Cover photo: Wandisile, Chwayita, Mama Bokolo and I sit together in Hubspace Khayelitsha. Unfortunately Stefan was absent. Source: Emma Hosking (2014)
Dedicated to Chwayita, Mama B, Stefan, Wandisile and Ludwe

You are ever hopeful and excited by possibility. You have transformed and inspired me through your persistent pursuit of justice and Ubuntu.

You have enabled me to articulate my sense of the world in these pages.

“We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us new location to articulate our sense of the world” – bell hooks (1990: 153)
This thesis explores and celebrates diverse understandings and experiences of the economy through the narratives of four people working in Cape Town, South Africa. The diversity and multiplicity of the economy has been made invisible by a capitalocentric economic discourse which casts alternative ways of being as uncredible and weak. Thus, from a post-development/community economy perspective, I seek to foster a space in which non-conventional economic and political practices are seen as relevant and valid sites for action, where hope for a better future can be enabled.

Living in the segregated city of Cape Town, I began to question the polemic framing of the country’s “two economies”, a framing which disregards the actions of ordinary people who are improving the well-being of their communities directly, in favour of neoliberal pro-growth strategies. Therefore, I interrogate the binaries used to describe the economy and scale of action so as to reimagine other possible trajectories for transformation. In so doing, I trace some of the relational connections that the participants articulated and employed on a daily basis so as to foster a sense of place beyond dualistic notions of scale and politics. I also contend that if we are to appreciate the community economy as a significant and persistent site of struggle, there is a need to understand politics as happening beyond the horizon of direct mobilisation. Through these reframings I work to reinsert the experiences and perspectives of spatially and economically marginalised people and places into implications in broader issues.

I approach this research from a post-structural, feminist stance, not only to deconstruct the supposed dominance of the capitalist economy, but also to contribute to a project of growing a diverse economic discourse and enabling people to occupy this terrain and reclaim their agency. Hence, using ethnographic and visual collaborative methodologies I aim to promote and value the agency and autonomy of ordinary people who are performing, dreaming, enacting, connecting and enabling a broad horizon of opportunities in hybrid, multi-scalar ways. Therefore, alongside its conceptual contribution of enabling other economic possibilities, I hope that this thesis adds to a conversation about the need for methodologies to be realised as part of a broader movement towards transformation and change.
Acknowledgements

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<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANT</td>
<td>Actor Network Theory</td>
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<td>Asgi-SA</td>
<td>Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEE</td>
<td>Black Economic Empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPUT</td>
<td>Cape Peninsula University of Technology</td>
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<td>CSA</td>
<td>Community Supported Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Growth, Employment and Redistribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HoH</td>
<td>Harvest of Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>National Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>Reconstruction and Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCT</td>
<td>University of Cape Town</td>
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<tr>
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aangename kennis Afrikaans pleased to meet you

Apartheid Afrikaans state of being apart; system of racial segregation in South Africa enforced through legislation by the ruling National Party between 1948 and 1994, which curtailed the rights, associations and movements of non-white persons

bakkie Afrikaans an open backed truck, sometimes covered with a canopy

becoming, theory of a conceptualization of the world as a dynamic and open-ended system of relational transformations (McCormack, 2009)

Capetonian a person from Cape Town

capitalocentrism the discursive hegemony of capitalism; a discourse which reduces economic difference, and prescribes meaning in relation to a capitalist identity (Gibson-Graham, 2006)

fynbos Afrikaans/Dutch fine bush; an indigenous heath vegetation biome found specifically in a small belt of the Western Cape of South Africa. It is one of the most diverse floristic kingdoms in the world

ja Afrikaans/colloquial English yes, agreement; used as a common interjection

mama isiXhosa mother, or used when referring to a women older than yourself

mielie Afrikaans a maize plant or cob of corn

Model-C schools semi-private schools reserved for white children during apartheid (this racial segregation no-longer remains; of a much higher standard than public schools for non-white children

molweni isiXhosa hello, used in greeting to two or more people; sometimes used to greet only one person in order to show respect

ndiyavuya ukukwazi isiXhosa pleased to meet you

spaza township convenience stores selling everyday items, often informal or run from home

stokvel Afrikaans an informal savings or investment society to which members regularly contribute an agreed amount

resubjectification the way in which we recreate ourselves and others as subject to (rather than object of) discourses of the economy and development, so as to reclaim agency and identity (Gibson-Graham, 2003)
tactics everyday resistance of the marginalised through the creation and manipulation of spaces in ways that escape or subvert authority (de Certaeau

**tata isiXhosa** father, or used when referring to a man older than yourself

**toyi-toyi** a southern African dance form expressing protest or resistance, often including chanting of political slogans or song

**Ubuntu isiXhosa** a southern African philosophy of life and common humanity

**ugqirha isiXhosa** a traditional healer or doctor

**umlungu isiXhosa** referring to a white person, often in a mocking way

**umqombothi isiXhosa** a traditional beer made from maize, with a distinctly sour aroma, served at initiations and ceremonies.
Prelude

It seems strange, sitting at my desk in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, to write somewhat abstractedly about people and places many thousands of kilometres away in Cape Town, South Africa. However, in many ways, I feel near to these geographically distant beings – emotionally, spiritually and even technologically. They form an integral part of my community, my family, my identity and my humanity. There is a philosophy in southern Africa which goes by various names: in South Africa it is Ubuntu. Its meaning is many and multiple and very difficult to render into the English Language. Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999: 31) has described it as

[Speaking] of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say “yu, u nobunto” (“Hey, so-and-so has Ubuntu”). Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly, caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours”. We belong in a bundle of life. We say “a person is a person through other persons”. It is not “I think therefore I am.” It says rather: “I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.” A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are tortured and oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.

To me, this is a beautiful concept. It speaks of our interconnectedness and a desire for reconciliation, harmony and peace. It is about open-heartedness and nearness, a sense of belonging. It is a search for a “humble togetherness” (Swanson, 2007). Indeed, although I am far away, I do feel as though my humanity is bundled up, inextricably, with geographically distant relatives and friends, fellow citizens, places and environments. It is not just a concept that binds me to home however. I aim that it also informs the way that I carry out everyday life and relations with others, human and non-human, around me. It is a way of being. It has also inspired the ideas in this thesis. The late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, when asked in a 2006 interview by Tim Mosedi¹ what Ubuntu meant to him answered

In the old days when we were young, a traveller through a country would stop at a village, and he didn’t have to ask for food or for water; once he stops, the people

¹Tim Mosedi is a South African journalist who did this interview with Nelson Mandela as part of a promotional video that was distributed alongside the popular computer operating system, Ubuntu Linux. It is also Mandela’s most well-known statement on the subject of Ubuntu. You can watch the video segment at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HED4h00xPPA.
give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects...Ubuntu does not mean that people should not address themselves. The question therefore is: are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you, and enable it to improve? These are important things in life. And if one can do that, you have done something very important that will be appreciated (Mandela & Modise, 2006).

I understand the people who collaborated with me on this research as embodying Tata Mandela’s sense of Ubuntu. Through their efforts and pursuits they were building, connecting and enabling community. They were working to create nearness and a sense of being-in-common in a country where people have been forcibly segregated and distanced from one another. Many people in post-Apartheid South Africa continue to be “diminished”. My hope for this thesis is that through celebrating and amplifying the actions of the people I engaged with we might contribute, in our own small way, to the common goal of spreading Ubuntu through the land and its people once more.
Chapter 1
Introducing my research project

Situating my research in theory

In this research project I explore and celebrate diverse understandings and experiences of the economy through the narratives of four people living and working in Cape Town, South Africa. I explore the ways in which, through their everyday actions, they worked towards fostering community, connections, diversity and a sense of being-in-common in a city and country which has been historically segregated and ghettoised. I contemplate how these narratives might facilitate transformation towards a more enabling world, where ordinary people envision themselves as agents of change.

My research is based on the discursive project of community economies, of which the principle proponent has been the feminist scholars, J.K. Gibson-Graham. There is a growing awareness in development research and practice that capitalocentric ways-of-doing (which position capitalism at the centre and dismiss everything else) limit horizons of action and transformation and diminish other ways-of-being. In particular, these debates have arisen through criticisms of capitalist and neoliberal approaches (from post-structural, post-development and feminist schools of thought, among others) that are opposed to the way in which hegemonic discourses or monocultures, such as the capitalist economy, seem to control the discursive reality of the world and subjugate ordinary people as passive consumers (Santos, 2004; Ziai, 2007; Agostino, 2008; Escobar, 2011; Cameron, Healy & Gibson-Graham, 2013). These discourses silence and make invisible other ways of being which support and encourage well-being and action. It is therefore the silenced and that which is made invisible that Gibson-Graham seek to make credible in their re-imaginings of the economy.

J.K. Gibson-Graham have worked towards performing, amplifying and expanding the community economies discourse through various action-research projects in Australia, the Pacific, Asia and the United States. Through these projects they have shown that the capitalist economy is “but a thin veneer”, underlain by a diverse multiplicity of other activities which are not necessarily capitalist (Gibson-Graham, 2005: 16). They have also worked to support

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2 This name is a collaborative effort between two feminist scholars, Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson, who
ordinary people to become empowered and credible actors in the community economy so as to inhabit its diverse terrain. However, although Gibson-Graham’s depiction of the diverse economy is a step in the right direction, their framework (see Figure 1) still portrays the capitalist market as “a separate unified realm distinct from the non-market” (Williams et al., 2012: 219). It is here that I think there is a significant gap in the community economies literature and practice. As Williams et al. (2012) and Escobar (2001) reason, there is a need for a broader, more nuanced, understanding of the entangled, hybrid, multi-scalar nature of the economy and the way that people act in it. This is what I will attempt to do in this thesis.

In South Africa (and elsewhere), diverse economic activities have been broadly defined and

![A Diverse Economy](image)

Figure 1: Gibson-Graham's diverse economy framework. Source: Healy and Graham (2008)

confined to the “informal” economy, which is seen as separate and other to the “formal”, mainstream economy. This framing presents the informal economy as dysfunctional, passive,
poor and in need of policy and social assistance from the functional, active and wealthy formal economy (Habib, 2004; Pieterse, 2006). “Informal” activities are romanticised as small-scale, local, disarticulated, deviant and weak in relation to the power and global reach of the “formal” economy (Escobar, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2002). Indeed the informal economy is not seen to contribute to the country’s development and growth, nor to the greater well-being of its citizens. These are some of the key discourses about economy, scale and power which subject people to the neoliberal, capitalist economy of the post-apartheid government. These discourses, framed in binary terms, limit citizens’ sense of their own agency and capacity for making change in and beyond their own localities. They also limit the possibility of the community economy for being a progressive form of politics, development and citizenship towards transformation.

The project of growing a new discourse is a large, almost never-ending one and there are therefore many strands of concern which could be followed. Despite an escalating scholarly interest in the community economies framework, to my knowledge there have been very few studies in this field undertaken in South Africa. In light of the country’s segregated economic and social spheres, with this thesis I aim to contribute to a more nuanced, geographical exploration of the hybrid, networked, connected ways in which people act in the economy and build community, so as to think of the community economy as a politically progressive and hopeful horizon of possibilities. There is also space, to which this thesis aims to make a contribution, for thinking creatively about doing research in ways that will empower, amplify and grow diverse economic actors to think outside the binary frame and conceive of themselves as agents of change.

This project is founded in a critical, post-structural, feminist conceptual framework which has informed my interpretation of the challenges faced in growing a diverse economy, as well as shaped the questions I ask and the ways in which I attempt to answer them. Whilst the deconstruction and critique of hegemonic binaries of the economy and development is a central tenet of my research, I do not take this to its post-structural conclusion to suppose that all development or capital-based economy is bad and must be demolished. Rather, I aim to foster a space in which the validity and relevance of non-conventional economic and political practices for contesting dominant discourses and power structures are celebrated and subjectivities are reimagined, enabling multiple possibilities for an unknown future in the present. Rather aptly, Gibson-Graham (2006: 7) ask
What if we were to accept that the goal of theory is not to extend knowledge by confirming what we already know, that the world is a place of economic domination, conflict and oppression? What if we asked theory instead to help us see openings, to enable us to find happiness, to provide a space of freedom and possibility?

I hope, therefore, that that the theories, ideas and narratives in this thesis do not simply perpetuate capitalism’s supposed dominance, but rather that they open space, broaden horizons and enable happiness.

Research questions

Using a feminist, ethnographic methodology comprised of unstructured conversational interviews, observation, reflection and participatory video I seek to question: how might the narratives of four diverse people who are contributing to the community economy of Cape Town expand the horizons of possibility for change and enable transformation?

In doing so, I will also seek to answer the following questions:

- How do their narratives challenge the binaries of non-capitalist/capitalist informal/formal through privileging the diverse economy as mixed and hybrid?
- In what ways are they engaging in a progressive politics at the margins which challenges the binary of global and local?
- How might their narratives, actions and connections foster new spaces for transformation and expand the terrain of social movements by acknowledging the powerful politics of the everyday?
- How can we shape our methodological choices to promote transformations and support participants’ endeavours within development practice and research?

Situating my research in place

These questions are important not just theoretically, but also contextually. I feel that it is important, therefore, to provide you with some understanding of the context in which this research took place, in Cape Town, South Africa. It would be an impossibility to do full justice to providing a contextual and historical overview of the city and country in the space
that I have here. Instead, I will touch on a few key observations that I feel are important when reading this thesis.

Geographically speaking, South Africa is nestled at the southern-most tip of the African continent, sharing borders in the north with Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique and internal borders with Swaziland and Lesotho (see Figure 2). The country is straddled by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Indian Ocean to the east. Cape Town, the southern-most city in Africa, is situated near to the confluence of these two oceans, in the province of the Western Cape.

When the Portuguese first rounded the Cape Peninsula in 1488, they aptly named it “Cabo Tormentoso” (Cape of Storms) for its wild, tempestuous weather (Worden, Heyningen & Bickford-Smith, 1998). The coastal, low-lying area of the Western Cape (which lies against the dramatic rise of the interior escarpment) is the only area of South Africa to experience a Mediterranean climate of cold wet winters and warm dry summers. The rest of the country has dry winters and receives most of its rainfall through humid summer thunderstorms. Due to its unique micro-climate and underlying geology, this tiny area of the Western Cape covers part of a global biodiversity hotspot, the Cape Floristic Region. It is one of the most diverse
floristic kingdoms in the world, boasting some 9000 different plant species, of which almost 70% are endemic (Goldblatt & Manning, 2002). The predominant vegetation type is fynbos, which comes from Dutch/Afrikaans meaning “fine bush”. Table Mountain, one of the Natural Wonders of the World, rises out of the Cape Peninsula to loom above the city of Cape Town, often covered in its renowned “tablecloth” of cloud. The arresting beauty of the city (and the country as a whole) draws many tourists to its shores, but masks the underlying reality of structural inequality which delineates the lives of all who live there.

Surrounding the mountain are several wealthy coastal suburbs, the Central Business District (CBD) and the high- to middle-income Southern Suburbs. A main road and railway line separate the Southern Suburbs from the Cape Flats, a middle- to low- income area which was the Apartheid government’s dumping ground for coloured and black people. The area is populated by formal and informal settlements, as well as a large agricultural tract which provides the bulk of the city’s vegetables (Davis, 2013). The Cape Flats is renowned for the prevalence of gang-violence, sub-standard housing and flooding in winter. The parts of the Cape Flats where I worked have an extremely high unemployment rate (of almost 50%) and represent some of the poorest in Cape Town (Statistics South Africa, 2014). There is surprisingly little positive information to be found about the area; the majority of media coverage is adverse and pessimistic.

Therefore, I undertook most of my research in the Cape Flats’ townships of Khayelitsha, Nyanga and Philippi in order to seek out other, more optimistic and hopeful stories which are invisible in popular media and discourse. Three of the people I collaborated with lived and worked in the Cape Flats (one each in Nyanga, Khayelitsha and Philippi). The fourth lived in the Southern Suburbs and was based in an office in Woodstock. Woodstock is a suburb on the margins of the CBD, which, in the last five years or so has undergone a process of gentrification, turning it from a run-down, semi-industrial zone into a trendy, hip-and-happening suburb, particularly favoured by young designers and creatives. Two of the people I worked with attended the University of Cape Town (UCT), where I also completed my undergraduate study, located on the slopes of Table Mountain in the Southern Suburbs. Below, Figure 3 depicts the layout of Cape Town and the sites where the people I collaborated with were based.
South Africa: The Rainbow Nation?

The Republic of South Africa is often lauded as Africa’s “miracle nation” in light of its relatively peaceful transition from Apartheid to democracy in that a full-blown civil war was avoided – although there was horrible violence, it was on a smaller scale than what has occurred in many other former colonial territories. In place of the repression and discrimination of the oppressive Apartheid regime, on the 27th April, 1994 the new non-racial, democratic South Africa was ushered in. Never again would a person or group of persons be able to systematically and institutionally discriminate against, subjugate or grossly abuse the human-rights of another. To thank for this are the many brave and defiant anti-apartheid activists and ordinary people who fought tirelessly for the recognition and equality of all people, regardless of race, gender or ethnicity. The country’s new Constitution, which is “regarded by most people as being one of the most libertarian and human-rights orientated constitutions in the world”, is a solemn covenant to this (Tutu, 1999: 16). Despite this remarkable achievement, the transition has been incredibly tenuous and many barriers to equality still remain. With its atrociously pockmarked history and optimistic (but equally fragile) future, South Africa was a fascinating place in which to undertake my research and to contemplate the possibility of fostering much needed community, Ubuntu, hope and continued transformation.
The Rainbow Nation – a term coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to encapsulate the coming together of people who had previously been callously divided into black and white - is home to some 54-million people (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Of this, it is estimated that 43,33-million (80,2%) are black Africans, 4,77-million (8,8%) are coloured, 4,5-million are white (8,4%) and 1,3-million (2,5%) are Asian/Indian (Statistics South Africa, 2014). These population groupings do not really embrace the multi-cultural nature of the population. For instance, black Africans can be divided into four distinct cultural groupings: Nguni (which includes Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele and Swazi peoples), Sotho-Tswana, Venda and Tsonga. Similarly, the white population is composed of Afrikaners (who are descendants of Dutch, German and French Huguenot who came to South Africa between the 17th and 18th centuries), English-speakers (who descended from British settlers who arrived in the late 1800s) and other European immigrants (including Greek, Portuguese, Hungarian, German and Eastern European Jews). The contentious nature of these groupings is worth noting. The term “coloured” for instance, has been adopted from its apartheid usage and ambiguously describes a heterogeneous group of people who are often described as mixed-race. They are one of the most racially diverse groups in the world, with a rich heritage of Khoisan (now, a people almost extinct due to their obliteration during the colonial establishment), African, European, Indian, and South-East Asian descent. It remains an ambiguous issue as to what namings are politically correct in contemporary South Africa.

These contentions, to me, are sadly illustrative of the current state of the nation too. Despite the enshrined democracy and racial equality of the Rainbow Nation, post-1994, the country remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. This is surprising when one considers that the country’s ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), were formerly left-wing and affiliated with communist ideals, as expressed in the Freedom Charter (South African Congress Alliance, 1955). Characterized by its opening demand, “The People Shall Govern!”, the Freedom Charter is iconic in its demands for gender and racial equality, human rights for all, freedom from oppression, nationalisation and ownership of the country’s wealth by the whole nation, land reform and free education for all (among others). However, in 1990 the then National Party (NP) president, F.W. De Klerk released Nelson Mandela after 27-years imprisonment and repealed stringent bans on black political organisations as well as several other apartheid laws, so as to avoid convergence into chaos and war. This opened the negotiation table for forging a new democracy. Sadly, as Myambo (2011: 70) argues,
During the transition the ANC was literally wined and dined by such powerful advocates of neoliberal capitalism as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, white South African captains of industry and international big business, all of whom argued that pursuing policies of public ownership in the form of a communist-inspired nationalization of national resources would be akin to committing economic suicide in a globalizing world.

Upon democratisation, therefore, the government aligned itself towards a neoliberal, pro-growth strategy in an attempt to repair the turmoil left in the wake of apartheid policy. This meant the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) which encouraged cost recovery and privatisation measures – approaches which now make basic services unaffordable for the poor (Ballard, 2005: 82). Although the Constitution addressed almost all the demands of the Freedom Charter surrounding racial and language equality, the document did not include anything about land or wealth distribution or the nationalisation of industry. Despite attempts at affirmative action through, among others, the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) program, these seem to have created a new multiracial economic elite at the expense of the poor black majority (Myambo, 2011). Myambo (2011: 81) argues that

the central paradox of the New South Africa…is that the ideology of Rainbow Nation multiculturalism serves to mask race and class divisions in a system in which neoliberal capitalism turns out to be not so different from the racial capitalism of Apartheid.

This is an intensely saddening statement, but clearly indicative of the current state of the country. The esteemed multicultural democracy has not served the people - the majority are still disenfranchised. In this light, the “Rainbow Nation” democracy is could be seen as a disguised form of capitalism whose supposed multiculturalism legitimises hegemony and inequality. After years of struggle under oppression for liberation, this is to me a devastating conclusion.

The paradox of post-Apartheid South Africa is taken still further if one considers the way in which former President Thabo Mbeki instigated the now popularly evoked “two economies” thesis for conceptualising poverty in the country. Post-Apartheid policies have focused largely on economic growth rather than redistribution, while at the same time strongly promoting a pro-poor agenda (Lemanski, 2007; Görgens & van Donk, 2012). Central to the understanding of poverty in public discourse is Mbeki’s notion that “poor people remain trapped in poverty because they are trapped in a ‘second economy’, disconnected from the mainstream, ‘first
world economy” (du Toit & Neves, 2007: 146). Initial post-Apartheid policies such as the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP)\(^3\), the 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) and the 2006 Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative (Asgi-SA) were therefore aimed at building market-focused ladders between the “first” and “second” economies (Bond, 2007; Lemanski, 2007). These policies problematically diagnosed the “second”, informal economy of the poor as deficient, uncredible and in need of neoliberal reform, leaving the functioning of the “first” economy unquestioned and un-criticised (Habib, 2004; du Toit & Neves, 2007). Additionally, as Görgens & van Donk (2012) argue, they also obscured the agency of the poor, which has resulted in the continued marginalisation and invisibility of the majority of South Africa’s urban residents.

**Cape Town: A segregated city**

Although Mbeki’s crude framing is highly criticized, it does hold a partial truth in its demonstration of the stark dichotomy of inequality in South Africa. As Lemanski (2007: 451) comments, the rhetoric of two nations – one of wealth and the other of poverty – is strongly represented in South African cities, “where people and spaces from the two worlds are juxtaposed in close proximity.” This polarisation is dramatically palpable in post-Apartheid cities, where affluent suburbs and flourishing economic areas are centrally placed and bursting with opportunities, whilst at the periphery are located over-crowded, impoverished and ill-serviced townships, cut off from prosperous urban centres (Turok, 2001). Prior to the 1950s, Cape Town was known as a relatively liberal city, with many mixed-race residential areas. However, as a result of the 1950 Group Areas Act, by the end of the 1960s an estimated 150,000 people had been forcibly removed from the city to new public housing estates or townships on the Cape Flats (Turok, 2001). Ironically, Cape Town remains the most segregated (and least altered) city in the country.

It is important to trace the historical progression of this Apartheid ghettoization in order to understand the current context of post-Apartheid Cape Town. The roots of European colonialism in South Africa can be traced back to 1652, with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck

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\(^3\) A socio-economic policy framework that attempted to alleviate poverty and address massive shortfalls in service provision to the marginalised majority after the fall of the Apartheid Regime in 1994. This program predominantly worked to provide housing for those living in township areas in lean-to shacks. Several million of these small rectangular, brick and cement houses were built in urban areas, but they are now associated with controversy, corruption and poor quality. The policy was later followed by GEAR and Asgi-SA, which had similar foundational concepts and have not been very much more successful.
at the Cape to set up a Dutch mercantile settlement. The small population grew with the immigration of Europeans, the importation of slaves and the growth of a mixed population, expanding territorially into the hinterland (Davies, 1981). In 1806 the British colonial government established dominance, finally conquering the Dutch in the fight for control over the convenient port of the Cape. Although during these early European foundations there were racial overtones, these were not evident in residential planning. Europeans resided with slaves, workers and servants who were dependant on them living in close proximity, albeit the conditions were poor (Christopher, 1983).

The mid-1800s brought the rise of the age of imperialism and with it, social relations began to evolve. The growing populations of poor black, coloured and Indian populations migrating to urban areas for work posed what was seen as a threat to the economic and political dominance enjoyed by the white colonisers, especially in the face of a growing population of poor whites (Christopher, 1983). The “ethnic diffusion” of non-European people was perceived by whites to create unwanted competition in trade and employment and encroach on the stability, safety and health standards of white residential areas (Davies, 1981). Motivation for segregation came too from what was labelled as the “sanitary syndrome” – the propagated belief that non-Europeans were unhygienic and carried disease and so were alien and unwanted (Christopher, 1983; Maylam, 1995).

