the value of ‘inclusiveness’, welcoming contributions and offering help to those who need it (2012: 26-27).
- (d) *Diversity*: a recognition that the community is more vibrant and projects are stronger if multiple perspectives are represented (2012: 28).
- (e) *Experimentation*: a demonstration and support for risk taking, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

In providing a definition of the ‘digital humanities’, we have moved from theorizing, to praxis, to embedded values. This three-pronged definition serves to explicate a rather complex concept by providing a much more holistic approach to the digital humanities in the twenty-first century. It is against this background that we explore some of the current modalities of the digital humanities.

Current Modalities of the ‘Digital Humanities’

In classifying the ‘evolving’ characteristics of the digital humanities, four distinct modalities can be observed (cf. Figure 1). The first modality can be classified as ‘computing humanities’. The origins of computing humanities can be traced back to Father Roberto Busa (1913-2011), an Italian Jesuit priest who in 1949 initiated with IBM a thirty year project to digitize the complete works of St. Thomas Aquinas in a searchable database – i.e. ‘Index Thomisticus’ (cf. Hockey 2004: 4). An exposition of the trends within the early computing humanities reveals a focus on building tools; infrastructure; standards; and collections (cf. McPherson 2009: 119). Thus, Unsworth (2002) defines computing humanities as ‘computers used as a tool for modelling humanities data and our understanding of it’.

In the last decade advances in computing (e.g. wikis, social networking, crowdsourcing, etc.) have created tools that are redefining the digital interaction with the humanities. One of such interactions is the ‘blogging humanities’. McPherson (2009) defines blogging humanities as ‘the production of networked media and peer-to-peer writing’. Due to digital humanities being a fairly new area, blogging humanities creates the ideal space for researchers and scholars to define what they are doing in digital humanities and articulate some of their own ideas on the subject. These views are expressed in open spaces, which offer potential for others to collaborate and take these ideas further or critique the type of developments being articulated. Blogs are emerging as a critical source of information in many publications on digital humanities⁴. Hence, it beckons the critical question of what constitutes ‘legitimate’ knowledge in the humanities and in which domain/s should this ‘legitimate’ knowledge be deposited.

The third observable modality is the ‘multimodal humanities’. McPherson (2009) defines the multimodal humanities as ‘the bringing together of scholarly tools, databases, networked writing and peer-to-peer commentary, while also leveraging the potential of the visual and aural media that are part of contemporary life’. For Svensson (2010) the multimodal humanities is ‘comprehensive, simple and points to the importance of networked media and writing as well as describes an ongoing development’. Multimodal humanities shift the focus from technology, which is seen as an ‘expressive medium’, to ‘multimodal knowledge production’, which is the central focus (cf. Svensson 2010). For Davidson (2008) the multimodal humanities can also be defined as ‘Humanities 2.0’, i.e. making use of Web 2.0 technologies that are more interactive, collaborative and open. McPherson

⁴ Some noteworthy blogs: Dan Cohen at: <http://www.dancohen.org/>; DH Commons at: <http://dhcommons.org/>; HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Alliance and Collaboration at: <http://www.hastac.org/blogs/>; University of Victoria Humanities Computing and Media Center at: <http://hcmc.uvic.ca/blogs/index.php>; Digital Digs: An Archaeology of the Future at: <http://alex-reid.net/>; George Mason University Edwired at: <http://edwired.org/>; Ideas: Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences at: <http://www.ideas-ideas.ca/blog>; DigitalKoans at: <http://digital-scholarship.org/digitalkoans/>; Nicomachus at: <http://nicomachus.net/>; and Open Culture at: <http://www.openculture.com/>.

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(2009), Svensson (2010) and Davidson (2008) articulate a modality that enables the ideal environment for decentering of authorship, interdisciplinary and collaborative knowledge production in the humanities.

The fourth modality is the emergence of the ‘digital humanist’. This modality starts from the individual person (i.e. the scholar or researcher)

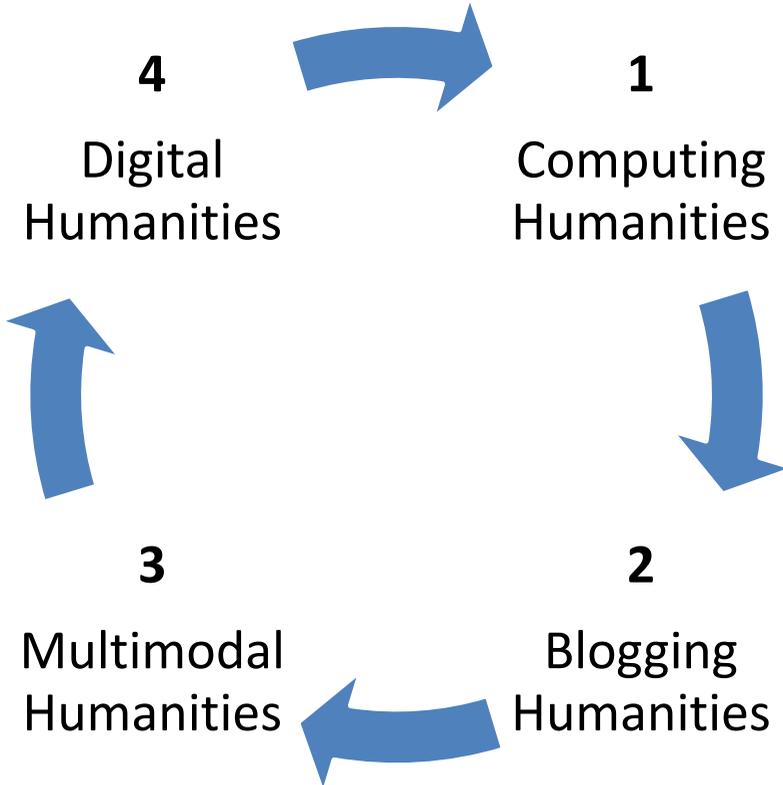


Figure 1: Current Modalities of the Digital Humanities

engaged in the digital humanities. It epitomizes the kind of work the individual does (i.e. thinking, reflecting, writing, and creating) at the intersection of the humanities and information technology. Thus for Svensson (2009) the term ‘digital humanist’ represents a specific category of scholars

that are engaged with a form of digital interaction with the humanities. Hunter's (2009) observation sees this modality as articulating a shift to the 'individual' as being the central element of the digital humanities. Thus for Hunter in this modality the individual occupies a 'sacred' space to ensure that technology designs are people centred and that digital humanities values the agency of human beings (individually and collectively) and that critical thinking, rationalism and empiricism are epitomized (cf. Hunter 2009).

These varying modalities bring to the fore different possibilities for institutionalizing the digital humanities. Thus, the following section will explore how selective institutions institutionalize the digital humanities.

Emerging Trends in Institutionalizing the Digital Humanities

Klein (2014) defines 'institutionalization' as 'a process of establishing something within an organization or a social sphere, whether it is an idea, such as democracy, or an occupation, such as teaching'. For Shapin (1992: 355) categories of knowledge are also institutions not in the conventional sense of buildings and structures, but as a set of ideas constructed and maintained in cultural spaces. Thus, it is important to understand how the digital humanities is located within the cultural space of the academy through the processes of institutionalizing, professionalizing and educating.

For Cecire (2011) a significant challenge with the institutionalization of the digital humanities is the emerging 'identity crisis' of humanities scholars. Cecire argues that with the recent proliferation of digital humanities centres and institutions within higher education, many adverts for tenure positions stress the importance of 'digital skills' as opposed to 'critical scholarship' (cf. Cecire 2011). As a result, we are witnessing a shift of humanities scholarship, from scholars once immersed in methodology and critical pedagogy to scholars possessing the technical skills (i.e. the 'know-how') needed in the digital environment.

To address this critical problem of institutionalizing the digital humanities, Ramsay and Rockwell (2012) contend for a digital humanities epistemology where 'digital tools' should be seen as 'theoretical tools'. Ramsay and Rockwell see the construction of knowledge through digital tools as legitimizing a new type of scholarship within the humanities, i.e. a type of scholarship that can be characterized as 'immanent' and 'nondiscursive' (cf. Ramsay & Rockwell 2012).

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For Thomas (2011) the institutionalization of the digital humanities sees a shift in humanities scholarly practice to one that embraces a ‘more fluid and open exchange of ideas and arguments’. This can be characterized by a shift to ‘openly available original research’, to ‘open verification’ of findings, to ‘adjustment and re-examination’ of research findings (cf. Thomas 2011). This brings to the fore three important contributions to humanities scholarship. Firstly, it ‘increases the scale of research and data involved’; secondly, it addresses the ‘global distribution of discourse and materials’; and thirdly, it comprises new models of production where other researchers can ‘validate’ and ‘credit’ contributions in a way that enables future scholarship (Thomas 2011).

It is against this background that we now explore four universities pioneering the digital humanities (cf. Figure 2 below):

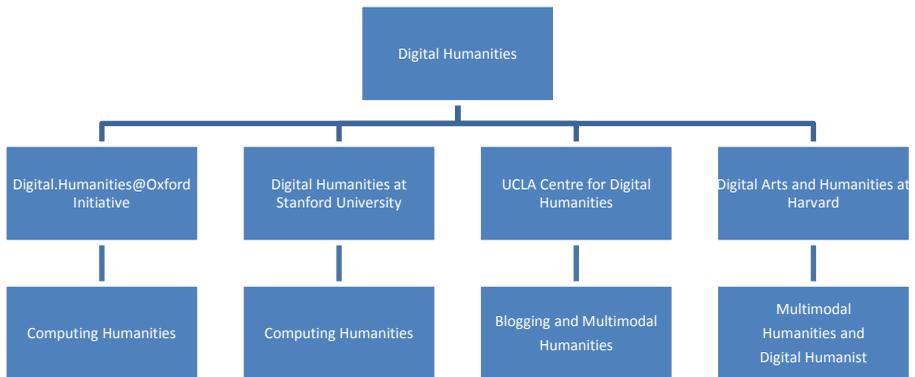


Figure 2: Institutionalizing Digital Humanities

(1) Digital.Humanities@Oxford Initiative

The Digital.Humanities@Oxford Initiative defines digital humanities as ‘research that uses information technology as a central part of its

methodology, for creating and/ or processing data' (cf. Digital Humanities at Oxford: <http://digital.humanities.ox.ac.uk/Support/whatarethedh.aspx>). The Digital.Humanities@Oxford Initiative is a collaboration between the Oxford e-Research Centre (OeRC), Oxford Information Technology (IT) Services, the Oxford Centre in the Humanities (TORCH), the Oxford Internet Institute, and Oxford's Bodleian Libraries. Its history can be traced back to its earlier tradition of computing humanities in 1975 with its projects on concordances and databases in Classics, History and Oriental Studies.

In terms of institutionalization, the digital humanities in Oxford is a strategic priority of the Oxford e-Research Centre. Thus, it operates outside of the domains of 'traditional' humanities; functioning as a separate entity to connect various disciplines in Oxford. Its mission is to advance the use of information and communication technologies for research across the university.

An analysis of some of the projects it is engaged with, demonstrates the extensive digital humanities activity taking place across a range of disciplines at Oxford. Some of the projects worth mentioning are the 'Constructing of Scientific Communities' (English Language and Literature); 'Cultures of Knowledge: An Intellectual Geography of the Seventeenth-Century Republic of Letters' (History); 'Automatic Annotation of the Spoken British National Corpus' (Linguistics); 'The Book of Curiosities' (Oriental Studies); 'The Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music' (Music); and 'Eastern Art Online: Yousef Jameel Centre for Islamic and Asian Art' (Religion/ Visual Arts)⁵.

In addition to the above projects, the Digital.Humanities@Oxford Initiative hosts an annual digital humanities training event, which takes place in the month of July at the University of Oxford – i.e. The Digital Humanities at Oxford Summer School (DHOxSS). It partners with the Edirom Digital Humanities Summer School at the University of Paderborn, Digital Humanities Summer Institute at the University of Victoria, Humanities Intensive Learning and Teaching at University of Maryland, Digital Humanities of Switzerland at University of Bern; Digital Humanities of the Leipzig Summer School at University of Leipzig, and the Women Writers

⁵ For a more expansive list and a description of the various projects, see 'Past Featured Projects' of the Digital.Humanities@Oxford website at: http://digital.humanities.ox.ac.uk/ProjectProfile/past_featured_projects.aspx.

Project at Northeastern University. Its objective is to introduce delegates to a range of topics in the creation, management, analysis, modelling, visualization, and publication of data for the humanities.

(2) Digital Humanities at Stanford University

Digital Humanities at Stanford University defines the 'digital humanities' as 'a collection of practices and approaches combining computational methods with humanistic inquiry' (cf. <https://digitalhumanities.stanford.edu/about-dh-stanford>). Stanford University has been engaged with digital humanities since the late 1980s. In terms of institutionalization, Digital Humanities at Stanford is an initiative of the Digital Humanities Centre. It hosts researchers and scholars who do not have a single institutional home, but are united through the support of digital humanities practice, theory and training.

Some of the projects that Digital Humanities at Stanford University are currently engaged with are: 'Kindred Britain' – an exploration of British culture and history from the perspective of family; 'ORBIS' – an interactive scholarly work that allows readers to examine the movement of goods and people in the Roman World through a creation of a historical transportation network model, interactive maps and visualization materials; 'Performing Trobar' – a website designed to support teaching and learning; 'African Archives' – a study of colonial systems, digitizing indigenous personnel records of the colonial administration in Senegal; 'Chinese Philosophical Texts' – a classification of Chinese and early Chinese thought; and 'French Revolution Digital Archive' – a digital version of the key research sources of the French Revolution.

Similar to the Digital.Humanities@Oxford Initiative, Digital Humanities at Stanford University hosts a series of training workshops that aim to provide the skills and information needed to effectively manage digital projects, as well as an exploration of ideas and tools. Some of these workshops focus on data management, text-based model creation, metadata for digital projects, code management for non-programmers, preservation strategies for digital projects, etc.

(3) UCLA Centre for Digital Humanities

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Centre for Digital Hum-

anities defines ‘digital humanities’ as ‘the cultural and social impact of new media and information technologies – the fundamental components of the new information age – as well as creates and applies these technologies to answer cultural, social, historical, and philological questions, both those traditionally conceived and those only enabled by new technologies’ (cf. <http://www.digitalhumanities.ucla.edu/about/what-is.html>). In terms of institutionalization, UCLA Digital Humanities comprises of thirty-five affiliated faculty that come from more than twenty different departments and five schools including Arts, Architecture, Social Sciences, Humanities, Information Studies, and Theatre, Film and Television. It networks with the following UCLA initiatives: Academic Technology Services; the Experiential Technologies Centre; the Institute for Digital Research and Education; the UCLA Library; and the Ahamanson Laboratory for Digital Cultural Heritage.

UCLA Digital Humanities scholarship epitomizes ‘collaboration’ and ‘interdisciplinarity’ through creatively expanding its networks of participation, the modes of access, and its mechanisms for dissemination of scholarship (i.e. open platforms, blogs, etc.).

In terms of projects, UCLA Digital Humanities has several strategic projects, which are collaborations between the Institute for Digital Research and Education (IDRE) and the Humanities, Arts, Architecture, Social and Information Sciences (HAASIS). Some of these projects are the ‘Ancient Egyptian Architecture Online’ (AEGARON); ‘Digital Karnak’; ‘Hypercities’; UCLA Encyclopaedia of Egyptology’ (UEE); ‘St. Gall Monastery Plan and Manuscripts’; ‘Korean Folklore Online Archive’; ‘Qumran Visualization Project’; and the ‘Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative’.

In addition to the above projects, UCLA Digital Humanities also offers an undergraduate minor, a graduate portfolio, a graduate certificate and several elective courses within the field of digital humanities.

(4) Digital Arts and Humanities at Harvard University

The Digital Arts and Humanities at Harvard University (DARTH) sees the digital humanities as the creative use of digital technologies to organize and gain insight into vast bodies of visual and textual information, and to experiment with computer-aided analysis of all forms of digital information (cf. <http://www.darthcrimson.org/about/>). Blackwell (2014) a Harvard correspondent, defined the digital humanities as ‘bringing as much life to the

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study of human culture as there is culture of humanity itself', through 'sound, images, video, and the immense body of data collected everyday describing the footprint of life' through 'exploring unconventional ways to tell the story of humankind'.

In terms of institutionalization, DARTH functions as a separate entity within Harvard to support faculty and students by connecting them with technologies designed to enrich digital scholarship. In order to achieve this DARTH partners with 'Digital Futures' (a network of faculty, researchers, technologists and librarians engaged with ongoing transformation of scholarship through innovative technology) and Harvard Library UX.

In terms of projects, DARTH has been engaged with several interdisciplinary initiatives, such as, 'Lasky Brajas Digital Pioneers' - which showcases original and innovative projects in the digital arts and humanities; 'Vassiliki Rapti' - a film project by students of Modern Greek; and 'Bringing the Giza Pyramids to Life' - onscreen navigation through 3D immersive experiences.

A strategic development of DARTH is 'THATCamp Harvard' (an acronym for 'The Humanities and Technology Camp'). THATCamp is an 'unconference' (i.e. a participant driven meeting) for humanists and technologists to meet, present and discuss ideas. Schreiner, an organizer of THATCamp 2014 and the Head of Harvard Libraries Map, Media, Data and Government Information Department, noted that the dynamics of humanities research is steadily changing with technology advancements creating new ways to conduct and present research: 'the old idea of sitting in a carrel and going into the library stacks - you can't work that way anymore because people have to work together. Everything is very interdisciplinary' (cf. in Blackwell 2014).

The philosophical underpinning to the digitalization of the humanities at Harvard is aptly captured by Shaw (2012) in the following,

Like pyramid-building itself, the work of the humanities is to create the vessels that store our culture. In this sense, the digitization of archives and collections holds the promise of a grand conclusion: nothing less than the unification of the human cultural record online, representing, in theory, an unprecedented democratization of access to human knowledge. Equally profound is the way that technology could change the way knowledge is created in the

humanities. These fields, encompassing the study of languages, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, archaeology, religion, ethics, the arts, and arguably the social sciences, are entering an experimental period of inventiveness and imagination that involves the creation of new kinds of vessels—be they databases, books, exhibits, or works of art—to gather, store, interpret, and transmit culture. Pioneering scholars are engaged in knowledge design and new modes of research and expression, as well as fresh reflection and innovation in more traditional modes of scholarly communication: for example, works in print that are in dialogue with online resources.

Towards an Interdisciplinary and Collaborative ‘Digital Humanities’ in Africa

In our introduction we articulated the many challenges facing the humanities in the twenty-first century, as well as the attempts made by CODESRIA and NIHSS that aim to reinvigorate the critical positioning of the humanities in Africa. In acknowledging the above, we have observed the potential for a reimagining of the humanities within a rapidly technologically advancing society. By harnessing the potential of this transitioning environment, we posit that a reimagining of the humanities in Africa, as a ‘digital humanities’, can shift the imbalance in terms of knowledge production, its relevance to students, as well as its critical positioning within the market. By comparing the institutionalization trends of the digital humanities in Oxford University, Stanford University, University of California, Los Angeles, and Harvard University, we conclude that a positioning of the digital humanities within higher education institutions in Africa has the potential to promote interdisciplinary and collaborative research. However, what is clearly evident is that the success of establishing these digital humanities is dependent on the availability of infrastructure and resources. While we have explored how the digital humanities have been ideologically defined and established within ‘developed’ countries, we are not ignorant of the digital divide that exists between the developing countries (i.e. Africa) and the developed countries. Hence, it is important for us to understand the changing technological landscape within Africa.

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The recent developments in Africa, more especially within the last decade, indicate a gradual transformation of 'access' to technology and 'connectivity'. Africa currently contributes 9.8% of the world's internet users, with internet penetration in 2014 totalling 26.5% which amounts to 297 885, 898 internet users as of 30 June 2014 (cf. Internet World Stats: Internet Usage Statistics for Africa). Macharia (2014) reported in the 'African Renewal' that internet access in Africa is no longer a 'luxury' it is a 'necessity'. Mobile penetration in Africa has grown from 1% in 2000 to 54% in 2012 (Macharia 2014). Today Africa boasts more than 754 million connections in sub-Saharan Africa and over 35 mobile network operators in Africa. Countries such as Seychelles, Tunisia, Morocco and Ghana, have mobile subscription penetration rates in excess of 100%, with Tunisia at 120% - i.e. 10.8 million mobile connections and more than it has citizens (Macharia 2014). This progressive scene is no different in South Africa, which in 2010 totalled 2 400, 000 internet users and in 2014 saw a massive increase to 24 909, 854 internet users (cf. Internet World Stats: Internet Usage Statistics for Africa). This indicates an internet penetration of 51.5% of South Africa's population. This increase can be partially attributed to the drop in market prices of devices due to the competitive market in which service providers find themselves and the lower data rates needed to maintain subscribers within a competing market. These technological transitions create the ideal environment for higher education institutions to explore the potential of a digital humanities.

But how have the advancements made in technology affected the production of knowledge? Knowledge production within this transitioning environment is taking place at a much faster pace throughout the world. Both knowledge and information are also becoming obsolete at a faster pace. Hence, for Mchombu (2007: 24) in order for African countries to compete internationally, they need to have access to the latest knowledge and information. Amidst the lack of access to knowledge, Africa is also - as noted in the 'Introduction' - placed at a vulnerable position due to its lack of ability to produce knowledge. Addressing the knowledge deficit that separates Africa from the technologically advanced countries is a crucial challenge in this twenty-first century. To address this knowledge deficit, Africa needs to (1) *acquire* knowledge that is already available; (2) *create* knowledge locally through research; (3) build capacity of the population to *absorb* and *apply* knowledge; and (4) create a capacity to *communicate* knowledge (cf. *ibid.*)

The current modalities and examples of emerging trends in institutionalizing the digital humanities (as discussed in this paper), offer potential to address this deficit of knowledge production within an ‘innovative’ space. In order to address this deficit through the digital humanities, two significant values need to be foregrounded, (1) interdisciplinary and (2) collaboration.

Interdisciplinary Knowledge Production

Klein (2014) defines the concept ‘interdisciplinary’ as ‘typically characterized by integration of information, data, methods, tools, concepts, and/ or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge’. Klein further contends that ‘interdisciplining’ is ‘proactive focusing, blending, and linking of disciplinary inputs, which foster a more holistic understanding of a question, topic, theme, or problem’ (Klein 2014). Thus interdisciplinary work can take the form of an individual scholar who integrates a diverse range of materials and methodologies into his/ her research, to joint initiatives by scholars from different disciplines to produce new knowledge.

But why is ‘interdisciplinary’ research important in Africa? The economies and cultures of knowledge production are an integral part of a multifaceted, complex and often contradictory intellectual and ideological process⁶. Interdisciplinary research offers the potential to address Africa’s epistemic invisibility in knowledge production, deconstruct Africa’s identity as the ‘inferior other’, and decolonize its scholarly legacies. Reimagining the humanities within an ‘interdisciplinary’ domain requires ‘interrogating’ the paradigms of knowledge corroborated with Eurocentric assumptions and developing innovative methods and theories grounded in the experiences of seeing the context through an ‘African lens’ or as Robbe (2014: 258) says ‘thinking through ‘the African’’. Interdisciplinary research thus involves two

⁶ For Weingart and Stehr (2000: xi) disciplines are not only intellectual, but also represent social structure, organizations and established social networks that shape and bias views on the relative importance of knowledge. Zeleza (2007: 198) defines disciplines using geographical images of ‘territories’, ‘fields’ or ‘turfs’ that aspiring interdisciplinarians seek to ‘cross’, ‘explore’ or even ‘annex’.

dimensions – *firstly*, it involves questioning and crossing the borders of institutionalized knowledge; and *secondly*, of opening academic disputes into the public sphere and engaging with issues that are of concern for different social groups (cf. Robbe 2014:258). It is in this context that the the digital humanities has the potential to ‘cross the borders of institutionalized knowledge’ and ‘engage the public sphere’, thereby, articulating a contextually relevant discourse and epistemology in knowledge production by Africans for Africa.

By its very nature of being the ‘digital’ humanities, an interdisciplinary framework for research is created. The computing technologies embedded within the digital humanities framework create the ideal interdisciplinary space for ‘team-based’ research. *Firstly*, it provides a ‘common space of interaction’ where researchers and scholars can share ideas and address critical questions or problems of common interest. *Secondly*, the digital humanities creates ‘spaces of experimentation’ affording African scholars the ‘safe’ space to experiment with their thoughts and ideas. *Thirdly*, the digital humanities serves as an ‘interdisciplinary information portal’ (as noted with the four institutions we discussed earlier), i.e. repository for digital collections, such as websites, electronic text projects, blogs, visual and aural data, and so forth⁷.

However, while ‘interdisciplinary’ approaches in knowledge production within the digital humanities affords the opportunity to revisit and constructively engage the historical legacies that have marginalised African scholarship, it also implies the positioning of the African scholar and researcher on the same level as scholars from the developed countries that

⁷ With regard to the interdisciplinary journal *Alternation*: With its thematic editions stemming from collaborative research groups, it embarked on engaging the creating of these ‘common spaces for interaction’; these have been ‘spaces of experimentation’ involving postgraduate students; and finally with its CDs and DVDs containing all previous publications (launched in 2008) as well as its website that opened on an open access platform in January 2012, it has started to engage the digital humanities. There are plans afoot to develop the website into a more comprehensive ‘interdisciplinary information portal’ including isiZulu tools and web-resources.

occupy digital humanities spaces⁸. In order to do so, scholars/ researchers in Africa need to (1) acquire the digital skills in content and subject mastery; (2) know how to disseminate knowledge beyond the boundaries of a specific discipline; (3) know how to function as a ‘member’ of a team as opposed to the traditional prestige assigned to ‘autonomous’ researchers; and (4) how to negotiate ‘space’ when dealing with similar subject matter across disciplines.

Collaboration in Knowledge Production

The second value which we highlight in this paper is ‘collaboration’. Collaboration and interdisciplinary research are seen as ‘interlinked’. When scholars discourse notions of interdisciplinary research, collaboration emerges as the underpinning philosophy describing the type of engagement needed in such space. Collaboration as defined by Kuhlen (2006) is

a means of cooperating and sharing resources with others in an open, friendly, often non-competitive, but supportive way – collaboration is in general organized in networks, not in hierarchies’.

By applying this definition within the sphere of digital humanities, Spiro (2012: 25) expresses collaboration as ‘a free flow of information that allows people to build on ideas and think in new ways’ (as noted earlier). For McCarty (2012: 4) the emphasis on collaboration is a shift from ‘solitude’ at one extreme to ‘collective’ reasoning at the other, hence it encompasses ‘a spectrum of work styles varying in time as well as project’.

Flanders (2012: 68) adds a new dimension to collaboration in the digital humanities by emphasising the role of resources in mediating the nature of collaboration,

Digital humanities projects take place in a space constrained by a set of technical norms that govern the informational and operational behaviour of the digital environment. Because these collaborations are aimed at building something that works, a tool, a resource, an

⁸ This has been one of the main objectives that *Alternation* and its interdisciplinary collaborators have strived to contribute to now for twenty years already.

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online collection, the collaborative activities are typically mediated through things like software tools and data standards. However, since these initiatives take place in the humanities, they also require agreement concerning disciplinary norms that shape the practices of digital representation. These include acceptable standards of authenticity and verification, the kinds of commentary and contextualization that are acceptable or required, and beliefs about the interpretative or analytical or critical goals that are at stake. These norms arise from detailed ongoing debates concerning both the ultimate goals of scholarship and methods and practices by which we achieve them.

The above definition illustrates the level of complexity when it comes to technologies mediating the 'nature of collaboration' and its 'outcomes'. However, in the above definition we also note the 'progressive' nature of collaboration, i.e. the 'ongoing debates' concerning the goals of scholarship, methods and practices amongst its involved researchers and scholars.

Thus, collaboration within the digital humanities is interdisciplinary, linking together the humanistic and computational approaches. In addition, instead of the researcher/ scholar working alone, they function as part of a broader team. It reflects the need for people with a range of skills to contribute to knowledge production within the digital scholarship. By bringing together people with diverse expertise, collaboration opens up new approaches to addressing a problem. It is to this end that Spiro (2012: 25) sees collaboration as an expression of 'diversity' and the realisation of the 'collective creative potential' of the team.

The element of collaboration features strongly in both the objectives of CODESRIA and NIHSS. As noted earlier, one of NIHSS objectives is to strengthen South-South collaborations in dialogue with Northern counterparts. Digital humanities has the potential to serve as a vehicle to attain such objectives by fostering a 'digital space' where such researchers/ scholars can collaboratively engage on projects of common interest. In addition, by facilitating the collaboration of scholars within Africa, the digital humanities can act as a medium to decolonize knowledge production by harnessing the collective ideas and thoughts of scholars within Africa for Africa. Prior to the information technological revolution in Africa, when it came to knowledge production and dissemination, Africa was marginalized-

due to the printed word. Until very recently African scholars suffered from complete isolation. However, the advancement towards a digital humanities can serve to ‘bridge’ the gap between African scholars and the rest of the world, while strategically positioning African scholars with a ‘voice’ and an autonomous African space to articulate an organic scholarship.

A Framework of Technological Affordances for Interdisciplinary and Collaborative Research Practices

The rapid advancements in information technologies has brought to the fore an array of ‘loose tools’ in the form of synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (delayed time) tools. In order to fully understand the potential of these tools for advancing a digital humanities in Africa, one needs to categorically place them within a framework that highlights its affordances – i.e. its ‘action’ potential. In order to do so, we employ the categorizations of Siemens and Tittenberger (2009: 45): (1) Access (tools used to access resources); (2) Presence (tools used to indicate state of presence online or physical proximity); (3) Expression (tools used to illustrate expression); (4) Creation (tools used to create new content and resources); (5) Interaction (tools used to interact with others through synchronous or asynchronous action); and (6) Aggregation (tools used to retrieve and filter information of interests. Each of these six categories (cf. Figure 3) possesses the affordances needed for a digital humanities in Africa.

In the following, we briefly highlight a selection of important tools currently being used within the broader domains of interdisciplinary and collaborative knowledge production.

The first tool is ‘blogs’, which are used to establish presence, creation, and interaction. Blogs are basic web pages, which enable unique opportunities to improve communication with (and between) researchers and scholars, increase depth of reflection, and enable the formation of diverse viewpoints and perspectives (cf. Siemens & Tittenberger 2009: 47). Blogs can also be used as e-portfolios or online journals.

The second tool is ‘wikis’, which are used for access, creation and interaction. Wikis are ‘unconventional’ knowledge spaces that enable individuals to create a collective resource; thus, often termed collaborative writing on the web. The common use of wikis include: collaborative writing and group work, content creation or collaborations with researchers from

other departments/disciplines/ universities.

The third tool is 'podcasts', which is used for access and creation. Podcasting is the distribution of audio online through RSS feeds⁹ (cf. Siemens & Tittenberger 2009: 49). The usage of podcasts within the research domains include: recording lectures, external presentations, evaluation and feedback, and short introductions to new knowledge areas.

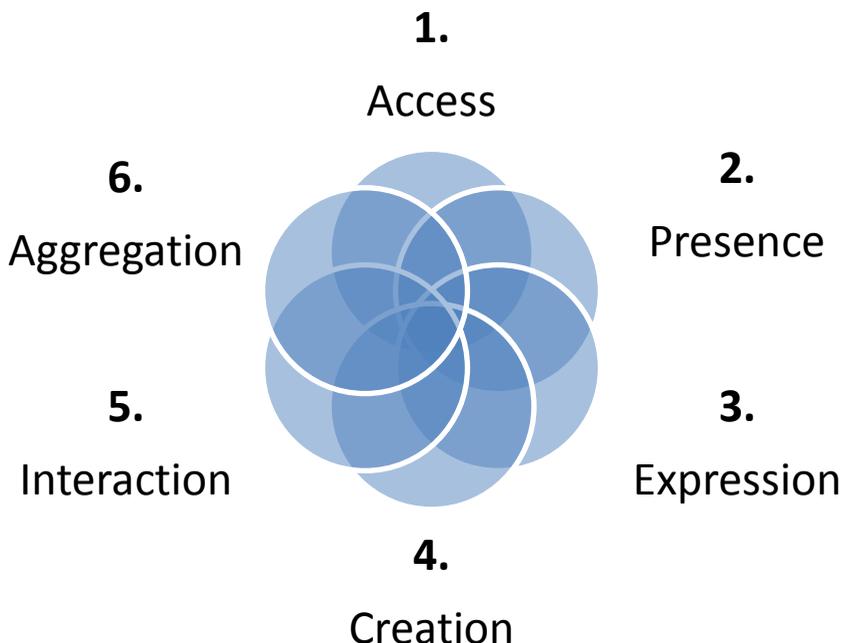


Figure 3: Framework for Technological Affordances

The fourth tool is 'micro-blogging', which is used for access, presence, creation and interactivity. Micro-blogging involves sharing resources and engaging in short conversations with other users of the service

⁹ RSS = Real Simple Syndication.

or experts in other disciplines (cf. Siemens & Tittenberger 2009: 51).

The fifth tool is social networks, which is used for access, presence, expression, creation and interactivity. Social networking has moved from the subculture domain to mainstream (cf. Siemens & Tittenberger 2009: 51). Social networking sites have integrated suites of tools with functionality similar to blogs, micro-blogging, image sharing, etc. The use of social networks for research has vast potential from organizing online research groups, and communicating through its mobile platform functionalities.

The sixth tool is web conferencing, which is used for interactivity as well as creation. An example of the innovative use of web conferencing is the Global Centre for Advanced Studies (GCAS)¹⁰, which uses the ‘Big Blue Button’ (an open source web conferencing project) to conduct seminars with prominent scholars through virtual interaction on contextually relevant matter. This open source platform features record and playback functionality; whiteboard; desktop sharing; integrated voice conferencing; web camera and presentation sharing functions¹¹.

The seventh tool which we would like to highlight is the use of Open Educational Resources (OERS). In terms of ‘distributing’ knowledge, OERS have a critical function within Africa. OERS address the knowledge deficit in Africa by providing access to knowledge that is affordable and usable.

These seven tools serve to illustrate the potential for advancing the digital humanities in Africa. By incorporating these tools into a digital humanities model, the humanities can advance a critical positioning within Africa in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

Conclusion

The crisis of the humanities as articulated by Nussbaum (2010), Belfiore

¹⁰ The Global Centre for Advanced Studies (GCAS) is a global classroom with leading philosophers, theorists, artists and visionaries that serve to empower through knowledge distribution and conscientization. While not classified as a digital humanities, its model epitomizes interdisciplinarity and collaboration.

¹¹ This is a very important resource especially as we seek to develop cross-country PhD and other research cohorts and groups in Africa.

(2013) and Pannapacker (2012) cannot be ignored¹². These three individuals pose critical questions that force one to rethink the way we 'do' humanities in Africa. Amidst 'rethinking' how we engage with the humanities in Africa, the discourses generated by CODESRIA and NIHSS on the critical positioning of the humanities to the development of the continent, offer a vision for optimism. In addition, harnessing the potential embedded within a rapidly changing technological landscape offers the opportunity to 'reimage' the humanities in the twenty-first century. It is against this background that we set out to articulate a discourse, which advances an interdisciplinary and collaborative digital humanities in Africa. As a fairly new concept, we began by offering a definition of the digital humanities. In so doing we captured some of the leading voices such as those of Cohen (2011), Kirschenbaum (2012), Fitzpatrick (2012) and Spiro (2012). In surveying the implementation of the digital humanities, we found four modalities present, i.e. computing humanities, blogging humanities, multimodal humanities, and the digital humanities. These varying modalities offered the potential for the institutionalization of the digital humanities to take on varying shapes. Hence, we highlighted four prominent institutions in the field of the digital humanities and reflected on how they institutionalized the digital humanities. These four institutions offer insights into how digital humanities is contextualized and the type of projects and activities they are engaged with. The findings indicate a strong emphasis on interdisciplinarity and collaboration. By drawing on these two concepts we began envisaging how one could advance a digital humanities in Africa. What is of vital importance in our observations is that while there exists a digital divide between Africa and the 'developed' countries, the major strides in access to technology and connectivity in Africa in recent years, create an ideal environment for the exploration and development of the digital humanities. It is to this end that we focused on the values of interdisciplinarity and collaboration, and the technological affordances for a digital humanities in Africa.

In offering a summation of the discourse generated in this paper, we position three critical concepts: (1) Africanization; (2) innovation; and (3)

¹² Cf. also the contributions in this volume – especially those by Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa; Kamwendo & Pogieter; Keet; Olivier; Stewart and Kamwendo

knowledge production. These three terms have strategically dominated higher education discourses over the past decade. The advancing of the digital humanities in Africa allows for ‘innovation’ in ‘knowledge production’ with the ability to produce knowledge that resembles the local ideas, thoughts and aspirations of researchers and scholars within the African content. This process hence engages with a level of Africanization, as it articulates a decolonization of Eurocentric knowledge and the reimagining of African scholarship. It is within this context that we find ourselves advancing the digital humanities as a possible ‘catalytic’ project to develop a prototype of a digital humanities in Africa.

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Language Policies of South African Accredited Journals in Humanities and Social Sciences: Are they Speaking the Language of Transformation?

Gregory Kamwendo

Abstract

Within the context of the post-apartheid era in South Africa, the higher education sector (the main site of knowledge production), is undergoing transformation. The language factor, one of the central pillars of the apartheid days, ranks high on the transformation agenda. This agenda can, for example, be detected in key official documents such as the Constitution and the language policy for higher education. The language policy has been transformed from two official languages (English and Afrikaans) during the apartheid era to eleven official languages (English, Afrikaans, and nine previously marginalized African languages). In the higher education sector, there is now a strong call to convert African languages into languages of scholarship. It is against this background that the paper attempts to establish the extent to which South African accredited journals (as publishing outlets for knowledge producers) are pursuing the transformation agenda. To this end, the paper critically analyses language policies of selected South African accredited journals. The study is confined to journals that lie within humanities and social sciences disciplines. The study indicates that 70 % of the journals are monolingual (English), 20 % of the journals are bilingual and 10 % are multilingual. In addition, there is no accredited journal that is published exclusively in an African language.

Keywords: accredited journals, English, humanities, indigenous African languages, language policy, social sciences, South Africa

Introduction

The slogan ‘publish or perish’ is widely known and respected in the academic world. Academics strive and compete to publish in reputable peer reviewed journals and other outlets. As Adebowale (2001: 1) notes,

academic publishing has gathered, sieved and engraved the work of researchers, disseminating their products to the corners of the globe, and thus assuring them a place in knowledge production in a more accentuated information-driven world.

The language question comes in immediately: Through which language(s) can knowledge producers (through their scholarly publications) reach the corners of the globe? English is the main lingua franca for scholarly publishing in the world (see Lee & Lee 2013; Lillis & Curry 2010; Altbach 2007; 2013; Ammon 2001). The majority of the high ranking journals are published in English, and naturally there is immense pressure on academics, especially those from non-English dominant backgrounds, to publish in English medium journals (see Curry & Lillis 2013). In some countries, such as Norway (see Brock-Utne 2007), financial rewards for those who publish in scholarly outlets in English are higher than those meant for academics who publish through the Norwegian language. Since publishing outlets do not operate in a linguistic vacuum, one cannot ignore language policies of publishing outlets as a critical element in present day South Africa where language features prominently in the country’s post-apartheid transformation agenda.

South Africa, through its Department of Higher Education and Training, annually releases a list of accredited journals. These are peer reviewed journals that meet the department’s set criteria. Publishing in these journals attracts government subsidy. The minimum criteria for a South African journal to qualify for government subsidy are as follows:

- The purpose of the journal must be to disseminate research results and the content must support high level learning, teaching and research in the relevant subject areas.
- Articles accepted for publication in the journal must be peer reviewed.

Language Policies of South African Accredited Journals

- The majority of contributions to the journal must be beyond a single institution.
- The journal must have an international standard serial number (ISSN).
- The journal must be published regularly.
- The journal must have an editorial board that includes members beyond a single institution and is reflective of expertise on the relevant area.
- The journal must be distributed beyond a single institution (Department of Higher Education and Training 2003).

Not all published items in an accredited journal attract government subsidy. The following items are not subsidized:

- Correspondence to the editors
- Abstracts or extended abstracts
- Obituaries
- Book reviews
- News articles
- Advertorials (Department of Higher Education and Training 2003).

Some of the journals are, for example, strictly monolingual whilst others are bi/multilingual. Monolingual journals are restricted in nature given that only those academics who are proficient in the stipulated language(s) have the opportunity to publish. Bi/multilingual journals, on the other hand, are more inclusive, and in the process promote academic freedom. It is important to stress that no journal operates without a language policy. The

language policy of an academic journal can come in either overt or covert manner. To this end, a *de jure* language policy refers to an explicitly outlined policy whereas a *de facto* language policy tends to be implicit. The absence of a written language policy does not mean that there is no policy at work. It is against this background that the current paper reports on an examination of language policies of South African accredited journals, and then proceeds to determine the extent to which the language policies promote transformation in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

The paper discusses the language factor in knowledge dissemination from the perspective of language policies of South African accredited journals. To what extent are the language policies in tune with South Africa's transformation agenda? What are the implications of the language policies for transformation? The current paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, I provide the theoretical backbone of the paper. In the next section, I review the related literature. This is followed by a section on data and methods. In the next two sections, I provide findings and recommendations respectively. In the last section, I provide a summary and conclusions.

Theoretical Orientation

Transformation of higher education, especially from a language perspective (Kamwendo 2013; Nzimande 2012); and Cobarrubias' (1984) language policy ideologies provide the theoretical backbone for the current paper. We start with transformation. The demise of apartheid in South Africa triggered an urgent need for a transformation process. Transformation goes beyond merely looking at gender and racial representations. In the context of our current discussion, we are interested in the transformation of the academic publishing arena. Language was one of the key cornerstones of the apartheid system, and in knowledge production, English and Afrikaans were the main languages. With the demise of apartheid, it has become very imperative that the language factor be included in the transformation agenda, and African languages are expected to play a more robust role in science and academia and knowledge production (Kamwendo 2013; Nzimande 2012). As Nzimande (2012:1) argues,

the debate is no longer whether we should develop African languages as languages of scholarship in academia, but rather when and how

should these languages be part of our academic discourse beyond the mere symbolism that is currently at play at most of our universities.

In response to this call, it should follow naturally that African languages should penetrate into the scholarly publishing sector, and this is the main subject under discussion in the current paper.

Language policy for higher education in the present day South Africa is a product of the political changes that came with the end of apartheid in 1994. Following the first multi-racial and democratic elections of 1994, the language policy of the country transformed from two languages (English and Afrikaans) to include an additional nine previously marginalized African languages, thus giving South Africa eleven official languages. This constitutional provision represents what Cobarrubias (1983) calls linguistic pluralism. This is an attempt by the official policy to reflect the country's linguistic diversity. Education, as a sector, is expected to operate in accordance with the Constitutional stipulation about adopting multilingualism.

In terms of language policy for higher education, all institutions of higher education have to come up with language policies that are in line with the wishes of the Constitution. The language policies must address the past inequalities. In other words, the language policies are expected to lie within the domain of transformation. Actually, the higher education policy document warns that, for example, any continued use of Afrikaans as the sole medium of instruction runs against the transformation of higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training 2002).

We now turn to language policy ideologies. Cobarrubias' (1983) language policy ideologies are relevant for the current paper. The first ideology, internationalisation, refers to a situation whereby a language of international communication (such as English) is given official status. The objective behind this type of language policy is to enable a country or institution to connect with the wider international community. English is one of the eleven official languages of South Africa. The second ideology, linguistic pluralism, is evident in South Africa through the country's eleven official languages. Third, there is linguistic assimilation. This is a situation whereby there is a dominant language and efforts are taken to drive everyone (including linguistic minorities) to use the dominant language. The fourth ideology is what is called vernacularization. This refers to a situation under which an indigenous language is capacitated and promoted to enter official

domains. We shall return to these four ideologies later on in the paper.

Review of Related Literature

Knowledge production is not the end of the journey for any knowledge producer. The next step is to devise ways of disseminating the knowledge, and this is no easy task in Africa and other parts of the developing world (see, for example Altbach & Teferra 1998; Chan & Costa 2005; Katebire 2010; Bello & Nwagwu 2010; Ngobeni 2010). With reference to South Africa (and Africa), we may wish to pose the question: Who do South African (and/or African) academics serve, or write for? As academics, they belong to both local and international communities of practice of academics. One would say that African academics write and publish for the local and wider community. In order to reach the international community, the use of languages such as English, French or Portuguese becomes inevitable media. In the globalized world, English is the dominant medium of international communication. African academics also have local audiences to write for. African academics also need to have a sense of social responsibility. That is, they need to respond to the needs of their societies. Their academic outputs have to be relevant to their societies. In order to fulfil this social responsibility, the use of African languages becomes handy. Ki-Zerbo (1994: 36) has lamented that

all too often, African intellectuals write for a tiny in-group, and both their language and their jargon are more arcane than the language of old Africa's sorcerers and secret societies. This reflects the serious problem of the use of African languages in education and research.

In a keynote address given at the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) 30th anniversary grand finale conference and celebrations, Wa Thiong'o (2005: 160) challenges African academics as follows: 'How many social scientists have ever written a single document in an African language?' The language factor in African academics' publishing outputs is also a matter of concern in the context of the African Renaissance. For example, in the introduction to the book *The African Renaissance: The new struggle*, it is lamented that:

While most contributors in this volume are Africans who speak one

African language or another, none has used an African language in their writing. We have all used the African idiom and borrowed English as a means of writing. Our nuances, impressions and interpretation of English language are rooted in our African languages, experiences and meanings. Can African people champion their Renaissance through the medium of foreign languages? This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges to African people (Makgoba *et al.* 1999: xi).

A debate on the Organization of Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) and the language question was initiated by Kihore (2005) in an article in which he highlights the inadequacies of the organization's use of English as the sole official language. Kihore (2005) is concerned with two groups of people, whom he believes, are negatively affected by OSSREA official language policy. First, he refers to

individuals or groups of individuals who are proficient in local African languages but whose trades or activities are touched or affected by some of OSSREA's research undertakings (Kihore 2005: 1).

These people may want to access OSSREA's research findings, but end up meeting a linguistic barrier. If research findings cannot reach the people who are supposed to benefit from them, can the African academics claim to have displayed social responsibility? Whilst academics do write for their peers (in scholarly journals and other outlets, using international languages), they also have a social responsibility to ensure that their research findings trickle down to the ordinary man and woman, who in many cases, does not speak or write English, French or Portuguese, or any of the other languages of international linkage.

Data and Methodology

The study employed a mixed methods approach. To this end, the paper carries both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell 2012; Green 2007). The qualitative data are in the form of language policies of journals. The language policies have been employed for the categorization of journals as

follows: monolingual journals (journals that accept one language only), bilingual journals (journals that accept two languages only), and multilingual journals (journals that accept three or more journals). The quantitative data comprise the frequencies of journals per language category.

The population consisted of South African journals accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training as per the 2014 list of journals. From this list, I confined the study to journals that cater for disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences. This proved to be a challenge. One of the limitations was to determine which journals belonged to the Humanities and Social Sciences category. This challenge is not new. Previously, the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences had noted that,

there is no uniformity in terms of which core disciplines or departments form part of a humanities or social sciences faculty. There is, furthermore, no uniformity or similarity across institutions in terms of what is meant by a Social Science, Arts, Education or Creative degree in the universities of technology (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011: 42).

Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to obtain journals that catered for disciplines in Humanities and Social Sciences. Within this list, convenience sampling was applied i.e. going for journals for which language policy details could be accessed. In the end, a total of 110 journals were used in the study. All journals were kept anonymous, and were identified by number only. Borrowing from Englander and Uzuner-Smith (2013), I employed document analysis. To this end, I analysed relevant South African strategy and policy documents such the report on the charter for humanities and social sciences (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011), policy and procedures for measurement of research output of public education institutions (Department of Higher Education and Training 2003), and the language policy for higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training 2002).

For each journal, I identified statements that constituted the journal's language policy. This involved reading through the journal and locating what constituted the journal's language policy. Each journal had its own way of declaring its language policy. Some journals were direct whilst others were not so direct. For each journal, I had to establish the language policy through

this process. In the end, it was possible to have a language label (e.g. monolingual, bilingual, multilingual etc.) placed against each journal. The data were then quantified by establishing the frequency for each language policy category.

Findings and Discussion

The findings and their discussion have been arranged as follows. We have categorized the language policies of accredited journals under the following sub-themes, namely: journals that publish exclusively in English (English monolingual journals), bilingual journals (English plus another language), multilingual journals (three or more languages) and exclusively African language journal.

English Monolingual Journals

Out of the 110 journals that were examined in the terms of their language policies, 77 (70%) were found to have a monolingual English policy. That is, only papers written in English are accepted in these journals. It has to be recalled that South Africa has eleven official languages. Our findings are very clear that English dominates in the journal publishing domain. Nearly twenty years after the fall of apartheid, and after the installation of an eleven language policy, and the insistency that African languages, English continues to dominate the publishing industry. The dominance of English in the journal publishing sector is consistent with the reality across the globe (see also Lee & Lee 2013; Lillis & Curry 2010; Altbach 2007 2013; Ammon 2001). The reasons why English dominates are well articulated in literature, and the main one being that authors, including non-native speakers of English, want to make themselves visible on the international scholarly scene. It is argued that publishing in languages of lesser international communication reduces a scholar's visibility. So, here we see the internationalization ideology of Cobarrubias (1983) taking the centre stage.

It is also worth mentioning that some journals do not simply prescribe English as the sole language of publication, they also prescribe the variety of English. For example, journal number 11 prescribes that 'manuscripts must be presented in UK English'. Journal number 17 instructs: 'use UK English'. Journal number 41 says 'manuscripts must be in English

(UK)'. Journal number 259 instructs authors as follows: 'use British punctuation and spelling, following the Oxford English dictionary'. The choice of UK English is not surprising in South Africa given British colonial influence in that country.

The dominance of English is also reflected in the fact that even in a journal in which languages other than English are allowed, English cannot be completely dismissed. For example, journal number 79 says that

if an article is submitted in a language for which it is difficult to find suitable references, the author may be requested to submit a translated version in English for purposes of refereeing.

For journal number 236, 'English shall be the general language but articles written in an African language should be followed by a summary of 1000 words in English'.

Bilingual Journals

I now turn to the category of bilingual journals. Twenty three (23) (representing 20%) out of the 110 journals were categorized as bilingual. The language combination was English plus another language. The fact that English is part of the bilingual language policy further strengthens the dominance of English. One has to remember in the previous section, we noted that 70% of the journals have a monolingual English policy. English and Afrikaans is a common combination. This is not surprising given that both were previously the only two official languages (during the apartheid era) and the same languages are part of the eleven official languages package of the post-apartheid era. Whilst the use of English belongs to the internationalization ideology (Cobarrubias 1983), Afrikaans does not belong to the same category. The Afrikaans is largely confined to South African and Namibian academic circles. As such, Afrikaans does not offer wider visibility of journal articles published through the language. Actually, after the end of apartheid in 1994, the place of Afrikaans is on the decrease in South Africa. But why do some authors want write in Afrikaans? There are some who are passionate to keep Afrikaans alive as a language of scholarship, and this is also in keeping with the Constitution which recognizes Afrikaans as one of the eleven official languages. There exists a body of scholarly literature that

is written in Afrikaans, and some South African academics would like to contribute to that literature.

Multilingual Journals

For the purpose of the current paper, I refer to multilingual journals as those with three or more languages in their publishing policy. Only 10 (10%) of the journals were in the multilingual category. The actual number of languages varied from journal to journal. For example, journal number 8 provided room for four languages: English, Dutch, German and Afrikaans. Some journals were extremely multilingual (in line with Cobarrubias' 1983 ideology of pluralism). For example, journal number 96 invited papers from all the country's eleven official languages plus international languages such as French, Japanese, German and Portuguese. But even in these linguistically inclusive journals, one still finds that English remains the dominant language.

Exclusively African Language Journal

There is currently no accredited journal that is published exclusively in any of the nine (9) African languages that are part of the eleven official languages package. Publishing exclusively in an African language could have been designated as Cobarrubias (1983) ideology. In addition, this could have been a strong move on the path of transformation, in line the expectation in the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences that 'indigenous languages need to play a broader role in the construction of our policy. They must be extended into the discourses of scientific field ... knowledge construction' (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011: 38) and further extend into the dissemination of knowledge. There is need to learn from experiences of Tanzania where Kiswahili has been significantly used in scholarly discourses, and there have been some journals published through Kiswahili (Mwansoko 2003). Whilst there is currently no South African accredited journal exclusively in an African language, it should be noted that there is a refereed journal (in isiZulu) that is going through the process of attaining accreditation from the Department of Higher Education and Training.

Whilst there are no exclusively African languages journals, one finds here and there traces of some acceptance of some papers in an African language. But this comes with some challenges. Publishing in an African

language is theoretically possible in some journals, but in reality it is an uphill task to actualize, even when dealing with journals that are specifically for language matters. For example, one journal editor advised authors about the need for an extended summary in English of between 500 to 1000 words – which would be placed at the end of the article – in addition to an English abstract (200 words or so) to accompany the conventional article abstract in an African language.

Finding reviewers who can combine competence in the subject matter as well as competence in the African language in which the paper has been written can be a tall order. The scarcity of such academics can slow down the pace at which journals are able to publish papers through African languages. One journal offers the following as a possible way out:

If an article is submitted in a language for which it is difficult to find suitable referees, the author may be requested to submit a translated version of the article (in English) for the purpose of refereeing.

This, unfortunately, is not without its own problems. One would have liked to see an article being reviewed in its African language version, and then proceeding to be published in the same language.

An editor of a journal that accepts papers in African languages advises authors as follows:

The publisher will contract an X language [African language] editor to do the copyediting of the article. That would be no problem. A word of caution though – articles not in English do not garner many (or any) citations. If you are agreeable, a footnote could be included on the first page that readers can correspond with the author in English.

Against this background, one still finds some South African academics who are determined to publish through African languages. They are not many, but they do exist. It may be worthwhile, in another study, to find out what motivates such academics.

Recommendations

The fulfilment of the language transformation agenda in journal publishing in

post-apartheid South Africa and in other African countries can never be easy. This is so because with the ever rising power of globalization, the thirst for English is equally on the rise. To this end, South African academics, like others in non-English dominant countries, find themselves being caught up in a tug of war: to promote local languages but at the same time wanting to maintain presence and visibility on the international scene through publications in English.

There is need for the Department of Higher Education and Training not only to promote the use of African languages as media of teaching and learning in South African higher education, but to put in place incentives that can see African languages penetrate into the accredited journals. South Africa, as mentioned earlier, has an incentive system that funds universities for articles that are published in accredited journals, peer reviewed conference proceedings and books and book chapters. Authors and also journals could be given financial rewards for articles published through African languages. In addition, higher education institutions could be encouraged to honour and celebrate scholarly publications that come through African languages. In other words, special measures should be taken to improve the visibility and quality of scholarly publications that are in African languages.

Summary and Conclusion

The study has identified three categories of journal language policies, namely monolingual journals, bilingual journals and multilingual journals. Table 1 summarizes the findings, and it is clear from the table that English monolingual journals dominate.

Table 1: Summary of categories of journal language policies

Journal category	Frequency & Percentage
Monolingual journals	77 (70%)
Bilingual journals	23 (20%)
Multilingual journals	10 (10%)
African language journals	0 (0%)

There is no doubt that the transformation agenda (through use of local lang-

uages in journal publishing) is in conflict with internationalization. There is a desire to promote African languages as languages of scholarship by publishing through them, and yet at the same time, publishing in English earns one more visibility in the global scholarly community. This language dilemma is not unique to South Africa. It is a challenge to all countries that are not predominantly English-speaking. As Altbach (2013: 326) has observed, 'the costs and benefits of language choices must be carefully assessed'. Whilst going for African languages is a right step on the road to transformation, it weakens international visibility and connectivity. As Katebire (2010: 9) has rightly remarked, 'the poor visibility of African scholarship, however, is not merely a factor of production; it is equally one of dissemination and access'.

An examination of South African journals' language policies shows that English is the most predominantly used language (with 70 % as monolingual English journals). The majority of the journals do not have space for indigenous African languages. This is despite the fact that the Constitution and the language policy for higher education create an environment in which such languages can thrive as languages of knowledge production and knowledge dissemination. So far, South African journals are, if I may borrow Higher Education Minister Nzimande's words, failing to 'debunk the myth that African languages cannot be used for high level scientific research and philosophical thinking' (Nzimande 2012: 5). The dominance of English in the scholarly publishing sector is working against the transformation agenda. But this should not be surprising when one looks at the wider international scene where English plays the role of the dominant language of scholarly publishing.