The first formal location for Africans, Ndabeni, was established in Cape Town in 1901 after the outbreak of a plague in the city (Cook, 1986). The settlement was located on the outskirts of the city so as to allow for the future expansion of black housing, later realised in the establishment of Langa (1902) and Nyanga (1946) on the Cape Flats (Cook, 1986). The housing provided was dire, as the colonial government and its white electorate wanted to avoid large financial burdens. These cuts on expenditure for drainage and building had far reaching consequences that still proliferate today, where there is often poor or non-existent sanitation for huge areas of township and hellish winter living conditions in wet, flimsy houses or lean-tos. The squalid, crowded conditions and poor public infrastructure of these black settlements were starkly contrasted by that of the white residential areas. These were predominantly located in close proximity to economic, social and political centres and were low in density, boasting spacious plots and superior services, as well as being situated in environmentally pleasing and accessible locations (Davies, 1981).
The segregationist tendencies of the colonial government promulgated into the 1923 Native (Urban Areas) Act, which dictated that “the town is a European area in which there is no place for the redundant native” (Christopher, 1983: 146). Yet, many of these legal and political measures were permissively and differentially applied, allowing African, Indian and coloured “islands” to continue to exist within the city and many servants still living in the backyards of their white employers (Davies, 1981). This was all set to change with the rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, and social upheaval associated with World War II. It was during this time that the NP came to power in 1948. Its Apartheid ideology was grounded in what the NP called “conflict theory” – the idea that race and cultural differences were incompatible and that contact between ethnic groups would lead to friction (Davies, 1981).

The Group Areas Act became the government’s principle instrument of racial domination, whereby people were classified into ethnic groups, mobility of non-whites was severely limited and the concept of “separate development” was established through the formation of homeland states. Beaches, benches, roads, suburbs, shops, schools, churches, and seats on trains and busses (among many other services and areas) were demarcated as “whites only” or “blacks only”. Black people were only allowed to be in city areas with a valid pass-book to show that they held employment there – after work they would be relegated back to the peripheral township barracks. In addition, Demissie (2004) estimates that between 1968 and 1980 some 650,000 Africans were removed from urban areas into Bantustan homelands in the Eastern Cape.

Emerging from this dogma were concepts such as “buffer zones” and “barriers” in order to separate ethnic groups. The aim was to remove race islands that had formed within the city, relegating the black and coloured urban residents to the periphery to live in locations far away from white-only zones under strict government supervision (Cook, 1986). This involved dramatic rezoning and demolition in order to establish the CBD, industrial areas and more desirable places in the city for exclusive white usage and residence, separated (by walls, golf courses, train lines, roads and open land) from the areas of lesser value where subordinate groups were banished (Christopher, 1983). According to Davies (1981: 69), “what emerged were cities more highly structured and quartered than any [other] multi-ethnic colonial city”. As can be seen in the photograph (Figure 4) and the present day map of Cape Town (Figure 5) overleaf, the low- to mid-income, predominantly black and coloured Cape Flats remain separated and marginalised from the mid- to high- income, white Southern Suburbs by a main road and from the CBD by the national highway.
Figure 4: The sandy Cape Flats situated directly next to the airport and busy National Highway 2, with Table Mountain, CBD and Atlantic Ocean in the background. Source: Maria Wagener (2011)
Figure 5: Map depicting the legacy of Apartheid racial segregation in present day Cape Town based on self-identification of race data from the 2011 Census. Source: Adapted by hand from Adrian Frith (2013, Creative Commons Licensing)
The legacy of these ideologies, policies and physical structuring can therefore be understood to have broadly been continued into the present day Cape Town and other post-Apartheid cities. Cape Town is a city both ravishingly beautiful and starkly fragmented, bursting with juxtapositions of wealth and development; it is a city that is ever contingent, changing, in flux. Protest in its streets is loud and rampant and politics is vibrant (and often, dismal). It is a place in which I feel both at home and other. Most notably though, it is a place of segregation, it is a relic of Apartheid; it is the most unequal society in the world.

Segregation is an everyday reality for people living in Cape Town. Du Toit & Neves (2007: 166) observe that “although perched on the urban periphery of Greater Cape Town, [Khayelitsha’s] denizens often speak as if Encobo [Eastern Cape province] is closer than Claremont [Southern Suburbs of the city] and visit Qumbu [Eastern Cape province] more often than they do Kraaifontein [Northern Suburbs of the city]”. Indeed, access to the CBD is so separated and cut off that many people living on the Cape Flats associate more closely with another province altogether. The sad reality is that Ubuntu has been beaten down and made invisible through years of oppression and fracturing.

As I write this contextual section, I am immensely saddened by the unjustness and unfairness of this “new” South Africa, as well as mortified that the legacy of colonial and Apartheid regimes linger on today. Living in South Africa is a daily struggle of survival for the disenfranchised majority. It is a raw life (Ross, 2010). As you read this thesis, it is important to keep these harsh realities in the back of your mind. However, these hardships do not quash my hope and optimism for the future. Ubuntu is still there, but it needs to be re-enlivened and grown. It is these missing connections and networks that I have attempted to build, amplify and engage with (in my own, small way) through my research in this polemic city. In this thesis, therefore, I have merged critique with optimism and hope through a politics of possibility.

Scope of my research and thesis outline

Through this project I endeavour to make a contribution to the discursive project of the diverse economy, as well as to growing the literature surrounding community economies. In post-structuralist vein, I abstain from making universalising theories or claims. I also do not seek to dictate solutions, blueprints for transformation, or conclusive answers to the complex issues at hand. Rather, I acknowledge that the future is uncertain, contingent, complex and
unknowable; it is full of many different paths and possibilities. As I have previously mentioned, my desire is not to perpetuate or expand theories about capitalism’s dominance, nor to simply advance thinking in the field of community economies. Rather, I aim to foster a space in which a diverse array of possibilities for economic and political action can exist alongside each other.

Therefore, through this project I hope to foster, encourage and support a space in which people can think differently about the economy and their place in it. For this reason, I am curious about how the concepts of identity, agency and subjectivity intertwine and interact with each other in the space of a diverse economy. Gibson-Graham’s notion of “resubjectification” can help to foster such an understanding. The globalisation discourse works to subject people to a capitalocentric economy in which we are but consumers, employees, investors; the economy does things to us; we are “citizens” of capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 2003; Cameron, Healy & Gibson-Graham, 2013). Under such a discourse, our economic identities, power and political possibilities are limited and bounded. However, in a diverse economy we all have multiple roles, the capacity to make change and to practice agency (rather than simply being acted on).

Resubjectification, then, is a way in which to cultivate such capacity, to “radically reposition the local subject with respect to the economy” (Gibson-Graham, 2003: 54). Graham (2002: 19 in Roberts, 2004: 130) describes it as “the way in which we produce ourselves and others as local agents who are economically creative and viable, who are subjects rather than objects of development”. In this sense, resubjectification is concomitantly a liberation from being subject to a capitalocentric discourse and becoming subject to “new discourses which subject in different ways, thus enabling subjects to assume power in new forms” (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 14). Creating subjects who assume their new identity, agency and power in the diverse economy requires that spaces are fostered where conversation, performance, practice and opportunities for learning the language of economic diversity can be supported. It is such a space that I wish to nurture through this research project.

I conceive my research methodology and written thesis as a space for fostering resubjectification. Each of my chapters explicitly or inexplicitly works towards thinking about resubjectification and agency from different perspectives. I use Chapter 2 to introduce each of the participants to the reader in an informal, personal way. These vignettes draw heavily on each person’s narrative to provide a sense of their conception of their own identity
and agency. Alongside these, each participant also collaborated with me to produce short video messages to share with the other participants about whom they were, what they were doing to make a difference and to share encouragement with each other. These are included in disk format along with this thesis and I encourage you to watch them alongside your reading, as I have used them in my analysis. I understand these videos as providing a space for self-representation, performance, inspiration and agency beyond the capitalocentric discourse. In Chapter 3, I think about the ways in which my research methodologies came about and how I used them create a space for resubjectification, performance and the reclamation of agency. I address my positionality within the research process, as well as some ethical considerations.

The following three chapters are analytical in nature, each meshing a separate strand of literature with the narratives of the participants and my own interpretations. Instead of using a singular theoretical approach, I chose to engage with several different bodies of scholarly literature and geographical tools that were pertinent to the issues and themes which arose during my research in Cape Town. My intention, as Palomino-Schalscha (2011: 21) succinctly articulates it is not “to prove or apply a certain theoretical framework on the ground, but to engage with…emerging threads of conversations and concerns and see how they relate to and can be addressed by diverse and intertwined bodies of literature”.

Introducing the diverse economies literature through a post-development framework, in Chapter 4, I consider how each of the participants understood their role in the economy as neither overthrowing nor complying with the capitalist economy. Rather, they were finding alternatives within it and thus contesting the binary portrayal of the capitalist/community economy. In Chapter 5, I address the principal critique of community economies through a critique of binary concepts of scale (such as local/global). Tracing the connections and networks the participants engaged with, I contend that they were reimagining their agency as a flourishing, relational site of possibility and political transformation. In Chapter 6 I think about how to amplify and make “loud” the community economy, drawing on my use of video. I proffer that the community economy might be better understood as a social (non)movement, working beyond the realm of mobilisation to build and transform the urban space towards a desirable future. From this stance, I also contemplate how we might shape our methodological choices to promote transformations and support people’s endeavours within development practice and research. Finally, In Chapter 7 I offer some conclusory remarks on how to make sense of the thesis before you and what it might mean for the
practice of development. I comment on the role of research and scholarship in fostering spaces for sustaining the diverse economy and address the limitations of my work, making suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2

Introducing the participants

It would be difficult to make sense of the extensive sections of participant narrative included in this thesis without some sort of introduction to the people who articulated them. I regard Mama Bokolo, Stefan Louw, Chwayita Wenana and Wandisile Nqeketho as co-researchers and collaborators in this project – I could not have undertaken this project without them. They were wise, open, honest and giving of their time. They were creators, always hopeful and excited by the possibilities available to them. They were “painting the skies of opportunity” for others. They have also become my friends.

I have decided to write short vignettes as way of introduction to these wonderful people and some of the organisations they were involved in. These are not full portraits of their lives (this would be impossible), but rather a snapshot of the people that I met, of some of the things that they shared with me and why they were making such fascinating, inspiring and innovative contributions to their communities and the (broader) economy. I have also included an introduction to Mama Bokolo’s translator, Ludwe Qamata, as in many ways I feel that he became a participant too.

The video messages that the participants put together are intended to be watched alongside these vignettes, as a way in which to enable the participants to represent themselves to the audience of this thesis, as well as to the other participants. I encourage you to page back to these vignettes and watch the videos at your leisure as you read some of my interpretations and thoughts in the following chapters. These vignettes are intended to form part of the messy assemblage of my thesis and may take many different forms of becoming depending on when and how you choose to read them. I hope they might contribute to building a connection, Ubuntu, between the people, theories and audience of this research.

Aangename kennis, ndiyavuya ukukwazi, pleased to meet you…

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On request of the participants I have not used pseudonyms. Therefore, these are the participants’ real names.
Mama (Mabel) Bokolo, Abalimi and the Nyanga People’s Garden Centre

Mama Bokolo began to love gardening from an early age. She grew up in a village on the outskirts of Mthatha⁵, where her mother worked the land on their small homestead. In our interviews she spoke of her love of growing and eating peas and of growing maize. When she was about 13 years old, her mother became ill, and she had to take care of the family:

I was a mother, but I was a child. The way I was a child was like a mother, because I had to take care of my mother, she was sick. As I grew up, at my early stage, I had to look after the family, so if there is no planting happening out in the garden, or I am not taking care of the field, we would not eat. My father… was also ill, a problem with the leg – his leg was replaced. He was doing thatching of huts in the village, so when it rained he couldn’t do the task. That’s why I had to make sure there was food from the garden. That situation inspired me to start gardening to provide for my family and my mother.

(Mabel Bokolo, personal interview, 5 March 2014)

Once she got married, she moved to her marriage house, and continued to farm and plant – people from the village would come and buy her harvest from her, as well as seeds and

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⁵ Mthatha, formerly known as Umtata pre-1994, functioned as the capital of the Transkei Bantustan (or homeland), one of the areas set aside for the black inhabitants of South Africa under Apartheid policy.
seedlings. She went on to open a spaza\textsuperscript{6} shop, where she sold items such as flour, milk, fresh bread and produce from her garden. However, frankly and openly, she described to me how her husband was an alcoholic who had abused her, so she closed her shop, left the Eastern Cape and joined a garden project under Abalimi Bezekhaya in Nyanga, Cape Town.

Abalimi Bezekhaya\textsuperscript{7}, meaning the “planters of home” in isiXhosa, is an urban agriculture and environmental action association operating in the Cape Flats. They support individuals, groups and community-based organisations to start and sustain urban, organic food growing and nature conservation projects towards “sustainable lifestyles, self-help job creation, poverty alleviation and environmental renewal” (http://abalimi.org.za/about-abalimi/). Much of this work is supported through Harvest of Hope (HoH) which is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiative: micro-farmers sell their produce in a direct and personal way to the HoH Packing Shed, who secure them a fair and sustained income from customers in Cape Town, purchasing the reasonably priced and locally produced organic vegetables through a weekly box-scheme. Being part of a CSA ensures that a) micro-farmers can rely on a steady income even if a crop were to fail and b) that customers are more aware of the processes behind the food they buy and are in a direct relationship with the people who grow it.

In order to support herself and her children Mama Bokolo had to work part-time at a dress-making factory in the city, as the garden did not provide a steady enough income. When I met her, Mama Bokolo no longer worked at the factory – Abalimi had supported her to run the Nyanga People’s Garden Centre, as well as to earn her driver’s license (see Figure 7). She sold seeds, seedlings and compost to the community, spending much of her time training the youth and micro-farmers to grow their own gardens so as to expand the green movement. On the side, to support her living costs and to save money for when she would one

\textsuperscript{6} Spaza shops are small convenience stores selling everyday items, often run from home. They are particularly prevalent in township areas, often running as informal businesses, selling anything from sacks of oranges to cigarettes or tinned foods.

\textsuperscript{7} The organisation’s name is often shortened to “Abalimi”. For sake of ease, I will use this shortening from here on.
day retire and return to the Eastern Cape, she crafted beautiful beadwork, practised as an *ugqirha*\(^8\), and was a member of a community *stokvel*\(^9\) group. She described her attitude toward life to me:

I went to the factories just as a job to make money. Now I am back to what I love most. I’ve got my car, and I’ve got what I happily need. I accept what is here for me. I use what I have to satisfy my needs. I don’t have some kind of bigger picture like having a new truck or a house will make me feel more happy or comfortable. I will work with what I have. I just need to be able to create the beauty and the food, to bring healing to the people and the community.

(Mabel Bokolo, personal interview, 17 March 2014)

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\(^8\) isiXhosa a traditional doctor or healer  
\(^9\) Afrikaans an informal savings or investment society to which members regularly contribute an agreed amount and from which they receive a lump sum payment. Each month a different member receives the money collected during that period. Depending on the type of *stokvel*, the members can use the collected funds for their own use, for payment or investment purposes.
Ludwe Qamata

Ludwe was an apprentice to Mama Bokolo and who, when Mama Bokolo and I realised we would need a translator, became our wonderful translator. In many ways though, he was as much a participant as Mama Bokolo, as his insights into the work the older woman did were invaluable. Ludwe was a poet, describing everything in beautiful, flowing prose. He defined himself as a “volunteer for the community itself”, inspired by the work of Mama Bokolo to “sustain the garden movement with the community: the crime, the art, the music, the garden, all of it we combine together for the youth” (Ludwe Qamata, Mama Bokolo’s video message, 24 March 2014). Together with another of Mama Bokolo’s apprentices, he worked with children and schools in Khayelitsha and Philippi to bring together these threads and build up the community. He spoke of how he had been involved in criminal activities until he came into Mama Bokolo’s garden and was “inspired by the pictures” he saw there:

I keep on coming to mama, because she is giving me an exact skill, which is productive, and tells a story in itself...the pictures that she draws in the soil, those are healing pictures. So for me, I just feel that I need to be there...Mama, she healed me internally, she never realised, but she healed me deep within.

(Ludwe Qamata, personal interview, 24 March 2014)

Figure 9: Ludwe laughing as we talked around the table in Mama Bokolo’s garden centre
Source: Video-still from Mama Bokolo’s video message (24 March 2014)
Stefan Louw and Innovate the Cape

In the last few months of 2013, a series of articles, photographs and links started popping up on my Facebook newsfeed about an organisation called Innovate the Cape\(^\text{10}\). Eventually, I “liked” their page and began following (and getting excited about) what they were up to. They were running a competition in the Cape Flats, asking high school students, in small groups, to dream up innovative ideas to solve a problem or issue they perceived in their communities. They selected seven teams of students from the many applications received and spent several months journeying along with them, providing the students with mentors, resources, creative spaces and opportunities to present their ideas. The students came up with brilliant concepts: from a method for recycling polystyrene using the oils from orange peels, to a signage system for informal settlements to help emergency services find homes at night and a mobile app to help learners apply to university, mentoring them through their first year (http://innovatesa.org/drupal/node/19).

When I got back to Cape Town, I began emailing people I hoped might participate in my research and eagerly got hold of Innovate. As it turned out, Stefan, an acquaintance from my undergraduate days, was the director. Stefan had a degree in Mechatronic Engineering (he laughingly told me that every single male in his family is an engineer!) and at the time of my research was working on his Master’s dissertation (alongside and based on his work with Innovate) on enabling youth grassroots innovation in townships in Cape Town.

Importantly, he saw his narratives and understandings of his work and life to be shaped through a deep relationship with God. In one conversation he articulated:

\[
\text{I guess I don’t really see my time as my own…fundamentally what makes me who I am, my core, is that I am Christian, so I love Jesus and I think in that regard it means I’ve given my life to him, so that’s my time as well. There’s this beautiful thing of…there’s this Bible verse saying that if you lose your life to}
\]

\[^{10}\text{At the time of my research the organisation was called Innovate the Cape. However, it has since expanded to take entries from across the country and so has changed its name to Innovate South Africa. For the sake of ease, I refer to the organisation from here on as Innovate.}\]
others and to God, then you’ll find it, what you’re actually made for…You can find so much freedom and happiness in that.

(Stefan Louw, personal interview, 5 March 2014)

This concept led Stefan to spend a couple of years after his undergraduate degree experiencing others ways of life: he worked at a market selling fruit and nuts, taught English in South Korea, spent half a year building a church and got heavily involved in a “free healing” ministry, praying for the sick and disabled out on the streets of Cape Town.

Figure 11: Stefan hard at work at the Woodstock Exchange co-working space. Source: Stefan Louw (2014)

Stefan did not grow up in Cape Town, nor did he imagine being involved in something like Innovate. Rather, for most of his childhood he lived in a small village in Zululand (up in the north east of South Africa, near Swaziland) where his father was a rural development worker. He recounted to me:
I’ve always lived in a development context and around poor people. And...I didn’t think I’d ever work in that field, it was only later, actually after university that I realised I wanted to. But I think that’s where the seed was planted [living in the village]. So, ja\textsuperscript{11}, I grew up as a happy kid, I seldom wore shoes. We lived in a very beautiful village, so I also had an appreciation for nature…

(Stefan Louw, personal interview, 5 March 2014)

At the time of my research, he lived in the Southern Suburbs and worked in an office space in Woodstock called the Woodstock Exchange\textsuperscript{12}. By the end of his undergraduate degree, Stefan had read a lot about technology transfer and how often top-down development did not work. He had also had many discussions with his father about the importance of context in development work. So, when he came across the Innovate model, he thought:

Hey, this is kind of the answer! These students are realising from a young age that they can actually do things and get the confidence to do them themselves. And it doesn’t really matter what it is, it’s just that they can do something. There is no need for “community engagement” if they are doing it themselves!

(Stefan Louw, personal interview, 5 March 2014)

\textsuperscript{11} Afrikaans yes, agreement; used as a common interjection
\textsuperscript{12} The Woodstock Exchange is a hub-space for entrepreneurs, young designers and social innovators – it consists of a couple of boutique shops and several levels of office space.
I met Chwayita on a windy afternoon in February at UCT campus, where she was in her first year of study in organisational psychology. The location was apt, as her love of knowledge and passion for education shone through in all her interviews. In her last two years of school in Philippi, Chwayita started a group called Rescue for Nature who got together to clean up the school and plant a vegetable garden through the Innovate the Cape project. She told me the story of their beginnings:

It was basically a conversation with a friend…I was just frustrated that when I come to school I see diapers around and it’s just way disgusting. It is through meaningful dialogues that like this [indicates between us] that this country is able
to solve its biggest problems. I spoke with my friend and said “well, what can we do?” I felt like there was nothing. But she was like “No, we can. Let’s go up and tell everyone who can support us about this problem we have”. There was a girl with tuberculosis (TB) at my school who died. She lived opposite on my street, I knew her. And she died because of TB, it doesn’t even make sense. So we decided, no man, we don’t want students dying because of TB at our school, that’s not cool, that’s not even real. So we started cleaning up, we told some of our friends and my twin brother told his guy friends, so we had like man-power. We did it: we woke up at 7am and we started cleaning the school and we saw the difference: it was clean now.

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 28 February 2014)

Chwayita was a triplet. Living in the Eastern Cape, her mother had four children, was expecting another – and had triplets! I remember Chwayita laughing at my surprised expression:

Yes, I’ve grown up in a very big family. I’ve come to understand that I can’t only care about myself. I think that is where it [the inspiration to help other people] comes from, because I’ve always been around people and I’ve always had to care about someone else…oh my goodness! The first time I came here [to UCT] and I
realised I have my own room and I have to sleep alone I cried, I cried…I’ve never
had my own room, I’ve always had to share and this was just so strange, no-one
was going to talk in my ear or something. I was just going to have a peaceful
night.

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 28 February, 2014)

In our conversations, Chwayita spoke a lot about how her Christian faith motivated her to do
“extra stuff” in her community, such as going back to her old school to tutor. Some of her
dreams for the future involved having a husband, a good job and to continue to add value to
the world, because “the moment I stop doing something to help others, that moment I will
stop breathing” (Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 28 February 2014). Growing
knowledge and inspiring youth to think beyond their circumstances was of the utmost
importance to her:

A brilliant, empowered state of mind is the key to having a good life. It doesn’t
matter where we come from, as long as you have knowledge and an education you
can make it anywhere. So I just want to inspire that... It’s here in my heart. You
know, when you have something attached to you, you just can’t let it go until you
do it?

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 28 February 2014)
“Welcome to my office”, laughed Wandisile, gesturing towards a grubby leather couch and a small, round coffee table constructed out of old car tyres in the corner of a busy, open-plan room. Around us, Hubspace Khayelitsha, the co-working space where he works from, was buzzing with conversations, people dashing in and out, and loud RnB spewing from the speakers. However, although Hubspace Khayelitsha was the nucleus of Wandisile’s endeavours, it was the streets and neighbourhoods of Khayelitsha where he worked. Despite his family’s protestations (who wanted him to attend university, as he was the first in his family to reach the final year of school), Wandisile already had a myriad business projects to his name when I met him.

At just twenty three years old, he had already run an events business organising after-parties for schools on the Cape Flats, a company called Location Rhythm which organised a
celebration for the school which got the highest marks at the end of each term, as well as a pageant aimed at girls who were top-achievers at their schools. When I met him, he had three more projects in Khayelitsha on the go: Iyeza Express (a medicine delivery service for people who could not get to the hospital, delivered door-to-door by bicycle), Illima Cleaning and Recycling (Khayelitsha’s first recycling initiative, which offered supermarket vouchers in exchange for recycling) and the 18 Gangster Museum, which was his principal mission. The 18 Gangster Museum is an initiative to curb gangsterism in the community by displaying the history of gangsterism and the adverse effects that it has on the community so as to educate against its spread. At the time of my research it was a work-in-progress, but Wandisile and his team had hopes for it to be Khayelitsha’s first ever museum, promoting tourism to the area and appealing to the youth so as to discourage them from turning to gangsterism. They hoped that the creation and curating of a world class museum might not only encourage the sharing of more positive stories from Khayelitsha, but also grow the horizon of possibilities for the youth there, who are often discouraged and feel a sense of failure and hopelessness.