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Towards Contextually Relevant Epistemology of Knowledge Production in Teaching and Learning in the Humanities

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Abstract

Over the past decade, we have seen the production of knowledge in the academe undergo fundamental change. This change has challenged traditional disciplines, practices and policies that form the foundation of established educational institutions. Elements such as the interrelatedness of abstract and applied research, the transdisciplinarity setting, the heterogeneous institutional setting, increased reflexivity (i.e. a more dialogical process), and new ways of assessing the quality of knowledge, have all challenged the type of knowledge produced and facilitated within higher education. Additionally, critical disparities regarding the role of the community and critical stakeholders, and the purpose for which knowledge is produced, have received noteworthy attention. Within this transitioning environment, contradictory impressions of ‘social accountability’ and ‘relevance’ continue to place the humanities under a critical lens. It is against this background of purported transitions and increasing theoretical aspirations that the authors problematize and probe the prospects for a contextually relevant epistemology of knowledge production. While cognisant of the many theories and approaches that seek dominance within this field, the authors explore a Gramscian approach of ‘organic’ knowledge production within the humanities. In so doing, the authors explore the relationship between researchers and the researched through the critical lens of Gramsci’s theorizing. This focus supports a critical engagement with the broader social and economic issues of knowledge capital, and offers possibilities for positioning the humanities more critically within the broader domain of knowledge production.

Keywords: Knowledge co-production, organic knowledge, organic intellectuals, contextually relevant, humanities, teaching and learning

Introduction

The societal role played by Universities and institutions of higher education have been considered by many, with some literary contributors including Perkin (2006) arguing that, they play important roles within many advanced civilizations. Furthermore, Perkin (2006) posits that, throughout the ages, their functions have remained comparatively unchallenged and centre primarily on their role as centres of teaching and learning; research and innovation; and community or civic engagement . This modern day depiction of university priorities into a tripartite model of function, is most widely attributed to Boyer (1990) whose seminal work ‘Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate’ critically appraised, amongst other things, the relevance that academia has on the betterment of civic society. In his assessment, Boyer (1990) re-emphasises the role that universities play as centres responsible for knowledge production. This idealist supposition has been subjected to notable critique by others including Rooney, Hearn and Ninan (2005), who argue that universities are far removed from societal concerns primarily because of an obsession with the exclusive production of largely abstract knowledge by an academic elite, for the benefit of the higher echelons of society and in most instances, for consumption only by other academics. This viewpoint asserts a need for the legitimization of ‘bottom-up’ forms of knowledge such as folk culture (oral tradition), which are not normally seen as valid (cf. de Roux 1991: 38-44; and Fals-Borda 1991). An ideal ‘cogenerative dialogue’ in which academic knowledge draws from multiple ‘insider’ contexts is seen as the gold standard that academic knowledge production should seek to achieve. It is unsurprising therefore that, the true mantle and importance of universities has increasingly become synonymous with how well the knowledge produced by a limited few can inform social and community development. Cottom (2003) and Djeflat (2009) offer a summative overview of contemporary debates within the discourse and conclude that institutions of higher education have increasingly become irrelevant to the communities they serve, largely because they have been unable to ensure that their knowledge production endeavours translate to meaningful innovation.

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Accepting this, higher education institutions have supported the emergence of participatory research methods in which community members partner with academics within the research process from problem conceptualization all the way through to dissemination of findings (cf. McIntyre 2008). Such co-production of knowledge is acknowledged as illustrative of the fact that ‘research and innovation’ portfolios within universities have created a blueprint for deeply ingrained methods that support contextually appropriate knowledge production within higher education institutes. By contrast, ‘teaching and learning’ portfolios within higher education institutes have by Olawoyin’s (2010) account, failed to develop relevant methods of knowledge production. In the main, teaching and learning activity has failed to demonstrably move from the long-held and inaccurate belief that universities are bastions of knowledge and instead, curricula are often poorly synchronized with human labour force demands of society.

Guided by this observed disparity between theoretical aspirations and reported realities, this paper explores a Gramscian approach for contextually relevant epistemology in knowledge production for teaching and learning in the humanities. In so doing, this paper analyses the key theoretical constructs in Gramsci’s postulation of ‘organic’ knowledge. However, before attempting to frame Gramsci’s theoretical constructs, it is important to understand the prevailing context of knowledge production. In order to do so, in the following sections we will explore (1) the qualitative trends in knowledge production discourses; (2) its shifting application in higher education; and (3) a synoptic précis highlighting the production of knowledge in the humanities today, which will form the background to the positioning of Gramsci’s epistemology.

A Gramscian Epistemology of Knowledge Production

Throughout this paper, certain critical concepts employed by Gramsci, such as the subaltern; the dominant group; discourses of power, etc. are used as the basis of analysing issues related to coproduction of knowledge. Even so, a critical question which warrants attention is ‘why the focus on Gramsci?’ Firstly, the current era thrust with discourses of globalization, neo-liberalism, terrorism, etc. makes it an apt environment to engage with Marxist critique (cf. Allman 2010). In addition, the post 9/11 era (and more especially the

post-apartheid era in South Africa) demands renewed ways of critiquing global relations of power and pedagogical ideas that have dominated higher education. Secondly, in the past few decades, we have seen Gramsci emerge as an intellectual influence on critical and progressive thinking, within the context of the role of culture within politics; and also as the basis for developing a critical relationship between praxis and theory (cf. Reed 2012). In addition, scholars such as Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo (2002) have explored the educational implications of Gramsci's critical constructs such as 'hegemony'; 'subaltern'; and 'organic intellectual' for the current era. It is within this context that the authors position Gramsci as an important theorist to unpack the constitution of a contextually relevant epistemology to knowledge production in the humanities.

Qualitative Trends in Knowledge Production Discourses

Universities engage with communities and with stakeholders and one of the perceived benefits of these engagements relates to the demonstration of the benefits of higher education to the wider population. These benefits may include making academic knowledge and expertise available to communities and co-creating knowledge with communities and industry. It is hoped that in the process of engagement, universities will exist beyond the 'ivory tower', 'elitist' medium and become increasingly valued by local communities as approachable empowering entities. By engaging with communities, universities can help to build and sustain learning and knowledge based societies for its people. However, the negative experiences of communities with universities in the process of engagement have been well documented and written about. For example, Mckinsey and Company (2012) share study findings which suggest that, some communities have anecdotally experienced academics as exploitative in the way that they extract knowledge from the poor and vulnerable (i.e. a type of subaltern on the periphery of the knowledge economy). Within their observations, they posit that, instead of co-creating knowledge with the community that would enhance development in the community, academics have, at times been accused of conducting their social research projects by extracting information and knowledge from subjects and disengaging with minimal sharing the research findings that could benefit the community. Instead of adding value to the development, universities are often perceived as perpetuating and at times, worsening

inequalities and disparities in their attempts at engagement (Beech *et al.* 2011).

A further concern that is often cited to substantiate challenges about knowledge production within higher education institutions relates to a reported incongruence between the competencies of graduates and the requirements of the industries for which they have academically prepared. This unique paradox of the ‘unprepared overqualified’ graduate is articulated in the study by McKinsey and Company (2012: 23) who conclude that ‘while young people are qualified – even over qualified, in many cases – to enter the workplace, most of them feel ill-suited to tackle the harsh realities of an evolving job market’. Involving 4900 graduates, the study shows that many students offer negative reflections on the content of what they learned at university and in most instances; they conclude that the lack of inclusion of wider society in developing university curricula perpetuates the continuing lack of alignment between university education and skills for life¹. The contribution of university teaching and learning portfolios occupies centre stage with respect to this issue both as the cause and likely panacea to the noted problem of contextually irrelevant knowledge that learners are exposed to during their program of study.

Beech, MacIntosh and MacClean (2011) allude to the fact that academics in the management sciences have been paying attention to the relevance of academic research to management practice for the past four decades. This is because research that is highly credible in the academic community seems to be irrelevant to organizational staff and managers in particular, despite the need for such research (cf. Keleman & Banzal 2002). Not all management research is of practical relevance; nevertheless, developing, testing and refining management theory is an important academic endeavour. However, in a developing country such as South Africa, the lack of relevant knowledge to establish and grow small businesses to create jobs for the masses of unemployed people, threatens the ideals of democracy and sustainability. These and other questions about the real value of knowledge raises further questions about the ‘objective’ value-add that university

¹ It is widely recognized by industry that universities have not yet succeeded in turning out students with the skills and competencies required in the workplace. Graduates struggle to cross the bridge between theories in the academy to practical solutions in the workplace.

education adds to the employability of individuals. In acknowledgement of the above, we find that the humanities is not the only discipline under critical reflection within the domain of knowledge production but rather, wider questions about the value of university may be reasonably posed.

Recent solutions focus on alternative modes of knowledge production such as ‘co-production’ (cf. Pettigrew 2001) and ‘engaged scholarship’ (cf. Van den Ven 2007) to cross the divide between the academy and the world of practice. The idea of co-production of knowledge is that academics and practitioners work together through engagement and dialogue to find practical solutions to real world problems, which simultaneously inform theory.

In critically reflecting on the incongruence between academic knowledge and societal priorities as a result of ‘ivory tower’ obsessions among academics, Beech *et al.* (2011) contend that part of the problem is that universities reward individual success in research over the promotion of innovative and inclusive teaching and learning. This may in part explain why little progress is made in innovation around co-production of knowledge with communities (cf. Cottom 2003). This view is one of a number of asserted illustrative examples that confirm the significant and wide-ranging concerns about a general lack of alignment between academic knowledge and the socio-economic demands of industry and society at large.

South Africa is faced with persistent and serious structural challenges associated with unemployment, poverty and inequality, which have prompted policy makers and citizens to prioritize development. The role of education and training as a contributor to inclusive growth and employment generation has begun to receive much attention in policy documents such as the National Development Plan 2030 (2011) and the New Growth Path (2010). The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET 2013) for example, recognizes the importance of practical experience for students in the world of work as an invaluable part of training as most students are preparing for entry into the labour market. The Department of Higher Education and Training therefore calls for partnerships between higher education and industry. It also recognizes the importance of the education and training system to provide knowledge and skills to the economy. These calls are well intended but pose some challenges in implementation for a number of reasons not least, the complexity of relationships between universities and the communities they serve.

What are the implications on the relevance, access and ownership of

knowledge? Should public colleges and universities, for example, serve the needs of the economy? To whom will core educational and socialization functions be redistributed? Will universities be able to sustain knowledge transmission, production and creation as compatible activities or will higher education face a legitimacy challenge as a result? These are all critical questions that come to the fore in the broader ambit of a transitioning higher education environment.

Towards a Knowledge Production Shift in Higher Education Application

Despite the proliferation of concepts such as ‘stakeholder engagement’ in the private sector, ‘participatory development’ in the public sector and ‘participatory action research’ in academia, the voices of the poor and disenfranchised (i.e. the subaltern) remain absent in knowledge production with lasting social and economic consequences. This is a ‘result of the fact that both material and knowledge production is still the privilege of a selected few and thereby implies a means of domination. As the producer and repository of ‘official’ and ‘legitimate’ knowledge, higher education institutes are implicit participants in reinforcing this domination and persistent disenfranchisement of the subaltern.

Rahman (1991: 14) posits that the elites dominate the masses by the polarisation of control over the means of material and knowledge production and that ‘these two gaps should be attacked simultaneously wherever feasible’. Knowledge creation is a process of co-creation. In this process the distinction between knowledge producers and knowledge consumers is broken down. Hence, there is a shift in discourse from partnership and mutuality to reciprocity. Universities are called as a partner to ‘demonstrate social responsibility’ and their ‘commitment to common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes (cf. Department of Education 1997: 10). This is taken one step further in the White Paper of Higher Education and Training (2013: 39) which recognizes the universities position with community engagement as ‘socially responsive research, partnerships with civil society organizations, formal learning programmes that engage students’. Universities are encouraged to engage the community in a direct relationship that impacts research and teaching and learning (ibid.). However, the critical question relates to how universities

engage the subaltern to give legitimacy to ‘bottom-up knowledge’ production, within a framework that is supposed to alter the politics of power relations in knowledge production.

In this regard, Hoppers (2013: 100) urges universities to ‘develop mutually and reciprocally determined demand in problem identification and resolution’ in its engagement with the subaltern. Participation in knowledge creation is to be increased to a level of mutuality and reciprocity in order to democratize the knowledge process. This involves legitimizing ‘bottom-up’ knowledge processes, which are normally not considered valid (cf. de Roux 1991: 38; and Fals-Borda 1991). Real participation requires a ‘co-generative dialogue’ (cf. Fear & Edwards 1995). The social and knowledge outcomes of such a dialogue are very important with regard to this perception. It can be recognized as enhancing egalitarian relationships (Shotter 2008); construction of new meanings (Grundin 1996); and a concurrent understanding of a new position (Ramsay 2008). In such a transformative dialogue, researcher knowledge which draws and abstracts from multiple contexts, is combined with insider knowledge in a co-creative project of knowledge creation and shared action.

Participatory research is described by Kemmis and McTaggart (2005: 560) as an ‘alternative philosophy of social research’, which is frequently associated with social transformation in the Third World. Its roots can be found in liberation theology, neo-Marxist approaches to community development, and human rights activism. One of its attributes is shared ownership of the ‘engagement’. It is committed to social, economic and political development that is responsive to the needs of the subaltern, in contrast to the political project of conventional social research, which normally serves the ideological function of protecting and advancing the interests of the powerful.

The notion that research should actively involve communities affected by it has been promoted in popular education movements (cf. Freire 1993). Theoretically, participatory research therefore offers one solution to how universities could engage empowering the subaltern through knowledge production. It is within this context that we will explore Gramsci’s philosophy and praxis of knowledge production.

Despite the availability of this theoretical premise for knowledge production, and despite the fact that participatory research has gained some traction in many institutions, this methodology is not embraced as an

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instrument for knowledge production across disciplines². Specialisation and technocracy places certain kinds of expertise and certain kinds of knowledge above others. The natural sciences and law, amongst others, use positivistic methods of research to make a case or to prove of a hypothesis. Knowledge developed through traditional scientific paradigms such as experiments or the use of technologies is frequently considered more legitimate than local knowledge or experiential knowledge. Scientists in the natural science or positivist disciplines lack an epistemological foundation to make sense of its practice. In such disciplines, the dominant epistemology of the academy runs counter to the social change agenda.

Although many social and humanity scientists are familiar with participation as a broader social change strategy, they might still choose to control the research process and knowledge production believing that theoretical knowledge holds the upper hand. Knowledge is undeniably socially and politically constituted. Knowledge systems and constructs in South Africa are adopted from a colonial history and 'apartheid' past. Categorisations and presuppositions must be subjected to continual revision to deconstruct inequalities of the past³.

² In participatory research those restricted as research participants, also participate throughout the research process identifying the problem and the solution. This research process is designed to increasingly shift the power and control of decision making into the hands of the community. By turning the power structures on its head the social structure of the knowledge process is changed. Maquire (2006) posits that the benefits of this research process can be more equitably distributed where research subjects are involved as partners in the entire research process. Participatory research is about people producing knowledge that is normally hidden, and to develop their own consciousness and further their social change struggles.

³ All researchers are called upon to reflect critically upon and question historical discourses and allow the community member to be a legitimate participant on the dialogue. Should the academic however understand categorisations of discourses as simply 'mirroring' what the subject 'is' 'objectively', he/she would simply invite the subject to understand themselves in accordance with this supposedly incontrovertible identify, and the subject will be abolished from any possible dialogue (Foucault 1991: 382).

Another reason for participatory research not enjoying the preferred traction in higher education institutions might relate to the fact that this methodology is consigned to the domain of community engagement. Despite community engagement being one of the three founding principles (together with research and teaching and learning) of the post-apartheid reconstruction of the higher education system and despite it being recognised as a ‘strategy in the transformation of higher education in relation to community development priorities’ (cf. Council for Higher Education 2004: 130), it does not enjoy the same status and recognition as teaching and learning and pure research (as opposed to applied research)⁴.

Producing Knowledge in the Humanities Today

Much like the rest of the world, South Africa’s focus on education has progressively shifted from issues of massification to more sophisticated concerns with standards of education; albeit, at a comparatively slower pace. This is largely due to the legacy of separatists policies that intentionally excluded particular population sectors. Boughey (2003) offers an apt summation of this progression and confirms a shift toward providing ‘epistemological access’ in terms of developing methods of teaching that allow students to become capable participants in global knowledge production. The humanities have played a particularly important role within the eradication of ‘disadvantage’ both in terms of leading conversations about equity in education but also through their promotion of progressive discourse about the contribution that education makes to wider socio-economic concerns (cf. Scott 2001). Furthermore, the humanities has been responsible for generating important questions about the nature of knowledge. For example, the emergence of debates about the appropriateness of Western

⁴ In tenure and promotion processes community engagement is inadequately weighted and poorly clarified. To the contrary, academics spending time on applied research projects often risk their careers. The old mantra of ‘publishing’ or ‘perishing’ also applies negatively in this instance. Participatory knowledge production happens through continuous negotiation at many levels with different groups/individuals over time and in place. It calls for an investment in time, money and people to build trusting relationships that can facilitate problem identification and solution.

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forms of knowledge as a currency of education in Africa can be traced back to the humanities. This has in turn given rise to the view that indigenous knowledge systems deserve to be given more priority within higher education (cf. Chamberlin 2003). Beyond that, questions about social relevance of education have put forward the contention that academia has the potential to make more meaningful contribution to society if its production is negotiated between academics and recipient communities. This shift in the discourse about knowledge production is increasingly challenging the humanities to become more responsive and relevant to societal needs, especially in the face of global economic and social problems (cf. Waghid 2002).

It is against this background that anyone interested in knowledge production in the humanities today, seeks to answer the critical question of what is the role of the academic in the twenty first century humanities. For Aldama (2008:110) the central thesis on the role of the academic is the production of knowledge, which may translate to forms of power, in particular 'political power' and this power has an impact in all spheres of society. Hence, to understand the dominant paradigms such as patriarchy, capitalism, neo-colonialism, etc. one needs to understand the relationships of power to the discursive structures of knowledge. For Denning (2004: 233-234) the role of the academic in the humanities is to identify 'new forms of struggle and solidarity in places we never thought to look'. For Bérubé (1995: 40) the role of the academic in the humanities is to dissect the 'power relations that shape the most intimate and/ or quotidian details of our lives'. All these positions posit a rethinking of what we teach and how we position 'knowledge' we construct within the humanities.

To this end, the critical intersection between 'knowledge' and 'power' that we now turn to Gramsci's epistemology of knowledge production to further analyse the role of the academe.

Towards an Organic Knowledge Production Approach

In current praxis the researched subject is often marginalized in the knowledge production process by the dominant group (i.e. the intellectuals: academics and universities who often assume the roles of bastions of knowledge). In the context of this paper, we employ Green's (2002: 3) definition of the subaltern as a social group, class, individual who are subject to the initiatives of the dominant group. Hence, amidst this marginalization in

the process of knowledge extraction, the researched subject (i.e. the subaltern) continues its struggle for agency, power and social mobility. It is within this context that Gramsci's theorizing of 'organic' knowledge comes to the fore challenging the notions that the subaltern cannot participate in the co-creation of knowledge. By employing the term 'organic' knowledge in this paper, we imply knowledge co-created by the organic intellectual and subaltern, which reflects the realities of the subaltern's lived experiences (cf. Sandler 2009: 429). By accentuating a type of 'organic' knowledge, Gramsci puts forward a re-envisioning of the subaltern as possessing rich social and intellectual resources. In the context of the broader participatory research framework, Gramsci's philosophy of praxis inspires an alternative approach for teaching and learning within the humanities –i.e. a critical pedagogy embedded in relational knowledge. By positioning Gramsci's praxis, we honour the role of the subaltern's thoughts, ideas and actions in creating knowledge, which through reflection by researchers reaches the wider communities of interest. Thereby, articulating how knowledge is socially created and used in the 'lived-experiences' of the subaltern via the 'bottom-up' approach. In order to provide a further explication of Gramsci's epistemology, we explore the following constructs: Construct 1: Organic Intellectuals; Construct 2: Subaltern Knowledge; and Construct 3: Co-Producing Organic Knowledge (see figure 1 below).

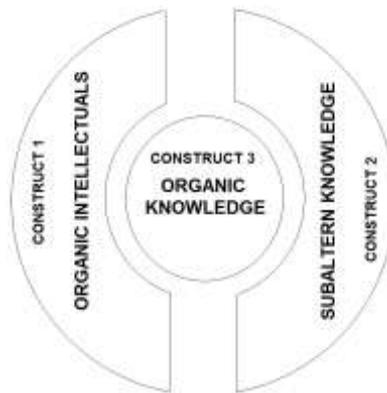


Figure 1: Organic Intellectuals - Subaltern Knowledge - Organic Knowledge

(1) Construct 1: Organic Intellectuals

Gramsci's epistemology articulates an association between those who possess knowledge, its social creation and how it is used (cf. Karabel 2002: 23 and Zanoni 2008: 12). In Gramsci's epistemology we find a strong connection in the interaction between the intellectuals, the subaltern and their shared thoughts and feelings. Ideally for Gramsci, the subaltern should be self-emancipating, but they lack the theoretical consciousness that would enable them to be aware of the contradictions in their own lives. Thus, Gramsci attributes an important role to the intellectuals in conceptualizing the ideas and thoughts of the subaltern. Gramsci (1971: 334) argues that 'there is no organization without intellectuals that is without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people 'specialised' in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas'. However, Gramsci goes further to argue that having a cohort of intellectuals with the ability to 'intellectualize' the ideas of the subaltern and not 'feel' for the subaltern renders a sense of 'detachment' and 'autonomy' from the masses:

The popular element 'feels' but does not understand or know. The intellectual element 'knows' but does not understand and, above all does not feel... The error of the intellectual consists in believing that one can know without understanding and, above all, without feeling, or being impassioned: in other words, that the intellectual can be an intellectual if he [she] is distinct and detached from the people (Gramsci 1971: 418).

For Gramsci, the abilities to 'understand' and 'feel' are interlinked. For an intellectual who is not an insider of the group, he/she must be prepared to experience the feelings of the subaltern in order to co-create knowledge with them (cf. Fontana 2000: 306). If the intellectual fails to 'understand' and 'feel' then the relationship becomes 'bureaucratic and formal' and can lead to the establishment of an intellectual 'caste' (cf. Gramsci 1971: 418). Thus, in Gramsci's epistemology, an intellectual who is not from within the subaltern group can only assume some degree of 'organic' status when he/she understands the 'passions' that motivates the actions of the subaltern. It is within this context that we see Gramsci begin to distinguish between two types of intellectuals, vis-à-vis 'traditional intellectuals' and 'organic

intellectuals'. For Gramsci, 'traditional intellectuals' are often the product of the current dominating regime, - i.e. historically constituted. They attain some degree of autonomy and possess a 'caste-like' position in society⁵. They function to maintain the status quo within the current economic, social and political strata. For Gramsci, what really distinguishes the traditional intellectuals from the organic intellectuals is their 'negative position' to the subaltern group, whose self-proclaimed autonomy stands in direct opposition to the aspirations of the subaltern (cf. Gramsci 1971: 236).

Hence, it is the second category of intellectuals i.e. the 'organic intellectuals', which emerge as an integral element of transformation for Gramsci. Heskin (1991) offers a description of Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' as those situated in the popular movement, aligned to the grassroot participants, functioning to articulate the values and commitments that bind the group together. They are defined by the functions attributed to them by the social group they represent. For Boggs (1993: 179) organic intellectuals share with the larger membership the same language (framework of communication), culture and lifestyle. Born from within the group, they act back on the group, critiquing their ideas to transform it into collective action. In Heskin's view (1991), the organic intellectuals possess the capacity to imagine an alternative future, to generate a counter-hegemony in the interest of the group they represent. Furthermore, they are able to articulate the steps forward to attain that goal within a real world of praxis.

The process of creating or birthing organic intellectuals that are inherent and understand and feel the subaltern is the ideal. However, Gramsci (1971: 334) notes that this process of creating intellectuals is 'long, difficult, full of contradiction, advances and retreats, dispersal and regroupings, in which loyalty of the masses is sorely tried'. It is in this context that both Karabel (2002) and Zanoni (2008) contend that intellectuals not birthed from within the group can show their organic relation to the masses by directly experiencing and knowing their feelings, passions, aspirations and ideas. Boggs (1993) thesis adds to this by developing the argument for a reconstituted definition of the organic intellectuals that are not seen within

⁵ Burke (2005) lists the clergy, philosopher and professors as an example. Although they consider themselves as independent of ruling groups, for Burke (2005) this is usually a myth and an illusion. They are essentially conservative allied to and assisting the ruling group in society.

the confines of class, social identity or social location. Hence, for Boggs (1993) this new form of organic intellectuals creates the prospects for critical intellectuals within the academe to engage with the subaltern for change. The redefined organic intellectual then offers the subaltern recursive reflection based on recognition of ‘compassion’, ‘consequence’ and ‘experience’ (cf. critical attributes identified by Gramsci 1971: 5-6).

(2) Construct 2: Subaltern Knowledge

A critique of ‘subaltern knowledge’ raises a critical question about whose knowledge matters. It further probes the discourses of what constitutes ‘legitimate’ knowledge. A debate that has dominated the academe for decades where specialized intellectuals served as the ‘gatekeepers’ of knowledge and the common individual’s (i.e. the subaltern’s) ‘reasoning’ or ‘understanding’ in order to establish meaning of the human world was seen as meaningless (cf. Patnaik 1988: 2). In the context of this paper we employ Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell’s (2008: 27) definition of ‘subaltern knowledge’ as the experiences; narratives; ideologies and claims to various forms of expertise that define how the subaltern comes to know and inhabit the world.

Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis centres on the thesis that all men and women are intellectuals. While cognizant of the category of ‘specialized’ intellectuals (as articulated in our discussions above), Gramsci posits that, ‘all men [and women] are potentially intellectuals, in the sense of having intellect and using it’ (cf. Gramsci 1971: 3). It is within this context that Gramsci (1971: 421) argues that the subaltern possesses a type of ‘spontaneous philosophy’. A type of knowledge that stands in contrast to knowledge produced by systematic educational activity, but rather a type of knowledge produced through the everyday experience in the world – i.e. ‘common sense’, a traditional conception of the world (i.e. a localized, native knowledge) formulated through historical acquisition (cf. Gramsci 1971: 199). For Gramsci, while common sense dominates the mental life of the subaltern social group, it is not ‘unchanging’ (ibid.)⁶. Thus Gramsci (1971:

⁶ Common sense is established by a process of consent to the dominant group’s attitudes and interests, which are accepted by the subaltern as being its own general interests.

419) contends that since ‘common sense’ is situated in ‘time’ and ‘space’ it remains at variance with one another taking on differing forms at different moments.

Due to the above variants, common sense can also be seen as a category of ‘original thought’ that is produced by the subaltern. This is illustrated by Patnaik (1988: 7) in the following:

One of the most crucial dimensions of subaltern common sense is its originality. It is a creative thought-process of the subaltern groups. Some rationalisations of their subordination might have been constructed by themselves. Some dissent, discontent, and counterpoints might have been offered by the subalterns themselves.

It is within this context that we now find it imperative to understand how the knowledge of the subaltern is constituted. As noted earlier however, that one of the critical challenges is the lack of theoretical consciousness of the subaltern to critique the very system in which their knowledge is produced. This lack of ability renders the subaltern unconscious to the fact that their worldviews (i.e. common sense) may very much be the product of a predetermined ‘act’ articulated by the dominant group. Thus, for Gramsci (1971: 422) it is within this context that the organic intellectual emerges with the critical function to critique the composition of common sense. By critiquing this composition, the organic intellectual will be able to deconstruct and reconstruct a new common sense with the ability to articulate an alternative worldview.

This implies that the construction of a particular conception of the world must be critiqued with focus on the level of consciousness of the subaltern and its social function. This calls for a critique on the origin of knowledge, and the social dialogue that results in the value, use and development of this knowledge into something projected within the subaltern social group (cf. Zanoni 2008: 18).