Wandisile grew up in Khayelitsha with a family of nine in a tiny, two-roomed house. He described his dreams for the future to me:

I wanna have a family, I want to get married, I want to live in a very nice house. I’m not gonna lie, I want to have cool cars. I want all the things I really wanted as a kid that I couldn’t get, and I really want my children to live in a warm home, in a loving home, you know, because my mom and dad they made sure that we had food for supper, we had breakfast, they really loved us, never mind what happened with them. I want my kids to speak like I do about my parents. That is probably the biggest dream I have for myself. Also, I want to build this museum to be crazy, I wanna leave a legacy in Khayelitsha of something that is amazing.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 19 February 2014)

By the time Wandisile was twelve, many of his friends had already joined gangs. Despite the pressure to become a gangster, with his wonderfully infectious grin and optimism, he told me how, rather, he strived to do his best at school and had often been the top of the class:

I am one of those people who when I want to do something, I don’t care whatever people will say, I am just gonna go and get it. I am really crazy like that, you know. I used to be really fat, and I also loved soccer. And people were like “he’ll never make it”. So, I became the captain of a team here called Liverpool. I made it to Western Province soccer, we went to Durban. When people said I wasn’t able to sing I thought I am gonna learn how to sing and I am going to be the best at
singing - I learnt to sing opera at school...So, every time when someone says I can’t do something I’m like, okay I’m going to show you!

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 19 February 2014)

Despite the odds against him in trying to start a social enterprise in Khayelitsha from scratch (see Chapter 3), Wandisile had sky-high dreams for the potential of the 18 Gangster Museum:

The whole idea was to have this big museum – but not just a museum as is the old way of doing things but a more interactive museum where people engage and can have fun: a museum that appeals to the nature of the youth. We understand the importance of education, as it affects the decisions people can make. We want to have ex-gangsters as the curators of the museum, to talk to the youth. This museum will be the first of its kind in Khayelitsha. We want it to attract a lot of tourists, so that it’s good for the economy of eKhayelitsha. We want something that could be a cure, but also a prevention. The problem in South Africa is that there are a lot of curing systems. We want a museum that will be always there… There is so much wrong in our communities that need to be fixed, but [long pause] hope is still there.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 19 February 2014)
Chapter 3

Tracing my epistemological and methodological becomings

Introduction

I spent months planning and thinking about how I would do my research. I would spend hours sifting through notes and texts about narrative inquiry, hungrily reading up on how to amplify voice through methodological devices and what the best-practice for interviewing was within a post-structural and feminist framework. I felt well-prepared and in control of my research plan.

I soon discovered that qualitative research is a fundamentally messy business and there really is no amount of planning and reading that you can do to prepare for a conversation or an embodied moment with a participant. My carefully constructed methods suddenly felt naïve and flimsy, as they morphed and evolved for each person, context and moment. I felt starkly vulnerable to the realisation that I could not solely rely on the blueprint methods I had read about, but, as McGuigan (1997: 2) states, would need to “make up the methods” as I went along, so as the “methods [would] serve the aims of the research, not the research serve the aims of the method”. From there on, throughout my research process (which shifted and changed constantly) I tried to embrace that vulnerability through the way I approached the “becoming” (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987), or the “biography” (Pink, 2013) of my methodology.

Denzin & Lincoln (2011: 3) write that qualitative research is a set of interpretive and material practices, of which each practice “make[s] the world visible in...different way[s]”. Therefore, an awareness of and reflection on the epistemological and methodological lenses that I am looking through – what they make visible, what they conceal and how they affect decisions along the way – is paramount to conducting rigorous and caring research (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011). However, I think that as a qualitative researcher it is important to acknowledge and realise that these practices are never clear cut, fully knowable or value-free (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). Our ways-of-knowing and corresponding ways-of-doing shift and transform constantly, depending on the time, place, person and situation or any other number of factors, both personal and environmental. For instance, Routledge (2004: 85) argues that the self is a performed identity which is “subject to the contingencies and
complexities of space/time and is thus dynamic, changeable and multiple”. Embracing such complexity and contingency required vulnerability and openness to change and difference.

Therefore, in vein with Monica Evans (2010: 6), “I feel incapable of declaring a definitive epistemology [or methodology] for this project”. Rather, in this chapter I will attempt to draw some “co-ordinates” out of the messy entanglement of my research in an attempt to deal more deeply with some of my epistemological and methodological becomings and to reflect on how they both shaped and were shaped by my research aims, context and subjective reality. Secondly, this chapter will deal with who I engaged with and why I approached them, as well as how I used particular methods to co-create knowledge along with them. I will also discuss how I transcribed, analysed and organised the above into the thesis that lies before you. Lastly, I will reflect on the ways in which I negotiated ethical commitments, constraints and conflicts during the research process.

Throughout this thesis you will notice that I avoid as much as possible the term “participant”. I am uncomfortable with the way that the word conjures the notions that I “possess” their comment and action for research purposes only, that their names and identities are not particularly important to the research and that they are somehow value-free entities subject to my research “experiment”. It is impossible to describe the diverse people I worked with in one term – they were creators and co-researchers, young and old, social entrepreneurs and university students. It feels inadequate to refer to the amazing people I engaged with as simply “participants”. They have shaped me, my identity, thoughts and being, in manifold ways (that go beyond the bounds of this thesis) through how they lived and acted in deeply human ways. I have therefore chosen to refer to them as “the people who I researched/engaged/interacted/collaborated/conversed with” and as “co-creators” throughout this work. I hope that this reflects some of these connections, relationships and my concerns.

The biography of my epistemological and philosophical approach

Perhaps a notable point of departure for me in terms of conceiving this project is my theoretical grounding in both anthropology and human geography. While these are not epistemologies as such, I regard the biography of my epistemologies (Pink, 2013) as important, so as to trace and understand how my understandings about ways-of-knowing developed contextually. I see these disciplines as fundamentally important to forming my initial convictions and philosophies about the economy, discourse, power and the role of the
researcher, as well as for gaining an appreciation for different ways-of-knowing. In my final year of undergraduate studies at UCT these were my majors and I was immersed in what I saw as critical, African-centred (rather than Eurocentric) debates about the descriptive and orientalising “power of the West” (Hall, 2002; Said, 2003). I was drawn to ideas about doing research which does not support objective statements or facts, but acknowledges the partiality and multiplicity of subjective truths (Clifford & Marcus, 1986); anarchist anthropologies of the economy (Graeber, 2004); and how social movements which seem “local”, “particular” and “chaotic” could rather be seen as inherently political and play a part in shaping progressive social change (Ballard, 2005; Zuern, 2011). Touching the tips of these discussions in class, whilst around me the exciting and tenuous political environment of South Africa sharply focused my gaze onto these ideas, brought me to realise that change can and should be inspired through writing academically about the issues that people face. Some of these influences helped to shape my critical ontological approach to the world that we live in. To me, these ideas and authors form part of my academic identity and growth and I will touch on some of them again in this thesis.

These underpinnings may also partly explain my almost instant attraction to the ideas posited by post-development scholars, such as Santos (2004), Escobar (2001) and Gibson-Graham, (2005), especially in their rejection of cultural imperialism and homogenising discourses like that of development. Santos’ (2004) concept of a “sociology of absences” or the “monoculture of development” describes how the hegemonic discourse of development predetermines the solution, limiting other options by making them invisible, un-credible or non-existent, limiting even the possibility of imagining them. These ideas and theories are a large part of the reason that I find myself drawn to post-structural and feminist understandings of knowledge, power and discourse as central “co-ordinates” of my project.

*Power and possibility: How knowledge is constrained and enabled*

Post-structuralist philosophy emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s as a critique of positivist academic practice and knowledge production and has largely informed the project of re-framing the economy. Its proponents were concerned with the way in which diffuse, yet powerful, social relations “fix the meaning and significance of social practices, objects, [categories] and events” in a way that defines them as the natural, universally agreed upon truth (Woodward, Dixon & Jones, 2009: 396). Post-structuralists view this as a product of uneven or hierarchical power relations, where it is in the interest of some to define and
categorise “reality” in totalising, binary ways, in the process concealing, flattening or eradicating other ways-of-knowing or being which may threaten their supremacy (Hall, 2002). As a researcher, it is therefore important for me to be aware of how such hegemonic discourses of “the capitalist economy” might constrain and reduce other possibilities of what can be done or even be imagined (Kitchin & Tate, 2000; Santos, 2004).

Grounded in this critical stance towards all claims to truth, essentialism, simplistic or binary representations and overarching meta-narratives, my research is informed by a celebration of difference and a keen awareness of the existence of multiple knowledges and partial truths (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Dempsey & Rowe, 2004). Through my research process I aimed to deconstruct hegemonic claims to truth in both the way that I collected and generated knowledge, as well as how I wrote about the stories people had to tell. Importantly, I reject the notion of any “objective” fact or truth and acknowledge that it is impossible for me to accurately represent reality for, as Woodward et al. (2009: 399) argue, “our concepts do not simply re-present that reality (in the sense of mirroring), but represent reality within a fully relational system of understanding”. In other words, I understand all knowledge built in this research to be constructed by and “situated” in each person’s own particular perspectives (which are constantly contested and in flux), as well as influenced by my own values and interests (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011). Such an understanding requires that I practice reflexivity in thinking about how my research, as an embodied practice, is shaped by positionality, context, emotion, connections and conflicts between me and the people I research with.

I am not concerned with trying to establish “the real” stories and situations of the people whom I conversed with, nor to write a “true” reflection of their realities. Rather, I hope to portray a plurality of different perspectives and ideas which may open the door to new possibilities and question the legitimacy of overarching narratives of the economy (Cameron and Gibson, 2005a). This is as much a feminist project as a post-structural one. Feminist scholars, such as Cameron & Gibson-Graham (2003), argue that certain voices have been left out and silenced by the dominant framing of the economy. Therefore, acknowledging multiple knowledges and narratives requires the validation of “alternative” sources of knowledge (such as life histories and subjective experience) in an attempt to authorise the stories “ordinary” people tell (Fraser, 2004: 181). I do not see this as simply an act of “giving voice” (to then take home and interpret), but rather, my research is informed by the idea that knowledge is produced in negotiation and collaboration between research participants and
researcher. Therefore, in this project, I consider the means to be very much more important than the ends.

**Performing possibility: Making a difference**

However, I do want to go beyond the interpretive moment in my research. Radical geographers have often critiqued post-structural research as being in-accessible and too focused on critique to engage with on-the-ground struggles (Dempsey & Rowe, 2004; Fuller & Kitchin, 2004). However, there are strands of post-structural research (and certainly feminist research) that are politically charged for action. Here, I am inspired by the notion of the performative power of discourse to “create and produce the phenomena it regulates and constrains” (Tedlock, 2011: 334). In this sense, I envision my philosophical co-ordinates as a “tool-kit”, which at times will be useful and at times will not – but a tool-kit that is built for “the purpose of intensifying struggle” and which is sensitive to human agency and contingency (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977: 208). So, while my project is aligned to the project of deconstructing the hegemonic discourse of the capitalist economy, it is also committed to doing this productively.

I am highly aware that language constructs the world and am therefore seeking to “ensure everyday knowledges are used to shape the lives of ordinary people” (Cameron & Gibson, 2005: 317). Along with the task of reframing the economy as diverse and multiple, with non-capitalist activities visible and possible, is also the need to “engage in a micropolitics of enabling subjects to inhabit that [new] terrain” (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 14). This resubjectification is a principle driving force of my research. Therefore, in vein with the aims of radical/critical geography, my work hopes to be transformative, emancipatory and empowering not only in the way it deconstructs social relations, but also in its capacity to inspire hope and political possibility in the lives of everyday people (Fuller & Kitchin, 2004).

**This mess is an epistemology**

I have portrayed some of the epistemological and philosophical co-ordinates that have influenced my research. I feel that it is important to stress, however, their paucity and flexibility. Rather than fixed constructs shaping my work in particular ways to particular
ends, they are becomings, assemblages, rhizomes, with no clear beginning or end, but spreading in all directions at once (Tedlock, 2011). Deleuze uses these metaphors almost interchangeably to describe “a dynamic and open-ended set of relational transformations” (McCormack, 2009: 277) which are “non-hierarchical, horizontal multiplicities that cannot be subsumed within a unified structure, whose components form random, unregulated networks in which any element may be connected with any other elements” (Bogue, 1989 in Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010: 872). What I mean here returns to how I started this section, claiming the impossibility of a definitive epistemology: rather, it is a messy business, an entanglement of ideas that come together in different ways at different times.

**Positioning myself in the research**

I feel that given my philosophical grounding in feminist and post-structural thought, it is paramount that I try to describe some aspects of my positionality and to think about how these came into negotiation and conflict with those of my participants in different ways as I undertook my fieldwork. According to Chacko (2004: 52, emphasis original), positionality refers to “aspects of identity in terms of race, class, gender, caste, sexuality and other attributes that are markers of relational positions in society, rather than intrinsic qualities.” These relational positions are multiple, fluid and laden with power. Therefore, it was of the utmost importance to reflect on the effects of these relations throughout the research process, not just as an activity at the end (Sultana, 2007). I have therefore tried to keep a diary as I go, from which I have drawn many of these reflections.

Perhaps, first, it would be useful to describe how I came to do this particular research project – what drew me in and how my ideas were shaped. I was born in 1991, at the time when the NP’s regime of Apartheid in South Africa was beginning to crumble at the seams. Nelson Mandela had been released from 27 years of imprisonment just the year before and was in negotiations with the then President, F.W. de Klerk, as to how to move forward. The country was on the brink of civil war and there was very little surety about whether it would be a safe place to live or not. Around that time, my parents had the opportunity to go and live in Aotearoa New Zealand for a couple of years, where my dad could work as a locum general practitioner in the small town of Opotiki in the Bay of Plenty. I was born in Aotearoa New

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13 A rhizome is a horizontal underground plant stem with lateral shoots and roots, such as ginger. Deleuze uses this term metaphorically, to describe networked, entangled and non-hierarchical relations, in contrast to arborescence, which describes relations which are hierarchical and centered.
Zealand, oblivious to the massive decisions and changes happening in South Africa concurrently.

A couple of months before my fourth birthday, we immigrated back to South Africa. My childhood there was instrumental to my ideals of emancipation and transformation. Driving past shanty-towns and children begging on the streets on a daily basis from the privileged position of being a white, middle/upper class child who attended a “good” school, I felt an urge to help and “make a difference” to the lives I saw, that seemed so very different to my own. It felt like a hopeless situation. It was when I started university, though, that I began to see things differently. I was based in Cape Town – the bustling Mother City \textsuperscript{14} of South Africa – and was excited by the things happening all about me for working towards a better future, as well as the diversity of people and ideas in my classes. I volunteered for several NGOs that worked on the Cape Flats, teaching English and art to high school students. I saw powerful, small-scale activities happening there that surprised and excited me: from school gardens, to community marches and ladies making beadwork from recycled materials. It was not as hopeless (or in need or my help) as I had previously assumed.

Amin and Thrift (2007: 150) describe cities as “not purposeful or bounded economic entities, but sites where the full variety of the ‘economy in general’ is made visible and juxtaposed, but with crucial effects resulting from the particularities of ‘placement’”. I certainly experienced this: whilst tension, conflict and poverty were visible and stark, I saw, creeping out from under doorways and through nooks and crannies, a proliferation of amazing, diverse, lively things that people were doing to change their communities for the better. Largely, these went unrecognised and unnoticed by the larger public and government. This realisation came at the same time that I was studying and writing about social movements and alternative economies in geography class. I became interested in the idea that small-scale, localised, everyday movements and actions were inherently political and could amount to large scale transformation (Ballard, 2005; Zuern, 2011; Cameron, Healy & Gibson-Graham, 2013). So, in many ways I feel that this project has been empirically inspired by, and is very much a result of my upbringing in, a politically turbulent and lively city such as Cape Town.

In 2011, once I had finished my undergraduate degree at UCT, I had the opportunity to go back to Aotearoa New Zealand to do a Masters in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). I am now in the very lucky position of having two places

\textsuperscript{14} Cape Town is lovingly referred to as the Mother City by many of its residents.
to call “home”. However, being away from South Africa amplified to me my sentiments of responsibility, commitment and desire to support the everyday struggles of communities in South Africa, especially in Cape Town. It was for this reason that I decided to locate my study there, in the place where my inspiration first began. Returning in January 2014 to do my field research I was confronted even more so by the stark structural inequalities and my stark “whiteness” (and all that goes with that term – structural privilege, wealth, complicity) and that this was my “home” (Holland-Muter, 1995; Steyn, 2012). Perhaps it was due to having experienced what it was like to live in Aotearoa New Zealand, a country with relatively little inequality (or less visible, anyway), but I felt these confrontations and conflicts in my positionality more than I had ever done so before when living in South Africa.

It is for these reasons that in returning “home” to do my field research (an ironic concept in itself, as traditional social science research tends to look to the “exoticism” of places afar) I felt the displacement of being between, “neither inside or outside” (Katz, 1994: 72). The multi-sited nature of my research also added to the feeling of being displaced; as I moved fluidly between them, the relational positions between me and the people I researched with was constantly changing. I was home, but at the same time “other”. Sultana (2007: 378) writes of how, when doing research at “home”, “people placed [her] in certain categories, exerted authority/subservience, ‘othered’ [her] and negotiated the relationship on a continual basis”, while the commonalities between them helped her to “bridge the gap” over time. In my research, the constant negotiation of relationships was very much an expression of power and was important to be attuned to constantly. At times, this was emotionally challenging and stressful, as I very much wanted to maintain equal research relationships with the people I interacted with. However, it became clear to me that that such equality was an impossibility, as well as undesirable. To me, recognising this conflict was not necessarily a negative experience, but was part of being more humble in the way I approached my research and worked with the people whom I collaborated with. It was especially important (and refreshing) when I realised that I, as the researcher, was in a position of supplication to the researched – I depended whole-heartedly on their insights, guidance and knowledge (England, 1994).

A particularly humbling experience for me was going into the second largest township in South Africa, Khayelitsha (a mere twenty minute drive from my family home, the outskirts which I would glimpse from my car almost every day) for the very first time for an interview.
The area has a bad reputation for gang-related violence and crime, so I had always stayed well clear. I decided to go alone, as I did not want to create the impression that I was scared of the place in which some of my participants lived and worked. However, I also felt the need to admit to Wandisile in that meeting my shame at never having been there; to being an “outsider” in the very city I call “home”. This honesty was met with surprise and teasing, but was relished too, as he proceeded to give me a tour of “the sights” pointing out his favourite places and introducing me to his friends on the street. In those moments, I felt a change in our relationship, perhaps we became friends, and very much more equal. My need to be guided, as well as my interest in and receptivity to a place which he was familiar with went a long way towards strengthening our co-learning experience – his manner and my openness also helped me to feel less like the “other” and more like I somehow belonged.

There were also times, however, when my presence as “other” was more obvious. While I can never fully know how I was perceived by the people I researched with, I was aware of the slippery nature my identity/relationship to them which changed almost constantly – researcher, friend, academic, privileged, equal, gardener, woman, umlungu, African, foreigner, visitor, community member, outsider, professional, student, English, able to speak isiXhosa.

Language was an interesting aspect. I am fairly proficient in Afrikaans, and can speak basic isiXhosa. The latter is relatively unusual for white people to know in South Africa. So, when I used it in greeting or to answer basic questions I was met with much appreciation, enjoyment and mutual respect. This helped me to gain rapport and a closer relationship with the isiXhosa speaking participants. However, it could only take me so far. When interviewing Mama Bokolo, I found that we both knew too little of the other’s first languages to speak easily and fluently. I had wanted to avoid using a translator, but I decided it was necessary in this situation and asked Mama Bokolo if she knew of anyone who could help us. She enlisted one of the young men that she had mentored in gardening, Ludwe Qamata. I assumed that he would take on a neutral role, but of course, it did not turn out that way: his ideas, hopes, and personality shone through. In my diary, I wrote: “in a way, it was like a three-way

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15 isiXhosa referring to a white person, often used in a chiding/mocking way.

16 For this reason I have chosen to interweave Ludwe’s translations and own comments with Mama Bokolo’s narrative. While Ludwe translated all her words, I have chosen to attribute them to Mama Bokolo when he translated directly into the first person (e.g. “I am here to do the work that I am doing”) and attribute them to him when translated into the third person (e.g. “She says that she goes to the Eastern Cape on holiday”) or gave his own opinion.
interview, with all of our thoughts and knowledge combining, intertwining, inextricable from each other” (personal diary, 5 March 2014). While at first I was worried about this, I soon grew to appreciate it as yet another example of the embodied and sensory nature of knowledge, the fluidness of “real life”, a far cry from the sanitised versions in textbooks.

I was very much aware of my lack of cultural knowledge, especially when working together with Mama Bokolo in the garden. In my journal I relate sentiments of embarrassment at realising that the elders in the community would wait on me to greet them, before they would acknowledge my presence. I made this mistake several times, and once or twice got called out by them for not greeting with the formal Molweni Mama/Tata as soon as I saw them. Similarly, twice, when walking about his neighbourhood, Wandisile turned to me and asked “don’t you just have a two-rand?” He requested this small sum of money not for himself, but to hand to a friend or an acquaintance whom we had just met. This request for money made me feel uncomfortable, as it made me aware of the sense of obligation I was expected to (and did) feel as a wealthy, white, “outsider”. However, it was also a reflection to me of what community means in that context – a being-in-common that was difficult not to like.

There was also the question of how best to deal with and reciprocate when participants shared deeply emotional and sensitive stories with me in conversation or during the interview (such as about a difficult marriage, domestic violence, sick children and criminal conduct). While I did not specifically prompt for such personal recollections, once we had established relationships of trust and collaboration people wanted to share them with me. Palomino-Schalscha (2011: 32) also writes about this worry of being reciprocal: “In most…cases I could only offer being there, listening attentively and empathetically, which although I consider important, usually frustrated me.” I tried to respond empathetically to their stories through being there and listening carefully, as well as sharing stories of my own struggles and hardships. I found this to be crucial step not just in gaining rapport, but also in fostering more equal, caring and responsive research relationships.

My experiences doing research have taught me that being open and vulnerable are of the utmost importance to generating respectful and transformative research which is as loyal as possible to the context in which it was created. Although I have “sectioned-off” these reflections on my positionality, they are ideas which I will return to and continue to negotiate

17 isiXhosa molweni means hello, used when greeting two or more people. Mama/Tata respectively means Mother/ Father, used by a younger person addressing an older person.
throughout the rest of this thesis in keeping in line with Sultana’s (2007) call for a *constantly negotiated* ethics.

**Inventive methodologies**

I tried to be as open to innovation and invention as possible when shaping my methodology so as to embrace plurality and change. Therefore, whilst I have chosen ethnography as my core methodology, I have also included aspects of a visual approach, as well as experimenting with using Latour’s (2005) Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a methodological tool (where it is usually considered as a *theory* of networks). Increasingly, traditional methodological approaches are seen as limiting other possibilities for ways-of-doing and knowing in their pursuit of neat, linear explanations (Lury & Wakeford, 2012; Jungnickel & Hjorth, 2014). In this stead, Back (2012 in Pink, 2013: 137) asks how we might “account for the social world without assassinating the life contained within it”. In an attempt to avoid such an assassination of life, I have tried to enter the “between” (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013); to experiment with inventive methodologies that allow for “messiness”, creativity and social change, shaped by the researcher’s entanglement with the world.

In order to perform respectful and transformative research, my philosophical approach requires that I use methodologies that are sensitive to multiple and shifting understandings of concepts such as researcher/researched, insider/outsider and field/home (Till, 2009). Whilst (ironically) historically grounded in scientific objectivity and a conception of the researcher as distant (or completely removed) from the research itself (e.g. Malinowski, 1961), critical ethnography is now explicitly critical of such claims and has been used by many post-structural and feminist scholars to explore plural realities and knowledges. Till (2009: 626) describes ethnography as “a methodological and practice-based approach to understanding and representing how people – together with other people and non-human entities, objects, institutions and environments – create, experience, and understand their worlds.” It therefore felt appropriate to choose critical ethnography as the over-arching methodological approach for this project, especially in terms of its nuanced approach to representation and its sensitive handling of intersubjective research relationships and collaboration.

Interestingly, in traditional research (and much contemporary social science research too) ethnography is not considered to be a fully-fledged methodology. Rather, it is understood to operate as a method in itself, primarily involving interviews and participant observation.
However, as Lillis (2008: 357) argues, this leads to “only a truncated engagement with ‘context’”. Along with Lillis, Pink (2013) argues that ethnography is more than just a set of methods – it is “an approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing experience, culture, society and material and sensory environments that informs and is informed by sets of different disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles”. Ethnography is concerned with the production of knowledge and different ways of knowing, not simply the collection of “data” (Pink, 2013). The approach is therefore well aligned to my project of acknowledging and strengthening other ways of knowing and doing in order to challenge hegemonic understandings of the economy. Importantly, ethnographers do not hope to expose objective truths about the world that they encounter, but are aware that all knowledge is partial and constructed; all claims are but a version of reality, shaped by the way the ethnographer experiences the world and relates to those in it (Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

For the most part, ethnography (and academia in general) has favoured the written word as a form of representation – hence, even this thesis is heavily constrained, in terms of form, by the academic institution it has been created under. Indeed, visual methodologies in the field of geography, especially those using video as a method, have largely been avoided by scholars who are wary of and discouraged by its pitfalls and critiques (Kindon, 2003; Rose, 2003). Visual methods have been criticised for their implicit notion of the “pure”, “authoritative” and “factual” nature of vision, as if the visual “[bypasses the] troublesome issues of constructing knowledge” (Crang, 2010: 212). Similarly, Kindon (2003: 142) has argued that research which fails to acknowledge the gaze of the researcher (and what this means in terms of situated knowledge) produces “voyeuristic, distanced, disembodied claims to knowledge”. That is not to say, however, that it is impossible for the visual to be an equally meaningful form of representation to textual representation. Therefore, in this project I decided to experiment with the visual as an empowering and inventive methodology.

While the visual can be dangerous and exploitative if considered to be “just another method” of collecting “data”, it has the potential to add immensely to our research if we understand images as producing, performing and inventing knowledge (which are then further reproduced, re-performed and reinvented by their audience) (Till, 2009; Pink, 2013). Importantly, this involves the acknowledgement of and engagement with hierarchical researcher/researched relationships as well as a commitment to the production of knowledge being both by and for the participants (Kindon, 2003). Therefore, visual ethnography as a feminist methodology aims to transform and empower in acknowledging that “research is
explicitly a political intervention that not only represents, but constitutes, reality” (Cameron & Gibson, 2005). I have therefore incorporated visual methodology as a collaborative approach in my project; one which I hope is affirming, transformative and importantly, steered by the people I engaged with themselves, so as to “look alongside” rather than “look at” (Kindon, 2003).

I have articulated the need for research which does not constrain possibilities or ways of being, is mindful of the political nature of all research, is collaborative and engages in the social world hoping to transform it (Lury & Wakeford, 2012). Law (2004: 2, in Jungnickel & Hjorth, 2014: 137) argues that for this to occur it is “increasingly necessary to use [methodologies] unusual or unknown to the social sciences”. In order to privilege the messy entanglement of everyday life in my project of reimagining the economy, I decided to use ANT as a methodology. While perhaps its use as a methodology is unusual, the way that Latour (2005) “extends the place of agency beyond the human to non-human objects” in order to understand how the networks and connectivities between them bring about change was a useful lens through which to create and enlarge our discourses about the economy (Woodward, Dixon & Jones, 2009: 402). In order to avoid flattening and reducing everyday life into a neat package, I used an ANT methodology to trace some of the entangled connections and relations between actors, both human and non-human. This required descriptions and explanations emerging from the field and the relational practices of various actors in it. Jóhannesson & Bærenholdt, (2009: 19) describe how thinking of the field as an actor-network … opens up new pathways for fieldwork. It becomes possible to move the focus from a description of the content of a field – often predefined by particular actors – toward the work and the contingencies involved in constructing the field. ANT is thus able to sensitize fieldworkers to their own role in constructing the field they are describing. This underlines that an ever-present feature of fieldwork is that it partly creates the field it describes as it carves out situated knowledges of it.

Therefore, in both my field research and writing I attempted to think beyond the research encounter to conceptualise how they were created through various relationships, connections and linkages beyond the constraints of place and time. I did this through asking particular

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18 As an example of what such a methodological approach might involve, Jungnickel and Hjorth (2014, p. 138) describe how “in the process of tracing the construction of a building, Latour and Yeneva (2008) examine not only the bricks, glass, and steel, but also the architects and engineers, their social interactions, sketches and drawings, models, hands, scalpels, sticky tape, desks, glue, the general public and much else”.

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questions about connections and relationships in the interviews, analysing visual content for linkages beyond the image and exploring the relationships between co-researchers’ everyday actions and wider processes of transformation. I found this to be an useful approach, as considering complex, heterogeneous actor networks (which were constantly on the move) was a way in which to tackle the (admittedly daunting) hegemonic discourse of the capitalist economy by “inventing a visual vocabulary that will finally do justice to the thingy nature” of the economy (Jungnickel & Hjorth, 2014: 137).

The research process

Hyndman (2001: 262) writes that “fieldwork is at once a political, personal and professional undertaking”. Therefore, the following section relates to how I experienced and did my fieldwork in this light. In this section I will begin by outlining and discussing what happened in the two months (February 2014 – March 2014) that I was in Cape Town doing my field research and a day in July that all the collaborators and myself met up. I describe who I conversed with, how these conversations came about and what methods I used (and how they were very messy). Following that, I will also write about what I did once I was back in my office at university (April 2014 – January 2015) whilst generally working in front of my computer - how I transcribed, analysed, wrote about and compiled the ideas that I am putting across to you, the reader, in this thesis.

Who did I talk to and how did these conversations come about?

In my research proposal, I wrote that I would work with between four to eight people, who seemed to be “more aware” of the diverse economy, “in their actions, if not in their articulations” (research proposal, November 2013). However, the process of finding participants was far less me “selecting” them than a series of connections, discussions, events and conversations which led me in the direction of people who were keen to be part of my project. For instance, one morning in January my mother handed me The Big Issue 19 magazine, pointing to a double spread, “Don’t these guys look amazing?” she said (see Figure 17 below). I contacted the group via Facebook (their only advertised form of communication) and asked if anyone there might be interested in participating in my project.

19 The Big Issue is a social enterprise which puts together a largely community-driven magazine pertaining to relevant political and social issues, which is then sold by vendors on the streets. These vendors are usually unemployed, and are trained through The Big Issue’s development program. See their website (http://www.bigissue.org.za/) for more information.
As mentioned earlier, I had started “following” Innovate the Cape on Facebook the year before, which led me to meet with Stefan. Abalimi was suggested to me during a conversation about my research at a wedding in the mountains, which led me to Mama Bokolo and Ludwe. This “snowball effect” helped me to make many connections and soon I had more options available to me than I could contend with. From there on, finding people to work with involved emailing the various people I had heard of and meeting up with those who got back to me. Four people (out of about eight) responded as keen to participate. The conversations and other interactions I had with these four people form the basis of the thesis before you.

Figure 17: The article which connected me with Wandsile Nqeketho. Source: The Big Issue (October –November 2014)
Of course, this was a wholly subjective way of selecting participants. Often, when telling people about what my research would entail, I was met with surprise that I was simply asking people who I thought were doing interesting things. “But isn’t that really biased?” one friend asked. This is a particularly positivist assertion and one that I was met with frequently. To me, grounded in feminist epistemologies which call for situated knowledges, I did not see this as a problem. As it turned out, I discovered that I vaguely knew Stefan too, as he was a friend of a friend, which further conflated the matter. However, I considered this to be an important aspect of my work and it did not bother me; rather, I celebrated it. In line with Hyndman (2001: 263) (and many others) I would argue that “the assumption that a field-worker is an outsider and that this position authorizes a legitimate space from which to study and record ‘the field’ is epistemologically and politically suspect”. Rather, as social researchers it is important acknowledge that we are “always, everywhere, in ‘the field’” (Katz, 1994: 72). I see this conception of the field as “here” and “now” as demanding that as a researcher I am responsible and committed to those that I worked alongside, even once back “home”. I have therefore attempted to remain in contact and involved with those who participated; who have now, in many ways, become friends. I have followed some of them on Facebook, supported a crowd-funding campaign and kept in touch via email. I have therefore embraced perceived “biases” in many ways such as these.

This mess is a method

According to Peet and Thrift (1989, in Kitchin & Tate, 2000: 17), “the kind of methods needed to understand subjective, plural narratives should be supple, in order to capture a multiplicity of different meanings”. Therefore, in shaping my methods I tried to be as open to difference and multiplicity as possible. I wanted to be able to experience the many ways people chose to represent themselves as agents (or not) in the economy, as well as to better understand and trace the multiple linkages and connections that they acted alongside (and with) in their everyday lives. I could hardly imagine doing this through the strict lens of a questionnaire, survey, or even a structured interview, especially considering my post-structural feminist background. My initial idea for this project had been shaped by many conversations and dialogues with people, as well as by hearing socially and politically engaged people share their stories about what they did, often in public. I found these inspiring, thought-provoking and as a call for action. With these as explicit aims of my project too, I decided to try and emulate the dialogues in the way that I did my research.
I therefore chose to undertake conversational, serial narrative interviews. These occurred in many different settings: in coffee shops, whilst weeding a vegetable patch, perched on a plastic crate with eyes squinting into the sun, seated in an office in the city and whilst driving in my car. Usually, I recorded these on my dictaphone; however, due to their nature, our conversations often moved beyond the “formal” interview and into daily conversation. While at times this was frustrating, it was also a gentle reminder that I was not there to extract all the knowledge that I could, but rather to learn and to create knowledge that would extend well beyond the research project. As Fraser (2004: 184) suggests, “engaging participants in relatively informal and friendly ways, we sometimes process stories with participants along the way and allow for stories or comments that do not appear to be immediately relevant”. Engaging in solidarity and vulnerability with the people I spoke to opened up a space for reflexivity, curiosity, difference and contestation, enabling the world to surprise me, as I had no set agenda for what I wanted to “find out” (Fraser, 2004; Tedlock, 2011).

I carried out a series of two to three interviews with each person over a space of two months. Serial interviewing proved to be a useful method, as it meant that I could digest what was spoken about in the first interview (which was unstructured) and then “follow up” on interesting ideas or thoughts in the next interviews. Serial interviewing helped me to get to know the co-creators on a deeper level and so engage with a sensitive, probing exploration of their everyday lives, gaining insight into some of the “taken-for-granted”, embodied aspects (Crang & Cook, 2007). In the first interview I asked each person about how they had come to be who they were and doing what they were doing. These narratives were a way in which to better understand how they made sense of their personal experiences in relation to hegemonic discourses and in many ways, how they disrupted them (Chase, 2011). From this basis, in the following interview I tried to engage in a deeper discussion of their understandings of the economy and how they related to and with it as well as with other economic beings.

Importantly, instead of focusing on barriers, problems, or lacks, I took a positive, supportive stance – celebrating and encouraging thought on their assets, capabilities and successes – as a grounds for hope, becoming and opening the possibility for more enabling ways of being (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010; Palomino-Schalscha, 2011; Cameron, Healy & Gibson-Graham, 2013). I was particularly inspired by thinking about how such narratives could lead to transformative social change (Fuller & Kitchin, 2004). This led me to think deeply about audience: as Plummer (2005, in Chase, 2011: 428) argues “for narratives to flourish, there must be a community to hear”. Similarly, Shopes (2011: 459) posits that the
narrative encounter “charges the listener…to pay attention, to witness and also to act in ways that respond to the teller’s story…though acting in the world, with a moral vision inspired by the stories one has heard”. I see the narratives people shared as hopeful and enabling; they have the potential to inspire their audience to reinvent the ways in which they imagine and act in the economy. Hence, I thought it important to the becoming of the people who co-created the knowledge here before you, as well as to the active role of this work for creating change, to extend the audience beyond only those who might read this thesis.

I therefore decided to experiment by collaborating with the co-creators to make short video clips to be shared with each other for inspiration, learning and building networks of understanding. I invited each person to film the video and provided in advance some questions and possible topics that they could choose to talk about, prompting them to think about where they might like to film it (a place of significance etc.) or whatever else they would like to say or do. At first I had conceived that the video messages would function as a side-bar to the actual thesis, more as a means of dissemination than anything else. However, I soon realised what rich discussions and embodied knowledge they contained – I think that in many of the video messages the co-researchers spoke more freely and animatedly than in the narrative interviews. I found that as embodied, contextual and inspirational material for analysis and sharing, video was a fantastic way to engage in a reflexive process of knowledge production along with the people I researched with (Crang and Cook, 1995; Pink, 2001).

In my field diary I also noted how, by providing time for the people I engaged with to plan what they wanted in their videos, they could apply creative selection to what they portrayed and how. I saw this as an empowering process, creating a space for knowledge production, resubjectification and shared understandings, which can contest the dominant economic framework (Barnes, Taylor-Brown & Wiener, 1997; Gibson-Graham, 2002). Each person spent time outside of the interviews actively thinking about and deciding on what was important to put across – I was especially touched by Mama Bokolo, who had written herself a script in English (which must have taken several hours and much careful consideration, as it is not her first language) and had planned for me to film her getting out of her car, entering the garden and sowing seeds with her hoe. She saw it as a space of performance and creativity and was extremely proud to be sharing her message with others. This unexpected

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20 A similar project was done by Barnes, Taylor-Brown and Weiner (1997) who collaborated with HIV positive mothers to produce recorded video messages to be viewed by their children after their deaths, which provided a space for self-representation, situating the women at the centre of knowledge production – this was understood as a form of empowerment.
performativity excited me, as it emphasised the embodied nature of knowledge and opened up a space for analysis and discussion.

Similarly, both Wandisile and Chwayita had chosen specific places to film their videos – Wandisile took me to a hill in the middle of Khayelitsha from where there is a 360 degree lookout over the sprawling township and Chwayita took me to her old school, bringing with her some of the Rescue for Nature team. Each of them had thought deeply about what they wanted to portray and spoke directly to the audience, sharing advice and inspiration. While video in research has been critiqued for detaching and representing, it is argued that it can also enable performance, touch and connection (Crang, 2010). I certainly experienced this and it added richly to the research. Also, interestingly, it was the video aspect of the project that the co-creators were most excited about. Chwayita especially, could not believe that I wanted her to share her story with other people doing amazing things and that I saw what she had done as just as important as what the others had. This speaks clearly of how by becoming seen, by making their struggles and successes visible, the people I worked with were able to connect and to build solidarity21 (Crang, 2010).

In July, I was lucky enough to be back in Cape Town on holiday and organised for us all to watch the videos together, connecting in person. The physicality of watching the videos together and meeting each other was a very special experience – we ate cake, chattered and shared with each other how we had felt watching the videos. Despite their very different backgrounds, it was interesting to see how each of the co-creators picked up on nuances and similarities between their own stories and the others; how each of them celebrated verbally the passionate quality of all the videos. The energy and the seams of connectivity in the room were palpable. Dilley (2000: 136) posits that “great interviews show the seams of connections between ourselves, others and those in between” – I hoped, therefore, that through the process of interviewing, creating and watching the videos, both myself and the people I interviewed began to sense these “seams” and how we might grow them.

Following on from this experience, I opened up to the co-creators the possibility compiling their messages into a video to be shared on the internet to a public-access site such as YouTube. This of course opened up some consent issues: the people I worked with had

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21 Crang (2010) relates a similar project called “Arab women speak out”, undertaken by Underwood and Jabre (2003). They helped to put together videos documenting the unseen lives of Arab women, which were produced by Arab women for audiences of other Arab women. This project was seen to build a sense of solidarity and commonality through rendering their struggles visible.
agreed in the consent form to the videos being shared in the thesis and with the other participants, but not for online sharing. Many of the things people shared in the videos were deeply personal and the videos completely exposed their identities visually. These issues re-emphasised the need for a constantly negotiated ethics, as I had to return to the participants and discuss with them what this might mean. Even though they were keen to share the videos online, it was important to bring up implications they may not have thought of, or that could have future impact. You can find more discussion about some of these ethical considerations towards the end of this chapter.

Along with the interviews and filming of the video messages I also practiced a “deep hanging out”, spending time with the co-creators and getting a better sense of the embodied aspects of their knowledge and positionality (Geertz, 1998). I worked in Mama Bokolo’s garden, went for walks around Khayelitsha with Wandisile, drank coffee with Stefan and took a morning trip to visit Chwayita’s school, among many other moments. Along with this, I kept a fieldwork diary in which I reflected on my observations, impressions, thoughts and emotions. I also kept an eye out for interesting and related media. Furthering the ANT methodology through these different methods and collections, I tried to trace the connections between objects, experiences, people, ideas, conversations and places in order to interrogate “how people and things exist in the world, such that they are constituted with particular capacities for action” (Woodward, Dixon & Jones, 2009: 402).

The title of this section is “this mess is a method”. This statement was taken from the work of Jungnickel and Hjorth (2014: 137) who use it to describe how research methods “emerge from entanglements with the social world”, mingle with the conventional “tools” of the researcher and then “re-entangle with the messiness of everyday life”. I use this to explain that while I have tried my best to describe my methods here, they were not static and fixed, but changed with every encounter. There was no such thing as a “typical” method or way-of-doing – rather, my methods were lyrical, contingent and often emerged out of everyday life (McDowell, 2010). Perhaps this was because I was not aiming at simply “getting” certain data or “describing” multiple realities: my methods were “not just descriptive or generative, but also performative” (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013: 6, emphasis my own). Methods are inventive and creative – they do things (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987). Therefore, in order not to assassinate the life of the social world, there is a need to embrace the diversity, the difference, the messiness of that world. This is what I have tried to do in this thesis.
Transcribing, analysis and writing-in

Once returning to Aotearoa New Zealand I set about transcribing the fifteen interviews I had done, which ranged between forty minutes to two hours in length. I had hoped to transcribe whilst in “the field” so that I could return the transcriptions to the participants as we went; however, this proved to be an over confident assumption as time quickly ran away from me. I transcribed ad verbatim, although I tried to remove unnecessary um’s, ah’s and speech errors so as to maintain the integrity of the people I had conversed with. I became frustrated, however, with how this somewhat mechanical task took away the vibrancy and “situatedness” of the conversations. I therefore did not rely solely on transcriptions, but went back and listened to the recording when I felt that a certain section was important as I wrote.

I understand analysis as a fluid task, which flowed through being in “the field” to writing down my thoughts. I agree with Palomino-Schalscha (2011: 42) who writes that “while in the field one is inevitably making sense of what one is learning, which in turn affects the way fieldwork is being done and the directions the research takes”. Therefore, I see analysis and change in direction as a cyclical, iterative process whilst being in the field. At this point the people I conversed with were often part of the analysis through our conversations and decisions of how to go about our interviews. The second, more formal part of my analysis took place back in my office or lounge, generally spread out on the floor with paper, pens and highlighters as my aid to piece together and trace the connections and associations, incongruences and points of difference in a “manual”, embodied fashion.

I had planned to code the interviews using the qualitative research software, Nvivo. However, like MacLure (2013), I sat uncomfortably with its imposition of aborescent, tree-like delineations, boxing, enclosing and allotting the data into “comprehensible” units or themes, especially in light of my post-structural framing. I felt as if coding removed the texture, fluidness and entanglement of the data; it did not make space for difference and what Deleuze (1990) calls “the mad element”: that which “refuses to settle under codes or render up decisive meanings” (MacLure, 2013: 171). Therefore, I tried not to ignore things which did not fit, rather finding a way to incorporate them in the assemblage of my project. However, I still found the practice of coding an important one, as engaging with the data helped me to see it from different angles and notice things anew. MacLure (2013) suggests that rather than thinking about coding as a process of creating structure and congruency, “we could think of [it] as the on-going construction of a cabinet of curiosities” or wonder, an open ended process.
of making sense. I tried, therefore, to approach the data with a sense of wonder and openness
to possibility.

I used writing as a way of analysis too – making connections and observations and directional
decisions as I went. To me, it was a way of piecing together meaning and situated
knowledges, writing-in, rather than writing-up a preconceived argument (Berg & Mansvelt,
able to unproblematically reproduce the simple truth(s) of our research in our writing”.
However, I do not see the field and writing in such binary terms, separate and distanced from
each other. Rather, they are very much intertwined with each other. Although I began writing
with a basic outline based on my coding, my arguments tended to develop and transform as I
wrote them. Often ideas or thoughts sprang to mind as I wrote or re-listened to an interview.
In this sense, writing and researching was a “mutually constitutive process” (Cupples &
Kindon, 2003: 223). The field seeped into the everyday process of writing; it continued to be
constituted and created through it. As Richardson (1994: 516 in Cupples & Kindon, 2003:
223) argues:

Although we usually think about writing as a mode of “telling” about the social
world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project.
Writing is also a way of “knowing” – a method of discovery and analysis.

Therefore, I wrote-into the research, discovering, interpreting, noticing, realising and creating
throughout the process of writing. In this sense, I understand writing as a process of “using
language to look at, lean into and lend oneself to an experience under consideration”, as well
as positioning and articulating my own presence in and stance towards the world through it
(Pelias, 2011: 660). Writing the story of my research was therefore a performative and
political act: shaping and participating in the world in a partial and positioned way.

I endeavoured to represent the flexibility and openness to change that writing-in allows by
intertwining and combining various bodies of literature and narrative. For this reason, I chose
to write a non-standard thesis format: rather than sticking to a bounded literature review
separate from the discussion sections, I chose to interweave these with each other so as to
follow conversations, connections and debates as I felt necessary, as well as leaving space for
the reader’s own interpretation and resonances. I also embraced a poly-vocal writing style,
including long quotes and anecdotal sections throughout the thesis to emphasise the way in
which knowledge was constructed together with the co-creators (Clifford & Marcus, 1986).
However, I am aware that writing-in is not a collaborative or neutral process. Throughout the writing of this thesis I consciously decided what to include and what not to, how to represent conversations, people and experiences and what interpretations and themes I would privilege. Writing is a highly mediated and partial process. For this reason, I have written this thesis in the first person so as to acknowledge my role as a re-presenter and a creator and to “draw attention to assumptions embedded in the…text” (Berg & Mansvelt, 2000: 174).

I struggled to represent on paper the lives of the people I engaged with. Their stories are living, embodied and personal. In particular, I was concerned with the way that I appropriated their voices so as to make theoretical arguments. What gave me the right to trim and select which parts of their stories to tell? I felt a commitment (and indeed, friendship) to the people who had collaborated with me. Therefore, rather than representing their lives and narratives as simply texts to be read, I tried to represent them in ways so that they “[remained] visible as real, living people with their own personalities and trajectories” (Wedgwood, 2009: 334 in Evans, 2010: 28). To this end, I present vignettes about each of the participants’ in Chapter 2 as well as including and making reference to their video messages throughout. These sections are intended not as interpretations or analyses. Rather, they are intended to enable the reader to vicariously “meet” the co-creators of this research in a more holistic way, so that they might find resonances of their own between the co-creators everyday stories and the theoretical conversation I am suggesting. However, it is important for the reader to realise that the narratives and quotations that you read in this thesis have been shaped, selected and re-presented by me, a researcher in a position of power.

Other ethical considerations

For this thesis I was required to submit an application to the Human Ethics Committee of VUW which outlined how I would deal with various institutional ethical requirements such as confidentiality, privacy and the storage of data. However, I agree with Sultana (2007) in saying that there is a disjuncture between institutionalised ethics and actual fieldwork contexts, where often decisions need to be made that cannot be provided for on a piece of paper. Often contexts require intuition and reflexivity, asking one’s self, in vein with Evans (2010), “what is the most respectful and least harmful thing I can do right now?” As much as I was able and aware I attempted to practice a constantly negotiated ethics in the field, seeking to evaluate matters as they arose, in conjunction with more institutionalised ethics (Sultana, 2007; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013).
I complied with VUW regulations in that written consent was gained from each participant, as well as explaining in full the purpose of my research to each person. However, for instance, while it was suggested by the Human Ethics Committee that confidentiality was important, each of the people whom I engaged with specifically wanted me to use their given names. One even went so far as to say that I should include their mobile number and email address in the thesis so that interested parties could get in contact. Each person wanted to claim and share the stories that they were proud of – they wanted to inspire others. Similarly, when I asked them if they would be happy to share their videos with an online audience I was met with excitement and unanimous agreement: “Yes, of course. My light is no good under the table, it must be up on the table”, Mama Bokolo answered firmly. Fahmy and Pemberton (2012, in Pink, 2013: 212) point out that “it is important for researchers to acknowledge participants’ ‘right to be visible’ especially where research seeks to challenge wider social processes of disempowerment”. Despite their eagerness however, it was important to address the possible consequences of online sharing (such as downloading, copyrights and permissions) and attribution of opinion in the thesis (how using their real names could put them in unwanted positions or even harm them). I found this to be an extremely ambiguous issue to navigate.

In my field diary I recall an interview with Mama Bokolo where we were speaking about her role in the economy and the work she did under Abalimi. She was unusually hesitant to answer the questions and Ludwe spent most of interview speaking to her in isiXhosa, urging her to share her thoughts. During the interview Mama Bokolo had to go and attend to a customer and while she was away Ludwe told me “Mama B, she is scared that you will share what she is telling you with other people higher up, it is important to her, the retirement money”. I realised we needed to speak more about confidentiality and brought up the issue on her return. However, in the same breath as explaining that she was worried that some of what she might say could affect her relationship with Abalimi, she adamantly held that she wanted her real name to be used. This was a tricky ethical situation to handle – I wanted to respect her decision, but at the same time did not want to put her in a difficult position. I resorted not to push her when I sensed she did not want to talk about something and checked with her that she was happy with what she had said being published in her name, by listening to the recording with her (which is something she had requested, as she wanted to check up on Ludwe’s translation).
My responsibility and commitment towards representing the co-creators with integrity also meant that I was sure to inform them that they could request that data not be used publicly or destroyed at any time if they so wished. The sharing of the videos online further conflated this issue for, as Pink (2013: 212) notes, the “possibility of online texts going ‘viral’ and thus becoming part of contexts that go beyond their intended audiences” is something to consider. These were of course important aspects to discuss with the co-creators and I will need to practice a continually negotiated ethics once the videos are uploaded, removing them from the web if necessary (while also being aware that it would be impossible to remove it in entirety, as viewers may have downloaded it in the past).