(3) Construct 3: Co-Producing ‘Organic’ Knowledge

For Gramsci (1971: 350) every ‘hegemony’ as the domination of ideas is an educational one. Thus, educational systems are necessary to advance the

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existing relationships of production and reproduction of the dominant class⁷. Due to hegemony sustaining the relationships between the dominant and the subaltern, a struggle for control over educational institutions such as universities, where methods of producing knowledge are central activities become imperative (ibid.). Thus, the third construct in Gramsci's epistemology focuses on the ways in which educators think about or perform their work within educational institutions, even though they may be conscious that these educational institutions serve to reproduce the social arrangements they are seeking to change radically.

To modify the dominant conception of the world, intellectuals would have to be produced at all levels that propagate another conception of the reality and assume a hegemonic function deriving from their organic relations with the masses. In Gramsci's philosophy of praxis, an educational curriculum should be aiming to co-produce a new stratum of intellectuals with the critical skills to engage with transformation of the subaltern – change the conceptions of the world (cf. Gramsci 1971: 326). For Gramsci, as noted previously, the development of a socio-cultural opposition must begin from the 'common sense' of the masses. It is the aim of the organic intellectual to engage this common sense. Hence, two critical questions come to the fore in Gramsci's epistemology. Firstly, should educators try to change the education system by working within it, and secondly, in what ways can oppositions or alternatives to it be thought? (cf. Simpson 2002: 267). In order to provide a response to these critical questions, the authors in this paper contend that one needs to move beyond the common praxis of 'studying *the* subaltern' to 'studying *with* the subaltern'. For Mato (2000: 480) the emphasis of 'studying *the* subaltern' reflects the 'institutional' context and is reminiscent of the distance and disenfranchisement between the researchers and researched – i.e. a tradition that dominates current praxis within academe. Mato (2000: 481) further contends that, 'it is ethically, politically and epistemologically imperative that researchers find ways to promote the conscious incorporation of social groups that are usually targeted as subjects of study into jointly conceived research agendas'. This notion of 'jointly

⁷ For Gramsci (1971: 350-351) the theoretical and practical principles of hegemony possess epistemological significance in that it articulates an ideological terrain where methods of knowledge may be formed and reformed.

conceived research agendas' reemphasises Gramsci's critical position of organic intellectuals being a part of the masses and able to 'understand' and 'feel' the subaltern in order to produce contextually relevant knowledge. By strategically incorporating the subaltern into the research process, it brings about a shift in research praxis of constructing local communities as objects of study, hence, uttering the shift from studying '*the other*' to study '*with that other*'. This change in focus produces knowledge that is 'organic' capturing the thoughts, aspirations and ideas of the subaltern that reflects their lived realities.

This shift in praxis towards a co-produced knowledge implies reframing our interests to reflect the interests of the subaltern – i.e. what will the subaltern social groups gain from such knowledge production? Mato (2000: 487) offers a 'shift' in knowledge production within this redefined praxis. For Mato (2000) knowledge about the subaltern has always been produced (through publications, reports, and so forth) to provide the hegemonic agents (i.e. the dominant group) knowledge about the secrets of the subaltern. By understanding the subaltern's conception of the world, hegemonic agents were able to dominate and control the subaltern. However, by co-producing knowledge with the subaltern, organic intellectuals begin to reverse the order of things by providing the subaltern with knowledge of how their worldviews and so forth have been constructed and controlled through the hegemonic articulations of power. While this approach is now being purported as a transition within academe praxis, its existence within broader pedagogical discourses is not new. To substantiate this we turn to Freire's (1992: 30) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which he defines his pedagogical position, 'a pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or people) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come the necessary engagement in the struggle for liberation'.

Framing Gramsci's Epistemology within the Humanities

In this section we aim to briefly highlight some of our thoughts on how Gramsci's philosophy of praxis could be positioned within the humanities to bring about a contextually relevant epistemology in knowledge production

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for teaching and learning. Firstly, as a philosophy of praxis, Gramsci's epistemology can be aptly clustered with liberatory, emancipatory, empowering, transformative and transgressive approaches to education. The three constructs which form Gramsci's epistemology (as discussed above) serve to support the educational efforts of disenfranchised communities, and with efforts to create a more diverse and culturally inclusive learning environment within the humanities. For example by academics repositioning themselves within the subject's environment as 'organic intellectuals' with the ability to 'feel' and 'understand' the subaltern, while acknowledging them as sources of rich intellectual knowledge, academics within the humanities can now occupy a more critical role by facilitating a 'type' of learning that is contextually relevant and embedded with kinds of metaphors and analogies that reflect the worldviews of the learners they facilitate. Furthermore, by bringing in new content in the form of co-produced knowledge (via the 'bottom-up approach'), academics begin to alter the learning processes that have dominated the humanities, by challenging the status quo and power hierarchies that protect traditional domains of academic knowledge.

Secondly, Gramsci's epistemology serves to position the learner at the centre of the learning process thereby shifting the epistemological frame or knowledge acquisition. This postulates decentring of what is considered 'authentic' and 'legitimate' knowledge, and a repositioning of the learner's life-world within an experimental learning framework. This shift also posits a methodological repositioning in which teaching and learning takes place within the humanities. Through praxis which includes cultural practices, learners' narratives, learners' experiences, and so forth, academics within the humanities are placed in a critical position to offer a broader sociological critique of education as an institutional practice and also challenge the dominant power hierarchies of a nation or community.

Thirdly, Gramsci's epistemology articulates the critical role of dialogue and recognition of an intersubjective constitution of worldviews. This shift within the humanities positions the learning environment as not encompassing a 'set' body of knowledge to be delivered to students, but rather an acquisition or learning process in which students come to see the world from their own lived-experiences. It is within this context that the learners begin to see themselves not as mere 'individuals' in a learning process, but as part of a community of learners. The notion of a learning community prompts three critical questions for the humanities. (1) Who are

the learning subjects? (2) How is a community of subjects constituted through praxis? (3) How is knowledge claims validated?

Finally, the application of Gramsci's epistemology within the humanities begins to illustrate the need for multi-inter and trans-disciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. The ability to fully comprehend the 'common sense' (worldview) articulated by the subaltern cannot be achieved from the confines of a single discipline. Hence, the integration of a broader critique incorporating politics, sociology, religion, culture, language, psychology and so forth, will offer a more nuanced framework for engaging the subaltern.

Conclusion

Higher education has long afforded itself the mantle of serving as the primary space for knowledge production but, with passing generational changes, questions have been raised about this asserted position. Firstly, the point of contestation arises from a growing acknowledgement of the fact that non-academic communities have much to bring in enriching the process of knowledge production and secondly, there is growing dismissal of the abstract-types of knowledge that are often associated with 'ivory tower' forms of knowledge production. The current discussion sought to present a contextually relevant epistemology of knowledge production for teaching and learning in the humanities. At the onset of this paper, the complex trajectory of this debate is acknowledged followed by a subsequent problematisation of some of the issues within the domain of knowledge production. In facilitating a broad-based discussion of current trends in knowledge production discourse, a review of current progressions in knowledge production applications within the higher education milieu, was offered. Additional contextualisation of knowledge production within the humanities today and an articulation the critical position of the humanities within the broader academe, was provided. It is against this background that the authors began to position a Gramscian epistemology to knowledge production. While acknowledging the many theories within the field that seek to dominate the discourse of knowledge production, Gramsci's understanding of organic knowledge production serves as the basis for discussion within the paper. The ensuing discussion focusses on unpacking three critical Gramscian

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constructs, namely (1) organic intellectuals; (2) subaltern knowledge; and (3) co-produced organic knowledge. Throughout the discussions of these three constructs, the authors illustrated how Gramsci's conceptualization of these constructs impact knowledge production within the education domain. The paper concluded with a critical framing of Gramsci's epistemology in the humanities and how it potentially challenges the current praxis and ethos that dominates teaching and learning.

In concluding this paper, we acknowledge that there is more work needed in this field. Hence, engaging with knowledge production in the humanities through these types of epistemologies offers much prospect for academics within the humanities to 'reinvent' themselves as intellectuals as well as the content they facilitate in their teaching and learning. We offer this paper as a work in progress, with further possibilities of exploring Gramsci's epistemology through contextually applied case studies as evidence of how knowledge can be produced with contextual relevance.

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Education for Freedom

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Poverty is not a fate but a condition; it is not a misfortune but an injustice. It is the result of social structures and of cultural and mental categories. It is linked to the way society is constructed in all its manifestations. It is the result of human hands; economic structures, social ornaments, racial prejudices, cultures of religious sense, all accumulated through history, economic interests each time more ambitious; so its abolition is in our hands as well (Gutiérrez cited in Ardito 2007: 166).

Abstract

This essay revisits translated elements of the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997), author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968, tr. 1970). Freire is associated with a method of teaching basic literacy and a philosophy of education. From a sketch of Freire's work in Latin America and Africa, I consider the debate around the reception and appropriation of his philosophy. Lastly I attempt to locate critical pedagogy within a humanist and enlightenment tradition that clarifies the meaning of education for freedom.

Keywords: Freire, pedagogy, politics, colonialism, Marxism, humanism, modernity, capitalism, liberation

Introduction

In order to achieve humanization, which presupposes the elimination of dehumanizing oppression, it is absolutely necessary to surmount the limit-situations in which people are reduced to things (Freire 2005a: 103).

Paulo Freire sought to address the link between education and freedom. If '[t]he pedagogy of the oppressed, animated by authentic, humanist (not humanitarian) generosity' is to present itself 'as a pedagogy of humankind' (Freire 2005a: 54), how does education for freedom work?

Rather than see schools as components of the irredeemable Ideological State Apparatus, Freire advocated liberation through education and social activism. Successful literacy campaigns in Brazil, Chile, and Nicaragua (for which Freire won the UNESCO Literacy Award) have shown the merit of his approach¹. Teaching literacy where literacy is a requirement for suffrage gives political power to the task of facilitating the entrance of learners into the literate world. Combining an interest in existentialist Marxism, ideology critique and liberation theology, the life of faith committed to redemptive social justice claims salvation through education. Rooted in Base Ecclesial Communities and working for social upliftment, activism was spurred by claims such as: 'The Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin' (Camilo Torres cited in Smith 1991: 16; see Montero 2007). Unlike a theodicy which attempts a vindication of God's goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil, a loving God is presupposed as legitimating the temporal struggle². Reflecting on 'my faith in my struggle for overcoming an oppressive reality and for building a less ugly society ... my struggle for a more people-oriented society', Freire asserts that

¹ For a sympathetic account of Freire's educational reforms in São Paulo see del Pilar O'Cadiz *et al* (1998), and Freire (1993). See Freire (1985) on adult literacy in a peasant context; and Gerhardt (1986), Taylor (1993), Manning (2004), and Baracco (2004). Kirkendall (2010: 142-3) reports that in Nicaragua the Sandinistas levelled the accusation of social egoism at those who saw the Freire's literacy campaign as political domestication. This accords with Freire's (2005a: 159-160) model of cultural revolution as re-education.

² See the concern with social responsibility and class conflict evident in the Papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891: Leo XIII) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991: John Paul II), neither of which challenged the sanctity of private property. Freire refers approvingly to the Papal Encyclical of John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) (see Freire 2005a: 14, fn 14). 'Freire connects his political anthropology to the Judeo-Christian tradition' (Torres 2014: 81). See Schugurensky (2011) and Cho (2013) for reflective assessments.

salvation implies liberation: ‘as if the fight against exploitation, its motivation, and the refusal of resignation were paths to salvation’ (Freire 1998a: 104, 105).

This Christocentric movement was criticised for ultimately endorsing modernity and for trying to spiritualise secularism. Critics saw in the focus on social justice an accommodation with temporal matters traceable to the second Vatican council (1962/5) with its whiggish view of modernity as definitive progress (see Milbank 1997). Ignoring Marx’s analogy between the phantasmagoria of commodity fetishism and the illusory representations of religion, Christian Marxism embraces the redemption of man through modernity. For Freire: ‘The real Easter is not commemorative rhetoric. It is praxis: it is historical involvement’ (Freire 1985: 123)³. Locating Freire in ‘the liveliest and most interesting period of modern Brazilian history’, the early 1960s, Roberto Schwarz (1992: 132-4) describes the move away from a nationalist Marxism which specialized in discussing the invalidity of capitalism, but which took no steps towards revolution. It has been argued that Freire’s Christian socialism made a decisive contribution to changing the profile of the Catholics Church in Brazil, bringing it closer to the poor, and decisively aided Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s path to the presidency (see Christo 2007)⁴. In the words of Henry Giroux, radical pedagogy is a ‘moral and political practice’ (Giroux 2001: xxvii). How does this practice intersect with pedagogy?

³ In contrast, for Marx clear proof of the radicalism of German theory is that it takes as its point of departure the transcendence of religion, and gives rise to ‘the *categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions* in which man is debased’ (Marx 1992: 251; see Maritain 2011: 103). See also Habermas (2006) on the religious roots of the liberal state.

⁴ Freire comments on the Brazilian lefts’ sectarianism and dogmatism: ‘Lula knows—today much better than the average of the leftist leadership of yesterday and the representatives of a certain outdated left of today—that there is a language of historic possibility, neither falling short of nor going beyond limits’ (Freire 1998a: 59). Freire remembers the ‘verbal incontinence of the Brazilian left’ that ‘scared the right, leading it to grow stronger and prepare to stage the coup of 1964’ (66).

Critical Pedagogy

It is in this sense that I say that I have never abandoned my first preoccupation, one that has been with me since my early experiences in the field of education. Namely, my preoccupation with human nature (Freire 2001: 115).

Freire's pedagogy, with the ideal of the teacher as facilitator rather than dictator⁵, centres on the culture circle and the discussion of generative themes that have significance within the context of students' lives. 'Society in Transition' explains:

To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world. It is to experience that world as an objective reality, independent of oneself, capable of being known. Animals, submerged within reality, cannot relate to it; they are creatures of mere *contacts*. But man's separateness from and openness to the world distinguishes him as a being of *relationships*. Men, unlike animals, are not only *in* the world but *with* the world [*Sin embargo, es fundamental partir de la idea de que el hombre es un ser de relaciones y no sólo de contactos, no solo está en el mundo sino con el mundo*] (Freire 2005b: 3)⁶.

The cooperative research of educators and students explores the contradictions of social life by decoding images and then moving to print

⁵ John Dewey also rejected imposition from above in favour of expression and cultivation of individuality and advocated learning from experience as well as from texts in preparation for improving a changing world (see Dewey 1998: 5-6)⁵. Universal access to education combined with rational pedagogy that reflects the divisions of society is seen to provide the knowledge and cultural capital necessary to open the possibility of changing the system (see Bourdieu & Passeron 2000).

⁶ 'Society in Transition' ('La sociedad Brasileña en Transición') is the opening part of Freire's first book, *Education as the Practice of Freedom (La educación como práctica de la libertad)* (1965). The Portuguese original contains references to Scheler, Niebhur, and Toynbee dropped from the English translation.

literacy. The precondition of this pedagogical narrative is that humanity is obtained through the suspension of animality:

Men relate to their world in a critical way. They apprehend the objective data of their reality (as well as the ties that link one datum to another) through reflection – not by reflex, as do animals. And in an act of critical reception, men discover their own temporality. Transcending a single dimension, they react back to yesterday, recognize today, and come upon tomorrow. The dimensionality of time is one of the fundamental discoveries in the history of human culture. In illiterate cultures, the ‘weight’ of apparent limitless time hindered people from reaching that consciousness of temporality, and thereby achieving a sense of their historical nature. A cat has no historicity: his inability to emerge from time submerges him in a totally one-dimensional ‘today’ of which he has no consciousness. Men exist in time. They are inside. They are outside. They inherit. They incorporate. They modify. Men are not imprisoned within a permanent ‘today’: they emerge, and become temporalized (Freire 2005b: 3).

Words are seen to have meaning in the context of the world in which we live⁷ as generative themes are verified ‘through one’s own existential experience, but also through critical reflection’ (97):

The adult literacy process as an act of knowing implies the existence of two interrelated contexts. One is the context of authentic dialogue between learners and educators as equally knowing subjects. This is what schools should be – the theoretical context of dialogue. The second is the real, concrete context of facts, the social reality in which men exist.

⁷ Referring to Plato’s *Apology* and the *Phaedo*, Bakhtin (1981: 130) describes an essential type of autobiography ‘involving an individual’s autobiographical self-consciousness [that] is related to the stricter forms of metamorphosis as found in mythology. At its heart lies the chronotope of “the life course of one seeking true knowledge”’.

In the theoretical context of dialogue, the facts presented by the real or concrete context are critically analyzed. This analysis involves the exercise of abstraction, through which, by means of representations of concrete reality, we seek knowledge of that reality. The instrument for this abstraction in our methodology is codification, or representation of the existential situations of the learners (Freire 1985: 51)⁸.

Freireian pedagogy is conceptualised in terms of the Socratic dialectical search for truth between co-investigating participants in which the '[t]eacher ought to be aware of the concrete conditions of the learners' world, the conditions that shape them' (Freire 1998b: 58).

Following clues for seeing, the Freireian taps into the inner necessity to know as learners make their own way from being shackled to what they immediately encounter to attain insight and human self-transformation⁹. Oppression as captivation-in-an-acceptedness-of-what-is must give way to

⁸ As an act of will, of comprehension, 'the world becomes part of the student's field of identity by being an instantiation of his or her conceptual structure. This gives the student as active agent power over the world in order to transform it. Freire's constructivist epistemology, based in freedom, is at its root an attempt to relate to the world by a totalizing relation, grasping it by means of naming' (Joldersma 2001: 136). See McLaren's (1988: 172-74) conceit of the teacher as ritual performer, 'as much a social activist and spiritual director as a school pedagogue.... a parashaman.... Teaching is a form of 'holy play'... that is more akin to the drama of hunting societies than to the theatre of agricultural societies ...'.

⁹ Even the quest for self-justification must be scrutinised: 'The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence – but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher' (Freire 2005a: 72). Morrow and Torres (2002) compare Freire and Habermas in terms of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Andy Blunden (2013) traces Freire's intellectual roots to the French interest in the master-slave narrative (via Alexander Kojève) and to a current of social theory based on interactionism and the struggle for recognition.

authentic existence as choosing oneself on purpose and determining existence primarily and chiefly starting from that choice:

As men emerge from time, discover temporality, and free themselves from ‘today’, their relations with the world become impregnated with consequence. The normal role of human beings in and with the world is not a passive one. Because they are not limited to the natural (biological) sphere but participate in the creative dimension as well, men can intervene in reality to change it. Inheriting acquired experience, creating and re-creating, integrating themselves into their context, responding to its challenges, objectifying themselves, discerning, transcending, men enter into the domain which is theirs exclusively – that of History and Culture (Freire 2005b: 4)¹⁰.

Transcendence is integral to the freedom that is unique to being human. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* quotes Karl Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* in support of the thesis that animals produce only what they need, and cannot produce products detached from themselves, whereas humans exercise their freedom through what they produce. Because ‘people can tri-dimensionalize time into the past, the present, and the future, their history, in function of their own creations, develops as a constant process of transformation within which epochal units materialize’ (Freire 2005a: 101)¹¹. Temporalization opens man’s transcendence.

¹⁰ Referring to *The Republic*, Immanuel Kant credits Plato with maintaining that ‘however great a gulf must remain between the idea and its constitution, no one can or should try to determine this, just because it is freedom that can go beyond every proposed boundary’ (Kant 1998: 397, B374). Transcendence is integral to human being.

¹¹ See Marx (1964: 112-114); Althusser (2005) on the whole ethical and anthropological interpretation of Marx nourished by the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*; and Kain (1986) on Marx’s Kantianism. Marx’s manuscripts confirm the basic outline of Hegel’s writings of 1802/4 collected as *System of Ethical Life* and *First Philosophy of Spirit* which were unpublished in Marx’s life-time. Marx’s critique of Hegel’s idealism has been attributed to his unfamiliarity with the work of Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz that covered the practical elements of Hegel’s writings (see Levine 2012: 53-66).

Freire's philosophical anthropology is central and determining. Man is the ultimate purpose of nature, the purpose by reference to which all other natural things constitute a system of purposes¹². Humans create culture while animals cannot expand their restricted world 'into a meaningful, symbolic world which includes culture and history' (Freire 2005a: 98). Literacy is essential for consciousness of temporality, and illiterate cultures do not achieve a sense of their historical nature. Only humans develop, and the transformation of an animal is not development:

The transformations of seeds and animals are determined by the species to which they belong; and they occur in a time which does not belong to them, for time belongs to humankind.

Women and men, among the uncompleted beings, are the only ones which develop. As historical, autobiographical, 'beings for themselves', their transformation (development) occurs in their own existential time, never outside it (Freire 2005a: 161).

'[T]his apparently superficial distinction' (97) between animals and humans means that there is no man without the animal; only by way of comparison with the animal does man appear. The pedagogy of the oppressed is based on the axiological subjection of the animal:

Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming* – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. Indeed, in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, people know themselves to be

¹² See Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2011: 71-104) on Freire's pedagogy of humanism. Freire is centrally concerned with 'the role of autonomous individuals and the force of self-determination', 'self-reflection and social critique' (Giroux 2004: 13, 14). The faith is that 'the pedagogical "act of knowing" reflects the liberatory goal of a socialist politics' (McLaren 2001a: 639). 'Consequently Freire often falls into a theoretical discourse which legitimates a modernist notion of the unified human subject and its attendant emphasis on universal historical agents' (Brady 1994: 143). Freire's stress on existential conditions and self-fashioning is amplified in the work of Maxine Greene that synthesises Dewey and Sartre (see Greene 1988).

unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. In this incompleteness and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation. The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity (Freire 2005a: 84).

This is because '[i]f hope is rooted in the inconclusion of a being, something else is needed in order to personify it' (Freire 1998a: 106):

of the uncompleted beings, man is the only one to treat not only his actions but also his very self as the object of his reflection; this capacity distinguishes him from the animals who are unable to separate themselves from their activity and thus are unable to reflect upon them. In this apparently superficial distinction lie the boundaries which delimit the action of each in his life space. Because the animal's activity is an extension of themselves, the results of that activity are also inseparable from themselves: animals can neither set objectives nor infuse their transformation of nature with any significance beyond itself. Moreover, the 'decision' to perform this activity belongs not to them but to themselves (Freire 2005a: 97).

Animals can't take risks or make decisions, neither can they commit themselves; 'animals do not "animalize" their configuration in order to animalize themselves—nor do they "de-animalize" themselves"' (98)¹³. Lacking 'self-consciousness' the animal's life is 'totally determined' (99).

¹³ 'If, for animals, orientation in the world means adaptation to the world, for man it means humanizing the world by transforming it. For animals there is no historical sense, no options or values in their orientation in the world; for man there is both a historical and a value dimension. Men have the sense of "project", in contrast to the instinctive routines of animals' (Freire 1972: 21). That is: 'All the animals have exactly the faculties necessary to preserve themselves. Man alone has superfluous faculties' (Rousseau 1979: 81). This historically sedimented tradition of privileging man includes Marx (1976: 183-4). See Agamben (2004: 29) on the 'anthropological machine of humanism'.

Separation from and objectification of the life-world is necessary to transform it:

I shall start by reaffirming that humankind, as beings of the *praxis*, differ from animals, which are beings of pure activity. Animals do not consider the world; they are immersed in it. In contrast, human beings emerge from the world, objectify it, and in so doing can understand it and transform it with their labor.

Animals, which do not labor, live in a setting which they cannot transcend. Hence, each animal species lives in the context appropriate to it, and these contexts, while open to humans, cannot communicate among themselves (Freire 2005a: 125).

Animality is an index oppression and peasants ‘often insist that there is no difference between them and the animals; when they do admit a difference, it favors the animals. “They are freer than we are”’ (63), they say¹⁴.

Freire’s comments on the animal exemplify the tendency of modern thought to create a gulf between the human sphere of values and the non-human. In Kantian terms, freedom is the kind of causality that belongs to living beings insofar as they are rational. The universality of freedom is a concept demanding self-responsibility and ethical praxis as practical freedom to fulfil the destiny of the human being as person. Freire’s pedagogical anthropology has been described as ‘a theory of human nature, one might say a secular liberation theology’ (Aranowitz 1993: 12). Ideally the valorization of the voices, knowledge, and understanding of disadvantaged groups

¹⁴ ‘Unable to decide for themselves, unable to objectify themselves or their activity, lacking objectives which they themselves have set, living “submerged” in a world to which they can give no meaning, lacking a “tomorrow” and a “today” because they exist in an overwhelming present, animals are ahistorical’ (Freire 2005a: 98). See Kahn (2010) on Freire’s subsequent eco-pedagogical tempering of this anthropocentrism. Freire remarks of his travels through the centre of capitalist power: ‘As I said to my Brazilian and Chilean friends whom I left in Santiago, I needed to see the animal close to its home territory’ (Freire & Faundez 1989: 12).

achieves the right to assume direction of their own destiny¹⁵. The philosophical vision underlying this political and ethical perspective is as follows:

Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality.... But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation (Freire 2005a: 43).

For Freire '[h]ope is an ontological requirement for human beings' (1998b: 44), and he presumes that hope for a better life must coincide with some form of social justice incompatible with capitalism¹⁶. The faith is that to be transformed through education is at the same time to be an agent in transforming the world in the direction of a socialist alternative to capitalism.

These principles were given concrete form in Freire's involvement in the education policy of the People's Revolutionary Government of Granada (from 1979 until 1983 when Granada was invaded by the US), a regime accused of stifling a free press and refusing to hold elections (see Gibson 1994). He implemented the literacy campaign of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Guinea-Bissau. In 1980 the Department of Adult Education of Guinea-Bissau declared that the Freire inspired literacy campaign of the years 1976-79 involved 26, 000 students and the results were practically nil. Critics conclude that Freire based his romantic view of the complexities of the context on impressions derived from

¹⁵ The imperative of Freireian education to form subjects rather than objects echoes Freud's *Wo Es war, soll Ich warden*. Freud's 'It' being the id: 'Where the id was, there ego shall be' (Freud 1973: 112). The challenge is to avoid compromise formations that, despite what they promise, block resolution in a web of hypocrisy and diversion (see Lacan 2006: 435).

¹⁶ Peter McLaren describes the bridge to this as 'a multiracial and anti-imperialist social movement dedicated to opposing racism, capitalism (both in private property and state property forms), sexism, heterosexism, hierarchies based on social class, as well as other forms of oppression' (McLaren nd.).

the writings of Amílcar Cabral¹⁷. Lack of success in Guinea-Bissau has been traced to the decision to use the colonial language (Portuguese) as the means of instruction on the literacy campaign: ‘Most African countries were too linguistically diverse and rural for Freire’s techniques to be effective there’ (Kirkendall 2010: 112).

Reflecting on the attempt to make Portuguese the national language in Guinea-Bissau, Freire concludes that where the Portuguese language has nothing to do with everyday social practice it cannot impose itself as necessary (see Freire & Macedo 1987: 162). Use of Creole (which lacks a stable written form) was Freire’s preferred option to pave the way for the eventual dominance of Portuguese as the language of the sovereign nation. He was to be more successful in São Tomé and Príncipe, a colonial creation with no indigenous population and wide use of Portuguese. Faced with the legacy of colonialism one must work with what is available: ‘What policy could be adapted which would be adequate to the concrete situation?’ (Freire 1989: 114). Freire’s account of Brazilian national liberation illuminates these issues.

In 1965, analysing the Brazilian experience of colonisation, Freire noted that Portugal had insufficient population to engage in projects of settlement: ‘Unfortunately for our development, the first colonizers of Brazil lacked a sense of *integration with the colony*’ (Freire 2005b: 20)¹⁸. In an argument that recalls the distinction in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* between

¹⁷ Facundo (1984) notes in Freire’s *Pedagogy as Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau* (1978) a lack of concern with the material circumstances of Guinea-Bissau. See also Harasim (1973); Walker (1980); Torres (1993); Nyirenda (1996); and (Okigbo 1996). For the influence of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* see Freire (1990: 36), and chapter four of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Nyerere (1967) provides an interesting point of comparison.

¹⁸ As Hegel (1956: 84) remarks: ‘South America was conquered, but North America colonized ... The Spaniards took possession of South America to govern it and to become rich through occupying political offices, and through exactions. Depending on a very distant mother country, their desires found a larger scope, and by force, address and confidence they gained a greater predominance over the Indians. The North American States were, on the other hand, entirely *colonized* by Europeans’.

plain robbery and colonialism as devotion to an idea, Freire opines that the Portugese colonists sought to exploit rather than cultivate, to leave with spoils rather than settle. Indeed Freire's intra-colonial nationalism stresses the need to locate the seat of decision within the nation rather than being subject to decisions made in the metropole (see Freire 2005a: 160-62)¹⁹.