Dealing with the co-creators with integrity also meant that I needed to think deeply about reciprocity. Whilst agreeing to return copies of their transcripts, share the videos of the other people involved and send each person a copy of my completed thesis, I was wary of endeavouring to “give something back” to them. Giving back implies a process of exploitation and compensation, which ironically would serve me as the researcher perhaps more than the researched themselves, through the atoning of any guilt I may have, leaving them uncertain of what I was “giving back” for. I therefore attempted to make my research less exploitative from the outset through approaching ethnography as a process of negotiation and collaboration with the co-creators (Pink, 2013). I consider the space for self-reflection that telling their life stories and sharing inspirations and thoughts with others created as a particularly positive experience for them. It was, I think, one of my project’s key contributions. Indeed, when we gathered together to watch the videos, each of the collaborators, in their own way, commented on how inspiring and encouraging it had been to hear about each other’s initiatives and to share stories of their own.

Opportunities to reciprocate also presented themselves in unexpected ways, ways which I can only identify now as reciprocal (they often felt natural at the time). One such occasion was the day that Chwayita and I went to her school in Philippi to film her video message. I fetched her near UCT, where she clambered off a mini-bus taxi, only minutes later to realise that she had left her wallet on the back seat. What ensued were a couple of hours of a cat-and-mouse chase to hunt down the taxi and wallet (an almost impossible task). We eventually found them, but along the way we also cemented our friendship. Far from being a “pay-back” gesture, I had wanted to help her out of mutual concern and it came across as an act of friendship rather than anything else. However, at other times, I felt the need to “give back” or “repay” more strongly such as Wandisile asking me to give small change to friends on the
street (as I recounted earlier). Allowing all these various intricacies to play out was an important part of growing successful and balanced relationships, but of course needed to be thought about and negotiated continually.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have attempted to portray the messy assemblage of how I went about doing my research, getting entangled with other people’s lives and situations and somehow making some sense out of it all. I have thought about how my epistemological and methodological predilections influenced how this project came about, the questions I asked and the way that I saw them evolving into this thesis. Importantly, I have tried to address these issues with candour and reflexivity and have not claimed to know where the research begins or where it may end. Certainly, the research process is not a closed system, and its effects surpass the written document. In this light, I like to consider my research process as way of building linkages with the world. As Deleuze (1995: 45) writes, a linkage is “always in-between…it's the borderline…a line of flight or flow...[where] things come to pass, becomings evolve, revolutions take shape”. In the following chapter I will begin the process of bringing together threads of narrative and experience to make linkages between how each of the people I collaborated with perceived their roles in the economy and the theoretical framing of the diverse economy.
Chapter 4

A diverse economy: Creating possibility and hope

Introduction

Chwayita Wenana and I sat across a table from one another at UCT on a blustery Friday afternoon. This was our first time meeting and somehow I could not help but feel excited and upbeat in her presence. Her five foot high, petite frame did nothing to hide her slightly shy, but wonderfully large, personality and zest for life that permeated the room (although perhaps her wriggling mass of gorgeous dreadlocks gave it away!). For the afternoon, I had thought we would just have a chat about what we wanted to get out of the project and what participating in it would involve, but her interest was so that she wanted to launch straight into the first interview that same day. “You want me to share my story? Wow!” she laughed.

Chwayita was telling me about forming the club, Rescue for Nature, that she and a group of friends started at her school:

**Chwayita:** I had to type the vision statement, because, to make it look professional to other people, with our aims and stuff. So I just typed the vision statement, showed the other guys, and they said “Yeah, sounds cool, let’s do this thing! Rescue for Nature! Let’s go!”

**Emma:** How did you feel when you realised you were finally “doing this thing”?

**Chwayita:** Oh my goodness! [Looking up and down at herself] Do you see how small I am?! I was organising people who were way taller than me…it made me feel so useful and I felt like it added value to my life and I wanted to do this all the time. So, it kind of made me realise that I am a little person, but I can do so much, I can make a big change. It made me realise that I found myself in that. I am actually useful…

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 28 February 2014)

The possibility and hope in her tone, along with the realisation that indeed, she, Chwayita Wenana, a little (in size) school girl from Philippi could make a difference in the huge world is exactly what makes me feel hopeful about the future. She has recognised that she has the ability to act in the economy and world – she is an agent of change. However, as Cameron, Healy & Gibson-Graham (2013: xix) argue “most people don’t see themselves as significant actors in the economy, let alone shapers of it”, often describing themselves as simply consumers or another cog in the consumption machine. In this chapter I will think about what
it is that constrains and enables people’s understandings of their agency in the economy, founding the discussion in literature from post-development, specifically that of diverse economies. Importantly, I will discuss how the ways in which we think about, describe and conceptualise “the economy” constrain and enable certain ways of being and doing within it. 

First, consulting with the relevant literature, then turning to the conversations I had with the people I researched with, in this chapter I seek to draw together these threads of narrative to think about what they might contribute to creating hope for and the possibility of a better world (and ways of acting in it).

I will begin by thinking about the ways in which conventional economic discourse constrains other ways of being in its capitalist privileging of “growth at any cost” and its belief in the key value of private ownership and generation of wealth (with a focus on the South African and Cape Town context) through the lens of post-development literature. However, while early post-development literature called for the condemnation and obliteration of the “regimes” of capitalism and development to make way for “better” alternatives, I will argue for a more nuanced approach, which is found in much contemporary post-development literature. Drawing on the work of Byrne & Healy (2006) I will argue that binaries, such as development/anti-development and capitalism/anti-capitalism, are fantasies which are bound to disappoint when they do not transpire in perfection. Therefore, simply replacing capitalism with another alternative system is too totalising and reductive. Rather, I will argue that a more achievable and worthwhile project would be to engage with the present system, seeking out the diversity (that is already present, but cast invisible or uncredible) within it, so as to challenge capitalism’s supposed predominance and to build an alternative conception of the economy that already exists. Using the work of the feminist geographer J.K. Gibson-Graham I seek to show that the economy is marvellously diverse, a collage of capitalist, non-capitalist and other hybrid activities, which cannot simply be defined as a hegemonic “capitalism”.

Based on these theoretical ideas, I will then show how a diverse community economy is very much alive in the city of Cape Town. In particular, I will consider what the ways in which the people I engaged with conceived of their everyday activities and narratives can contribute to an understanding of the community economy as a “politics of the possible” (Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010: 873). I will look at how they describe their own agency in relation to the economy, their cultural values and imaginations. Importantly, I will argue that their narratives are not black and white or clear cut; rather, they are bursting with hybridity, with congruencies and incongruences, they are both constraining and enabling. These people, I
contend, are engaging with the negativity of the current system in deep and politically progressive ways so as to foster an uncertain, yet hopeful and altogether possible future.

Rethinking “the idea” of development and the economy

Post-development, discourse and hegemony

Ideas matter...ideas can ignite creative energy, resistance and movements for change. Ideas can also fix the future, creating convictions that we are trapped by the powers of geography, time and capital flows (Pieterse, 2006: 289).

The conventional or hegemonic “idea” of the economy is singular; the economy is considered to be but one, irrefutable thing – Capitalist (Cameron, Healy & Gibson-Graham, 2013). As Pieterse (2006) has argued, along with many other post-development scholars (e.g. Santos, 2004; Agostino, 2007; Ziai, 2007; Escobar, 2011), this totalising discourse has power such that it defines a singular way of doing development that delegitimises other forms and ways of understanding what development might be. To illustrate the extent of this powerful, but narrow way of understanding development, Carmen (1996: 137) posits that

the position of pre-eminence achieved by contemporary economics in development is such now that other disciplines are considered important only from the moment their economic impact and benefit can be demonstrated...patterns of speech and vocabulary have undergone such profound transformation that services such as health, transport, tourism and education now uniformly use the language of competition and the market.

The beginnings of this critique emerged in the 1980s when a group of authors became dissatisfied with the concept and practice of development (especially its focus on economic growth as progress). Rather than leading to the improved wellbeing of those in poverty, they argue that development contributes to a progressively widening gap between the wealthy and the poor around the world (Ziai, 2007). These authors argue that the hegemonic discourse of development and the role of predominance given to “the capitalist economy” within it are instruments of power employed for western domination. Not only does the West see “the Rest” as “underdeveloped”, but so too do governments and ordinary citizens of the South define themselves in relation to the “developed” (Hall, 2002). It is, Agostino (2007: 198) argues, as if capitalist economic development “is a universally agreed upon truth”. Indeed, the embodiment of this so-called “truth” is reflected in many of the policies and goals of the post-Apartheid government in South Africa. The ANC’s 2006 Asgi-SA sought to “halve
South Africa’s poverty and unemployment by 2014 by sustaining increased growth targets of 4.5% until 2009, and 6% after 2010” (Lemanski, 2007: 453).

President Jacob Zuma’s 2014 State of the Nation address was peppered with the line “we have a good story to tell”, relating economic growth to achievement in school enrolments, health, tourism and the provision of basic services (Zuma, 2014). The country is set to continue in its aggressive neoliberal pro-growth strategies to combat socioeconomic issues. However, this optimistic address was set against the backdrop of a sharp rise in service delivery protests across the country, which are largely fuelled by anger and frustration at high unemployment rates and poor provision of basic services, as well as deep-seated inequality (Grant, 2014). I experienced one of these protests in Cape Town while on my way home from an interview with Mama Bokolo in Philippi – the streets were strewn with burning tires and rubbish and crowds of people toyi-toyi-ed in the middle of the road (Figure 18 depicts a similar service delivery protest a couple of months later). Such displays of dissatisfaction and frustration are all too clear an indicator that Cape Town’s economic strategy continues to be based on growth rather than redistribution (Lemanski, 2007: 453). The dominant discourse’s “one and only development” rationale of modernisation and economic growth does not seem to be making considerable improvements. In fact, Cape Town is among the most unequal cities in the world (McDonald, 2012; United Nations Human Settlement Program, 2012).

Thabo Mbeki’s framing of South Africa’s “two economies” (the formal one of the wealthy, and the informal one of the poor) is argued to misleadingly “[enable] the state to suggest the formal economy is doing well and should be left untouched for it is modern, efficient and internationally competitive” while “the second economy is seen to be deficient, [requiring] both policy reform and social assistance for its inhabitants” (Habib, 2004: 96). This statement echoes Santos’ (2004: 253) argument that the monoculture of development “has produced forms of ‘non-existence’, namely the ignorant, the residual, the inferior, the local and the non-productive”, that need development by “the scientific, the advanced, the superior, global or productive realities”.

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22 Toyi-toyi is a southern African form of dance expressing protest or resistance. It often includes chants, singing, foot-stomping and slogans, such as the ANC’s “Amandla!” (power). Toyi-toyi was used very effectively during Apartheid as part of the struggle for liberation, and today is used extensively in service delivery protests to express peoples’ grievances to government.
Through this definitional power, people, popular practices and local knowledges are labelled as the principle constraints to “achieving development” and the contributions of the informal sector are cast invisible and un-credible in national statistics and indexes (Carmen, 1996; Maiava & King, 2007). The conundrum, succinctly defined by Gergen (1994: 253, in Agostino, 2007: 198), is that “the words that present problems within a given system of understanding will only find solutions born of that system, and assertions from alternative systems will remain unrecognised”. It is this totalising, limiting capitalocentric discourse that post-development scholars such as Escobar (2011) are opposed to.

**Questioning singularity and celebrating diversity**

From this line of argument, it may seem as if development should be done away with altogether – and this was a sentiment of many of the pioneering scholars of post-development. Contemporary scholars take a far more nuanced approach. However, the totalising rejection proposed by early post-development writers is also where the discipline’s largest critiques fall. It is argued that many authors’ zero-tolerance stance towards development as a whole (Esteva, 1985; Sachs, 1992; Rahnema, 1997) is reductive, creating distinct essentialisms of what is bad (development, global, modernity, economic progress/capitalism, universalisms, and the West, etc.) and good (indigenous movements, local, tradition, subsistence, anti-
capitalism, etc.). This line of argument reduces all development into a single thing which is bad, not taking into account that western development and conceptualisations of modernity are also diverse in nature (Ziai, 2007). Storey (2000: 42) contends that post-development’s vague and inexplicit position towards alternatives is ignorant and apolitical; what he terms a “Pontius Pilate politics”:

while western levels of material development may be impossible for all, it does not mean this is not a desired option for many people…To ignore that desire is to romanticise the aspirations of many ordinary people – precisely the type of cultural imperialism post-development theorists claim to reject.

However, these critiques themselves are somewhat essentialist, for most contemporary post-development authors (such as Gibson-Graham, Santos and some of Escobar’s later works) are sceptical of the wide brush-stroke rejection of development in all its forms. While they reject a statement of concrete alternatives or blueprints, they are also far more optimistic and creative (as opposed to only critical). For instance, Illich (1997: 99, in Agostino, 2007: 204) argues that “it is not my purpose …to paint a Utopia or to engage in scripting scenarios for an alternative future”, rather, alternatives are already happening: they can be found in what people are already doing. Similarly, Byrne & Healy (2006: 243) suggest that it is too limiting to simply substitute development (or capitalism) with anti-development (anti-capitalism) – they are subjects of fantasy, which “offer the promise of a return to an imaginary wholeness, to a retroactively constructed unity with mother nature, true self, and so on.” Moreover, the privileging of a fantastical Utopia ironically suggests an uncritical acceptance of capitalism’s dominance, without appreciating the actual diversity of the current system (Byrne & Healy, 2006). By demanding an alternative, the diversity and multiplicity of the current system is disregarded and made invisible.

Reframing the economy: Diversity and agency

The feminist scholars, J.K. Gibson-Graham, have worked to challenge the notion of a singular economy through the discursive project of community economies. Many neoliberal scholars celebrate the hegemony of capitalism and the market and many others express the futility of trying to oppose it (Gudeman, 2001; Harvey, 2001). However, this singular celebration of the capitalocentric worldview and the paucity of hope for better ways of living and acting in the world disregards the “hidden” diversity and multiplicity of the economy and those activities people are already engaged in to secure well-being (Santos, 2004; Matthews,
2007; Gibson-Graham, 2008). This hegemonic position disregards the agency of everyday people to make a difference in their worlds – instead, they are fixed as consumers and nothing more (Cameron, Healy & Gibson-Graham, 2013). Therefore, from a post-development perspective, Gibson-Graham (e.g. 1996, 2005 among many others) and authors such as Santos (2004) work discursively to make credible those activities and things which have been cast un-credible and non-existent by the “singular” economy through a reimagining and reframing (or deconstructing, in post-structural language) of the economy as diverse and manifold.

In doing so, Cameron et al. (2013) depict the economy as an iceberg (see Figure 19 below). This stark imagery shows that while there is a widespread belief that capitalism has “permeated into every crevice of daily life and that its on-going encroachment is inevitable, inescapable and irreversible ” (Williams et al., 2012: 216), it is actually but a “thin veneer … underlain by a thick mesh of traditional practices and relationships of gifting, sharing, borrowing, volunteering and reciprocal and individual collective work”: a space where community is enacted (Gibson-Graham, 2005: 16). The economy is relationships, people, objects, and is constituted by a vast array of activities that people are already doing. It can be understood as “a negotiated space of interdependence” where ambiguity and uncertainty are embraced (Healy & Graham, 2008: 17). In this vein, Carmen (1996: 140) suggests a “refocusing of economics on well-being, displaced for so long by the economics of well-having.” Cameron et al. (2013: 4) agree, imparting the need to take notice “of all the things we do to ensure the material functioning and well-being of our households, communities and nations”, as well as realising that what we understand as “well-being” varies according to place, society, age, gender, culture, etc.

Challenging the notion of a capitalocentric, “known” economy, the familiar is made strange and the strange familiar (Cameron, 1998; Healy & Graham, 2008: 17; Graham & Cornwell, 2009). This counter-hegemonic discourse therefore aims to engage in a “politics of the possible”, engaging with the diversity of the present system (not the fantasy), so as not to limit any economic pathway or activity (Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010; Miller, 2013). In this pursuit, Gibson-Graham (2006) attempt to move beyond the deconstruction of the economy by actively multiplying, amplifying and connecting diverse activities which contribute to well-being in previously invisible ways. This involves creating new discourses of the community economy to counter the paucity of current economic language and engaging in the “micro-politics of enabling subjects to inhabit that [now visible] terrain” (Gibson-
Graham, 2002: 14). Through this project of resubjectification and reframing of the economy as diverse, ordinary people may begin to comprehend of their own economic agency and ability to make a difference in the world.

Creating hope and possibility in Cape Town

In my methodology chapter, I wrote that it was almost impossible to group or “box” my participants into a certain category or type. While I still hold to this ideal (although, of course, I am aware that I am fallible and it is a human tendency to box and contain), perhaps an apt way to describe the people with whom I interacted is as “creators”. I see their narratives as describing ways of engaging in everyday acts of creation and production, not necessarily in a purely physical sense – but they were creating hope, possibility and change, they were growing a sense of being-in-common and they were all deeply aware of their ability to do so. They were in a process of becoming and resubjectification – and it is this becoming that I will reflect on in this section. Importantly, I will argue that their narratives
were not black and white in terms of how they perceived their agency and ability to affect change or their role in the economy; they were not fantastical or utopic. Rather, the people I researched with were dealing with the negativity of the current system in thoroughly political (and diverse) ways, not dismissing their very real material concerns, but engaging deeply with them. It is this sense of hybridity, of congruency and in-congruency that I hope to convey here as a nuanced and politicised approach to community economies in Cape Town.

I have divided the remainder of the chapter into two sections: Contesting the capitalist economy with hope and Engaging with possibility. In some ways it echoes the design of the literature review above, in others it moves forward to dealing directly with the possibility and hope that the review concluded with. I will use narratives from the interviews and reflections from “the field” to carefully consider these themes.

Contesting the capitalist economy with hope

In the second interview with each person, we engaged in a discussion about what they understood as “the economy” and how they related to it. Throughout my planning, the idea of creating a counter-hegemonic discourse was what I (idealistically) aspired to. It was through engaging with the participants about this idea, however, that I came to realise that discourses such as these do already exist, just in a vastly more hybrid form than I had imagined. Moreover, it was exceedingly naïve of me to imagine some sort of “pure” discourse existing outside of “the capitalist” one. I was simply signing up to the fantasy that I have so ardently refuted here. The understandings and experiences of the people I conversed with in relation to the economy were far more nuanced and multiple than I had imagined and once again highlighted to me the danger of telling a single story, or seeking to describe the world in binary terms. While their narratives contested the dominant capitalist discourse in many ways, they were shaped by it and complied with it in many ways too.

For instance, during a Friday morning interview, sitting outside with a tea at a little café at the Woodstock Exchange, Stefan Louw described the economy to me as:

23 Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, a Nigerian authoress, spoke at a TEDtalk in 2009 about “the danger of a single story”, arguing that telling only a single narrative about a person, culture, discourse, knowledge or society can undermine diversity and the multiplicity of real life. While she speaks in regards to discrimination towards literature coming out of Africa, her words and thoughts are highly applicable to feminist/post-structural social sciences, which are very much aware of the damaging power of hegemonic binaries and privilege multiple stories. You can find the talk at: http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story
broader than just economic, so how to bring value would maybe be a better way of describing it...I see the ultimate end being the value in the students [who participate in Innovate the Cape] and them becoming innovators as opposed to creating innovations. Some people would just see the value in the projects they create and how successful those are. I don’t really think it matters so much – I think just them having tried something and seeing that they can do it is the most important thing.

(Stefan Louw, personal interview, 14 March 2014)

Contesting the dominant discourse of the economy (which concerns itself with end products and perpetually seeks to have more), Stefan chooses to describe his economic activity as focused on wellbeing, asking questions such as “do people feel more realised?” and “do they feel more ownership and control of their lives?” (Carmen, 1996: 140). His words resonate with the idea that value should not just be measured in monetary terms. Rather, the value is in people having the chance to try something on their own, exerting their agency and using what they know to creatively make a difference. It is about reclaiming and transforming identity. In contrast, he also notes that some people may only see the value in the finished projects and how successful they are; in a sense casting invisible the deeper significance of what the projects mean to the identities and processes of becoming of the students involved. Stefan is well aware that these meta-narratives cannot be measured by the yardstick of conventional development. However, his understanding cannot be interpreted as black and white – it is far more nuanced and hybrid.

Although contesting the dominant understanding of the economy and development, in some respects Stefan’s narrative conforms to it too. This dialogical tension is emphasised, for instance, in how he described the economy as not “just economic”, but about well-being too. Described in binary, there is a sense of separateness or distance between the two concepts. Ironically, such understandings are actively propagated by neoliberalism itself (intent on the drawback of state assistance and encouraging citizens to make do for themselves), the very system Stefan is challenging. This is not to say, however, that Stefan’s narrative is lacking or blemished. Rather, I believe narratives such as this to be the key to transformation. I am pointing out the hybridity of the narrative, its fluidity and multiplicity; that it does not simply convey one thing.

Gibson-Graham (1995: 47) argue that “the duality of life or death of capitalism means that capitalism’s health is simply perpetuated”. Attempting to emphasise and work with the current diversity of the economy instead, Stefan (and the other participants too) showed a
deep understanding of this conundrum. Despite contesting the current system, they did not reason that it needed to be overthrown completely. Rather, they could be seen as trying to find ways of working in the world better. Therefore, moving beyond fantastical notions of a new system completely free of capitalism, I think narratives such as Stefan’s and those of the other people I worked alongside have the ability to creatively transform the economy for the better, unsettling the notion of the economy as an organised whole and dealing with the negativity of the current system in positive ways (Byrne & Healy, 2006).

However, it would be naïve of me to dismiss the hegemonic power of the capitalist discourse altogether. The discourse, despite being transformed and contested in many ways by the people I engaged with, also affected how they understood their agency and ability to make a difference. An example of how the capitalist discourse constrains conceptions of agency is depicted in Chwayita’s response to me asking her how her actions fitted into the economy:

**Chwayita:** Me? I don’t think I do…no.
**Emma:** Really? What is the economy, to you?
**Chwayita:** Like the state, I mean the government just managing the money going where it is going. And just the market world.

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 14 March 2014)

Often, Chwayita described cleaning up her school, mentoring students and inspiring others as “extra stuff”; informal and of little consequence in any “economic” form. To me, her words echo Mbeki’s “Chinese Wall” conception of South Africa’s two economies. However, despite this distinction in Chwayita’s understanding of her role in the economy, she described her actions as inspired by the notion of making a difference in her community and she was adamant that she could. This apparent disjunction between what she said about her role in the economy and what she did is to me yet another form of contestation; subversive and slow, an undercurrent of actions, hidden beneath the invisible cloak cast by a capitalist discourse which discredits them. It does not matter if Chwayita was tangibly aware of this hybridity, but her actions demonstrated her desire to foster an economy of wellbeing just as Stefan did. Similarly, Wandisile discussed with me how, due to the limits of the current discourse of the economy, the words available to describe what he did to actors such as business people or NGOs were severely limited:

**Wandisile:** The major problem with our type of businesses is getting to that second phase, that’s the major problem. For businesses in the townships that do not have the proper infrastructure to operate in the manner that matches their
standards it’s impossible. You know, some businesses are not like others. You want to open up a museum, it’s not like you want to open up a spaza shop! How in the world will you have a five year track record so that you can access that funding? For some ideas it’s limiting, you know? Because you end up being angry and saying that these people want us to come up with a car wash because it’s an easy business, a meat shop, because it’s an easy business, but when we come up with the really creative, highly innovative ideas that can change the world it’s difficult to get funding for them because you do not have the required structure set in place.

**Emma:** Do you think they understand what you are trying to do, as a social entrepreneur? Do people understand what being a social entrepreneur means?

**Wandisile:** Well, when you’re doing business with a business man as an entrepreneur from the township, they’ll treat you strictly as a business man; they don’t see you as a social entrepreneur; they are yet to understand what it is we do. In South Africa, we do not have a system where we can register a company and say it’s a social enterprise – it’s either a NGO or a company. There are just those two. If you go to an NGO, they see you as a business, they will cut you off. That really hits us in terms of many funding opportunities. Some funding, they want businesses which are strictly businesses. The way that we do it often has a much greater impact than plain NGOs or companies. But that doesn’t exist – it’s either that you’re an NGO or you’re just for business. Social enterprises, they do not have anything. You must lie in one of the two.