After quoting Simone Weil in relation to personal responsibility and national, democratic destination, Freire addresses the need in Brazil to enable 'the people to reflect on themselves, their responsibilities, and their role in the new cultural climate—indeed to reflect on their very *power* of reflection' (2005b: 13). Taking into account the various levels at which the Brazilian people perceive their reality, Freire elaborates on his own analysis of the historically and culturally conditioned levels of understanding. In the 'most backward regions of Brazil' among "'circumscribed' and 'introverted' communities', '[m]en of semi-intransitive consciousness cannot apprehend problems situated outside their sphere of biological necessity. Their interests centre almost totally around survival, and they lack a sense of life on a more historic plane' (13). Such 'disengagement between men and their existence' makes 'discernment difficult': 'Men ... fall prey to magical explanations because they cannot apprehend true causality' (13).

Ideally inner transformation grounded in the phenomenology of lived experience mirrors social transformation. Dialogue between man and man enables men to become a "'transitive", 'historical being[s]'' (2005b: 13-14), although this can still be naive and susceptible to the magical aspect of intransitivity, the 'irrationality and fundamentalism' (14) characteristic of mass society. The highest stage, '*critical transitivity*', consists of 'the substitution of causal principles for magical explanations ... [and] by soundness of argumentation' (14), meaning testability and openness to revision. Transition as self-affected rebirth involves 'lead[ing] a country to a democratic destination' (13), for the falsifiability indicative of critical transitivity is inseparable from democracy. These psycho-epistemological, discursive categories are also forms of politics; from tribalism to massification/totalitarianism 'where a person acts more on the basis of emotionality than of reason' (15) we eventually arrive at democracy. Genuine

¹⁹ For Peter McLaren (2001b: liv): 'In other words, I do not see the central tension as one between the autochthonous and the foreign—but between labor and capital'.

education is the vehicle of this journey from self-incurred tutelage to cognitive and political freedom: 'In this way, the Enlightenment project is called upon to live up to its name' (McLaren 2001b: liii)²⁰. A humanistic education aiming at inculcating the feasibility of observing the moral law is essential for such a challenge: to think for oneself independent of the teacher. The goal is the liberation of humanity: 'Freire's is a humanist project, *par excellence*' (McLaren & Leonard 1993: 3)²¹.

In what purports to be his last interview Freire says he understands himself more 'as a kind of epistemologist proposing a critical way of thinking and a critical way of teaching, of knowing to the teachers in order for them to work differently with the students' (Freire 1996). On the question of language and power, he remarks the duty of the teacher to recognise that wherever there is a cultivated use of language, there is one that is subordinated and uncultivated. He concludes:

I defend the duty of the teachers to teach the cultivated pattern, and I defend the rights of the kids or of the adults to learn the dominant pattern. But it is necessary in being a democratic and tolerant teacher, it is necessary to explain, to make clear to the kids or to the adults that their way of speaking is as beautiful as our way of speaking. Secondly, that they have the right to speak like this. Third, nevertheless they need to learn the so-called dominant syntax for different reasons; that is, the more the oppressed, the poor people, get command of the dominant syntax the more they can articulate their

²⁰ Ana Maria Araújo Freire (Araújo Freire in Freire 1998a: 132) foregrounds the decisive influence of the French Enlightenment on Brazilian democratic rebelliousness.

²¹ For Adorno (1973: 197), because ideology only makes sense in relation to the truth or untruth of what it refers to, the reduction of knowledge to socially necessary delusions cancels ideology. In the name of social justice the social contradictions are foregrounded, but this gesture of moral judgement is itself extracted from its own historical conditions of emergence, its own social contradictions. The relativity of cognition can only be maintained from without, a transcendental guarantee that is itself, as unconditioned, inescapably ideological. See Martin and Torres (2004: 22) on Freire as critical theorist, 'heavily influenced by the Frankfurt School'.

voices and their speech in the struggle against injustice (Freire 1996)²².

While avoiding an implacable definition of the class enemy and demurring the promotion of absolute class enmity, Freire hoped for social transformation.

The degree to which Freire called for the abolition of private property is open to question. Certainly condemnation of the greed of those who defend the privatization of every public company that turns a profit, and the lack of respect for public property (state corruption), traces these ills to ‘neo-liberal modernity’ (Freire 1998a: 54). Part of Freire’s antidote is ‘rigorous agrarian reform’ on the basis of the following interpretation:

Not one modern capitalist society has failed to conduct its agrarian reform, indispensable to the creation and maintenance of the domestic market. That is why among those democracies agrarian reform is no longer discussed, not because this process is ‘ancient’ or ‘a violation of private property’ (1998a: 54).

The goal is to strengthen the domestic market and so bolster national independence by way of reforms within the context of capitalism in accord

²² ‘[T]he existing contempt for the learners’ cultural identity, the disrespect for popular syntax, and the almost complete disregard for the learners’ baggage of experiential knowledge’ (Freire 1998a: 62) does not entail jettisoning the dominant syntax: ‘I have never said, as is sometimes believed, or even suggested that lower-class children should not learn the so-called educated norm of the Portuguese language of Brazil. What I have said is that problems of language always involve ideological questions and, along with them, questions of power’ (Freire 1998b:74). Compare this with Gramsci’s view that political progressivism demands educational traditionalism, and the oppressed class should be taught to master the tools of power and authority before they can effectively challenge the system under the guidance of the vanguard party (see Hirsch 1997; Mayo 1999; and Borg *et al* 2002). Michael Apple (2011: 15-16) also invokes Gramsci to argue against embracing intellectual suicide. For a restatement of this position in the South African context see Laurence Wright (nd).

with the development of modern society aiming at a balanced distribution of social wealth. And this indeed is how reforms in Brazil have been interpreted. The Lula government's 2002 redefinition of agrarian reform that has continued under Dilma Rousseff has been described in the following terms:

Agrarian reform was no longer part and parcel of the fight for socialism, but rather an essential economic development policy.... Emptied of its political content, agrarian reform was now subordinated to economic objectives.... It reflected the PT's [*Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party)] shift to a 'third road' strategy in the years leading up to Lula's election—neither socialist nor neoliberal. With a focus on acquiring state power, the PT came to view explicitly socialist positions as a hindrance to electoral victory. Instigated by Lula—whose three previous presidential campaigns helped build his hegemony over the party—the PT reluctantly made a shift in ideology and endorsed capitalism, seeking to retain its “socialist” credentials by embracing ‘developmentalism’. The idea was to integrate small family farming in big picture economic planning, calling [for] the inclusion agrarian reform without necessarily redistributing land (Welch 2011)²³.

Such is the result, in the context of global capitalism, of Freire's dream of ‘re-creating society’ that rejects ‘Stalinist authoritarianism’ in favour of ‘a truly democratic socialism’ (1998a: 49) as the goal of ‘a leftist party in touch with its time... making all its statements, denunciations, and announcements rigorously ethical’ (79). The goal is transformed into that of making capitalism fit for society (see Crouch 2013).

Apart from the passing rejection of ‘the myth of private property as fundamental to personal human development’ (Freire 2005a: 140), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* does not interrogate private property beyond moral

²³ Although ‘the agrarian reform constitutes one of the programs in a policy of strengthening the family agriculture (based on the small property and the family's work) integrated into the capitalist market.... since 1996, the compensation for expropriated land has ensured the existence of a real institutional land market, which benefits, *in fine*, the proprietors, banks and investors’ (Sabourin 2008).

condemnation of property distribution. Rather property is transmuted into knowledge as property. In ‘the problem-solving method’ of teaching the teacher does no regard ‘cognizable objects as his private property’, for rather than being ‘the property of the teacher’ the object of the act of cognition should be ‘a medium evoking the critical reflection of both teachers and students’ (80). This position is open to the criticism that the metaphor of property as knowledge substitutes cognition for the actuality of possession in law, displacing property from the socio-political realm to the realm of ideas (see Pierson 2013). The redistribution of knowledge and opportunity is to take place within the reformed existing system.

The appeal of Freire’s ideas on social justice and the necessity of grass-roots activism can be seen in institutes from Nicaragua, Britain, Malta, Brazil, the USA, and South Africa²⁴. Despite these achievements, which exceed the aims of adult literacy, the reception of Freire’s work has not always been inspiring.

Freire has been invoked in the comparison of teaching and sex (see Tomkins 1990), and has been claimed by business management studies aiming at liberation through efficiency rather than through any radical challenge to the capitalist system²⁵. Social activism becomes social entrepreneurship, and Freire is enlisted to promote Total Quality Manage-

²⁴ For the fates of Freire inspired projects see Brown (2013) on Kerala, and Siddhartha (nd.), The Critical Pedagogy Collective in the UK, and <http://www.Friere.org>. Blikstein (2008) argues that Freirean principles in combination with new technologies can realise education for freedom.

²⁵ In answer to Moacir’s (1996: 63) argument that the ‘aim of institutional pedagogy is to reach social self-management... [i]t would be at the service of a project of society’, Torres (1996: xxiv) points out that this idea of autonomy as self-management sounds like the voucher system advocated in North America by neo-liberals offering greater autonomy to schools, leaving education to the whim of the market and privatization. See Kumar (1998: 2914) on the incorporation of Freireian ideas and terminology into the industry of voluntarism; also Smith *et al* (2009: 67-70). See also Roberts (2000) on the misuse of Freireian ideas, and Lange (2012); Ward (1994: 118-122); Bowers and Apffel-Marglin (2005) for criticism of Freire; and Smith *et al* (2009).

ment programme enlists Freire to improve manager adaptability (see Prieto 2011; Prieto *et al.* 2012; and Waistell 2009). The free market has been punted as essential to realising Freireian freedom (see Sing 2008). At The Paulo Freire Charter School, Newark, New Jersey learners can engage in the ‘Teacher Cadet Programme’ or ‘Bank of America Student Leaders Program’. Education for liberation becomes team-building and personal construct therapy dispensing medicinal rhetoric (see Viney 1996: 49-86). The principle categories of Freire’s conscientized literacy are repackaged as a philosophy of life and smoothly put in the service of the existing system of domination and exploitation by ‘divesting them of their essential political dimension and turning them into purely psychological categories’ (Martín-Baró 1994: 19).

It is not surprising that Freire reportedly gave up the use of the slogan *conscientização* (conscientization) when he saw that it was being employed as a ruse to mask the implementation of instrumental rationality under the guise of radical pedagogy (see Torres 2008: 8; and Lichtenstein 1985). The moral critique of capitalism, incorporated into its progressive self-criticism, enables the intractable system to offer itself as the best hope for individual freedom and economic prosperity. In addition to an agent capable of actions conducive to profit creation, the spirit of capitalism requires an agent equipped with a greater degree of reflexivity; one who judges the actions of the former in the name of universal principles, something to fire the imagination (see Boltanski & Chiapello 2007: 14).

These appropriations of Freire have led some to claim that, despite the plea ‘not to confuse modernization with development’ (Freire 2005a: 161), Freire’s assumptions and presuppositions serve the very system he claimed to want to change (see Esteva *et al.* 2005). His work has been linked to the ‘values of Western modernity’ (Bowers 2001: 71). Criticism has been levelled at the Enlightenment way of equating change with progress and of thinking of critical reflection as the primary basis for initiating change. This situation is the result of adherence to ‘a universal human nature rather than to the actual patterns of individual-community relationships ... the same modern way of thinking that is found in transnational corporations’ view of global markets’ (Bowers 2001: 73; and see MacIntyre 1988; and Losurdo 2011). Reflecting on the appropriation of Freire’s work, Giroux (nd.) notes that Freire ‘strides the boundaries between modernist and anti-colonialist discourse; he struggles against colonialism, but in doing so he often reverses rather than ruptures its basic problematic’. The goal of ‘replacing capitalist

relations of production with freely associated labor under socialism' (McLaren 2001a: 641) recedes yet again²⁶.

Peter McLaren dates the integration of critical pedagogy into a reformist strategy to the mid-1980s when corporations began to become more powerful than some nation states and neo-liberalism co-opted or extinguished hopes for educational transformation²⁷. Without the political linkage to oppositional politics education becomes therapy committed to solving a variety of partial problems within the terms of the existing system. In response, defenders of Freire have sought to move the concept of transformation from participation and integration within a democratic system commensurate with the liberal approach to include the possibility of subversion and revolution: '[b]y propagandizing the notion of social solidarity and mutual interdependence as a counter to the self-destructive tendencies of individualist pathologies' (Martin & Torres 2004: 9)²⁸. Educators committed to socialist civic virtues need to 'subordinate their work

²⁶ 'The rhetoric of freedom and equality may have intensified, but there is unassailable evidence that there is ever deepening exploitation, domination, and inequality and that earlier gains in education, economic security, civil rights, and more are either being washed away or are under severe threat' (Apple 2011: 13).

²⁷ For McLaren: 'many who claim that they are practicing a vintage form of Freireian pedagogy... have, unwittingly, taken critical pedagogy out of the business of class struggle and focused instead on reform efforts within the boundaries of capitalist societies' (McLaren 2010: 499). It seems that the belief that '[i]nsofar as schooling is premised upon generating the living commodity of labor-power, upon which the entire social universe of capital depends, it can become a foundation for human resistance' (McLaren 2003: 119) can also lead to co-option.

²⁸ Martin and Torres (2004) advocate communities of resistance within a resurgent welfare system. That is, activism is to be subsidised by a state and economic system that redistributes surplus to the poor and unemployed. Apart from consigning some to perpetual (alleviated) poverty and unemployment, such a proposal made under the banner of modernised Marxism is content to leave undisturbed the exploitative origin of surplus value.

to and in the service of popular majorities and their struggles' (McLaren & Jaramillo 2007: 115).

Inspired by Cuban socialism and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the Citizen's Revolution in Ecuador, and indigenous revival in Bolivia, the call of revolutionary pedagogy is to abandon the university as an ineffective basis of resistance and engage in local struggles: 'We must all actively remain immersed in our communities, and where injustice is perpetrated we need to resist, take courage, and act' (Kirylo 2013: xxiv)²⁹. In the name of revolutionary learning in action rhetorical radicalism and the clenched papier-mâché fist are disavowed in the cause of uprooting capitalism through the creation of new human relations. Activist pedagogues (minus the vanguard party) ought to 'refuse to labour in the interests of capital accumulation, [such that] labour-power can therefore serve another cause: the cause of socialism' (McLaren 2006; and see McLaren & Jaramillo 2005: 137).

Lessons

According to the received modes of education, the master goes first and the pupil follows. According to the method here recommended, it is probable that the pupil would go first, and the master follow.... The adult must undoubtedly be supposed to have acquired their information before the young; and they may at proper intervals incite and conduct their diligence, but they ought not to do it so as to supersede in them the exercise of their own discretion (Godwin 1823: 70)³⁰.

²⁹ 'I am not interested in making education more effective, or efficient, or smooth-running, or successful. It is already too successful.... In its present form, education is successful at creating the conditions of possibility for capitalism to reproduce itself' (McLaren 2013). This position echoes Nietzsche's diagnosis of 'why our academic thinkers are not dangerous.... They don't frighten; they carry away no gates of Gaza Yes the university philosophy should have on its monument, "It has hurt nobody"' (Nietzsche 1911: 200-201).

³⁰ For Mary Wollstonecraft the problem with conventional education is that '[t]he memory is loaded with unintelligible words, to make a show of,

In what ways is Freireian critical pedagogy distinct from its educational predecessors? Like Plato's prisoners in the cave allegory of the *Republic*, Freire is concerned with how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened. The ensnared are caught up in misapprehension and must liberate themselves with the intervention of an outsider. But 'a free man ought not to learn anything under duress.... compulsory learning never sticks in the mind' (Plato 1974: 306, 536e). In Plato's allegory release from the shackles is only the beginning of emancipation for initially the freed prisoner wants to turn back to his illusory shadows (see Heidegger 2002: 28; and Inwood 2005)³¹.

Plato's *paedeia* leads from misrecognition to the form of the Idea, and Freire's directive learning also leads to the Good: 'And anyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life must have sight of it' (Plato 1974: 321, 517 c)³². All our thoughts and actions back to the socio-political

without the understanding's acquiring any distinct ideas: but only that education deserves emphatically to be termed cultivation of mind, which teaches young people how to begin to think.... How much time is lost in teaching them to recite what they do not understand?' (Wollstonecraft 1996: 169). While Godwin remained suspicious of the hegemonic function of national education, Wollstonecraft saw it as the way of ensuring that teaching was not distorted by private gain (as did Kant 2007: 446-7; and see Loudon 2007: 27-50).

³¹ Bingham and Biesta (2010: 71-2) see Freire as conscientiously Platonist, while Roberts (2000: 38) argues that Freire's theory of knowledge is opposed to Platonism. See Jay and Graff (1995); and Taylor (1993).

³² For Heidegger (1998a: 181) the beginning of metaphysics in the thought of Plato is at the same time the beginning of humanism: 'human beings as animals with reason take centre stage and the drama of the liberation of their possibilities in terms of moral development, development of their reason, the awakening of their civic sense, etc., becomes of essential importance'. See Howard Eiland's (1989) discussion of pedagogy in Plato's *Laws*: 'real equality meted out to various unequals' in a community that sees to it that each citizen is assured the necessities of life, including 'equal distribution of land and houses'. In the division of 'one man to one work' there obtains common weal, 'all [being] as utterly alike as may be in all happiness',

by way of as practical wisdom (*phronesis*) that has a bearing on every-day life. Linked to politics this becomes a question of ethics and ethical judgement, of the good life and how to realise and maintain it (see Arendt 1992 and Arendt 1971; and Aristotle 1995: 1805, 1143a 20, 33-35). And of course by impressing a character on someone and guiding someone by a paradigm can avail itself of a normative proto-type. Ethology based on the principle that different circumstances produce different types of characters is always open to the charge of indoctrination³³.

The vision of learning as moral education recalls the seventeenth century humanist self-fashioning of autonomous subjects associated with the pedagogy of Erasmus and the English Renaissance that sought to counter the sovereign or political model of discipline instilled by classical education based on rote learning and grammatical drilling. Erasmus hoped to reform the behaviour of the ruling groups, and so Tudor schools were 'transformative or transitional institutions' (Halpern 1991: 26). Positing an intersubjective universal conscience grounded in knowledge of wrong as privation and defect demands that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means³⁴.

'making life, to the very uttermost, an unbroken consort, society, and community of all with all'.

³³ 'Freire has his *Republic* too. There is no way out of Plato's dilemma. Literacy always comes with a perspective on interpretation that is ultimately political. One can hide that perspective the better to claim it isn't there, or one can put it out in the open' (Gee 1989: 162). This in turn position opens the way to the following blanket criticism: 'Despite their talk about 'self-expression', today's educators have to inculcate collectivism' (Peikoff 2014: xxi). The defensive response that Freire inspires 'the kind of education [that] is non-prescriptive' (Nkoane & Lavia 2012: 67) founders on the wilful politicisation of education in the name of moral education. And anyway, isn't the claim that it is better to be non-prescriptive itself a prescription?

³⁴ See Hämäläinen's (2003: 77) claim for social pedagogy moving away from philosophical anthropology to emphasise social criticism and emancipation based on the belief that social circumstances can be changed through education: 'It aims to promote those developmental processes in people that are connected with moral values. The helping process is based on the Kantian maxim which defines every human as being of absolute and unique value and

Freires's pedagogy of the oppressed is also foreshadowed by Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz's stress on the Hegelian centrality of self-estrangement (*Selbst-Entfremdung*) in his *Philosophy of Education*. Education guides man away from his animal nature: the mind must estrange itself from itself so that it may place itself over against itself and become a special object of attention, thereby removing estrangement and returning the self-conscious mind to unity with itself:

The aim of education must be to arouse in the pupil this spiritual and ethical sensitiveness which does not look upon anything as merely indifferent, but rather knows how to seize in everything, even in the seemingly unimportant, its universal human significance (Rosenkranz 1897: 31).

Recounting the influence of Rousseau, and the transformation of the French Revolution from proclaiming the liberation of humanity to pursuing the glory of the French nation, Rosenkranz argues that the philosophy of education is always political because of implementation, and teaching is always ethical because of human interaction. In passing he notes the influence of another relevant educational reformer:

Then appeared Pestalozzi and directed education also to the lower classes of society — those who are called, not without something approaching to a derogatory meaning, *the people*. From this time dates popular education, the effort for the intellectual and moral elevation of the hitherto neglected atomistic human being of the non-property-holding multitude. The shall in future be no dirty, hungry, ignorant, awkward, thankless, and will-less mass, devoted alone to animal existence. We can never rid ourselves of the lower classes by having

says that all individuals should be treated as objectives in their own right, never just as the means to achieving another person's ends (the so-called categorical imperative), the objective itself. From this point of view, one educational task of social work is to help people to attain and to maintain the experience of meaning and dignity in their life. Pedagogical questioning is closely connected with ethical themes'. However, such social criticism clearly remains embedded in philosophical anthropology.

the wealthy give something, or even their all to the poor; but we can rid ourselves of them in the sense that the possibility of culture and independent self-support shall be open to everyone, because he is a human being and a citizen of the commonwealth. Ignorance and rudeness, and the vice which springs from them, and the malevolent mind which hates civil laws and ordinances and generates crime – these shall disappear. Education shall train man to self-conscious obedience to the law, as well as to kindly feeling toward the erring, and to an effort not merely for their punishment, but for their improvement. But the more Pestalozzi endeavored to realize his ideal of human dignity, the more he comprehended that the isolated power of a private man could not attain it, but that the nation itself must make the education of its people its first business. Fichte by his lectures [*Addresses to the German Nation*, 1808] first made the German nation fully accept these thoughts ... (Rosenkranz 1897: 281-282).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi pioneered basic literacy with a fundamental stress on the self-activity of the learner developing the power of observation (*Anschauung*), utilising pictures before letters. Pestalozzi criticised ‘our unpsychological schools [that] are essentially only artificial stifling machines for destroying all the results of the power and experiences that nature herself brings to life in [children]’ (Pestalozzi 1894: 26)³⁵. What is at stake is faith in the possibility of improving the human race.

Most strikingly Freire’s criticism of dictatorial teaching also recalls Friedrich Nietzsche’s criticism of liberal education methods. As he put it in a lecture delivered in 1872 what is called ‘culture’ (*Bildung*: self-formation) in our universities merely proceeds from the mouth to the ear:

³⁵ Pestalozzi influenced Friedrich Froebel: ‘All true educators must at each instant, in all their requirements and designs, be at the same time two-sided, – giving and taking, uniting and separating, dictating and following, acting and enduring, deciding and setting free, fixed and movable: and the pupil must be so also’ (Froebel 1885: 9). These currents flowed into traditional educational institutions. For example, Froebel influenced the Dominican Order. My own primary education was shaped by Dominican educators trained, I suspect, at the Froebel College of Education, Blackrock, Dublin (now relocated to the National University of Ireland, Maynooth).

‘How is the student connected with the university?’ We answer: ‘By the ear, as a hearer’. The foreigner is astonished. ‘Only by the ear?’ he repeats. ‘Only by the ear’, we again reply. The student hears. When he speaks, when he sees, when he is in the company of his companions when he takes up some branch of art: in short, when he *lives* he is independent, *i.e.* not dependent upon the educational institution. The student very often writes down something while he hears; and it is only at these rare moments that he hangs to the umbilical cord of his alma mater. He himself may choose what he is to listen to; he is not bound to believe what is said; he may close his ears if he does not care to hear. This is the ‘acroamatic’ [oral] method of teaching (Nietzsche 1909: 125)³⁶.

Freire’s objections to the consequences of modernity were echoed by Martin Heidegger’s reaction to the dehumanisation of man, and an education system that undermined human being as potential for change:

The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they—he has to learn to let them learn. The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices. The teacher is far less assured of his ground than those who learn are of theirs. If the relation between the teacher and the taught is genuine, therefore, there is never a place in it for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official (Heidegger 1976: 15).

Heidegger saw the instrumentalisation of education as reducing learning into the efficient use of resources, whereby techniques for controlling nature are turned back on ourselves. Invoking the idea of Socratic conversation,

³⁶ Nietzsche (1982: 160): ‘I did not believe my eyes and looked and looked again and said at last: “That is an ear! An ear as big as a man!” I looked yet more closely: and in fact under the ear there moved something that was pitifully small and meagre and slender. And in truth, the monstrous ear sat upon a little, thin stalk – the stalk, however, was a man! By use of a magnifying glass one could even discern a little, envious face as well; and one could discern, too, that a turgid little soul was dangling from the stalk’.

Heidegger also stressed that in the concrete pedagogical scene the parties allow their respective identities to be thrown in doubt.

But for Heidegger the transformation of subjects into resources is not to be halted by the self-assertion of the humanistic subject since it is the representation of that subject that facilitated the framing of the calculable world that has led to the current crisis (see Thompson 2005; and Allen & Axiotis 2002)³⁷. The ‘*humanitas*’ of the *homo humanus* and the ‘human’ in human being is determined by reference to an already established interpretation of history, nature, and the world. Metaphysics thinks of human beings out of a sense of what it is to be animal, not in the direction of acquiring an understanding of what it is to be human. Indeed the conception of *animal rationale* devalues man by tying him to animality: ‘a thesis advanced with an invidious glance at the animal’ (Adorno 1973: 124).

Freire’s opposition between traditional banking (transmission) education and liberatory critical (constructivist) pedagogy, flourishing the Gradgrindian spook, serves to satisfy the desire to be on the right side righteously contributing to justice in the world. But in terms of pedagogy, the foregrounded goal of liberation introduces an always timely reminder of the complexity of the place of imitation in teaching and learning. The liberatory teacher does not need to function as empathetic role model to be identified with, for this might confirm rather than challenge the system of identification that is perpetuated by the cycle of substitution. Thus for Freire: ‘I engage in dialogue not necessarily because I like the other person. I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely individualistic process of knowing’ (Freire in Freire & Macedo 1995: 379). From a strictly epistemological perspective dialogue is oriented toward the delimitation of a knowledge object. You cannot realistically have a dialogue ‘by simply thinking that dialogue is a kind of verbal ping-pong about one’s historical location and lived experiences’ (385). Otherwise there is the danger of

³⁷ Heidegger (1998b: 245) criticised the humanism of antiquity, Christianity, Marx and Sartre for determining humanity ‘with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole’ (see Hodge 1995: 80). Heidegger’s own praxis involved the Nazification of the university.

blurring the structuring presence of authority³⁸. The validity of my judgement is not merely a reflection of my experience, and the conditions of belief-holding are not to be confused with those of justification. As Augusto Boal (1985: 108) notes, quoting with approval Brecht, the one who shows remains disengaged.

Ideally, then, I ought not to see myself in my teacher's place but rather see myself overturning the system perpetuated by the roles of master and student in the first place. That is why the basis of identification, social identity in term of race or class, is not essential for learning to take place. Because social identities are hierarchical and oppressive, liberation cannot be grounded on them but can at best use them as a stepping stone to their eventual overcoming. Rejecting the presupposition that because experience is always what I begin with therefore a particular judgement on my experience meets the criterion of validity, Freire stresses that justification does not rest on immediacy but on analysis. '[I]t is indispensable to proceed with the investigation by means of abstraction' (Freire 2005a: 105) which ultimately returns the investigator critically to the concrete. This is why Freire argues against the position that the unanalysed experiences of the oppressed speak for themselves or that the educator must stick with the knowledge of lived experience (see Freire 2006: 72). When the critique of privilege becomes a privilege, analysis of the social totality is reduced to a fable manned by wolves and sheep. In the process of abstraction and critical reflection learner and teacher discover their place in the world. Pedagogy, implicated in the distinction between manual and mental labour, is part of the problem to be analysed.

This is not to say that I cannot be inspired by seeing someone like me in the role of teacher, but this subjective compensation is not essential for learning. Indeed it might even foster a certain complacent expectation that, on the basis of our shared identity, I am sure to succeed or at least more likely to find favour. Permission to substitute domesticates the subversive desire to

³⁸ 'I cannot accept the idea of a facilitator who facilitates so as not to teach.... the teacher turned facilitator maintains the power institutionally created in the position ... a deceitful discourse' (Freire in Freire & Macedo 1995: 378). According to Rosa María Torres, Freire maintained that the educator who says that he or she is equal to his or her learners is either a demagogue, lies, or is incompetent (Torres cited in McLaren 2000, p. 148).

substitute as sanctioned succession. This would confirm the essential structure of what Freire (2006: 90) called ‘the introjection of the oppressor by the oppressed’ that critical pedagogy as a form of historico-sociocultural and political psychoanalysis seeks to cure.

Conclusion

Dialectically, education is not key to transformation, but transformation is in itself educational (Freire 1990b).

While the experience of islands of injustice makes up the world of oppression, Freire sees relativism as the enemy of liberation (see Freire 1990a: 387). Both the absolutising of experience and the abandonment of objective truth are refused. Freireian consciousness-raising links education and praxis to oppression and its causes by way of the narrative of liberation. While education can at best undermine a system from within or provide the knowledge to ground a strategy of action, it cannot by itself produce political change. Because an effective, or at least progressive, intervention depends on a correct interpretation of the world then the world must be correctly interpreted before it can be positively changed. Education for freedom is the heading of this ongoing process of interpretation.

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Transforming Human Geography: Embracing Afrocentricity

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Abstract

Re-examining what constitutes valid knowledge and how knowledge is produced and used are major focus areas in relation to the transformation agenda in higher education. This article critically examines these aspects in relation to the discipline of geography with a special focus on human geography which is substantially influenced by the humanities and social sciences. It specifically uses Afrocentricity as a methodological and conceptual framework to inform the transformation of human geography and provide insight into how to centralise African experiences and contexts in human geography teaching and research. The article has two main sections. The first section undertakes a critical reconsideration of human geography in the transformation context. The next section specifically examines the role of geographical research in advancing African scholarship. The article concludes that Afrocentricity provides a useful framework to critique accepted and widely used geographical categories and concepts; thereby rethinking what geographers do and the implications thereof, from a African-centred perspective.

Keywords: Human geography, afrocentricity, African scholarship, transformation, framework

Introduction and Context

The notion of African scholarship and transformation is at the centre of revisiting socio-economic change in different arenas and re-examining processes of knowledge production and use. The latter requires a critical

appraisal of disciplinary orientations and assumptions that underpin the academic endeavour in relation to both teaching and research. Transformation cannot and should not be equated only with changes in the demographic profile of persons which, in the South African context often refers to including (and often targeting) individuals and groups from historically disadvantaged communities such as Blacks/ Africans, women and the disabled. There needs to be a concerted effort to change mind-sets, value systems and ways of knowing that impact on society. Rethinking what constitutes valid knowledge, how it is produced and for what purposes becomes crucial, particularly in educational settings. This article critically examines these aspects in relation to the discipline of geography with a special focus on human geography.

The discipline of geography has two major strands: physical and human geography (the focus of this contribution), which are both concerned with the environment (physical and social), time and space. Kitchen and Tate (2013:3) assert that there is no consensus on who geographers are, what they do, and how they study the world. This reflects the broad scope of the discipline. Furthermore, Livingstone (1992 cited in Kitchen & Tate 2013:3) asserts that geography is elusive to define because it changes with societal changes. However, there is general agreement that the focus of geography is on interconnected human-environment relationships in different spatio-temporal contexts and scales as well as spatial manifestations and variations of socio-economic and environmental phenomena (Hanson 2004; Kitchin & Tate 2013; Murphy 2014; Varró 2014). Dear and Wolch (2014:6) specifically state that the focus of human geography is 'to understand the simultaneity of social, political, and economic life in time and space'. Both human and physical geography are interrelated and dialectic in nature, one impacting on the other. Research has shown that the physical and natural environment has and continues (albeit at a lesser extent among the more affluent in society who are in a better position to manipulate the environment than the poorer groups in society whose livelihoods and lives are more closely tied to the natural resource base) to influence human behaviour and choices (Cassidy 1997; Laland & Brown 2011). Bradley (1991:3) argues that relationships between the environment and culture are fundamental in understanding the historical development of the psychology and sociology of a particular group of people. In addition, there is a growing consensus that human factors dramatically affect the physical world and that anthropological drivers are the

main contributors to extreme climate events that are increasing globally (Bob *et al.* 2014; Brown *et al.* 2007; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007). From an environmental perspective, it is also important to note that the distribution, exploitation, ownership and control of the world's natural resources, from land and water rights and entitlements to harnessing energy, has been instrumental in influencing human relations and power dynamics which, in turn, has informed human history.

It is important to note that the humanities and social sciences have a strong tradition of critical reflection and engagement. While geography as a discipline has been informed by some of these engagements (for example, the emergence of feminist or gender geography in recent years and the conceptualisation of political ecology as a theoretical framework), it has largely been dominated by discourses embedded in environmental sciences. Yet, a significant proportion of knowledge generation and sharing takes place in the sub-discipline of human geography which is influenced substantially by the humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, human geography plays a key role in sensitising physical geography research, particularly in relation to environmental degradation and climate change, to socio-economic implications and impacts. Additionally, Murphy (2014:1) asserts that recent renewed interest in geography does not necessarily reflect an appreciation of the contributions or importance of the discipline but is related more to the 'focus on difference and its association with visually alluring maps'. However, as discussed later, these maps are often projected in ways that are biased towards western supremacy and presented as 'objective truths'.

The aim of this article is to explore the Afrocentric perspective as a methodological and conceptual framework to inform the transformation of human geography. It is intended to provide insight into some of the issues and approaches to the development of an Afrocentric perspective of human geography which revolves around the argument that African experiences and contexts can provide a focus for the scholarship and transformation of African communities. The process of redefinition is critical to the nature of knowledge production and the transformation agenda.

Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:i) argues that Afrocentricity is an intellectually dominant idea of the African world with increasing impact and influence on the social sciences that challenge major epistemological traditions in Western thought. Although there is a clear impact and influence of Afrocentricity and transformation debates on the historical, sociological,

psychological, educational, criminological, theological, political science, philosophical, linguistic and anthropological disciplines as illustrated by Asante (2007) and Bangura (2012); very little work has been done on the implications of Afrocentricity on geography and the physical and natural sciences in general. It is important to note, however, that while Afrocentricity as a conceptual framework has been embraced in the social sciences and humanities, Pellebon's (2012:19) study that examines whether Afrocentricity is integrated in Social Work education concludes that this is limited in the actual curricula and research agendas in selected higher education institutions. This suggests that even within social science disciplines, the theoretical embracing of Afrocentricity as a framework has not sufficiently translated into transforming what is taught and researched.

Smith (2008:89) undertakes a review of Molefe Kete Asante's (regarded as one of the main intellectuals of developing Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework) 2007 book and concludes that it is useful 'as a foundation to understanding the processes connected to African centred thought which then can be applied to understanding the continent's (Africa's) contributions from a historiographical and theoretical perspective'. Asante (1998:19) specifically asserts that Afrocentricity is a 'frame of reference' (specifically embedded in 'African cosmology, axiology, aesthetic, and epistemology') that informs 'the study of African concepts, issues and behaviours'. Furthermore, Bangura (2012:109) states that Africancentrism (also interchangeably used with Afrocentricity in the article) 'presupposes knowledge of a commonality of cultural traits among the diverse people of Africa which characterise and constitute a worldly view that is somehow distinct from that of the foreign world views that have influenced African people'. Furthermore, Karenga (1988:404) defines Afrocentricity as a 'perspective or approach rooted in the cultural image and human interest of African people' that challenges, what Graham (2001:6) indicates as, 'forms of inclusion (and exclusion) that have led to social injustice'. Ince (2009:52) states that 'the Afrocentric paradigm directly challenges representations that have conventionally commanded claims to knowledge' which were 'embedded in notions of superiority based on race, gender and class distinction'. Social justice is central to Afrocentricity (Daniel & Lowe 2014:1) and human geography (DeVerteuil 2013:599).

Afrocentricity implies and provides a standpoint and perceivable

focus from which to derive a systematic, coherent and beneficial (in relation to improving the conditions and status of Africans and the African diaspora) framework and perspective which has implications for geographical research and what we claim to be geographical knowledge, particularly in human geography given its socio-economic orientation. Research processes, as well as the nature of knowledge production generally, include the orientations and assumptions of the researcher and the research subject(s), whether it be ideas, people or places. The nature of the processes of knowledge production and relationships among various stakeholders and interest groups are immersed in unequal power relations and dynamics that need to be critically addressed since they influence outcomes and impacts.

A Critical Reconsideration of Human Geography in the Context of Transformation

Geographical research (as is the case for research and knowledge generation more generally) is not an objective, value-free, scientific endeavour. It is therefore imperative that the geographical concepts, perspectives and approaches be critically examined. Afrocentricity, as articulated earlier, provides an alternative standpoint to assess human geography.

An African-centred perspective of human geography rests on the premise, as articulated by Keto (1991) and Asante (1988; 1992) decades ago and more recently (Asante 2007), that it is legitimately and intellectually useful to treat the continent of Africa as a geographical and cultural centre that will provide the reference point(s) in the process of gathering and interpreting information about people from the African continent and diaspora. This correlates with Asante's (1993:112) assertion that the geographical scope of Afrocentricity is not limited to the continent of Africa but wherever 'people declare themselves to be Africans'. Asante (1992:9) further states:

The fundamental assumptions of Afroecological inquiry are based on the African orientation to the cosmos. By 'African' I mean clearly a 'composite African' not a specific discrete African orientation which would rather mean ethnic identification, i.e. Yoruba, Zulu, Nubia, etc.

The term 'African' is used in this article to not refer exclusively to skin pigmentation or geographic location but to signal reference to a common and connected heritage that is linked to a personal identity that is rooted in notions of a common origin, struggle and experience. This is not to disregard socio-economic differentiation linked to aspects such as race, class and gender. It is to centralise values and worldviews, that is, the key issue is African thought and western thought, not African people and western people.

In geography, the implications of a Eurocentric dominance can be discerned by an analysis of various concepts that are employed and which remain central to the development of geography as a discipline and the way in which issues are theorised. This is important since, as Bangura (2012:103) states, 'many of the concepts and contexts used in works dealing with Africa and its diaspora employ Eurocentric concepts and contexts that often do not capture the essence of the phenomena being discussed'. In relation to geography specifically, at the most basic level, the history of the discipline has credited European scholars and explorers for making 'discoveries' and developing tools and explanations that have been part of African and other people's indigenous knowledge base for centuries prior to these 'discoveries'. Several studies highlight that these 'discoveries' were already known by local people prior to colonisation (Asante 1992; 2002; Karenga 1988; Keto 1991). Reclaiming African history and contributions have been at the centre of Afrocentricity and, more recently, the African Renaissance Project. The manner in which the world is generally physically presented, especially in maps, and mentally conceptualised further supports the notion of Eurocentric dominance and imposition (Bangura 2012; Blaut 1993; McGee 1995). Keto (1991) illustrates how the lines of longitude use Western Europe as the centre. Furthermore, the world map which is most commonly used depicts the northern hemisphere at the 'top' and the southern hemisphere at the 'bottom' despite the planet being an object in space that can be viewed from any orientation. Another blatant spatial example of Eurocentrism in geography is in cartography where the Mercator projection which enlarges the northern hemisphere is mostly used.

Hoover and Donovan (2004:18-19) argue that concepts are '(1) tentative, (2) based on agreement, and (3) useful only to the degree that they capture or isolate some significant and definable item in reality' and that ideas, perspectives and theory development occurs through the linking of concepts which is used to refer to observable phenomena and communicate

research findings. Essentially, concepts are central for classification and permits generalisability. For example, ‘population explosion’ or ‘overpopulation’ is a key concept in population geography. This concept is generally used to describe population change (and specifically growth) among Black people. However, this apparently ‘universal’ concept is fraught with cultural and socio-economic undertones and value judgements of poor Blacks in particular being irresponsible and dependent on government support. For example, derogatory terms like ‘welfare mothers’ or ‘welfare queens’ are often used to refer to single Black mothers who receive state support. Furthermore, on the African continent, the notion of ‘population explosion’ sits uncomfortably with the cultural and biological genocide that denotes specific forms of violence that persists in many African countries (Eck & Hultman 2007; Gleditsch 2012; Pruniér 2007). This is not a focus of population studies in geography with genocide (and violent conflicts generally) being the focus of research in conflict studies. The notion of overpopulation therefore co-exists uncomfortably with the existence of genocide.

The use of several spatial and socio-economic categories and names, the basic disciplinary language of geography, is also Eurocentric in a number of ways. There is a tendency for regions to be defined relationally to Europe, for example, use of terms like the Far East, Middle East and the ‘Dark’ continent (referring to Africa). This is also a typical example of spatial distortion and imposition of identity that temporally and spatially disconnected Kemet (the original name for Egypt) from Africa and located it in the ‘Arab World’ or Middle East. In doing so, the contributions Egyptian civilisation made to the world were removed as being from Africa. The socio-political and economic implications of using terms such as the ‘First World’, ‘Third World’, ‘developing regions’, ‘underdeveloped regions’, ‘developed countries’ and ‘industrialised regions’ are problematic and reinforce Eurocentric hierarchies of power and privilege. The terms used to refer to African countries (‘Third World’, ‘developing’ and ‘underdeveloped’) are generally associated with negative stereotypes and meanings. Furthermore, they tend to mask differences within countries and regions and particularly the plight of Africans in the diaspora. For example, the United States of America is deemed to be a ‘developed’ and ‘First World’ country, however, more Black people in America live in poverty compared to Whites (Boyd 2014; Glasmeier 2006) which can be linked to persistent racism and other

forms of oppression. Additionally, most of these terms are based almost exclusively on European economic criteria which ignore the importance of indigenous knowledge and livelihoods, historical factors and cultural dimensions in relation to development processes.

There is also a key assumption that underpins the use and implied meanings of the categorisations, that is, processes of economic development follow western patterns. This assumption has serious policy and development planning implications that encourage top-down planning in African contexts which are often externally conceptualised and funded. This is also associated with an imposition of western models and values systems on the African continent and the African diaspora. At best, these policies and planning approaches partially address the socio-economic, political and environmental challenges and problems experienced by African people. At worst, they are wholly inadequate and inappropriate with disastrous implications and consequences for African communities, often worsening conditions and reinforcing inequalities and conflicts. Thus, it is clear that the 'naming' of geographical concepts and the taken for granted 'language' of the discipline have serious implications at the research, interpretation and policy levels. As Bangura (2012:104) suggests, language and naming are powerful, profound and subtle processes; capturing meaning (and loaded with value judgements).

Geographers display a tendency to compartmentalise the world spatially and economically using political, economic and environmental categories. This is embedded in a desire to 'map out' landscapes and demonstrate the high levels of socio-economic and environmental variability that characterise the world, including the different forms of inequalities. The common spatial compartmentalisation is demarcations which relate to geographical location (rural, urban, coastal, inland, informal, built areas, etc.), race, nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, income levels and economic status. These categories tend to reinforce and (re)create differences and hierarchies in society. It is important to note that specific categories often overlap with each other to create multiple jeopardies for many groups of people such as poor rural women. Critically examining the implications of the geography of compartmentalisation or categorisation reveals that belonging to or not belonging (the politics of inclusion and exclusion) to a particular group and/ or spatial location is what creates relative oppression and privilege concurrently at different scales (the

household, community, local, regional and global levels) and in different places and contexts.

While categories are useful for analytical purposes and tracking changes over time, it is important to note that this tendency to homogenise is extremely problematic. There are substantial differences as alluded to earlier within specific spaces (such as within countries) and categorisations (such as First World or rural) can be misleading, especially when there are perceived notions of what these constitute. The Afrocentric perspective encourages social scientists to critically evaluate the validity of knowledge, ways in which knowledge is produced and for what purpose, and epistemological assumptions and theoretical/ conceptual frameworks. As stated earlier, Afrocentricity advocates that there is a need to move away from 'homogenising' concepts that are Eurocentric but presented as universal. Afrocentricity gives priority to the experiences of African peoples in different contexts while also relating these experiences to broader socio-economic and political structures as well as historical processes. Advocating an African-centred approach in human geography implies that research and explanations cannot be uniform in terms of issues, approaches and outcomes, since they examine the socio-economic and political expressions and experiences of the concerns and interests of people from different localities, nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds.

Location is central to geographical thinking and research, and is linked to geography's concern with absolute (the exact coordinates) and relative (how place is perceived and experienced) space. Dear and Wolch (2014:9) identify three aspects of socio-spatial dialect: how social relations are constituted through space, how social relations are constrained by space and how social relations are mediated by space. Murphy (2014:3) particularly notes concerns related to location biases which 'affect what gets more or less attention, the ways in which location and geographic mobility are intertwined, and the opportunities a focus on geographic location offers in efforts to understand the coupled nature of human-environment systems'. The National Research Council (2010:45) in the USA argues that globally, more is known about certain contexts and issues (particularly in relation to risk and resilience) than others as a result of locational biases. They specify that this is particularly notable in Asia and Africa where research on hazards, for example, is underrepresented. Murphy (2014:3) states:

The disparity in geographical coverage has far-reaching implications

if one considers the unacknowledged assumptions that often accompany generalisations grounded in case studies that are developed without adequate consideration of locational bias.

Bob *et al.* (2014:28) note specifically that limited data and specific case studies in Africa on climate change pose research and intervention challenges that need to be addressed to empower the continent to adapt to and mitigate against the devastating impacts of changes in climate and the environment. Human geography has a substantial role to play in this regard.

Driver (1995:403) asserts that the enthusiasm for the writing of new histories of geography is indeed one of the most striking developments across the discipline. Despite this, Sidaway (1997:74) argues:

Yet it is everywhere taken more or less for granted what is being discussed is only western civilisation – and, more significantly, as if it were the unique source of its own geographical tradition.

Sidaway (1997:92) notes that within this initiative of rethinking geography there remains a tendency to construct and centralise western tradition within accepted frameworks. Essentially, this means that while geographical contributions, frameworks and concepts may be debated and challenged, these are limited and the status quo remains largely intact. The growing discourses around ‘Eurocentricity and geography’, ‘the re-writing of geographical history’, and other similar topics are important components of the broader geographical restructuring and transformation processes. Geography as a discipline cannot be separated from its own history and cultural biases and misconceptions which need to be confronted and contested.

The Role of Geographical Research to Advance African Scholarship

Kitchin and Tate (2013:1) state:

Research is the process of enquiry and discovery...For the human geographer, research is the process of trying to gain a better

understanding of the relationships between humans, space, place and the environment.

Geographical research is generally primary data collection based. Increasing visibility in terms of both information that exists and the number of persons involved in generating the information is the starting point for integrating and centralising Africans into human geography as researchers and subjects. Visibility emanates through appropriate and unbiased data collection and training of African-centred human geographers. Identifying research areas and agendas that respond to the needs and concerns of Africans; collecting and analysing disaggregated data that unpacks differences and examines commonalities; training and empowering local researchers and using local organisations; and adopting methodological approaches that gives voices to the marginalised (especially at the local level) are among some of the ways to bring Africans into human geography research. African voices, indigenous knowledge and expertise must enter the definition of what constitutes research, and knowledge production and dissemination in human geography.

The geographical tradition of mapping has evolved overtime, especially in the context of the advancements in computing and spatial technologies which have seen the emergence of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing. These spatial methodological approaches present information that is generally better suited to capture variables pertaining to the physical landscape. Although there is an increased focus on participatory GIS (Bassa *et al.* 2014:108) which is intended to integrate social phenomena into spatial mapping approaches in geography, these studies are limited and they rely heavily on consensus-building perceptions of the physical environment (often derived during focus group exercises which in itself implies that generally a small proportion of the population participate) and these are confined to social aspects such as land use, soil quality and infrastructural issues that can be easily 'mapped'. Other social phenomena such as land conflicts, safety and security considerations, and experiences of exclusion and land dispossession tend to be neglected or reduced to points on a map identifying areas of 'hotspots'. There is limited detailed exploration of what this means in the lives of people. This is also noticeable in climate change research where the focus tends to be on mapping climate variables with a neglect of social resilience and adaptation, yet the

latter are central to strengthening local and global capacities to cope with climate change.

The examination of the limitations of spatial techniques as an illustrative example raises the question about the multidisciplinary that geography seeks to embrace. A geographer is typically trained in a range of quantitative/ statistical, spatial (including GIS discussed above) and qualitative approaches. However, while there is this broad (and perhaps unique) continuum of methodological training, the outputs of geographical research generally tend to indicate a proclivity to specialisation, not only reinforcing the dualism of human and physical geography but also strengthening using one methodological approach/ technique within the sub-disciplines. An examination of the articles published in the *South African Geographical Journal* for two years (2012 and 2013) supports this assertion. Of the 28 articles published during this period, 19 (67.9%) were based on primary data while 9 (32.1%) comprised of desktop studies. Of these, the majority (21 – 75%) used a single technique while 5 (17.9%) used mixed methods. Two of the 9 desktop articles did not refer to any data while 7 used secondary data sources to undertake the analyses. Only 3 articles (10.7%) integrated qualitative approaches. The results indicate the bias towards quantitative approaches and also the lack of integration of multidisciplinary in understanding geographical phenomena from multiple perspectives. This suggests that the discipline of geography needs to relook at how it trains researchers and undertakes research. In terms of the training of researchers, it is possible that techniques are taught separately and there is a lack of focus on how to combine methods. This dilutes the strength of geography as a discipline that has a multidisciplinary orientation and is well suited to straddle and build bridges between the physical, natural and social sciences.

It is important to note that in relation to the use of quantitative approaches and techniques used in geography, including spatial techniques such as GIS and Remote Sensing, there is an assumption of generating knowledge that is ‘objective’ and reflective of the ‘truth’. In fact, the process of verifying information or physical features in reality is referred to in relation to GIS as ‘ground truthing’. This assumption of objective knowledge that is scientific and factual is a problem in relation to the sciences generally. Afrocentricity and other theoretical approaches such as humanism and feminism have contested this notion of objective knowledge and reiterated that the assumptions needs to be critically unpacked in the context of

differing perspectives and vantage points. Afrocentricity in particular has specifically engaged critically with Eurocentric ideology and vantage points (Asante 2007; Bangura 2012) which frame much of what is considered to be 'objective or valid' knowledge that masquerades as universal truths.

Linked to notions of what is deemed to be valid knowledge are contestations regarding whether Africa (and African societies) is the object or subject of research and knowledge production. This concern has been raised for decades. For example, Rodgers-Rose (1993:10) states that at a research level Africans have become suspicious and concerned as researchers from outside the continent (generally Europeans and North Americans) become the authority and experts on issues pertaining to African people and conditions, advancing the 'solutions' that will lead to addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges and empowering Africans. This aspect is also noted by Mohanty (1991:1) in relation to the Asian context who raises key questions that are still pertinent today about who produces knowledge about historically colonised peoples as well as from what location and for what purposes this knowledge is produced. Keto (1991:10) refers to this as 'colonial signatures' which arise when experts and authorities outside African communities exceed those that are inside these communities. This debate persists today and is strongly related to whose voices and concerns count. Asante (1998:xii) states that 'Afrocentricity is a moral as well as intellectual location that posits Africans as subjects rather than objects of human history'. This is not only relevant to history but also how research is conducted, disseminated and used.

In terms of geography and the African context, of particular concern is the proliferation of research relating to climate change issues. A positive sign is that there is significant research capacity on the continent focusing on climate change research in Africa. While beyond the scope of this article, it will be interesting to examine the profile (for example, gender, race, nationality, etc.) of the researchers based in African institutions and who are the key funders. This type of analysis is important to examine whether meaningful capacity to undertake research is being developed in Africa and whether there is a dependency on external resources to be research intensive in specific critical areas. Also, is the research focused on the physical and natural sciences or is human geography which underscores socio-economic considerations integrated into the research focus areas? Additionally, it is essential to examine whether alternative methodological and theoretical

perspectives are being adopted. The importance of viewing phenomena from different angles and perspectives strengthens our understanding of complex and interrelated issues such as climate change that has multiple drivers and several consequences.

As indicated earlier, key geographical research focuses on interactions between nature, society, space and time. Keto (1991) and Asante (1993) argue that the struggle over the control of space and time are major factors that contribute to power alignments and dynamics in society. They further contend that this control of space and time has also been central in allowing Eurocentric researchers to gain dominance over the rest of the world. Undeniably, there has been a resolute effort by Eurocentric scholars and politicians to control and manipulate time (especially the presentation and interpretation of historical processes and events) and space. Colonisation and the delineation of spatial regions and political boundaries globally, and specifically in Africa, mainly by Europeans with limited, if any, consideration for indigenous populations, cultures, traditions and histories are blatant examples of spatial control and dominance. The socio-economic, political and environmental legacies of these processes are still evident. There is little doubt that the most distressing episodes in the lives of the Black people such as colonisation, enslavement and apartheid were and are geographical exercises. These processes included the forced removals and relocation of people from their birth places and indigenous environments. This resulted in dislocations of familial systems and livelihoods that have resulted in widespread poverty among Black populations globally. Furthermore, distinctive boundaries were created to control human and natural resources. Poor people in particular were forced to move into areas with low agricultural productivity and limited natural resources. Despite our knowledge of how geographical regions and boundaries were created, as geographers we generally do not challenge these spatial constructs. Our continued acceptance of these physical features and boundaries serve to validate and give credibility to their existence.

Human geography is also critically engaging with constructs and consequences of globalisation. While geographers call for context-sensitivity and locality-based research, there is a general tendency within the discipline to emphasise the importance of global processes and interventions, particularly in the context of climate change which has emerged as a key thematic area in the environmental sciences generally and the discipline of

geography specifically. There is recognition that globalisation encourages trade liberalisation, foreign investments, consumption, mobility of people and goods, and intensifies international competition. These processes undermine indigenous and locally-based livelihoods, entrenches land dispossession and land grabbing, and promotes unsustainable practices; all of which increases environmental degradation and poverty. Despite the serious challenges that globalisation presents, countries worldwide (including on the African continent) aspire to be integrated into the world economy, as highlighted by Knox *et al.* (2014) and Martin (2013), and within the educational arena in particular there is a desire for internationalisation. Little and Green (2009:166) specifically examine the role of education in successful globalisation which is defined as ‘economic growth combined with equality and social peace’. While they illustrate how China, India, Kenya and Sri Lanka have developed forms of successful engagement with the global economy, they do not indicate how this can be sustained and whether the majority of African countries are well positioned to take advantage of opportunities presented. From a geographical and Afrocentric perspective, it is also important to raise who within these countries benefit and if benefits are geographically spread, especially in the rural areas where the majority of the poor reside.

Furthermore, Asante (2007) asserts that far from promoting multiculturalism, globalisation encourages the homogenisation of societies and cultures underpinned by western values, thought and practice. This has serious implications for the types of knowledge systems that are given credibility. In particular, the roles of indigenous knowledge systems in empowering local communities to respond to climate change impacts are critical to increase resilience and decrease vulnerability among the poor (Bob *et al.* 2014; Ibrahim 2011). This is particularly relevant in the African context where there is growing consensus that Africa will bear the brunt of negative climate change impacts:

Many African countries are still characterised by high levels of poverty; poor social services and infrastructure; livelihoods (including agricultural production and ecotourism) reliant on the natural resource base which is sensitive to climate variability; high percentages of urban poor who are vulnerable to natural hazards; and high levels of migration (sometimes as a result of climate factors).

Furthermore, these states and their communities frequently have little capacity to cope with or adapt to disasters or changes (including climate stressors) (Bob *et al.* 2014:33).

Human geography should be at the forefront of developing a research agenda to examine local initiatives and efforts as well as transform curricula to integrate climate change impacts.

More generally, in the African context, there is a need to revisit human geography curricula from an Afrocentric perspective. The experiences and locality-specific case studies need to be integrated to reveal the diversity of voices, issues and place dynamics. Afrocentric, inclusive curricula will also require transformation and re-training among educators and researchers to embrace different perspectives, educational approaches and methodological choices. The visibility of issues directly relevant to the African context and African people may also address the problems of higher drop-out rates among Black students as well as greater disengagement (Dei 1996:170). Thompson and Thompson (2008:48) describe this as the ‘politics of (in)visibility’ and calls for academics to provide information and ideas that will assist in unmasking racism ‘by providing evidence and empirical data on the interlocking nature of race, gender, and class’. Furthermore, there should be more focus on highlighting the achievements and research contributions of Black academics in human geography who can be role models for students and illustrative examples of what they are capable of achieving. There is also a need for more practical experiences and skills training. What is required is critical research focusing specifically on the curricula, pedagogic practices, and methodological approaches in human geography. This also implies moving away from portraying African people and societies as victims but as having agency and recognising knowledge systems and know-how. As Obama (2007:233) states, it is important not to be ‘robbed of our agency’ or be ‘trapped in cynicism or despair’. Furthermore, Asante (2002:102) asserts that:

Afrocentricity presents one way out of the impasse over social and cultural hegemony: the positioning of the agency of the African person as the basic unit of analysis of social situations involving African descended people is a critical step in achieving community harmony.