**Emma:** How do you see what you do with the Gangster Museum, Illima and Iyeza Express fitting into the economy then?

**Wandisile:** We just…in the economy we are those who balance out the social part and the economic part. You have the corporates, man, who are strictly making money, they have the capitalist mentality. And then you have NGOs, which are not really sustainable as they depend on unreliable funds. We are able to do what NGOs do, but generate an income at the same time. It’s not an income that keeps at one place, but this income it grows us. One day we will be touching and changing people’s lives all over Africa.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 12 March 2014)

What strikes me about what Wandisile voices here is that despite the importance of what he does being uncredible and invisible to actors such as NGOs and corporates, he is acutely aware of these deficiencies in the discourse, and actively perpetuates a contesting one – a discourse in which he plays a role. In my interpretation, his emotive language stresses the inbetweeness he feels as a social entrepreneur, but he is not negative about it. Rather his approach embraces the uncertainty of not having “a definition” as a “moment of opportunity to bring new possibilities to light” (Pieterse, 2006: 286). This sense of hope and possibility in the way that the people I interacted with contested the dominant discourse of the economy, in
conjunction with hybrid, intertwined notions of their roles in it, are what hold the potential to transform the way we understand and act in the economy.

Engaging with possibility

One morning at Isenta ye Gadi Yabantu (The People’s Garden Centre) in Nyanga, Cape Town, where Mama Bokolo works her green-fingered magic, I was taking photographs of the garden – the slowly ripening pumpkins bursting out from under lush green canopies of leaves, baby silver-beets pushing up from under the rich brown soil and harvested onions hanging from a fruit tree to keep from rotting (see Figure 20). Suddenly, Mama Bokolo, who had just finished up with a customer, was at my arm. “Come”, she said, “take a picture here with me” (the photograph appears below in Figure 20). She led me along the garden path until we were standing in front of a lean plant, which stretched up high above our heads, with long, pale green leaves and sturdy, woody looking stems. “My mielies”, she said with a toothy grin.

Later, during the interview, I asked her why mielies were so significant to her:

Mama B: In my culture…maize, I grew up surrounded by the maize, working with maize, dealing with maize, so it is a familiar object, it is some kind of culture to me.
Ludwe: It’s important for her to keep maize around, yes. About maize, when you arrive in the Eastern Cape, maize is the most popular. Out of maize you produce the mielies; out of maize you produce meal-bread. Wow, maize is like…for children you can grow a child, a young child, with the soup from maize, mixed with beans. Ah, there is plenty, there is plenty, I grew up from the maize. All the stamina from that maize, it loaded me, loaded and loaded [laughs]. Instead of Purity, I had to eat the maize juice, that soup.
Mama B: All the animals – cows, sheep, goats, chickens – all that kind of animals they also eat the mielies. They are important, most animals they eat the mielies. It is also helpful for making the cows to come. They use the mielies to make umqombothi, an African beer. They use that at initiations and ceremonies… But now, people are usually not focused on the maize or not working within the maize due to the laziness.
Emma: Why is that, do you think, mama?
Mama B: People in the Eastern Cape, they are getting lazy. They’ve got a huge land, but they don’t even try using little pieces of land to start farming.
Emma: Why is that? What has changed?

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24 Afrikaans a maize plant or a cob of corn, term used widely throughout South Africa.
25 A South African brand of pureed baby food
Mama B: Farming was the most important thing in the village during the old days. People were farming, they were not lazy, everyone was on the garden; everyone was busy. Nowadays they don’t bother themselves about farming and planting. They are sitting, even the little spaces; the garden in front of their houses with huge weeds. The people are just sitting, watching that weeds.

Emma: How do they survive then? If they are not working the land…

Mama B: They only wait for the pension, and the teenage pregnancy that is happening, they get an amount from the government.

(Mabel Bokolo and Ludwe Qamata, personal interview, 5 March 2014)

The comments Mama Bokolo made about the people “on that side” (in the Eastern Cape), who were “sleeping” or needed to “wake up”, were recurring themes throughout her narratives. While these heavily loaded terms describe people as the problem, her words resonate with my conceptions of the more nuanced, underlying issues of structural inequality and disempowerment. Through my own experience of these deep-seated issues in South Africa, I interpret the attitude that Mama Bokolo describes as “laziness” stemming from a deeply entrenched sense of failure after decades of imposed structural inequality and from the daily realities of living in poverty. Her narrative resonates with me, in my post-structural mind-set, with a critique of a system which promotes moving away from “traditional” ways to
more “modern” living, a system which requires that we are but consumers (Cameron, Healy & Gibson-Graham, 2013) and casts individual agency as uncredible and backward (Santos, 2004). In this sense, her narratives reflect to me how, as Carmen (1996: 140) writes:

In the name of modernisation and the irresistible march of market forces, innumerable economies, otherwise perfectly capable of looking after themselves and providing... [a good] quality of life [and wellbeing]...have been obliterated or become extinct.

Ironically, Mama Bokolo’s narrative juxtaposes “modern” as sleeping and lazy, with “traditional”, which she describes as being active and awake. In this sense, she chooses to frame the structural issue in a way that creates a space for her to do something about it. In a previous interview, Mama Bokolo stated: “It’s nice because I am not suffering because of that garden. I know that if you plant, you eat. And if you’re sleeping, you’re not eating” (Mabel Bokolo, personal interview, 26 February 2014). What Mama Bokolo proposes, then, is the reclamation of individual agency and empowerment through spreading the “green movement”, by sharing her skills and knowledge about gardening so that those who are suffering may be “woken up”.

Similarly to Mama Bokolo, Wandisile noted a feeling of missing traditional values in relation to the prevalence of gangsterism in Khayelitsha:

**Wandisile:** What I’ve come to see in Khayelitsha is that gangsterism is seen as cool, girls love them...there’s a lot of gangsterism within schools, sometimes there are wars at school and they need to be shut down...It’s so misinformed. The lack of knowledge of what opportunities, how many opportunities are available for them to reach their dreams – it’s a matter of seeing their older brothers, their parents not being successful. You know, you have a brother whose sitting around at home who’s basically doing nothing, and there’s you, studying at the same school he studied in, you just lose hope. I think one of the major things within our schools when it comes to gangsterism is lack of good role models...There’s a lot we can blame – the lack of facilities, the government, the community itself for not protecting our kids. In our culture, we say that a child is brought up by the community, it’s within our blood. If you’re seen smoking as an older person walks past he’s going to slap you, if you cry to your mother [about it], she will hit you also. We are very cultured, respectful people. I feel like in our days we have lost our cultural ways by trying to move with the times. In our culture, when a boy becomes too naughty you take him to the bush to become a man. It’s an intense program. They make sure that when you come out there you are a man. When you come out of the bush there are all of these strict rules which bind you, you have to
stick by them for six months, and then there are other rules to stick by for another six months, and then you have to stick by a smaller set of rules for another five years. So it’s a long process, they structure you and make sure you become a man. Afterwards, those values they have taught you become part of you, you don’t even think about them anymore. You become a man. If you were naughty, you would change. That was the main solution. All those big gangsters, you send them to the bush, they come back and they will never join gangs again.

**Emma**: That’s so interesting. So, nowadays, have a lot of the gangsters not been to the bush to be initiated?

**Wandisile**: Yes, many haven’t. But our cultural ways have been lost so much that you can take him and you can send him to the bush but that won’t work.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 19 February 2014)

Not only does Wandisile sense a loss of community connectedness and tradition, but also a lack of good role models, support structures, awareness of opportunities and hence hope. He understands issues such as gangsterism as stemming from a lack of hope - people turning to violence and crime because they have nothing else to aspire too. Indeed, the point Wandisile raises is but one of many factors contributing to a rise in gangsterism (see Van Wyk & Theron, 2005; Sefali, 2014). However, on a deeper level, Mama Bokolo’s and Wandisile’s narratives resonate with the idea that the neoliberal quest for modernity has eroded and devalued cultural and traditional values, has instilled a sense of failure and a loss of hope. In this sense, I think that their narratives challenge disempowerment and structural inequality in South Africa in a pertinent and nuanced way. Importantly, they both choose to describe the issues they see in their communities not as impossible, insurmountable problems (fantasies), but rather, as problems that they, as individuals and communities, have the means and capacity to challenge. There is a space in the situation they describe for them to do something – through a reconnection with traditional values, reclaiming identity and growing a sense of agency. Chwayita had a similar take when she described to me the way that poverty and the township environment constrained success:

**Chwayita**: Last year, I was a mentee at Inkanyezi26. They gave career advice and stuff, so I’m going to be a mentor this year, mentoring those kids who come from the exact places I know. I know it’s hard to stay motivated in those places, because there are few people who make it. I can actually count them – there’s about two, or one. *Ja*, there are few people who make it and when you’re trying to

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26 Inkanyezi is a student-run organisation based at the UCT, and forms part of the official Ubunye Development Agency, a registered non-profit organisation based at the university. They seek to address social needs in Cape Town by empowering learners with mentorship and information on post-matric options, scholarships, and bursaries to help them “realise their potential”. The name ‘Inkanyezi’ is in isiXhosa and means “let us shine” [http://www.inkanyezi.org.za/oldsite/].
make a life for yourself, people don’t really support you, because they’re jealous and stuff like that. Also, it’s noisy, where I come from. Every week people go out and party, I don’t know why! Seriously, my brother does it sometimes and I’m like no! I just want to chill! Dude…your life is a party. So ja, it’s hard to stay motivated because there are few people around who have the same interests as you.

Emma: What else do you think makes it difficult for kids who were at your school, for instance, to “make it”?

Chwayita: First of all, the school is a joke. The school has teachers who are not really devoted. I don’t want to put it in a bad way, but they’re not devoted, they don’t go out of their way to help a child. And they know, it’s a black school, it’s a government school, it’s not private and the resources are not there. So, that’s the first thing, and the second thing would be that there’s a lot of peer pressure around and there’s always gangsters fighting. People don’t go out on a Friday and study, they go out and stab each other because they’re from different areas. So that’s why it’s so hard to make it. That’s why I salute someone who comes from there and is studying. I think it’s because the environment just doesn’t stimulate people to study, it’s just not inspirational like this [indicates to the grounds of UCT around us].

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 28 February 2014)

Once again, it is significant that, being deeply aware of structural/racial inequality and constraints, Chwayita chooses to frame the problem in a way that enables her to find solutions in which she can play a role (i.e. mentoring). While Chwayita does not disregard the enormity of the challenge of inequality in South Africa, she does not treat it as a hopeless situation either. The narratives of Mama Bokolo, Wandisile and Chwayita all show an awareness of the wider issues, but it is how they read these broad problems and find a way to make a contribution that is noteworthy. It is their openness to tackling the situation head-on and not simply seeking an alternative reality that makes these people stand out to me as agents of change.

As some post-development authors argue, to describe only the hegemonic nature of the “dominant” discourse is to give it unjustified and unwarranted power (e.g. Escobar, 2000; Agostino, 2007). I think that it is therefore important to note that while the participants spoke about “problems” and, in the cases of Mama Bokolo and Wandisile, valued tradition and the past very highly, they did not frame these as capitalocentric nor did they allow them to become fantasies of an “imaginary wholeness” (Byrne & Healy, 2006). Rather, I interpret their narratives as working within the current antagonisms and constraints, creating a diversity of solutions towards a more productive engagement with the supposed dominance of capitalist
economic development. Indeed, in their own ways, each of the people I interacted with intrinsically understood that “the Big Other does not exist” (Byrne & Healy, 2006: 251); that not only are there many diverse ways to achieve wellbeing, but also that these are already happening, they are in motion, yet invisible if viewed within the hegemonic discourse. In this sense, I argue that through the way that these people are engaging with the economy and speaking about what they do, they are reclaiming the economy as a space to construct wellbeing.

**Conclusion**

But, you may ask, what is it that enables these people to be creators at all? To hold such a hopeful view of their capacity to create change? How have they come to identify with a politics of the possible? While these are questions which I cannot confess to know the full answers to, I can offer some of my observations and interpretations. Importantly, as I have stressed throughout this chapter, the answers are not clear cut, or fully knowable. Rather, they are ambiguous, messy and hybrid, full of contingency and incongruence.

An aspect of many of the discussions throughout my research was the juxtaposition between how the people whom I collaborated with described their hopes for social well-being and acting in more humane ways in the economy alongside their desires for bigger houses, more money and (in some cases) a fancy car. Often in the moment of discussion, I found it difficult to reconcile this capitalist tendency towards material wealth and accumulation with the ideals of a more just, social wellbeing. Simultaneously, despite many of their experiences of inequality and living in material poverty and alongside the service delivery protests on the streets, there was a sense that they would not rely on government structures to solve these problems. Rather, each of the people I worked with, in their own way, agreed that citizens themselves needed to take on the responsibility for acting in the world in better ways if they wanted to see change. It is these juxtapositions, though, that provide some insight into what motivated the people I collaborated with to actively reclaim the economy.

As I have mentioned several times throughout this chapter, the narratives of the co-creators of this research, although in contestation of capitalist ways of being, are inextricably intertwined with neoliberal, western, capitalist notions of development. The underlying premise of the neoliberal agenda (although not expressed plainly as per se) is that citizens are left to fare for
themselves; are made responsible for their own wellbeing. One afternoon, Chwayita commented to me:

“No-one is ever going to make a change if we just sit and think that someone else will do it. That was the turning point in my life, when I thought that no-one was ever doing anything, they were just complaining about the government. Everyone is just complaining. That’s why I just feel like you need to be the change you want to see. You have to go out there and do your thing”

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 14 March 2014)

It is somewhat ironic that her words are, in a sense, complying with the very system she is contesting. However, as I have attempted to show throughout this chapter, it is the acknowledgement of this hybridity that is paramount if we wish to consider and grow a community economy. I understand each of the people I worked alongside as actively appropriating aspects of the capitalist/neoliberal discourse for their own advantage. Through the lens of this simultaneous compliance and resistance, the act of articulating such development discourses might be seen as a way of creating a space for politically progressive change that does not tend towards a fantastical Utopia. Instead of either perpetuating or overthrowing the current system, these people are choosing to create alternative possibilities within it. They are creating space for a credible, visible diverse economy.

Therefore, in this chapter I have tried to capture the hybridity and nuances of people’s everyday narratives to better understand what they can contribute to an understanding of a community economy. What I have discussed here is just one part of a “process of empowerment whereby people not only begin to believe that their actions matter, but also feel emboldened to imagine a more promising future and ways to realize it” (Zuern, 2011: 43), what Appadurai (2004) calls the “capacity to aspire” or what Gibson-Graham (2002) might term “resubjectification”. In the following chapter I will think about some of the other relationships, places, objects, beliefs and ideas that enable such becoming and which offer the possibility of expanding the hope described here, framing the discussion in terms of space and scale.
Prelude one

Mama Bokolo, Ludwe and I sat out in the garden at the Nyanga People’s Gardening Centre on slightly wonky, upturned, plastic crates. Rays of sun streamed through the branches of the fruit tree above us and I used a rolled up newspaper to shield my eyes. Around us, I could hear taxis hooting, children shrieking as they played soccer on the street, sellers crying out to passers-by at the nearby meat market, a tinny radio blasting out RnB. The acrid stench of burnt meat and smoke permeated the air. In the garden, however, I felt a profound sense of peace, as the compost heap steamed in the heat, and birds twittered where they drank at the dripping tap. Despite the commotion, movement and chatter outside, there was stillness where we sat in-amongst the plants. I tried to get a sense of how Mama Bokolo felt about her garden:

Emma: Mama, can you tell me something about what your garden means to you?
Ludwe: For her, it’s not only about…it’s about people’s lives, to help people see. It’s to give people hope. For her, it’s not just the money. She’s also using herbs from the garden to make medicines.
Mama B: Uqgirha mna27! [Pointing to herself]
Ludwe: Mama was once sick, she was spiritually ill. She couldn’t walk. It was a spiritual struggle. The sickness was accorded to spiritual purposes. She accepted the calling and thereafter she was fine. She is now ugqirha. She is doing healing here in the garden.
Emma: So Mama, is this healing, the spiritual aspect, linked to the garden?
Mama B: Yes, seeing everyone greening their land, every little space is green – it’s healing itself. You come in from the dry land outside [indicates outside of the garden], you’ve got this empty feeling, but then you come in and that feeling just changes without you controlling it. I believe a green community will be able to develop the healing. It is healing that will not be driven, but it will just come in. You’re feeling down or sad or beaten down and then you come in and that just goes away.
Emma: It’s working! Because that’s how I feel when I come into your garden.

27 isiXhosa phrase, “I am a doctor”.
Mama B: [laughs] Also, I just have the skill to take care of the soil, and then from the soil there are many things that come out…I can’t control it, it is a calling. The ones who were living before, they are the ones that drive the body. I can dig and prepare the soil, but the land will tell me what to plant. It is a spiritual calling, a connection to the ancestors.

(Mabel Bokolo, personal interview, 5 March 2014)

When I arrived at the garden centre a few weeks later, Mama Bokolo was sitting cleaning the dirt off freshly pulled radishes and breaking off pieces of pumpkin vine, piling them into a cardboard box at her feet which was filled with an array of different vegetables. She told me that she was making up a “healing box” for a man who was crippled who came to her for help. When I inquired, she said that no, it was not part of the Abalimi program, she did it because of her own heart for the people:

Mama B: I love helping people, it is within my blood; it is part of me, a living thing. Ja, I don’t know how to explain…but by giving people skills and knowledge, I am trying to eliminate the cause of poverty. It is in my veins, the helping is within.

Emma: So, Ma Bokolo, do you think that by helping people and fighting poverty, that is part of the economy? Why?

Mama B: Mm, yes. Mm, it’s a deep question. The way I see it as fitting in is where people, let’s say people who are suffering with TB and other diseases and yet on this side I am capable of sharing the skills and the knowledge with the people. Those people who are suffering with diseases and other sicknesses are able to be healed with the skills and the knowledge that are within the garden movement. The youth that are stuck in drugs and crime are able to be skilled and trained in the garden movement, which is how I see it as to fit into the economy. Even the rapists themselves, they will spend a lot of time which is engaging themselves in skills and knowledge, working hard. So there will be no time to seize, to do the bad things and think the bad things. So, they are in the movement. Their focus is in the garden.

Emma: That is amazing, Mama! And a big task too. What are some of things that help you to do this?

Mama B: Well there are seeds and seedlings, which I get from Abalimi. The soil, it is also important, and the compost that I make here. Outside I do the herbs and the medicines, so that the money from Abalimi can go further. People bring their energies inside, they help by sharing the energy, the skills, the knowledge.

(Mabel Bokolo, personal interview 24 March 2014)
Innovate the Cape is a project aimed at all high school learners in Cape Town. On their application form they ask: “Are you a high school learner with a bright idea to solve a relevant problem in your community?” Interestingly however, in 2013 all the students who participated came from schools on the Cape Flats, with none hailing from more affluent, whiter, former Model C schools or the high-income Southern Suburbs area. Stefan felt that this may have had to do with the way that the question was framed. At the time, such a framing was intentional as they wanted to work with marginalised students. However, after seeing the potential of the competition for fostering cross-cultural awareness and relationships, he said that they would like to change the way that the question was framed so as to entice a more diverse group of students. From this, an interesting conversation emerged, moving quickly from the topic at hand to a much broader one about place in general:

Stefan: …just the nature of the question being framed as a community problem, just automatically makes people in South Africa think “oh, something in a township that’s wrong”. But I’ve had a change of heart from that. What could be really interesting is when you start mixing people because actually the things we teach in our workshops are very broad skills and useful to anyone really.

Emma: This idea of “community” immediately being likened to issues in the township environment…has this affected the way that you work at Innovate?

Stefan: It’s cool that you ask this question because that’s actually something else we found really interesting, which is how important a space is to the students. Last year our finalists were from Athlone, Khayelitsha and Philippi and just them coming to the CBD and doing something – and they made their own way here, so they would catch a train or a taxi, with their own agency, they would meet up with mentors and just come, on their own – but finding that they can just access places like this with all these resources was really eye-opening to them and sort of opened their world. So they would say a lot of things like “Ja, I just feel like my world is a lot bigger now” and “I never knew I could just come into town and do things”. Also I think that just being in a different environment was helpful, not a place that they’re accustomed to just surviving in, or where there is a lot of crime, or surrounded by poverty. Lots of the places we were in were creative and quite colourful and quite interesting. I think being in that environment was inspiring in itself. And then being at places like UCT where a lot of them never thought they would ever go – now some of them are actually studying there. It’s really cool.

28 During the Apartheid, white parents whose children were at public schools were given the choice to enrol their children at “semi-private” schools reserved for white children. These were termed “Model C” schools and although also state-run, were much better in terms of education quality than public schools reserved for children of other races. While today former Model C schools accept children of all races, their slightly higher fees mean that historically marginalised learners are still underrepresented.
So, I think it just makes them feel like they are included in Cape Town, because it’s very easy to think “no, I am just part of Khayelitsha”, but actually its part of a whole city.

**Emma:** Mm, I was also thinking that there is no fixed space where Innovate the Cape happens, it’s happening in many different spaces all the time.

**Stefan:** Ja, I really like that because I don’t really feel like we’re just one entity doing one thing with a very narrow scope. I kind of feel like our role is to fill gaps in different places – to see what is needed in different areas and how we can have a role there. So I really like that and especially last year we didn’t have any offices, we’d often just use free spaces, I’d go round to different coffee shops, and I would use UCT a lot. And people would also just offer us spaces. It was amazing. But I think just the fact that you are moving round a lot also is quite cool in terms of the space you’re in in your mind. You don’t get bogged down by things being the same every day.

(Stefan Louw, personal interview, 14 March 2014)

Stefan went on to describe to me how disparate the Innovate collective is. In fact, they have all met together in person only once: the rest of their working relationship has been carried out online over the past year and a bit. They have co-ordinated community experts and volunteers over email, information and advice from partners at Harvard and MIT over Skype and in Stefan’s words, “well, Google Hangouts is one thing we milk!” (Stefan Louw, 14 March 2014).

**Introduction**

In the previous chapter I considered how individuals in Cape Town are reclaiming the economy in diverse, hybrid ways so as to privilege a myriad of different activities under the banner of the economy, not just capitalist ones. Advocating for and embracing a diverse economy is, I have argued (along with authors such as J.K. Gibson-Graham), paramount to hoping for and realising a better world. It is a “politics of the possible” (Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010).

However, the conceptualisation of the community economy has been criticized for its romanticised notions of community and place-based practices. It is seen to uncritically embrace communal practices as inherently good and “authentic”, ignoring the hierarchies and power imbalances which are present in local settings too (Aguilar, 2005; Kelly, 2005; Samers, 2005). In addition, for many critics, the community economy is seen as “weak theory”; its vision of “disarticulated, place-based movements, of multiple experiments, and
no necessarily organised front” no match for the “natural” hegemony of the capitalist market (Gibson-Graham, 2014: 83). Not only do such critiques appear in the literature, but I have frequently encountered versions of them in from friends, family and people who have asked about my project. Often people comment that my ideas are idealistic or romanticised, that small-scale, localized practices stand no chance standing up against the “capitalist” economy. Somehow, “when ‘community’ and ‘economy’ are put together, the power, expansiveness, the universality of the latter are compromised and constrained, rendered as face-to-face, human, small-scale, caring, and above all local … positioned as ‘other’ to the so-called ‘real’ economy” (Gibson-Graham, 2006: 86).

During my time researching with Mama Bokolo, Chwayita, Stefan and Wandisile I encountered something quite different. The narratives they shared with me were not constrained by notions of bounded locality, they did not see their efforts in the binary and they did not feel threatened by some “immutable capitalist force”. Indeed, their actions were human, small-scale, local and caring, but they were also filled with mobility, expansiveness and inextricably connected to multiple actors (human and non-human) at various scales. As Palomino-Schalscha (2011: 186) articulates it, “the geographical imagination put forward by [the people I engaged with] is the result of a meeting and mingling of people, ideas, knowledges, demands and practices from diverse and hybrid trajectories”. With the research intention of amplifying and growing a discourse of a diverse economy, I found that thinking and speaking about what they did in hybrid, open, fluid terms was much more enabling and empowering. Such geographical imaginations cannot possibly be defined by hierarchical rankings or separated into “little” and “large” politics. Rather, the people I engaged with occupied and drew on multiple scales; their politics overflowed the lines and boundaries drawn about them.

Therefore, in this chapter I posit, along with Doreen Massey (2005, 2007) and others (such as Escobar, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2002), that in envisioning a better world, there is a need to reimagine the way we think about place and scale. I will argue that reclaiming place requires acknowledging it as a flourishing, relational site of possibility, agency and political transformation, one which does not fit into the categories of either global or local but is simultaneously both and neither. Going beyond this theorisation, I will use ANT as a “sophisticated analytical tool” for thinking about the extent and reach of the diverse economic actions of the people whom I engaged with during my research (Palomino-
Schalscha, 2011: 197). I will use ANT to trace the intricate multiplicity of human and non-human actors which construct the relations through which places, such as Cape Town, are made. Therefore, through considering the narratives of the people I engaged with and some of my observations from “the field”, in this chapter I question what forms of global and local can be uncovered by a re-imagining of the scales at which community economies operate and how this constitutes reclamation of space, of the in-between. Following this, I will question what articulating a geographical imagination of being in-between means for the process of resubjectification of the people I engaged with – and how they are making a radical creative space which “affirms and sustains [their] subjectivity, which gives [them] new location to articulate [their] sense of the world” (hooks, 1990: 153).

In this chapter I have chosen to interweave a review of critical geographical literature about place and scale with the narratives of the Capetonians who I engaged with (in particular I will focus on Mama Bokolo’s and Stefan’s narratives), rather than separating literature and experience into disparate sections. This is done to represent visually a deconstruction of binaries and convention of text to you, the reader, acknowledging that the experiences and narratives of the “local” people who I worked with are just as important and intermingled with the “global” as the “formal” literature is. It seems fitting to replicate the messy, everydayness of relational place in the way that I write, especially since I will focus on Massey’s (2005) understanding of place as relational.

**Once more, the global prevails - or does it?**

Imagining the community economy as a “politics of the possible” is a key aim of the thesis lying before you. Gibson-Graham (2006: xxxiii) argue that, “unmapped and unmoored”, the community economy is “a site of becoming and potentiality”. However, Aguilar (2005), along with many other scholars, has argued that “romanticised notions of community lurk behind its very definition” – it is seen as inherently good, local, based on solidarity and equated with an ethic of “small is beautiful” (Schumacher, 1973). Similarly, Kelly (2005) purports that there is a danger in uncritically celebrating communitarian-bases for exchange, as these are never free from contestation and power imbalances.

In prelude two, I recounted how Stefan described that simply by framing the Innovate question as a community problem, “automatically makes people in South Africa think – oh, something in a township that’s wrong”, which seemed to define the socio-economic bracket
of students who entered the competition (Stefan Louw, personal interview, 14 March 2014). Such characterisations of “community” are indeed rife, not just in the literature, but in everyday conversations in the news, online, in political debate, by corporates and even through many grassroots NGOs. Sadly, these discourses take the possibility and potentiality out of community economies; as Escobar contends, they result in an “erasure of place”, a discourse of the local which sees it as secondary, inferior to and produced by a much more powerful global force. Similarly, Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 7) argue that such debates rely on space as a central organising principle, but at the same time shut down any meaningful engagement with it: space “disappears from analytical purview”.

In one interview, Wandisile described to me how little the “outside” world expected of township schools:

> I was lucky because I am a talkative person so I had a lot of friends from different places man, like I had friends from Camps Bay High; from San Souci...I had a lot of friends. So, there was this thing, they used to look down on the kids studying in local schools. And yet, I’m from Luhlaza and I didn’t like how people used to see us as people from the townships, you know and when we speak in English and people would say “where do you study?” and I’d say “I’m from Luhlaza.” They’d laugh and say I was lying because no-one from Luhlaza can speak English, you know, people from local township schools are unable to speak English and they are not educated enough and so forth.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 19 February 2014)

To me, Wandisile is articulating a deep set structural inequality which sees people such as himself excluded from society, denied agency and possibility. I see his experience as mirroring the binary opposition between global and local, which codes the local as “place, community, defensiveness, bounded identity, in situ labour, non-capitalism, the traditional” (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 3), while the global is presented as “the scale from which there is apparently no escape” (Herod & Wright, 2002: 1), equated with space, capitalism, fluidity, agency, modernity and the political (Escobar, 2001). The casting of the townships as remote, passive and somehow isolated from the rest of the city tells a single story in which the exclusion and poverty of these local areas is justified as a necessary effect of the global world.

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29 I have used this word simply to emphasise the stark binaries that still exist as relics of Apartheid between wealthy and poor areas in Cape Town. The conceptualisation of a local “inside” being shaped by a global “outside” is also one that is spoken about by Massey in her book World City (2007).

30 Camps Bay High and Sans Souci Girls’ High are both former Model C schools in medium to high-income suburbs in Cape Town.

31 Luhlaza Secondary School, based in the township of Khayelitsha, is where Wandisile undertook his high school education. It is an under-resourced public school.
order. As Palomino-Schalscha (2011: 173) writes, such essentialisation removes marginalised people and places from “implications in broader issues”: they are powerless in the face of global capitalism and play no role in its construction (or deconstruction). Globalisation obliterates and reduces difference, it closes down multiplicity and the possibility of alternative narratives and ways of being (Massey, 1999).

In the South African city context (where cities such as Cape Town, due to their deeply embedded racial stratification, can still be described as reflecting the Apartheid design) such binary oppositions often come down to socio-economic divisions around race and class. Acknowledging that these are rough binary categories which overlook nuances (but that nonetheless reflect the legacy of Apartheid racial-economic divides of the present) wealthy, white South Africans live in the metropolitan inner city and suburbs, where people are mobile, working in high powered jobs and making change in the city. Relegated to the townships on the outskirts are the poor, immobile, black South Africans who work as unskilled labourers and casual employees or are unemployed, defined by tradition and poverty. This place-based majority are seen to have little role to play in the world of the globalised majority. These notions of place/space lead to a conceptualisation of space as “a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory and societal organization and inscribed”, and which needs no deeper analysis (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992: 7). This tendency considers the global as the only scale that matters and the local as its victim, product, and playing field (Escobar, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2002; Palomino-Schalscha, 2011).

Even authors who write in response and opposition to total hegemony, such as Hardt and Negri (2000), cede power to the global in arguing that any place-based form of resistance must “upscale” to be global in itself if it hopes to challenge the global dominance of capital. This resistance is embedded in binary differentials of power, denying any possibility of escape (Gibson-Graham, 2002; Healy & Graham, 2008). It is due to this perceived inescapability of global hegemony that I find the critiques of the community economy mentioned above to be somewhat missing the point of J.K Gibson-Graham’s work: identifying with a binary opposition of scale, a fantasy and a construction, denies any possibility of escape (Byrne & Healy, 2006; Healy & Graham, 2008). Conversely, I think

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32 These sentences are intentionally stratifying and hegemonic so as to depict the depth of structural inequality that pervades life in South Africa. Of course, the South African city in 2014 is no longer as divided as I have portrayed (as it was during Apartheid years) and in reality, the racial divides of race and class are not nearly as binary. However, these conceptions, as relics of Apartheid, still very much define the South African city for many of its citizens.
that the people whom I researched with put forward much more enabling and progressive geographical imaginations: each of them articulated (in their narratives, actions and interactions) the valuable, connected possibilities of their place-based actions to inspire change in the world. By engaging in open, fluid and intermingled ways of thinking about scale and agency, they were able to challenge the hegemonic “global capitalist regime” as well as realise their own agency and ability in doing so. It is therefore the subjugation of place that I will interrogate here through the narratives of the participants I worked with. What might be achieved through a re-imagining of global/local, of the in-between? And what does this mean for the political project of imagining other worlds?

Complicating the divide: Everything-in-between

Geographical imaginings of being in-between

To understand how geographical imaginations can complicate the local/global divide (and create a radical, open, inbetween space) it is useful to consider the ways in which the notion of scale has, in the past few decades, been reconsidered and reimagined in the literature. As Howitt (1993: 38) argues, it is important to realise that the labels we use to describe geographical scale (e.g. local/global, place/space) “need to be understood not as logically distinct, but as internally related to geographical form in a dialectical, non-determinist and multi-directional manner”. In this sense, geographical scale can be understood as

complexly constituted by an infinite multiplicity of conditions; it changes continually as those conditions change; it is pushed and pulled in contradictory directions as its myriad conditions change at different rates and in different ways... It has no essence, no stable core, no central contradiction. Instead it is decentred, existing in complex contradiction and continual change (Gibson-Graham, 1990:142, in Howitt, 1993: 38).

In this sense then, we cannot simply understand geographical scale as a fixed hierarchy of surfaces bounded in space and time. Rather, scale is a complexly intermingled “space of flows” (Castells, 1983, 2012) porous, unbounded and mobile. But more than this, it is a product of a multiplicity of relationships and interrelationships, always unfinished and being made; it is in a constant process of becoming (Massey, 1999; Featherstone & Painter, 2013). Massey (1999: 283) therefore understands space (and place) as socially constituted:
It is the sphere of meeting up (or not) of multiple trajectories, the sphere where they co-exist, affect each other, maybe come into conflict. It is the sphere both of their independence (co-existence) and of their interrelation. Subjects/objects are constructed through the space of those interrelations...it is the product of the intricacies and the complexities, the interlockings and the non-interlockings, of relations from the unimaginably cosmic to the intimately tiny.

Importantly, Rose (1999: 247) comprehends these relationalities as performed – “constituted through iteration rather than through essence” – so that space is practiced. However, this performative space is not interminably malleable and dynamic, as certain forms of space tend to recur, “their repetition a sign of the power that saturates the spatial” (Rose, 1999: 248)

Indeed, space can be understood as a strategy of power, accounted for by the persistence of some configurations of power more than others (Foucault, 1977; Rose, 1999). In her book *World City*, Massey (2007) attempts to understand how these unequal social, economic and political relationships of power that structure our world are practiced, through the conceptualisation of “power geometries”. As Escobar (2001: 166) argues, “everything is global and local, but not global and local in the same way”. What he is expressing here are the variable capabilities and positions that different people and places have “to control and influence flows and movements, as well as the reach of their geographical imaginations” (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011: 193). Rather, then, than the “global” being above, or determining of the “local”, these varying geometries of power describe a flat but uneven ontology of space, where multiple scales mix and intermingle (Latham, 2002; Amin & Thrift, 2007).

Place, therefore, is the articulation of a hybrid mixture of “local and more widely stretched relationships” (Latham, 2002: 125).

These ideas help us to think more openly and radically about the role and ability of the community economy (and the people acting within it) to affect significant political change. If space is performative, as Rose (1999) proffers, then we are its performers through our everyday actions and realities and can think, dream and practice other spaces that are more enabling, positive and connected. Soja (1999: 270) calls this the “Thirdspace”, or lived space, which is seen to “provide a new political grounding for collective struggles against all forms of oppression...from the intimacies of the human body to the entrapments built into the global political economy”. Rather than a fixed entity or locality, place becomes an “on-going negotiation and dialogue between a range of actors, knowledges, technologies and objects

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A non-hierarchical, but power-laden landscape or topology. Latham (2002: 131) describes such a topology as “the ways in which relations are stretched and folded, the science of nearness and rifts”. 89
[which] shape politics and daily life” (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011: 193). Where local politics are “viewed with suspicion as a product of sentimental nostalgic identifications [and] exclusionary communitarianism”, through the practicing of place (the negotiation of the plural and transecting trajectories that shape it) is the possibility of a progressive transversal politics of hope (Wills, 2013: 137).

If we are to think beyond simply the local scene of a community garden depicted in Mama Bokolo’s video, or the view of Khayelitsha from atop the hill where Wandisile filmed his video message, these concepts are particularly useful. As Massey et al. (2009: 415) would argue, the images and stories that these videos have captured describe a multiplicity of relationships which extend far beyond the obviously apparent: they represent a “politics of place beyond place”. However, as Palomino-Schalscha (2011: 197) argues, “the generality of [Massey’s] arguments does not provide enough detail about how to understand and trace the complexity and multiplicity of objects, ideas and subjectivities that construct the relations through which places are made”. Authors such as Ruming (2009), Latham (2002) and Law (1992, 2004), argue that ANT is a more refined analytical tool or methodology for understanding and following these relationalities and associations.

Seeking to abandon binaries altogether, ANT understands the world as a mobile arrangement of human and non-human actors which connect and interact so as to create (and make durable), as well as unmake, the social (Latour, 1987, 2005). By imagining scale as fluid, mobile networks, rather than static levels to be negotiated, there is a widened opportunity for rethinking the radical political possibility posed by disparate, place-based movements such as community economies (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011). As Jóhannesson & Bærenholdt (2009: 18) argue, ANT “offers a perspective to study the work of localising and globalising, understood as practices that render particular actor networks so stabilised and robust they can extend over long distances, but still remain local at all points”. Importantly too, it aims to displace the supremacy of human agency, to see actancy as human, non-human and more-than-human, material and textual (Gibson-Graham, 2014). Therefore, ANT tries to follow the various connections, linkages, entanglements, narratives and flows which fold together to embody the actor-network. I will now use ANT to unpack Mama Bokolo’s video message.
In her video message, Mama Bokolo chose to begin by performing an everyday scene in her garden. Wearing a traditional, *shweshwe*\(^{34}\) dress, she got me to film her climbing out of her car and introducing the Nyanga People’s Garden Centre. She unlocked the gate, walked into the garden, and, picking up a hoe, pretended to work at the soil (see Figure 21). As she worked, she pointed out carrots and spinach seedlings, which would soon be big enough to send via *bakkie*\(^{35}\) to the HoH packing shed, where produce from a number of gardens is sorted by volunteers and employees before being taken to the Southern Suburbs. There, the vegetable boxes are delivered to various pick-up points around the city to be collected by the box-scheme patrons. In the video you see a large pile of compost, a watering hose and sprinkler, a customer coming to buy seedlings, the overcast sky, up-cycled plant holders made of water drums and plastic bottles (see Figure 22) and Mama Bokolo’s *mielie* plants growing up against the fence.

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\(^{34}\) *Shweshwe* is a printed, dyed cotton fabric used in South African traditional clothing and is characterised by its geometric patterns. Ironically, this distinctly African fabric has colonial ties to Europe (Dudley, 2012). Known as *seshoeshoe* in Sesotho (one of South Africa’s 11 official languages), it is named for the Basotho King Moshoeshoe, who, it is believed, was gifted a similar fabric by German or French missionaries in the mid-1800s (Holmes, 2013).

\(^{35}\) An open-backed truck or yute.
The moments re-presented in the video, on deeper inspection, do not simply consist of what is visually present: the vivid locality of the garden, the soil and the vegetables are all shaped through the mixing of various and multiple trajectories through time and space. Not only has the film itself travelled thousands of kilometres across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans on my computer’s hard-drive and from it to be watched by you, wherever you may be, but the scene that is depicted has been created through the intertwining and coming together of disparate elements that include a driving license and car (see Figure 23), childhood memories, colonial legacies\textsuperscript{36}, markets, roads, spiritual dreams, Abalimi, the dry and busy township outside the garden, customers, \textit{Ubuntu}, traditional values, research, connections to the ancestors, the energy and skills of helpers, mobile phones, Mama’s beautiful beadwork (see Figure 24), healing and herbs, seedlings and soil (see Figure 25), a dress-making factory\textsuperscript{37}, emails, overseas volunteers, compost, money, tour groups and international funding. All these elements and their unique trajectories (among countless others) are enlisted in networks that enable this garden in Nyanga, Cape Town, to come into being, run by Mama Bokolo. In this sense, I understand Mama Bokolo and the other people (as well as places, ideas and objects) I engaged with during my research as “complicating the divide between

\footnote{36 For instance, see footnote 34}
\footnote{37 I refer here to the dress-making factory where Mama Bokolo held employment so as to subsidize her living when she moved to Cape Town (see Mama Bokolo’s vignette (pages 22-24))}
local/global and articulating multiple scales”, as they exist by the very encounter of all these elements from near and far away and from human, natural and supernatural realms (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011: 175).

Figure 23: Mama Bokolo looks over towards her car. She is proud of achieving her drivers’ license, which allows her to travel easily and spread the “green movement” beyond the fences of the garden. Source: Still from Mama Bokolo’s video message (2014)

Figure 24: Mama Bokolo, wearing her beautiful shweshwe dress displays to me the beaded necklace that she crafted to sell for additional income. Source: Emma Hosking (2014)
This geographical imaginary, which emphasises networks comprised by a range of different “actors”, resonates with Amin and Thrift’s (2007: 145) conceptualisation of the economy. For them, the economy is an act of many goals, pursued through a “bewildering array of inputs … ranging from money, things, knowledge, and buildings, to technologies, scripts, passions, and people”. Similarly, Gibson-Graham (2014: 87) argue that the engagement of community economy thinking with actor-networks, offers clues as to how to “act in friendship with the non-human, and to show how a diverse array of non-capitalist actions (that are already taking place every day alongside and entangled with capitalist ones) can be “supported and made viable by a vast array of socio-technical devices”. Because ANT is more interested in the extension and range of networks than fixed categories of scale, it understands “small actors and small transformations [as] remaking the world, as well as large ones” (Latham, 2002: 120). In this sense, the bewildering array of people, places, objects, ideas, texts and materials which come together to create the local sites of action where the participants of this project engaged with the world might be seen as constitutively powerful, inhabiting the entire natural and social landscape. These ideas, therefore, about the relational, performative nature of space, along with the deeper analytical lens of ANT are useful in thinking about how the participants articulated their roles in reclaiming and reimagining the economy of Cape Town and beyond.
Being more than “micro”: Localising actions, expanding politics

Although in many respects the work and lives of the people I engaged with were decidedly grounded, each put forward a geographical imagination which transcended the local through multiple connections, linkages and, as Doreen Massey (2007) would describe them, trajectories between people, sites, ideas, objects, histories and environments. I argue that though their projects are place-based, people such as Mama Bokolo and the others I worked alongside are in fact engaging in a politics of place beyond place. Despite dealing and interacting with every day, localised issues within their communities, they are negotiating and resisting boundaries placed around them by hegemonic discourses surrounding racial and gender discrimination, capitalism, poverty and development. Complicating the divide, I understand them to be actively rearticulating their identities as hybrid mixtures of multiple trajectories, connections, networks and histories. I recognize them to be opening up enabling sites of possibility and diversity, as well as stretching out and amplifying the possibility of progressive political change beyond the local.

In prelude one, Mama Bokolo described to me how her skills, knowledge, the seeds and seedlings, soil and compost, energies of the helpers, money from Abalimi and money from her “outside” work had the ability to heal the community of illness, crime and poverty through the garden. I understand her to be rearticulating and re-asserting her own ability/agency to make change despite the challenging, structurally unequal circumstances of her place in Cape Town. On their website 38, Abalimi Bezekhaya describe their work as enabling and supporting micro-farmers to grow their own vegetables to sustain their families, as well as providing the micro-farmers access to markets as a way out of abject poverty. Much of what Mama Bokolo did was supported by Abalimi (for example, the provision of seeds, learning to drive, market access). However, in the way that she approached her work in the garden, she was not willing to be defined as simply “poor”, “local” or “micro”. Her vision transcended the scope of the Abalimi farming project; it was something much more connected, hybrid and multidimensional. She was healing the community, expanding the garden movement and doing the bidding of the ancestors, following their call to look after the environment and people. This hybrid integration of trajectories is key to understanding the way in which Mama Bokolo was complicating the divide and engaging in a politics of place beyond place.

Earlier in that day’s interview, Ludwe, in some awe and excitement, had translated the following to me while Mama Bokolo moved away to answer her cellphone:

…Wow, wow, wow…Mama she is living this, she is doing this, she is breathing this, and then she goes to the Eastern Cape on holidays, she arrives in a place where it is filled with weeds, things are going slow, people are sitting down. And then she thought at this time, at her age of sixty, she only wants to take it to that place and say wake up…Here [in Nyanga People’s Garden Centre] she is collecting all the little pieces that she has been given – the skills, the knowledge, the resources – all the little pieces that people are offering, she collects them and keeps them safe for once she reaches that sixty years she can go to the place and wake them up. Even though she will walk slow, she will be able to be there for them...

(Ludwe Qamata and Mabel Bokolo, personal interview, 5 March 2014)

Despite the profound locality of the work Mama Bokolo does on a daily basis (working the soil, planting seedlings, pulling weeds, selling compost), the actor-networks that she performs, (re)produces and co-creates can be traced outwards and yonder the boundary of the garden walls. For instance, I understand Mama Bokolo’s retirement dream, which reoccurred several times throughout her narrative, as actively stretching out the politics of what she was doing beyond the garden and even beyond the location of Nyanga. She was engaging in a politics of place beyond place; shaping her work in Cape Town to engage in a future politics back home in the Eastern Cape and, at a deeper level, contesting the underlying structural inequality that caused people to “sit down” and “sleep” 39. The complex intermingling between Mama Bokolo, the garden (in the city) and “the other side” (the rural Eastern Cape), as well as a multiplicity of other actors blur the boundaries of place and time; each are a product of this constitutive interdependence, they are negotiating and transforming the “geometries of power” (Massey, 2007).

Similarly, her sense of the role of the garden in terms of healing the community far outstrips the simple garden-food-market-income logic that one might correspond with the term “community garden”. I understand Mama Bokolo to be re-appropriating discourses of the global (discourses which define the local as passive, disconnected, marginalised and isolated) by hybridising and reclaiming them to suit her own pursuits so as to shape the future of diverse and disparate places, spaces and lives beyond her garden in Nyanga. Through her narratives and actions, Mama Bokolo could be recognised as actively building connections, 39 For context and discussion, see chapter 4
balancing energies of healing and honouring the ancestors, creating possibility and hopefulness in the community and integrating her garden space into a politics of place beyond place so as to disturb global discourses of local passivity and dislocation, while also enrolling a number of more-than-human actors.

Stefan was also negotiating a localised, but beyond-local politics in his work as director of Innovate. As I related in prelude two, with the Innovate team strewn all around the world – in Kenya, Sierra Leone, America, Denmark and Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as volunteers from all around the wider Cape Town area – the work they do with school students based in Cape Town is shaped by the global and shaping it too. In this sense, he understands his role as an employee of the organisation as:

… just about connecting the dots. I realised, hold on, we’re not actually doing anything. We are just kind of like the glue. We’re the platform: we bring the students, the resources, the experts and advisors together, all into one place and stuff happens…We are trying to play the role of being a connector or interlocutor, which is to try and drive this innovation project and youth and get all the people involved that need to be: the public who have certain skills, the students, advisors and helpers from abroad, arranging venues and funding and all of that. All that is given by people and we just connect it all together…

(Stefan Louw, personal interview, 14 March 2014)

This geographic imaginary blurs the boundaries of place, with relationships and connections defining the importance of what the organisation does, rather than simply the local change that may occur through the student’s projects. Stefan went so far as to say that he did not really care if their projects failed or not. While the projects are important, the core value of Innovate is, as I recounted Stefan describing in the prelude, “opening up the students’ worlds”, which can only be achieved through expanding relationships and spaces beyond the local, by enabling them to realise their own beyond-local agency. In a sense this is also what Mama Bokolo was trying to do. The projects and activities on the ground are just the catalyst for empowerment, enablement and becoming at a scale which extends far outside of place itself.

As Gibson-Graham (2003: 50) write, “globalisation discourse situates the local (and thus all of us) in a place of subordination, as ‘the other within’ of the global order. At worst, it makes victims of localities and robs them of self-determinism and agency”. On one hand then, through celebrating and embracing students’ potentials to make change in their own
communities and mobilising local actors, such as volunteers, venues, schools, environment and traditional or embodied knowledge, Innovate could be seen as an effort to localise change, instead of relying on external experts or development practitioners. On the other hand, however, they are enabling local projects to transcend place, reimagining and expanding the possibilities of practicing in community economies at a “global” level by “enlisting in its networks far away actors, institutions…money, reports, websites, phone calls, emails, [Google Hang-outs, YouTube videos and Skype]” (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011: 199).40

The geographical imaginations of Mama Bokolo and Stefan (of being in-between, neither local nor global) demand the recognition that the community economy is a politically powerful yet diffuse, spontaneous and diverse project. If so, it is important to acknowledge that

we on the Left, a) don’t have to abandon place as an arena for the construction of politics and b) part of making a politics of place progressive is to have a politics which is not only introspectively about the local, but is about the local’s relation beyond (Massey et al., 2009: 415).

These “meeting places”, therefore, where diverse, disparate trajectories intersect, are hybridised and negotiated, claimed and re-appropriated, offer a gateway into thinking about how such radical creative spaces open the possibility of a process of resubjectification, whereby subjectivities are remade in empowering ways (Massey, 2007: 88; Palomino-Schalscha, 2011: 194).

Resubjectification: Towards an ethic of the local

The spaces articulated through the geographical imaginations of the people I engaged with are not just important in understanding space as mixed, networked, topological, hybridised and negotiated, but can also be extended to thinking about it as empowering, affirming and sustaining. As expressed by bell hooks (1990: 153), they open the possibility of transformation, “giving us new location to articulate our sense of the world”. Indeed, in the making of these spaces the co-creators practiced and defined their worlds as connected,

40 The concept of the internet as an actor in the actor-network, although of contemporary significance, is not something I have space to discuss here in more detail. However, as you read this chapter keep in mind that internet, emails, websites, online videos etcetera, are actors which (hugely) support people to engage in a politics of place beyond place on a daily basis and have the potential to thoroughly recreate place as we know it.
hopeful and full of possibility. In his video message, Wandisile stands, surveying the sprawling township of Khayelitsha from the vantage of a hilltop lookout. Towards the end of the video, I ask him, from behind the camera, why he chose to film it there. Gazing out over the landscape of shacks and houses, mountains and dunes, cars, roads, peoples’ lives in motion (see Figure 26), he responds:

Ah, well, this is quite a beautiful space. It’s amazing. The view here, it’s *amazing* and you can be able to see Khayelitsha in a different space – you can see how beautiful Khayelitsha is, and you can see how big Khayelitsha is. And you can actually even see the potential right here, the opportunities that are here, you know? When I come here, it’s a place of …I think a lot, I see a lot of opportunities, some opportunities that I don’t think I’ll actually pursue [laughs]…but yeah man, this is a nice thinking space. I just lose it here, I go wild. I start thinking of all the crazy things I want to do with my life. And yeah man, I just get inspired when I am here.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, video message, 24 March 2014)

In the face of discourses which, again and again, define Khayelitsha as a victim of the global order – passive, isolated and deviant from modernisation – Wandisile describes it as a space of beauty, size, possibility, freedom, capacity and opportunity; it makes him “go wild” with ideas, it is inspiring; something infinitely different from what the hegemonic discourse tells us. I argue that the way he describes it is part of becoming and resubjectification; it is a
politics of hope and possibility. Each of the participants, in their own way, reclaimed place as a location of hope through articulating their sense of the world in it: the locality “[becomes] the active subject of its economic experience” (Gibson-Graham, 2003: 50). Rather than being subjected as marginalised “citizens” of capitalism, I see the people I engaged with as “cultivating [their] capacities to imagine, desire, and practice” through their geographical imaginations and articulations of the places they lived in (Gibson-Graham, 2003: 54).