Similar assertions are made by Outerbridge (2013:63) who states: 'Afrocentricity purports that, in order to obtain these goals, there must be a self-conscious awareness of the need for re-centring through African people's intellectual agency'. Furthermore, Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:xiii) states that Afrocentricity provides 'the possibility that African cultures and values bring renewed ethical and social significance to a sustained project of human agency, liberation, and equality'.

The importance of generating relevant knowledge and information to inform change is particularly acute today since, as Gilley (2010:87) notes, despite two decades since Nelson Mandela proclaimed a 'new African Renaissance' (which was 'an attempt to have a fruitful encounter with modernity after decades of self-destructive ones'), there has been very little socio-economic and political progress on the continent. Furthermore, environmental challenges and conflicts worsened by climate change are increasing in Africa (Bob *et al.* 2014; Gilley 2010). This situation requires disciplines such as human geography to engage with these issues.

Methodologically, human geography embraces a wide ranging methods toolkit that includes quantitative, qualitative and spatial approaches as discussed earlier. The quantitative and spatial approaches have been adapted to explore socio-economic and environmental phenomena. The discipline is therefore well positioned to provide new and innovative ways of examining key research issues on the African continent. However, a key question is linked to the use value of knowledge generated from geographical research which can be extended to academic research more generally. Liu (2014:1) specifically raises concern in relation to the tendency of human geography research findings being confined to 'libraries and academic publications' which is generally 'appreciated only by a small number of academic communities'. He further states that while there is greater call for human geographers to contribute to policy development and debates, suggesting increased public engagement and practical relevance emanating from the research, in reality this is limited and lacks real impact. The transformation of human geography must address this aspect and examine ways to translate research findings to inform practical outcomes that are sensitive to context and meaningfully engages with local communities in a manner that is empowering and centralises local experiences and knowledge as encouraged when adopting an Afrocentric paradigm. Liu (2014:1) states that human geographers must interact more with stakeholders (specifically

society, industry and the state) external to the academic community.

Conclusion

Geographers who embrace an Afrocentric perspective and approach may have to contend with resistance from other geographers since they challenge assumptions and concepts that frame the nature and focus of the discipline. Theoretical suppositions, methodological orientations and techniques, research findings and interpretation as well as pedagogic practices are critically examined. Human geographers in particular who pursue an African scholarship agenda need to address the issues raised in this article. Afrocentricity provides a relevant and appropriate framework in this context to transform human geography, thereby ensuring that we are not intentionally or unintentionally favouring western or Eurocentric geographical concepts and practices. Afrocentricity thus provides a framework to critique accepted and widely used geographical categories and concepts.

Afrocentricity is a 'place perspective' (Asante 1992:6) and this article indicates that place matters and has socio-economic, political and environmental implications. As Castree (2009:169) states, it is important to consider 'the difference that place makes'. The focus of geography has always been on space, time and place (specifically human-environment interactions) which are the contexts of natural and human experiences, events and processes. As suggested in this article, some geographers located within radical, humanist and gender geography strands have already created the foundation for challenging traditional and established theories. However, Afrocentricity provides a useful lens to centralise African voices, experiences, concerns and interests. This can contribute to the further development of methodological and conceptual options and alternatives that can assist substantially in the pursuit of African scholarship that encourages a rethinking of research approaches. Furthermore, Varró (2014:3) calls for 'culturally and spatially sensitive political-economic perspectives' in geography which relates to the Afrocentric approach advocated for in this article. As articulated in this article, fundamental problems that Black people face on the African continent and the diaspora are linked to intensely and often deliberate geographical exercises (the control and manipulation of space and time). The dismantling and transformation of these institutions and mind-sets must, of necessity therefore, incorporate geographical restructuring

which includes how geographers think and what geographers do.

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The Study of Religion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, and Social Transformation

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Abstract

Initiated in 2000, the study of religion at UKZN, Durban campus, takes place via three programmes, viz. the UG programme in Religion, and the two PG programmes in Religion and Social Transformation and Religion Education. This article reviews some of the seminal considerations for the developing of the programmes as well as the dynamics and main considerations that impacted on their actual development over the last ten years. Pointing to the legacies of apartheid, underdevelopment and de-Africanisation, it reviews the focuses of the programmes with regard to their multi-religious approach, and their focuses on religion and development and religion and society. Content-wise it explains the rationales for both religion-specific and inter-, comparative or multi-religion modules. It closes by summarising the critical theoretical perspectives and frameworks in terms of which postgraduate research took place in the areas of religion and civil society; religion and counselling; religion, globalisation and poverty; the southern African Religion and Culture Encyclopaedic framework; and finally the critical perspectives that informed the founding of the programme in Religion Education.

Keywords: apartheid; underdevelopment; de-Africanisation; multi-religious studies; religion and development; religion and society; knowledge production; religion and social transformation; religion education

Introduction

Approved by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in 1999,

the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, has three relatively new academic programmes in Religion, viz. an undergraduate program in Religion (and Culture), and two postgraduate programmes in Religion and Social Transformation and Religion Education respectively. First offered in 2000 these programmes were developed to conceptualize the study of Religion within a decidedly post-apartheid paradigm. As such, they would constitute a decisive paradigmatic break from previous approaches to the study of religion (and theology) and provide the conditions for the possibility of knowledge production in a new key. The new knowledge would be characterised by knowledge that would not only inculcate new-found values such as freedom, equity, and social justice but also cultivate a liberated citizenry in which the diversity of religions are accorded equal status and respect, and studied with equal rigour as constitutive part of our country's nation-building project, beyond the legacy of apartheid.

In this article, I first briefly reflect on some of the historically-determined rationales that impacted on the designing of these programmes, the nature of especially the undergraduate programme in Religion (and Culture), and the postgraduate programmes in Religion and Social Transformation and Religion Education.

I

Postapartheid realities have been structured and are still determined by its anterior ideological history. This applies despite the very significant changes the new South African Constitution and related legislation made to the structural determinations impacting on the socio-cultural existence of the nation. It stands to reason that the continued impact of this history is multi-faceted and intertwined with new socio-economic and socio-political structural realities and imperatives. Even so, we can mainly identify three of these ideological facts that continue to impact on the polity, viz. apartheid, underdevelopment and de-Africanisation.

Apartheid

The racist apartheid state was characterised by its institutionalising of white

racist rule, the fostering of white ascendancy and the active obstruction and frustration of mostly black African aspirations for advancement and modernisation. From ideological perspective, it not only put the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) in place for the inculcation of white supremacy but also the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) which were used to administer, manage and police the apartheid ideology (Althusser 1971)¹. For forty-two years it succeeded in repressing the indigenous population. Not only did it actively promote and foster the improvement of the quality of life of whites at the expense of that of blacks. (Blacks were mostly used in industry and labour sectors – often as illiterate labourers). It also put in place an elaborate ideological framework which was supposed to structure society from top to bottom. Virtually no-one could escape this. Whites were schooled in white-only schools and universities and brought up in the belief of their own superiority, and blacks in their inferiority. The worst kind of outcome of this system was that it produced blacks who believed in their own inferiority. Once this was achieved, the system propagated itself² – obviously within the

¹ Cf. Althusser's (1971) distinction between ISAs and RSAs. In 1950s France, Althusser identified the ISAs as: 1) the religious ISA (the system of the different churches/ [religions]); 2) the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'schools'); 3) the family ISA; 4) the legal ISA; 5) the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties); 6) the trade-union ISA; 7) the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.); 8) the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports, etc.). The RSAs are characterized by their unified coordinating and managerial ideological function. Resorting directly under the head of state, the ideological system permeated government and state administration, and where dissent was encountered, was policed by a variety of law enforcement agencies, and managed and controlled via the courts, and prisons. This system of ideology is also applicable to apartheid South Africa which similarly had its institutional entrenchment in 1950s South Africa (cf. Smit 2010).

² The international sports activist Dennis Brutus played a very important international role in the anti-apartheid struggle. His activism acquires significance in that it aimed at the international isolation of the apartheid sports codes. This strategy impacted on both continuing colonial and then recently-founded apartheid ideological systems in South Africa during the period (1950s – 1970s).

limits set by the liberation struggle and national but especially international critique (cf. Smit 2010)

Underdevelopment

Western colonisation – with its roots in slavery since the sixteenth century – has been a primary force that propelled the development and modernisation of Western life and culture and the neglect or active discouragement of the peoples of the colonised countries to engage the same. If this was primarily the main ideology that drove nineteenth century colonisation (cf Rodney 1972)³, it was especially since the independence of these countries around the middle of the twentieth century that saw neo-colonial and neo-imperialist forces impact negatively on them (cf. Nkrumah 1963)⁴. Throughout, ‘underdevelopment’ has become the tenor of these epochs. Underdevelopment not only signifies the inability to develop as one would normally expect given the right environment⁵. It also refers to all those forces that actively oppose, discourage and obstruct development and modernisation. As such it is at base associated with the non-education or mis-education of people. Non-education primarily manifests in illiteracy – still widespread throughout Africa – and mis-education in non-competitive education or education which does not enskill and empower to participate equally in modern economies. People who are underprepared to engage the formidable economies of the developed world and who do not have the

³ Walter Rodney’s (1972) ground-breaking and foundational study covers the different epochs and related practices focused on ‘underdevelopment’.

⁴ Kwame Nkrumah (1963) was the first to substantially analyse the realities and dynamics of neo-imperialism on the African continent, and also developed proposals as to how to counter this exploitative system of the erstwhile colonizers. Cf. especially his chapters 2, 3 and 18 on ‘Obstacles to Economic Growth’, ‘Imperialist Finance’, and the ‘Mechanisms of Neo-colonialism’.

⁵ Underdevelopment assumes that development could not take place as expected because the conditions for development were purposely withheld, and structured negatively and disablingly, and constantly dashing hopes of development and rendering even moderate objectives for the improvement of the quality of life unattainable.

requisite knowledge or resources to creatively engage them are not only at a disadvantage but are open to exploitation.

De-Africanisation

The de-Africanisation of people on the African continent came about through the fact that occupational forces in Africa not only developed systems of disinformation about Africa's past but also denied African people their history, alienated them from their own cultural heritages (Mzamane 1999:173-175) and subjected them to dehumanisation and underdevelopment (Mugo 1999:221). This has resulted in what Teffo (1999:149) calls a moral decay and appalling socio-moral conditions in Africa and what Ntuli (1999:184) calls the existence of a cultural and moral collapse. Coupled with underdevelopment, the result is a radical absence of a modern developmental morality derived from African culture(s). Pityana (1999:140) refers to Africa's 'moral warp'. This has led to a general loss of self-esteem, pride and dignity (Hoppers *et al.* 1999:233). On the education front, 'de-Africanisation' came through underdevelopment, enslavement or miseducation (Mugo 1999:221). The situation this resulted in is that knowledge became 'racialised' – knowledge taught and learnt on the African continent remains focused on a white western world and does not take African realities seriously. In a nutshell, there is a huge need for an 'Africa-focused' (Mamdani 1998:132,134) intelligentsia.

Given this historically-inherited background with its multi-form excesses and geographical and power-political representations still determining current-day South Africa to various degrees (cf. Adebajo 2010; Mbeki 2009; and Saul 2005)⁶, the next section briefly reflects on the nature of the programmes we developed.

⁶ Saul (2005:16ff) positioned his proposal not 'beyond capitalism and socialism' (*a lá* Sklar 1988) nor as a stunted 'African socialism' – or 'African capitalism' for that matter – but as a process that needs to continue to 'juxtapose the rival claims' of capitalism and socialism on the African continent.

II

In practice, the new programmes in the study of religion are interventionist and have a three-fold significance. Given the continuing impacts of apartheid, underdevelopment and de-Africanisation, as well as the fact that a certain brand of Christianity was implicated in apartheid⁷, it was important to not only address all religions equally in our courses but also focus their study on realities devoid of non-relevant metaphysical scholarly assumptions and a theorising that ignores the realities and facts of daily life.

The Multi-religious Focus

All programmes invite students from the major religions in the region, African Religion, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam, to enrol in its courses. This feature of the programmes is important since it is a direct break from the old apartheid ideology-induced schooling system⁸ as well as different from the more secular policies followed in the United States. During the apartheid period, Christian-national education was enforced in schools, and the Christian-national educational framework used to propagate apartheid. This meant that even in schools where the minority of pupils came from Christian backgrounds, the school was nevertheless coerced to include certain forms of Christian practice such as Bible reading, Christian prayer, music or singing. The secular system followed in the United States, again, is different, in that it does not allow for any religious practices in state schools at all – not even prayer. Religiously-based private schools and universities, obviously allow

⁷ Students from different religious backgrounds had mainly three options in their studies. They could enrol in the state schools and be exposed to this ideology, attend private schools, or, at least at tertiary level, study at liberal institutions where the ideology was not so severely entrenched and where you did find certain forms of opposition and critique.

⁸ Whereas apartheid fostered difference in separate religion-specific departments which did not have to have any interaction with one another (at UCT, UDW, UNISA and Wits for instance), our policy on pluralism means that the religions engage one another in the broader context of the multi-religious framework. They do not remain pigeon-holed without any recognition and interaction in separate religious and faith-based enclaves.

for such, and actively include certain religious elements within the daily lives of faculty, students and pupils. The significance of our graduate and postgraduate programmes is that they do not aim at either of these two options and obviously also not that of the private school.

On the one hand, our programmes do not discourage religious-specific and confessional involvement of students in their courses – they may study their prescribed material from within their own faith traditions. On the other hand, they may focus their studies on faith traditions other than their own, or do it from a secular perspective. The dynamics of this is not the same as when students from different religions participate in a history class or a psychology project for example, because whereas their own faith commitments are not accommodated in these fields, they are, in our religion programmes. This fosters knowledge and learning from living and practicing faith traditions, as well as mutual recognition and the fostering of mutual understanding and respect of human dignity in the secular space of the university. This is in line with the basic hermeneutical premise, namely that not even the strictest of sciences are exempt from acknowledging their own pre-texts and pre-understandings. In this context, it is important, then to acknowledge and not disavow, repress or marginalise these very important and often very personal commitments of students. They should be accommodated in the secular space of the lecture theatre and classroom rather than ignored or at worst marginalised, denigrated and repressed.

Religion and Development

The programmes encompass religion specific modules as well as inter-religious and multi-religious modules⁹. Religion-specific modules focus on the basic knowledge and information related to each of the religions whereas

⁹ We distinguish between inter-religious and multi-religious mainly in terms of whether there is contact between the religions or not, and whether they form part of a process of development or not. The significance of the first distinction is that we respect those religious and faith traditions that do not wish to engage with adjacent traditions. Such a position usually also entails that the religion also does not engage the socio-cultural issues the programmes engage – even though they themselves are also affected by them and they exist in the same geographical area affected by the same issues.

the inter-religious modules¹⁰ provide the opportunity for religions to engage social phenomena and to do so in an equal, equitable and collaborative manner. The latter focus studies the articulation of the religions and religious organisations with issues such as development, conflict, race, gender, class, media, migration, poverty, health, and the environment to name but a few. Students from any religious background may enrol for a selection of these modules, including the religion-specific modules. This policy is also followed at the postgraduate level where students may complete their main projects – the BA Honours Research Project and the MA dissertation for instance – in religions of their choice, i.e. their own religion and religious tradition, or a religion other than their own. In these ways knowledge is produced with regard to the religions themselves as well as the articulation of the religions with the socio-cultural phenomena studied. It is not only religious practitioners who contribute to such knowledge production with regard to their own religion but also students from adjacent religions. This, we believe is laying the foundations for a much more informed development of the religions with regard to socio-cultural phenomena as well as the requisite dialogue that this engenders among fellow students for both the fostering of respect and an equal recognition of standpoints and religious convictions between the religions. It therefore not only pre-empts any form of superiority consciousness between the religions but actively fosters the mutual understanding and appreciation of our religions.

It is important that religious people and students of religion critically reflect on the articulation of the religions with regard to social phenomena. They need to do this from within their religions and religious traditions and practices. Even though this cannot be done equally across the religions –

¹⁰ Inter-religious refers to those traditions that are open to encountering and engaging adjacent religious traditions and faith communities and also open to engaging the socio-cultural issues we engage. Such engagement of necessity impacts on the development of the religious traditions in themselves as well as with regard to the articulation of religions with the socio-cultural issues studied. In practice they then also recognize the existence of other religions, and contribute to the socio-cultural issues in the public sphere that they share with other religious traditions and faith communities. It stands to reason that this approach constitutes interactive and dialogical processes and never an end in itself.

religions differ among themselves and there is also a great diversity within religions with regard to their potential for ‘application’ – it is important that religions themselves develop their traditions and critical thinking into modern contexts and with regard to modern and modernising issues and challenges¹¹. Moreover, a primary challenge to the religions is to become much more socially conscious in the broader national arenas of socio-economic challenges Africa face¹². Due to the social capital they harbour, the religious engagements of such phenomena in the interests of collaboration and development are crucial for the collective advancement of society at large as well as the continuous development of the faith traditions and faith communities themselves.

Religion and Society

The socio-cultural issues we address in the programmes and that students address in their research derive from within the African context. Rather than studying the religions esoterically, the focus is on the relevant and engaged articulation of the religions with regard to the issues that confront South Africa but also Africa more broadly speaking at the beginning of the twenty-

¹¹ On this score, one of the most negative effects of past collaboration between religions have been that when initiatives come from one specific religion – Christianity or Islam for example – then the general approaches in that religion provides the template for other religions to follow suit. Recognising the diversity between the religions but also within the religions, we try to prevent this from happening. Each religion and religious tradition needs to engage the issues on their own terms but in dialogue with the adjacent religions. Ultimately, the issues affect all equally, and this calls for collaborative engagement even though there is diversity in how such engagement is grounded (or not) in each of the religious traditions.

¹² Given the history of racism, ethnocentrism, and discrimination on the African continent, it is important that it is especially the religions – those beliefs and practices normally held to be the most conservative – that become involved in these processes. As such, and because they constitute very significant critical mass (as ‘social capital’), they can foster collaboration in the face of the existing intolerance, xenophobia, stereotypes, and prejudices on the continent.

first century. At the highest level of abstraction, this may range from the continuing structural effects of apartheid, underdevelopment and de-Africanisation. More closely related to local existence, there are numerous issues that confront local communities on a daily basis. These communities usually do not live in ghettos but in diverse and dispersed ethnic and religious societies in the same geographical areas. On this score, on the one hand, students of religion should know that the dynamics of the socio-cultural phenomena we face as a society and a country at large has a history and that we are continually confronted by the latent continuing effects of this history. This, however, does not make one a victim of a past that cannot be changed. Rather, it calls forth intervention, innovation and creative agency in the present, to address the wrongs and excesses of the past and the challenge to create structures, institutions and systems that would lay the foundations for a non-racial, non-sexist, non-exploitative and equal opportunity society in future. On the other hand, the socio-cultural issues people face, are also significant in their daily lives. On this score, modules such as Religion and Development; Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa; Women, Religion and Culture; Religion and the Media; Religion and Health; Religion and Human Rights; Religion and the Environment; Religion, Poverty and Economics; amongst others, play a significant role at both the large structural levels as well as with regard to their significance in current and local contexts – ‘lived religion’¹³ in the lived realities of daily life.

Knowledge Production

In the apartheid era, the majority of graduates were trained for work in white sectors, producing a lopsided professional cohort mainly serving the white communities at the expense of black communities. This also meant that whereas these latter communities faced the most severe socio-economic

¹³ Focusing on ‘lived religion’ Graham Harvey (2010) has provided an important pointer for research in this direction. The importance of this edited collection lies in that it brings to the fore that knowledge of the religions are not acquired through book-learning of ancient sources first and foremost, but in how religions function in the daily lives of practitioners, and the significance the religious and faith traditions have for adherents in the present. (Cf. especially Harvey’s ‘Introduction’.)

challenges, these were not engaged, the requisite knowledge not produced, and not nearly enough professionals trained for work in these areas. Moreover, this system did not take into consideration the variety of languages, and cultural and ethnic formations in the country inside the disciplines, e.g. an engaged psychology accommodating the specific social, cultural and historical challenges faced in language- and ethnic-specific conditions infused by the specific beliefs and practices in which it functioned. Rather, where much of such indigenous knowledge could be very helpful and positively impact on policy formation, with the requisite education and training of professionals who would be able to optimally serve people in terms of their different linguistic, ethnic and religious practices and persuasions, this was not taken into consideration. Professionals treated such people in a roughshod manner, often leaving behind greater problems than before their arrival. Another aspect was that even though the servicing of people working in their own community, was taken into consideration, it was so only in so far as it served ideological purposes and objectives. Much of the knowledge people were trained in – and this is still the case in many ways in many communities – did not include knowledge and skills for engaging these communities on their own terms and their own histories and traditions. Therefore, a basic premise of our approach in the modules has been to produce knowledge and graduates who can actively and transformatively work in previously marginalised communities, where they provide previously disadvantaged communities with access to Humanities knowledge. Therefore, a main challenge is to produce knowledge that would benefit graduates and through them, their previously disadvantaged communities they serve.

Multi-religious Expertise

The perspectives outlined above necessarily also impact on the teaching practices in the programmes. Since all staff come from different religious backgrounds, this makes for an important multi-religious input, while all continuously learn and develop knowledge in the social issue areas from multi-and inter-religious perspectives. In the multi-religious modules we either team-teach where a member of staff schooled in a specific religion, takes responsibility for the relevant section, or a single member teaches an inter-religious module in an integrated way. The strength of the first approach

is that students are exposed to in-depth scholarly knowledge from within every religion, concerning the issue studied¹⁴. The strength of the second is that every member of staff teaching inter-religious modules, become an expert in a specific socio-cultural area and teaches the module from comparative religious perspective, as different insights from each religion, impact on the social issue or socio-economic challenge addressed. There are very few educational institutions in South Africa where this approach is followed, and we regard ourselves as very privileged in this regard. The dynamics this brings to collegiality is a continuing exploration of the various religiously-founded perspectives on a variety of socio-economic and societal challenges our country faces. It adds value in so far as this approach also brings a richness of experience, and historical and cultural understanding together, feeding into more enriching understandings and appreciations of not only the complexities of life, but the array of possible approaches from within the religions in challenging times. Since we expect a certain proportion of the population to be *aux fait* with this kind of socially-engaged comparative religion knowledge, we need to be and produce academics who can provide leadership in this very important area of study.

III

As stated earlier, the undergraduate programme is characterised by both its religion-specific modules and multi- or inter-religious modules. This allows for religion-specific specialisation – especially with regard to those students who want a more thorough foundation in the religion of their choice – as well

¹⁴ We have learnt that if this approach is followed, we need to still have a module coordinator who can ensure that there is some integration of the different approaches with regard to the issue(s) studied. If this is not done, the module could suffer from just a number of loose perspectives and approaches to the socio-cultural issue studied without any integration. On this score, Comparative Religion provides the general theoretical framework of the programmes for the integrative parameters for the study of the module. The sub-disciplinary focuses are: pluralism, the phenomenological categories for the study of religions (as adapted from Smart 1997), that they be studied in the secular space of the university, contextually, and in a postcolonial theoretical framework.

as the cultivation of expertise with regard to the equal significance of the religions in shared socio-cultural contexts.

Religion-specific Modules

Religion-specific modules are primarily determined by the fact that there is a diversity of religions and diversity within the religions. On the one hand, the religions are studied with full knowledge of the specificity of each of the religions vis-à-vis others. This focus is important because one needs to cultivate an appreciation of the fact that one cannot use one single template and study all religions equally with regard to that template – the historical-critical paradigm for instance. One also cannot equally assume that all the phenomenological dimensions of the religions (*a lá* Smart, *Dimensions*, 1997) have equal significance across the religions. In some religions ritual, for instance, is much more important than in others. Equally, in some, beliefs are all important whereas in others it is religious experience; in yet others, current moralities can be directly articulated with the divine, whereas in some, it is not related. On the other hand, diversity exists within each of the religions. Such diversity may date from the religion's earliest beginnings or may have developed in history¹⁵. Very often, people do not make these distinctions – only thinking in stereotypes with regard to a homogeneous African Religion, Christianity, Hinduism or Islam. Religion-specific modules start out with focuses on the basic knowledge of each of the religions but also factor in the diversities since the religion's beginnings or the diversities that developed in history. Such diversity may also impact on the fact that in some strands of a religion, certain historically-developed beliefs may be all important whereas in other strands, specific rituals or a specific group's

¹⁵ Structurally, Ninian Smart's phenomenological approach (1997) to the 'dimensions' of religion is helpful in studying these different forms of diversity, e.g. in terms of his basic distinctions between beliefs, narrative, morality, ritual, social organization, religious experience and the different symbolic systems that exist in the religions. (Smart's additional dimensions are those of the material and political.) This also allows for constructive comparison between the religions with regard to some of these categories, e.g. narrative, ritual, morality, etc. or in terms of their articulation with social issues (cf. Smit & Vencatsamy 2013).

historically-developed social organisation may be all important.

Both these focuses on religious diversity are covered with regard to the social systems and social formations (as determined by social ‘thought’) of each of the religions, their significance, prevalence and significance in the history of South Africa and the current challenges they face within the world system.

Inter-religious Modules

Starting from the module, RELG101 Introduction to Religion, the inter-religious modules follow the two main distinctions with regard to diversity between as well as within the religions. In addition, they are studied from a secular perspective, contextually, and in the broader theoretical framework of our current postcolonial condition. The *secular perspective* is important because it allows for students to explore the variety of their own religious commitments without legislating for only one specific religion or belief- or ritual-system. The secular framework, then does not exclude religious commitment; rather, it facilitates mutual recognition and respect of religious diversity both between and within the religions within the secular space of academia. More importantly, it also allows for the engagement of the modernisation debate – i.e. whether the modernisation of the world inevitably lead to the increasing secularisation and decrease of religiosity in the world¹⁶.

The *contextual perspective* comes to the fore in that the social and political contributions of significant historical leaders within the religions are factored into the modules. Furthermore, significant socio-cultural issues and challenges that confront society and communities currently are studied. In addition to the articulation of religion with poverty and wealth creation, modules also focus on sexuality, health, and the environment for instance. The common denominator is that all the people from the different religions

¹⁶ It is well-known that there has been a great reversal of the secularization hypothesis in the face of the exponential growth of religious organizations in the world over the last decade or more (cf. Berger 2001 for instance). This is especially evident in the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal churches on the African continent as well as the African Diaspora: cf. especially the research by Paul Gifford (1998; 2004; 2009) for the former and the book edited by Adogame, Gerloff and Hock (2008) for the latter.

are determined by these socio-cultural and often very human factors on an equal basis. This means that if they need to be addressed, they need to be engaged collectively, with religious people being equally engaged – it is not the responsibility of government or a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or community organisation alone. Religious people need to be involved too – both in intervention and creative agency and engagement. In this, the modules play an important social role because they produce the secular knowledge that all should use to engage such phenomena, but also think about them and develop the requisite knowledge to address such issues from within the religions and religious commitment. Community and contextual inclusion ensure collaborative ethical care and joint action and practice with regard to targeted issues – the fostering of a mutually-shared and partnered citizenship in context.

The *postcolonial perspective* is relevant in so far as most of African society has been marginalised and underdeveloped during the colonising and apartheid periods in South Africa. Structurally, democratic South Africa has excelled in putting new legislation and systems in place that could foster social transformation and equality since 1994. The multi-religious modules draw on these realities with regard to especially moral transformation in the interests of racial, gender and class equality. The fostering of a human rights and social justice culture requires buy-in from a variety of stakeholders, not least the diverse religious communities in the country. The modules foster such a culture from within the diversity of religious persuasions studied, while emphasising the primacy of the development of African cultural commitments and practices. Case studies allow for focus on specific issues and social phenomena across the spectrum of the facilitation of religious engagement of socio-cultural phenomena. From positions in the margins, erstwhile marginalised groups and individuals are mainstreamed in scholarship and related practices. Since the religious communities are most closely related to marginalised people – they are present and operate at grassroots levels – it is the leaders and communities on the outskirts of society that need to be engaged and empowered to play constructive roles in the variously related and intertwined social transformation processes.

IV

Over the last ten years, the postgraduate programme in Religion and Social

Transformation had a substantial number of scholarship grants for postgraduate studies. This allowed for the training and graduating of 168 Honours (fourth year), 70 Masters and 20 doctoral students. Students could study in primarily four areas, viz. Religion and Civil Society; Religion and Counselling; Religion, Poverty and Globalisation; and the Religion and Social Transformation Encyclopaedia.

Religion and Civil Society

Due to the de-Africanisation of people on the African continent as well as an orchestrated prevention of African people from equally participating in the development of civil society structures and mechanisms during the colonial, apartheid and even post-independent phases in Africa, there resulted a radical absence of a civil morality derived from African culture(s). Different from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's view of civil society – that the individual or group forfeits certain natural liberties to the state in recompense for statutory protection – it was Hegel and Marx who mustered a critique of modern bourgeois society – that it is not adequate that human beings are seen as mere predicates to the state (cf. Lobkowitz 1967: 259 – 270)¹⁷. Internationally, this challenge has not been overcome by any country as yet – even more so, as liberal democracies continue to restrictingly and disablingly impact on 'developing democracies' (Cf. Chomsky 1997; and Carothers 1991; 1999). In the contexts sketched above, the challenges concerning civil society involve a number of issues such as the development of moralities within the different religions that could facilitate co-operative commitments of the religious formations with regard to citizenship¹⁸, a just civil society, the movement

¹⁷ For different models in terms of how civil societies in the past and present articulate with the state, see the 'Introduction' in Van Rooy (2000) for instance.

¹⁸ Cf. for instance Mamdani (1998) who in his inaugural address pointed to the question of citizenship in terms of the continued settler – native distinction plaguing Africa. This difference, especially as it signals the divide between advantaged and disadvantaged continue to negatively impact on life in Africa. The reason is that colonisation did not bring equality and an equalising of socio-economic development but compounded inequality. As such, it is a wider African phenomenon than that between white and black in S.A.

beyond past injustices, the cultivation of the various moral discourses, the cultivation of individual responsibility and responsiveness, and a critique of the continuously rising tide of globalization and neo-imperialist forces¹⁹.

The purpose of this focus derives from its ethical, educational and empirical approaches. With regard to ethics, both social and scientific ethics – especially bio-medical ethics – from within each of the religious formations of southern Africa need to be developed for the upholding of constitutional values and commitments. This, obviously, also has an educational component, in that ethical values in civil society constitute the commonly shared moral codes to which all subscribe irrespective of religious persuasion. Further, the purpose of this focus is to address social challenges such as gender, class and race disparities in religions and civil society and issues such as corruption, crime, violence and conflict amongst others.

Completed research has focused on 1) the history of the articulation of Southern African religious formations and civil society; 2) governance, morality and ethics; 3) citizenship and formative, constructive and critical perspectives from within religious formations and faith traditions; 4) socio-ethical transformation challenges in the different religions with regard to each of these three areas; and 5) bio-medical ethics.

Religion and Counseling

That indigenous cultures have not had access to training, theories, methods and skills development in the Humanities concerning personal, social formation and professional counseling is an understatement²⁰. Colonialism and apartheid targeted indigenous populations and actively exploited them for their unskilled and mostly illiterate labour without any significant

¹⁹ In older terminology, there is the distinction between master and servant; citizens with means and subjects denied of their citizenship – see Mamdani (1996); and Hemson (1998).

²⁰ This means that, with regard to modern society and community in southern Africa, most people did not and still do not have adequate access to counselling systems and practices. Given our past legacies and the different kinds of trauma it effected in society, much of these social and mental traumas are still in need of redress concerning individual, family and group life; cf. Kasiram (1998; and 1999).

development of counseling mechanisms and institutions for people who severely suffered under these inhuman systems. Since this reality is further most forcefully brought to public and academic consciousness due to the devastating impact of the HIV / Aids pandemic, this hiatus presents itself to academia as one of the areas in dire need of redress²¹. Such redress at the current juncture needs to address the legacy of the past as well as lay the foundations for a new generation taking their physical, mental and social well-being into their own hands²².

Students in the programme include community workers and involve practical work with communities – especially families. Religious organisations of both Eastern and Western religions have taken up the struggle to uplift and better communities with much zeal and expressed commitment to working alongside professionals and paraprofessionals to address the people's spiritual, emotional and social needs. Faith based organizations (FBOs) work within a variety of faith traditions to improve the

²¹ There is little doubt that we are living in a society that is facing serious dysfunction at many levels. In fact, there has been much talk and activity around issues of moral regeneration – which also involved the former and current presidents of South Africa as well as high profile politicians and religious leaders in South Africa. These challenges are compounded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic faced by the nation; cf. Kasiram (2006) where she addresses the need for arriving at practice possibilities that are inclusive of difference and transcend traditional religious divides in the interests of spiritual health and wellness.

²² South African history has been fraught with problems of exploitation of the 'masses'. Such exploitation involved lack or absence of social and cultural services and limited or no infrastructure for everyday functioning. We have communities that are so seriously disadvantaged, that providing a beginning or entry point where change could be implemented, is sometimes considered an insurmountable challenge. Yet within such a depressed mode, we find community-based work by committed and energetic individuals and NGOs. Many of these leaders and activists, however, are in serious need of further education and training. In this regard, workers are joining hands and collaborate across the disciplinary divides such as in the teaming up of Religion and Social Work graduates and their collaborative development and expanding of their disciplines in practice (cf. Kasiram 2006).

quality of life of people. Due to its inclusiveness, as well as its flexibility to address a variety of systems and complex problems, most of such work is done within an ecological paradigm. Within this framework, research done intervenes at both microsystemic and macrosystemic levels.

Given the devastating impact diseases such as HIV/Aids have on southern Africa and that many religious people have not had access to psychological and social counseling skills development, the purpose of this focus is to train religious people in both these areas. They have been trained to constructively contribute towards preventive and curative counseling²³. Not only disease, but also challenges faced by the different age and social group formations have necessitated this focus.

Completed research focused on the accommodating of spirituality as resource for mental and social health within counseling. Other completed research focused on 1) the developing of theories and models for the constructive accommodating of religious persuasion in counseling practices; 2) the development of such models for religions which did not have access to such theories and models under the previous dispensations; 3) the targeting of specific areas for such theory, model and practice development, in the areas of HIV/ Aids, pre-marital, family enrichment, teenage, work-life, old-age as well as illness and death counseling²⁴.

Religion, Globalisation and Poverty

While proponents of globalisation claim that it has expedited economic

²³ Concerning religious persuasion and the different faith traditions, the problem is that most religious functionaries who do engage counseling practices, are not adequately trained for this important area of intervention in the social and mental health of the nation. Often, due to the fact that they are not well trained, some may cause more 'harm' than effectively assisting people.

²⁴ To this end, the programme has also empowered community counselors with knowledge and skills in working with people in meaningful ways. Topics such as divorce, abortion and sexuality that were previously considered 'no-go' areas by many faith-based organisations have been embraced by community counselors in a courageous effort to address the often private but also family and social traumas experienced in society.

growth, resulting in general wealth and prosperity for all nations²⁵ the reality is that globalisation has been accompanied by:

- a) a massive retrenchment of workers;
- b) a widening gap between rich and poor within and between countries;
- c) increased poverty on an international scale;
- d) increased exploitation of working classes in developing countries; and
- e) constraint on local production due to the monopolies of international corporations and the import of cheap processed goods from the east.

In this context, critics of colonialism view this phenomenon as a new form of colonialism and imperialism – neo-imperialism in short – with the progressive pauperization of local and indigenous communities. Moreover, ‘First World citizens’ are not concerned about the global effects of the systems they benefit from and this has caused scholars to call for drastic changes in international systems, attitude and practice. This transformation has to also factor in the change from commodity production through human labour to knowledge production and information management in the so-called knowledge economies of the world.

Even so, globalisation is also a religio-cultural phenomenon. To some degree, the media has facilitated the cross-cultural understanding of world religions and cultures. However, it has primarily promoted ‘Western culture’ at the expense of indigenous and minority cultures, or the fostering of alternative cultural formations. This reality, together with how affluence and cultural hegemony or endemic poverty and cultural depravity articulate, is an area which has received less attention than the focus on economic globalisation and international resource and labour exploitation²⁶.

²⁵ For both affirmative and critical perspectives, see Castells (1983); Sklair (2001) as well as Arrighi (1996); Jameson (1997) and Muller *et al.* (2001).

²⁶ The eradication of poverty has become a priority for Africa in general. The success of the renewal, modernization and development in Africa, in fact, will be measured to a large extent in terms of economic growth, and the elimination of disease.

As part of the developing world, South African poverty²⁷ has not escaped the devastating impact of both economic and cultural globalisation. It is therefore understandable that trade unions and community structures have started to support the international campaign against globalisation. This drive derives from the international discontent with regard to the free market system or so-called neo-liberal democratic market capitalism. Internationally, there is a rising tide of movements working towards a more just, humane, and equitable system. Religious formations are playing and will in future continue to play an important role towards the development of such an economic system²⁸. It will have to involve those most closely associated with grassroots life. They will do so at primarily two levels:

- a) in contributing towards the debate on alternative models of economic and cultural development; and
- b) in empowering impoverished communities to sustain themselves through the developing of sub-economies and sustainable livelihoods²⁹.

²⁷ Recent studies point to a generic link between poverty (economic globalisation) and de- or aculturation (cultural globalisation). Many intellectuals, therefore, are convinced that the eradication of poverty needs to articulate with local cultural resources. In the face of much negative commentary (cf. Saul 2005), the main assumption for this project is that it is especially religious organisations which can make an important impact in this area, because they are present and work at grassroots levels of society.

²⁸ This focus therefore engages the eradication of poverty from a religious perspective, importantly including that of the variety of African Initiated Churches and Religious Organisations as well as African Traditional Religion. Faith communities can make a valuable contribution in this regard and should be challenged to contribute to the prosperity, health care and food security of Africa. Much of the research is therefore collaborative – in partnership with religious institutions and leaders, as well as NGO's and FBO's providing relief.

²⁹ South Africa is strategically positioned to make a major contribution to the development in Africa not only because its leaders enjoy great respect in Africa, but also because of its well-developed infrastructure.

This focus³⁰ derives from the fact that the phenomenon of poverty must invariably be understood within the context of larger historical forces such as colonialism, apartheid and globalisation. Even as it is a local phenomenon, past and current regional and global imperatives necessitate its study within broader context³¹. Moreover, contributions religious people make to poverty alleviation derive from the fact that they per definition, often live and work among the poor. The purpose of this focus has been to assist religious people and religious formations in their facilitation of poverty alleviation and economic development. It has been both analytical and constructive and primarily addresses class disparity³².

Completed and current research has focused on the economic and cultural problematics around colonialism, apartheid, globalisation and poverty. In addition, research focused on 1) the history, systems and practices of the articulation and intervention of religious organisations with regard to poverty; 2) the development of models and strategic interventions in rural and

³⁰ South Africa's tertiary institutions for instance have the capacity for research that could be harnessed for the development of programmes for sustainable livelihoods throughout the continent. (Several thousand students from Africa annually graduate at South African tertiary institutions.) The significance of applied research by religious organisations in the context of socio-economic development cannot be over-estimated.

³¹ It has been necessary to draw on expertise in the field of poverty alleviation both from theoretical and practical perspectives. Scholars, activists, relief workers and a variety of organizations working in communities – representing both the religious and secular sectors of society – have been engaged and provided source material for this research. Experts have been invited to present theoretical insights as well as practical guidance from the fount of their own expertise in working in and with impoverished communities.

³² The main problem in this regard, is the impoverishing of sub-Saharan Africa due to the predatory nature of its political elites. The countries' own peasantries and industries are not empowered and no requisite infrastructures developed. Rather, political elites nationalize institutions for their own benefits and enrichments, and extract surplus even from the poor and especially the African peasantry – who is also not allowed to own the land they work (cf. Mbeki 2005; Saul 2005).

urban economic and cultural development; 3) the study of formative and critical perspectives on poverty within faith traditions; 4) the study of existing practitioners and programmes in the field of Religion and poverty alleviation as well as job creation; 5) and the study and furthering of sustainable development in the face of forces of underdevelopment and cultures of poverty.

The Southern African Religion and Culture Encyclopaedic Theoretical Framework

Since the colonisation of Africa, southern Africa has been an ever-increasing pluralistic society. Colonial policy nonetheless inhibited the developing and flourishing of religious formations and cultures other than the colonial — particularly indigenous ones. This reality had far-reaching consequences in society. It impacted on how the different religions are understood or misunderstood today, the development of government policies which restricted indigenous cultural formation development³³ and the progressive development of an inclusive society. The system of apartheid pursued by the successors of the colonial governments systemically entrenched many prejudices and stereotypes of the southern African communities and stunted development. The old constitutions made it difficult for the natural and unforced interaction of cultures and religious groups within society. However, the new constitution provides for freedom of expression, religious practice and cultural development. The South African constitution and government policy now provides for a free and open pluralistic society in which all people can pursue their respective cultural and religious traditions

³³ Cf. Chidester's hypothesis (1996: 233ff), with regard to the progressive subjection and control colonization exerted on the indigenous population. Prior to subjection and control, colonial agencies could not detect the presence/ existence of 'religion' amongst the indigenous populations (the phase of 'denial'). In this, they worked with a Protestant-induced set of criteria of what constitutes 'religion'. However, as the indigenous populations were progressively subjected by colonial powers (the 'losing of frontiers') colonial protagonists – including missionary agents – identified the existence of 'religion' amongst them – 'denial' lost its strategic 'value'.

and identities without prejudicing the other³⁴.

Although in theory this change has provided opportunities for communities to interact freely in an open society, in practice, many prejudices and stereotypes about each other continue to exist. The encyclopedic theoretical framework deals with this complex issue in the southern African community and the need to renegotiate on issues such as race, gender, religious fundamentalism, ethnic identity, the status of immigrants (or refugees) and their many negative consequences for society as these articulate with core religious beliefs and practices. In the past few years, global society has witnessed religious discontent – with religious organisations being implicated in acts of violence. Such events call into question the historical role that religion plays in society. As we move toward building a civil society based on tolerance and respect for each other's traditions and beliefs, sustained and reasoned understanding of our religions and their various roles in society need to be investigated, analysed and explained. In addition, Religion as discipline engaging public issues must be developed together with these focuses.

In the interests of these objectives, the focus in this area has been the developing of relevant knowledge through both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The main aim has been to develop a comprehensive, multi-religious body of knowledge concerning the history of religions as it pertains to social formation and transformation in southern Africa as well as the developing of the religions in terms of current socio-cultural challenges. Since religious formations have played and still do play a crucial role within the southern African polity, this broad research focus has started to constructively contribute towards cross-religious understanding, education, respect and tolerance.

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Given staff shortages, the postgraduate Religion Education programme has not been developed to the same degree as the Religion and Social Transformation Programme. Even so, from the few Masters and Doctoral studies completed and currently engaged, we can already identify some

³⁴ Cf. Kumar (2006) for a selection of studies on current systems of pluralism in the world. For an analysis from a Muslim perspective, see Dangor (2009).

important aspects³⁵.

In line with the new education policy of South Africa, the constitution of the country is secular – fashioned along the lines of secular society – but provides for religious tolerance and freedom of religious practice³⁶. It is not secular in the same way that the constitution of the United States of America is secular³⁷. Voiced accordingly at the ‘Launch of The

³⁵ This is an important area in need of tertiary scholarly development, especially as it impacts on the schooling system in South Africa. The subject of Religion Education forms part of the Life Orientation programme at school throughout all twelve years of schooling. Since 2005, the subject of Religion Studies is a fully accredited Grade 12 subject. Pupils can study this subject as a main subject in Grades 10 – 12 alongside the likes of Mathematics, the languages and Physical Sciences.

³⁶ An analogy is the Canadian constitution that provides for multiculturalism and religious pluralism, although it does not go as far as the U.S. constitution that restricts the states’ involvement in religious matters. (For South Africa cf. Asmal and Sachs below.) There are different models of secularism and the South African constitution is secular in so far as it provides for religious and cultural diversity. The Indian constitution provides another analogy – similar to the South African Constitution it too operates with an inclusive secular notion of state.

³⁷ Operating in a Human Rights framework, the National Policy on Religion and Education (NPRE) promotes the fundamental values of the Constitution, builds national unity, aims at the fostering of common national values with regard to citizenship, and fosters the learning about the various forms of cultural diversity in the country, including religion. While facilitating transformation from the previously racist cultural ideology to an open, democratic society, learning about diversity is central to both the Constitution and the policy on Religion Education. When we founded our programmes in 1999, the formulations eventually accepted in the NPRE in 2003, were present in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa but not yet as precisely as in the Religion Education Policy. It was only through the efforts of a variety of organizations and lobby groups that the new education policy was eventually accepted and passed by government in 2003. Cf. Chidester (2008) for an overview of the processes that lead to the eventual formation of the NPRE.

Policy on Religion and Education in Parliament’, Cape Town, South Africa, 9 September 2003³⁸, the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, said:

In many countries, the practice still exists, by which a state designated religion dominates the education system. We have lived through this, and reject it. In other countries, including the United States, the separation of church [read religion] and state is so severe as to deny the obvious interaction between growing up, being educated, and the formation of beliefs and values. We have decided to adopt a *co-operative model*, with the state and church [read religion] in harmony, *existing separately in our specific spheres*, and working collectively in *shared spheres of interest*, like education.

Referring to the significance of the launch of the National Policy on Religion and Education, he continued:

In doing so we declare to the nation, and to the world, that we have put behind us the days of religious intolerance in education, of sanctified repression and abuse in our schools, and we intend to work towards seeing religion as a *tool of freedom*. We are convinced that this policy, in its guiding principles, sets the tone for a *healthy relationship between religion and education* that will be good for education, good for religion, and good for our schools in a democratic society.

What is evident from the minister’s speech is that a few of his own assumptions that lead to the formulation of this policy, was ‘the religious nature of our society’, that this has to be engaged ‘with sensitivity to the different beliefs of *our young citizens*’, thereby referring to the person of most concern, the pupil in the multi-religious classroom: ‘No child today should feel ashamed or excluded because his or her beliefs are not those of the majority in a school’. He continued:

³⁸ See: http://www.espsare.org/download/attachments/1803660/Speech_By_The_Minister_Of_Education_09Sep03.doc (accessed 16 July 2011).

Whilst the policy protects learners from discrimination it also enables them to engage with religion — as a rich heritage, as a source of moral reflection, and as a resource for spiritual formation — in ways that are consistent with the educational aims and objectives of an integrated school curriculum. In this way, teaching and learning about religion and religions will form part of the curriculum, to provide learners with the skills they will need to contribute to our diverse and changing society³⁹.

‘Religion Education’ in South Africa has its beginnings in the work of 1970s South African exiled academic, Basil Moore. Banned in 1972 for his editing of *Black Theology: The South African Voice*, Moore positioned the book in the framework of Black Consciousness, and South Africa’s history of struggle against oppression and quest for justice and reconciliation. Prof Kader Asmal’s positive appraisal of Religion Education also derives from the work of famous Religion Studies scholar, Ninian Smart who advocated a non-confessional and positive impartiality to the study of religion, religions and religious diversity in the interests of learning about difference and identity. While recognising and respecting the diversity of religions, the diversity of theological and confessional commitments, and the various positive contributions of the religions to our country, the educational objectives of the Policy on Religion and Education ‘charts’ a course *for our schools* to make their own, distinctive contribution to teaching and learning *about religion* in ways that will celebrate our diversity and affirm our nat-

³⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and values of citizenship, human rights, equality, freedom of conscience, and freedom from discrimination played a central role in the policy’s approach to religion in schools. Asmal said: ‘To promote a particular religion, or a prescribed set of religions, or a particular religious perspective, would place our learners, who come from diverse religious, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, at risk of discrimination and prejudice’. As such, no one religion is regarded or treated as superior or inferior to another. This perspective is central to the NPRE which was finally accepted by Parliament in September 2003, under the leadership of then Minister of Education, Mr. Kader Asmal.

ional ‘unity’⁴⁰ (e.a.).

This concurs with the 1990 view of recently retired Constitutional Court judge Albie Sachs. Already in 1990, Sachs stated: ‘We want a secular state in South Africa, but a secular state with religion, indeed with many religions [...]’. In addition to a number of issues he then touches on, Sachs also pointed to five ‘constitutional options’ for ‘governing the relations between religious organisations and the state’. These are:

- Theocracy, that is, the acknowledgement of religious organizations as the holders of public power and of religious law as the law of the state.
- A partly secular, partly religious state, with legal power-sharing between the state and religious institutions — each exercising constitutionally recognized power in its own sphere, usually with religious bodies controlling family law and, possibly, criminal law, and the state controlling all other aspects.
- A secular state with active interaction between the state and religious organizations, which not only have a constitutionally recognized sphere of autonomy, but collaborate with the state in tasks of mutual concern.

⁴⁰ This was the product of the work of the ‘uniquely South African body’, the Standing Advisory Committee on Religion and Education that ‘shows that religion can be handled respectfully, with integrity, and within in the framework of tolerance and human rights enshrined in our Constitution’. The main elements of the policy are:

- Definition of Religion Education: ‘teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity in South Africa and the world’.
- Framework for schools: providing guidelines ‘in regard to voluntary Religious Instruction outside of the formal school curriculum, and for Religious Observances during school hours’.

Clarity of guidelines concerning application: the policy’s ‘application in public and independent schools, as well as in public schools on private property, to ensure that there is no misunderstanding about what elements of the policy apply in the latter two instances’.

- A secular state in which religious organizations have a tolerated, private sphere of action, but there is no overlapping or joint activity with the state.
- A secular state in which religious organizations are repressed.

In his analysis of these options, their related questions, and assessment as to the most desirable – that would attract most support – Sachs’ view was that:

[T]here is no scope at all for the suppression of religion, nor is there any possibility of having a state religion in South Africa, nor of giving religious organizations judicial or other authority beyond the voluntary authority accepted by members. It would seem that in the light of South Africa’s history and culture, something along the lines of the third option mentioned above would achieve the greatest support, namely, *a secular state with active interaction between the state and religious organizations*⁴¹ (cf. Sachs (1990: 43, 45, 46).

‘[T]eaching of religion’ is the ‘responsibility of the home, family, and religious community’ and that the responsibility of the school, is to teach ‘about religion and religions’. This latter practice requires the school to see religion education not as, ‘catechism or theology, defined as the formal study of the nature of God and of the foundations of religious ‘belief’, but rather as to ‘contribute’ to the wider framework of ‘education as defined in international standards’⁴².

⁴¹ Cf. also Smit and Chetty (2009) that critically reflect on the dynamics of the teaching of Religion Education at school up to 2009.

⁴² Cf. reference to the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief in Asmal above. Three important scholarly resources for Religion education are: 1) the *Manifesto on Values, Education, and Democracy*; 2) the edited *Numen* volume on ‘The Challenge of Religious Education for the History of Religions’ – cf. especially Alberts, Editorial; and Chidester (2008); and 3) the edited volume of *Alternation* on ‘Religion and Diversity’ by Smit and Chetty (2009).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the overall approach in the programmes constitutes processes of engagement with students and communities as well as through students, with actual development and service delivery work according to their specific career paths. A very large proportion of Honours, Masters and Doctoral students have come from actual jobs and careers. They enrolled in our programmes with the aim of enskilling themselves at the university through our religiously-accommodating programmes. This has led to the production of graduates who returned to their communities and continue their work and careers in religion-specific or inter-religious environments, but now in a much more informed, and trained way. This engaged approach constitutes an intervention in our collectively determined postcolonial and postapartheid world with its specific historically-determined challenges.

More specifically, a main aspect on this level is that much of our students' research follows participatory models that involve communities. These projects impact positively on both students and communities in a variety of ways. Students are better enskilled for their work and careers in actual service and working conditions. Communities, again, are not studied 'objectively' and never able to own the knowledge they produce as part of the participatory research models. Rather, since they are involved in the processes of knowledge production, researchers help them to create new and more informed social systems and structures which can be owned, administered and managed. This is a primary assumption of research undertaken in the Program for Religion and Social Transformation. This process ensures that data is not gathered and stored away in libraries, but disseminated and given back to the community so that the community can act on it in an informed, consultative, and orderly way. In these ways, we prepare students to apply their knowledge and skills for the benefit of our multi-faith communities, also meaning that the levels of knowledge and skills feeding into communities do not differ from one area to another, from the erstwhile white areas to the black areas, or more importantly, the rich and the poor communities. The assumption is that the same standards and processes of knowledge production must feed into the communities – especially in both urban and rural traditional African communities where students come from these areas.

In addition to many of the scholarly outcomes of the programmes our

students and we ourselves have experienced so far, is the important fact that they foster inter-religious understanding, tolerance, and trust. The cultivation of relationships of trust in the public domain aim at collective solidarity and engagement of commonly shared socio-cultural challenges and problems. Adherents to religions can make their own individual contributions but our programmes also importantly foster collaborative engagements and contributions. The programmes not only provide for the accommodating secular space and the freedom to collaboratively work towards commonly shared secular goals, but also empower students through the relevant knowledge and skills – which are provided irrespective of race, class, or gender. It is hoped that such an approach will continuously make the hidden and latent ideologically-infused covert systems and practices redundant. Prejudices and biases as well as the infringement of social apparatuses on individual and collective aspirations and dreams are openly acknowledged and recognised as part of the human condition. Yet, this opens the space for the free development of trust, respect and the cultivation of dignity, in the place of 1) resistance and struggle as in the days of the apartheid regime; and the 2) continuously manoeuvring forces (‘old boys networks’, ‘cabals’, etc. emblematic of post-apartheid transformation forces jostling for position and acquisition).

The cultivation of trust takes its cue from those who struggled together irrespective of ethnic, class, gender, religious or other disparities and divides, and the continuous resuscitation of the common project of the developing of a common South Africa. At base lies the common sense that derives from and is founded on the recognition of the vulnerability of all involved, the vulnerability of the common project, but also that equal recognition that collective achievement only derives from individually- and collectively-motivated participation in the fostering of the common goals of excellence and achievement through collective synchrony. As such, we also foster an open, honest and integrity driven social whole emanating from the aspiration to maximise individually-motivated contributions to common objectives. This, we hope will in time translate into an ever larger commonly shared objective of an efficient, high profile, community- and context-relevant, research-led university deriving from the personal commitment of both staff and students, as well as the democratisation of knowledge and institutional practices. In these senses, knowledge and power are not struggled for, taken hold of, and exercised through measures of control and

ideology in the interests of only a select few, but openly distributed, and democratically shared.

As more and more students complete their studies, we hope that the programmes in Religion at our university will be a constructive contribution not only to real transformation in society but a fostering of tolerant, cooperative, integrated communities. A central feature of these communities will be the recognition and respect of the dignity of the other, and knowledge and understanding of difference and diversity. These communities hopefully, will live according to our national values, hopes and aspirations, and as one nation, pro-actively and constructively collaborate with one another irrespective of their religions, gender, class, or race.

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As an undergraduate student, **Bert Olivier** discovered Philosophy more or less by accident, but has never regretted it. Because Bert knew very little, Philosophy turned out to be right up his alley, as it were, because of Socrates's teaching, that the only thing we know with certainty, is how little we know. Armed with this '*docta ignorantia*', Bert set out to teach students the value of questioning, and even found out that one could write cogently about it, which he did during the 1980s and 1990s in opposition to apartheid. Since then, he has been teaching and writing on Philosophy and his other great loves, namely, the arts, architecture and literature. In the face of the many irrational actions on the part of people, and wanting to understand these, later on he branched out into Psychoanalysis and Social Theory as well, and because Philosophy cultivates in one a strong sense of justice, he has more recently been harnessing what little knowledge he has in intellectual opposition to the injustices brought about by the dominant economic system today, to wit, neoliberal capitalism. In 2012 NMMU conferred a Distinguished Professorship on him. From 2015 he will be attached to the University of the Free State as Senior Research Fellow. His

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motto is taken from Immanuel Kant's work: '*Sapere aude!*' ('Dare to think for yourself!'). Contact details: Bert.Olivier@nmmu.ac.za

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