Through articulating space in contextual, non-hegemonic ways, a location for contesting and re-appropriating dominant discourses and living in our own sense of the world can be created. As I depicted in prelude two, Stefan considered creative spaces as of the utmost importance to the success of the project, to inspire change and new ways of seeing the world. For instance, he described to me how the space of a coffee shop in Cape Town or a co-working space in the city and even the colourful Hubspace Khayelitsha could spark new ideas and ways of seeing the world for the students: “I see a problem and I know that I can actually affect change”. It’s not just a hopeless situation anymore. What we found in the students was this very interesting transformation…they were suddenly telling us “Now, I just look at things at home and in my environment and am like, ah, how could I fix that? What could I do there?” There’s this significant change in their outlooks.

(Stefan Louw, personal interview, 14 March 2014)

In this sense, depicting the Cape Flats as a place that is deeply connected to the city of Cape Town and beyond; to coffee shops, designers, retailers, roads, buses, colours, buildings, streets, people, meetings, resources, knowledge, mountains, businesses, tourists, mentors and volunteers in numerous ways and means, could be seen as resisting the dominant strategies of power.

bell hooks (1990: 152) writes of her marginality that

[it] was not a marginality that one wishes to lose, to give up, but rather a site one stays in, one clings to even, because it nourishes one’s capacity to resist…it offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds.

Standing up to the persistent view of the township as a poor, uncreative cul-de-sac, people such as Stefan, the students who participated in the competition (including Chwayita), Mama Bokolo and Wandisile, could be understood as practicing and performing a marginal space that is appealing, connected and empowering (Rose, 1999). Through such a reclamation, the
people, places and attributes of the township are cultivated and (re)subjected as agents of change, into “subjects with economic capacities who enact and create a diverse economy through their daily practices” (Gibson-Graham, 2003: 55, original emphasis). In this sense, Khayelitsha might be seen as, in the words of Wandisile (Nqeketho, personal interview, 12 March 2014), “a gold mine of opportunities…a wonderful place, an emerging, abundant and vibrant economy”.

Similarly, the healing that Mama Bokolo talks about, aspires to, practices and performs is shaped by and connected to articulations of culture, tradition and of her sense of the world. Through her garden, the healing and her deep sense of connection to the ancestors, she is expressing a desire for community wellbeing, sustainability, beauty, freedom and justice. Contesting the dominant strategies of power, of human control and of passivity she described how she is a body through which the ancestors work. This spiritual understanding complexly transcends the local and the position of subjected citizen. Through a privileging of the co-creation of place by human and more-than-human actors, such as spirits, ancestors, green plants, herbs/medicines and even the land and soil, I understand Mama Bokolo as expanding the terrain of political change and possibility. In this sense, the ways that the participants related to the places they worked in could be understood as a reclaiming of their place, their capacity to imagine and the possibility of making a change in their communities and beyond.

**Conclusion**

Pieterse (2003: 6) writes that

if the horizon [of the urban political terrain] is extremely limited, spatial configuration continues to produce segregation, fragmentation and exclusion. Alternatively, if the horizons are more open, we are more inclined to use the rich multiplicity of spatial practices to unleash new ways of interaction and engagement.

This comment is, to me, particularly relevant when thinking about the conceptualisation of the community economy in contemporary South Africa and beyond. As I have argued in this chapter, the binary spatial configuration of global versus local has effectively removed marginalised (spatially and economically) people and places from implications in broader issues; hence, limiting the horizons of political possibility and hope beyond capitalism.
This is starkly illustrated in Cape Town, where spatial stratification and segregation based on race and income is still vividly evident, despite Apartheid’s demise. Poor, black Capetonians, living in marginalised areas of the city are regarded as passive, isolated victims of globalisation and their alternative ways of being are disregarded. Such discourses cast diverse economic actors (such as the people I engaged with) as “other” to the capitalist economy: weak, constrained, romanticised, small-scale, local; in other words, of little consequence when contrasted against the “power and might” of the global capitalist economy. I argued that these critiques are somewhat missing the point of Gibson-Graham’s work by identifying with a binary opposition that denies any possibility of escape.

Therefore, through this chapter I have subverted this discourse through a conversation about re-imagining the way we think about place and scale. I have argued that although, indeed, the actions of the people I worked with were small-scale and local, they were also intricately mobile, expansive and connected. They occupied multiple and hybrid scales, relational sites of possibility which did not fit into the categories of either local or global. Understanding space as socially constituted and practiced, I argued that the participants were performing, dreaming, connecting and enabling other worlds through their everyday actions and relations through a politics of place beyond place. Here I used ANT to comprehend and depict some of the linkages, entanglements, narratives and flows which make up the community economy so as to re-imagine it as a vibrant and powerful space for transformation and change.

Importantly, I argued that by drawing on hybrid and multiple trajectories, networks and histories, the people I researched with were actively rearticulating their identities and opening up enabling sites of possibility. In their own way, they reclaimed place as a location of hope through articulating their sense of the world in it. Mama Bokolo, for instance, articulated her vision of her gardening project in terms of healing the community, expanding the green movement and acting on behalf of the ancestors. Her narrative and those of the others I collaborated with could be understood as making new space/horizons in which the actions of the marginalised might be seen as enabling, connected and positive.

I think that these complexly intermingled understandings of the agency of people, space and place offer nuanced, hopeful, and abundantly diverse ways and horizons for creating a diverse economy. Empowering and sustaining, these narratives and understandings are engaged in processes of resubjectification and becoming, of reclaiming place as a site of
politics, and celebrating the agency of everyday people and places to transform their worlds. As connected, appealing actors, these places and people are performing a radical, open, passionate politics of place beyond place, which is powerful in its diffuse diversity and groundedness. In the following chapter, I will consider how we might grow and amplify such politics beyond the people who are already practising them; how we might transform it into a movement.
Chapter 6

Painting the skies: Everyday social (non)movements and resubjectification

Introduction

Through the development of this thesis, I (along with the people I engaged with) have begun to describe some sort of ethical vision for the becoming of a community economy in Cape Town and beyond. We have endeavoured, in the words of Wandisile to “paint the skies” of possibility and opportunity; to perform and foster new spaces in which we might imagine creative and hopeful ways of acting and articulating our own ways of being in the world. Here, building on the ideas put forward in the previous chapters, I will question how we might conceptualise expanding these actions and articulations so as to mobilise ordinary citizens to comprehend their agency in the progressive politics of reclaiming our economy.

For South African cities, there is a rising need to tend to the pivotal concerns of inequality, distributive justice and cosmopolitanism (Pieterse, 2003). As Pieterse (2003) argues, this will require conceptualising, enlarging and engaging with a transgressive urban politics, which extends beyond the frontier of the possible delineated by hegemonic policy and governance structures in the post-Apartheid city. I do not have the space to do justice to the full spectrum of political engagements (which range from national level representative structures, to neocorporatist political forums, direct action or mobilisation, the politics of the grassroots, and symbolic/discursive contestation) which might form part of this progressive urban politics. However, based on the narratives of the people I engaged with and the insights and reflections that were gained through using video as a method, in this chapter I consider the ways in which each of them were engaging in a progressive politics at the margins, the interface, the in-between.

I begin the chapter by bringing together the work of Elke Zuern (2011) and Richard Ballard (2005) to contextualise some of the understandings about social movements and mobilising in post-Apartheid South Africa. This is largely focused on a politics of necessity, mobilising for

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41 Edgar Pieterse’s paper, The limits of possibility (2003: 8) suggests such a conceptual scaffolding to “capture the multiple, interconnected and overlapping spaces of political practices in the city”, which he delineates “into at least five domains of political engagement between the state, the private sector and the civil society at various scales, ranging from the national to the local”.

direct, material demands. However, it is argued that the politics produced by the poor cannot be reduced or simplified, as couched in these demands are desires and aspirations for rights, democracy and progressive political change. Importantly, these authors proffer that the civic movements of the Apartheid-era played an important role in conscientising the marginalised to realise that their actions mattered and to expand their horizons of possibility and hope, a consciousness that has endured through to post-Apartheid social movements. But what about actions which are not as pronounced or overtly in protest, such as the ones I have discussed in the previous chapters?

Fragmented and diverse, I argue that in order to understand the community economy as politically progressive and entangled in imagining what post-Apartheid development in South Africa might look like, it is beneficial to understand it as a social (non)movement – as the quiet encroachment of the ordinary (Bayat, 2010). Despite their diversity, the actors that I engaged with could be understood as collectively performing community and development, asserting their right to the city, even though not through a necessarily organised front or ideology. Drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau (1984), I contend that if we are to appreciate the everyday (including the community economy) as a significant and persistent site of struggle and development, there is a need to understand politics as happening beyond the horizon of direct mobilisation and protest too. In this chapter I use these ideas to gain insight into how the people I engaged with were building the future in the present in simultaneously quiet, subversive, hybrid, transformative and radical ways.

Lastly, drawing in particular on the video messages created and shared by/between the participants, I contend that the progressive politics of reclaiming the economy requires that ordinary citizens realise the potentiality of their everyday actions and lives. I question how we might go about expanding and sustaining the quiet encroachment of resubjectification and the community economy and what the role of people such as Mama Bokolo, Stefan, Chwayita and Wandisile might be in this. Reflecting on the video messages and their reception, I argue that they were a powerful means of encouraging, celebrating and enabling action. They were a medium for the resubjectification of those who created them and their audience too. Indeed, Oldfield (2014: 2) argues that questions such as these are urgent for South Africa at “this conjuncture where protest is rampant, democracy nascent and contested, and durable and painful histories of inequality shape everyday life in often violent as well as creative ways.” Everyday politics at the margins and the interface hold the possibility and hope for transforming the present into a better world.
Progressive politics? Mobilising in post-Apartheid South Africa

Upon democratisation in South Africa, there was a strong push by government towards a neoliberal, pro-growth strategy in attempt to deal with the turmoil left behind by Apartheid policies. Unfortunately, the implementation of privatisation and other cost recovery measures has made basic services (such as electricity, water and housing) unaffordable for the poor (Ballard, 2005). It is no surprise, therefore, that service-delivery protests have been the defining illustration of social movements in the country since 1994. While the period just post-Apartheid was relatively calm, the late-1990s onwards has seen the eruption of service-delivery protests across the country, where the “one city principle”, so desperately fought for during the Apartheid-regime, has not supported the poor as was imagined it would (Zuern, 2011). In many ways, these are small scale struggles of material, immediate demands (such as illegally reconnecting electricity, or evading rent payments). Diffuse and messy, the struggle of the poor is often not considered to be progressive, counter-hegemonic or useful at a broader scale. Indeed, when traffic on the national highway is disrupted due to protests and burning tires, the overriding sentiment that I have overheard in coffee shops and from friends are that the poor are creating inconvenient disruption and mess and they are challenging the government in obtuse and unnecessary ways.

However, as both Zuern (2011) and Ballard (2005) imply, the politics produced by the poor in South Africa cannot be reduced or simplified. Ballard (2005: 92) writes that “social movements tend to be imagined as the ‘hinge’ around which society can be diverted in a different direction... [and so] the responsibility for a utopian future is thrust upon local level struggles”. The narrow-minded comments exemplified above disregard the ability of localised-struggles to create a space of popular mobilisation whereby the marginalised can “challenge the state and thereby shift relations of power” (Ballard, 2005: 92). It is through these struggles that people contest, challenge and engage with the state through their immediate needs. With this in mind, Zuern (2011: 41) proffers that social movements of the poor in post-Apartheid South Africa represent a “politics of necessity”: a politics of material, immediate demands and broader rights which cannot be separated – they are indivisible.

In this sense, what looks messy is a way of trying to be counter-hegemonic and so disrupting comfortable assumptions of, for instance, who gets to say what. Zuern (2011: 42), for example, details the way in which leaders of civic movements during Apartheid played a key role in conscientising the people to fight for “more than bread crumbs”, demonstrating the
connections between their material demands and the broader political and social system. This cultivation of the “capacity to aspire” (Appadurai, 2004) - whereby the marginalised are empowered through mobilisation to realise that their actions matter, to change the terms of recognition and to expand their horizon of credible hopes for a better future – was key to the civics’ struggle against the Apartheid regime. These discourses about rights and participation have left a powerful legacy that has been sustained through to post-Apartheid struggles too. Perhaps this linkage is not as visible, or even initially intended, in post-Apartheid movements. However, while local struggles generally react in pragmatic, immediate ways so as to gain direct relief from everyday difficulties, they are also used to address broader issues, such as citizenship, rights and neoliberal policy (Ballard, 2005); as well as challenging notions of democracy and governance by demanding representation and consultation (Zuern, 2011).

Social movements in post-Apartheid South Africa, therefore, are “not just over the particular demands that protesters make, but also concern who has the right to make those demands and what in fact he or she should reasonably expect” (Zuern, 2011: 67). Through often subversive measures, the poor “claim, capture, refine and define certain ways of doing things in spaces they already control”, mobilizing with everyday struggles to disrupt comfortable assumptions (Appadurai, 2004: 74). Importantly, these tactics cannot simply be reduced to a form of resistance or local politics. Chipping away at the surface of opportunities and spaces where they can do something, they incrementally, but powerfully, question the hegemony of the prevailing system. In this way, the protesters of contemporary South African social movements can be understood as practicing a thoroughly progressive politics, which obligates government to reconsider their rhetoric and transform the political landscape of post-Apartheid South Africa.

These ideas resonate with the work of Michel de Certeau, who regards the everyday (for example, cooking, reading, talking, walking, dwelling and shopping) as a significant site of struggle. His ideas disrupt the binary of power (overdetermined and centralised/immanent and decentred) which is argued to “leave us, somewhat unhelpfully, with an inflated sense of what power can do and with a disempowering inability to think about politics as anything other than a resistance against the powders of the centre” (Cupples, 2009: 110). Instead, de Certeau conceptualises ordinary people’s “everyday practices of resistance as tactics, by which he means the creation and manipulating of spaces in ways that escape or subvert authority” (Cupples, 2009: 116). Rather than working to overthrow the dominant order
through a strategy of delimiting one’s own, separate place in the world (or by, in the case of this thesis, replacing capitalism with anti-capitalism), tactics aim to “divert [the dominant order] without leaving it”, making it function in another register (de Certeau, 1984: 32). For instance, de Certeau (1984: 32) describes how Spanish colonisation was diverted from its original aims by the use made of it by the indigenous Indian cultures:

> Even when they were subjected, indeed when they accepted their subjection, the Indians often used the laws, practices and representations that were imposed on them by force or by fascination to ends other than those of their conquerors; they made something else out of them; they subverted them from within – not by rejecting them or transforming them (though that occurred as well), but by many different ways of using them in service of rules, customs or convictions foreign to the colonisation which they could not escape.

These tactics, then, could be understood as a way of “making do” with the imposed system under which we have no choice but to live; finding ways of using the constraining order, without leaving it, towards unexpected and creative outcomes. In this sense, “the space of the tactic is the space of the other…it is a manoeuvre within the enemy’s field of vision” (de Certeau, 1984: 36). This making do, however, cannot simply be understood as straightforward oppositional resistance. The tactics of the weak are in-between and on the margins, working to “destabilise and hybridise identities” in incremental ways (Cuppes, 2009: 117). Making do requires taking advantage of opportunities, of cracks that open at particular conjunctions, so as to reclaim and rearticulate them in surprising, unintended ways.

The arguments of Zuern (2011) and Ballard (2005) provide a backdrop for considering how the people I engaged with were reclaiming the economy and mobilising their communities to action. However, their theorisations deal predominantly with more “obvious” forms of mobilisation and action (such as protests, rent boycotts or illegally reconnecting the electricity supply). De Certeau’s ideas about tactics and making do are therefore helpful in further questioning how diverse actors in the community economy might be seen as engaging in a progressive politics through their ordinary and everyday actions and re-articulations.
A quiet encroachment of the ordinary

Emma: Is there anyone or anything that has inspired the work that you do, to make a difference in your community?

Wandisile: Sometimes, you know, you just get inspiration from around you. You know, when I go on the train sometimes there is this singer, one has a guitar and the other one sings and I always give them money. They just sing about what’s happening in our communities, they are good song-writers and their music just takes me to another place. When I am on the train I am always hoping that they’ll come to my carriage. Maybe I just see them once a month, but when I do they always get me to that zone where I am highly inspired. I am even inspired not just by the music, but them, doing what they do. It’s crazy.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 12 March 2014)

This simple experience described by Wandisile, highlights to me the need to expand our view of the political to the everyday, the ordinary, the community economy. In some way, the music sung by of a pair of buskers on a train somewhere in Cape Town inspired Wandisile to think creatively, to hope for change, to imagine an alternative future. They inspired him to continue at his work on the Gangster Museum, which aims to bring about structural change in his community and the wider city. I therefore argue that a transgressive urban politics has to move beyond the horizon of direct mobilisation and protest action, to encompass and celebrate everyday acts, of creating, inspiring and making a difference, such as the buskers and the people I researched with were involved in. While they were not explicitly challenging the state or hegemonic structures, they were working to build a better life for themselves and their communities, as well as the wider Cape Town and South Africa. In this sense, I see their political practices as moving “beyond the terrain [of mobilisation], building and performing community to counter the durable stigma of gangs, violence and poverty” (Oldfield, 2014: 2).

Building the future in the present

I comprehend the diverse economic activities of the people I worked alongside as an attempt to “build the future in the present” - making and remaking space, encouraging engagement and acting in enabling ways - in response to what threatens to undermine their wellbeing (Pickerill & Chatterton, 2006: 487). Once again, Mama Bokolo’s video message proffers a good example. Performing mundane, everyday routines (such as hoeing the garden, writing seed labels, conversing with customers and selling seedlings) before the camera, Mama Bokolo could be seen as creatively constituting her vision for the future, as inspiring the slow
spread of green, of life and of hope. I understand her video portrayal and everyday actions as politically progressive – ordinary, but also exciting, feasible and powerful. Bayat’s (2010: 14) notion of a social (non)movement is useful here, referring to:

the collective actions of non-collective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognisable leadership and organisations.

The community economy might be understood as one such (non)movement. Although fragmented and incredibly diverse, people such as Mama Bokolo and her green healing, Chwayita’s cleaning, Wandisile’s gangsterism enterprise and Stefan driving Innovate the Cape can be seen as collectively asserting their right to the city, challenging assumptions, expressing agency and instigating change through their everyday practices and life. In many ways, they could be seen to be generating more imaginative and humble ways of practising development. Quietly resisting dominant structures by slowly advancing and expanding their space, this activism at the margins is “the quiet encroachment of the ordinary” (Bayat, 2010: 56). While Bayat (2010) uses this terms to describe the (non)movements of the poor and marginalised, I think that it has broader relevance in thinking about both activism and development more imaginatively and very differently. Ordinary acts - such as doing office work, watching a YouTube video, applying for grants, investing in a stokvel, wangling deals, consulting with former gangsters, cleaning a school in secret, posting a status on Facebook, engaging in an interview and slowly spreading green through the townships (one spadesful at a time!) - are contributing to the gradual fostering, claiming and defining of “new spaces” of transformation and development.

The everyday as a significant site of struggle

This everyday politics is considered to be a “weak” power in the face of an overdetermined, centralised, hegemonic capitalism. However, as de Certeau (1984) argues, the everyday should be seen as a significant site of struggle, which, over the long haul, could be stronger than so-called “strong” or “totalising” power structures because of its incremental, but enduring and persistent encroachment. He also argues that the domination/resistance binary limits our conceptualisation of what resistance can be to a rejection staged through direct action and protest (de Certeau, 1984). Importantly, this argument can be rendered to the notion of development too. I argue that not only is the everyday a significant site of struggle,
it is also a significant site of imaginative, non-hegemonic and culturally sensitive development – an understanding which is limited by our preconceived notions of what development might be. Cupples (2009: 116) describes how “de Certeau places emphasis on the diversity and creativity of forms of resistance, in particular the ways in which the socially or politically weak make ‘our space’ within ‘their place’”. In this sense, the people who I engaged with could be seen as “making do” with the current neoliberal state policies, creatively capturing, transforming and manipulating them in subversive, quiet ways to serve their own interests, for the development of their communities and beyond-local linkages. For instance, through selling her seeds and seedlings at low prices, Mama Bokolo was engaging in the capitalist economy, but at the same time ensuring the spread of greenness and healing to her community and saving money for her retirement dream of helping the youth to garden and heal in the Eastern Cape. This long term vision and action, the slow creep of change, could be seen as transformative and life-giving in an economy which casts the marginal aside as passive and poor.

These tactics or agency, then, describe “the stubborn, persistent and everyday uses and ways of operating of common people rather than spectacular antagonisms” (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011: 162). In describing to me how Rescue for Nature came to be, Chwayita spoke clearly to this idea:

**Emma:** Did you coming together as a group to clean up have any effects? Did it affect others at all?

**Chwayita:** It was definitely an important thing. In a sense that thing brought us together. Just us having meetings about our Rescue for Nature and no one was actually in charge of us. I was the team leader so I had to organise meetings – “let’s go to her house, let’s meet at mine, let’s figure out how we’re going to attack this”. So I think it made us critical and aware of what was happening and other people started seeing other stuff and the minute you do something about something else you see other things. You think “I can do more about this”. The minute you take action you see that actually there is more you can do. Ja, so I think we grew as a group, because we started as four people and then eight and then twelve. And there were younger ones who wanted to join too.

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 28 February 2014)

Chwayita’s goal was not to challenge government and structural violence overtly through direct resistance. Rather, she and her friends decided to make do with the circumstances and engage with the dominant neoliberal structure by getting together, claiming their agency and cleaning the school themselves. Whilst in many ways these actions conformed to the goals of
neoliberalism itself (withdrawal of the state, citizens fare for themselves) which exists beyond their own choosing, there was a sense of their having agency to transform the community and through this make a statement, claiming their right to the city and what this might look like in the future. Harking back to the debate made in Chapter 4, the co-creators of this research, living and working in contexts and conditions not of their own choosing, could be seen as appropriating and subverting the neoliberal agenda towards different ends, rather than rejecting it completely.

As de Certeau argues, such tactics, “involve the constant manipulation of events into opportunities” (Cupps, 2009: 116). I therefore understand Chwayita, for instance, as appropriating and reworking imposed conditions by creating them into an opportunity to come together as a community and a school, to inspire others to act and to resist the dominant framings of the poor as passive subjects of structural violence. Pickerill and Chatterton (2006: 487) contend that building the future in the present requires accepting that: a) our “everyday lives will weave together practices and spatial forms that are simultaneously anti-, despite-and post-capitalist” and b) “practices that will sometimes feel embedded or trapped in ways of doing at other times will be more liberatory and antagonistic”. Therefore, this seemingly ordinary act of cleaning up a school and planting a garden could be understood as a hybridly political act, whereby the terms of recognition for the poor are questioned and transformed and development is practiced.

These actions and narratives are part of a progressive urban politics, beyond the terrain of mobilisation. To me, as succinctly proffered by Oldfield (2014: 2), the “narratives [of the participants] highlight the small-scale, everyday toil of activists that incrementally and boldly shape resistance and its politics, the frictions and engagements behind the headlines of spectacular, revolutionary protest”. Not only that, but they also provide a horizon of credible hopes – they are a politics of possibility. The challenge beyond mobilisation, therefore, is to use these future-shaping narratives to grow the aspirations and hopes of ordinary, marginalised people, “in the process expanding social citizenship and especially voice”, as well as to realise and support many of their everyday acts as appropriate and transformational forms of “doing development” (Pieterse, 2003: 21). Such enablement is imperative at a time when South Africa’s democracy stands at the tipping point of possibility or disaster.
Inspiring resubjectification: Let’s get loud

The question remains though, how could we enlarge and sustain this every day, quiet encroachment of the community economy? And how might we grow the potential for engaging a broader range of people to participate, to realise themselves as citizens of the city, with voice and the ability to act? Although the legacy of Apartheid-era struggles has encouraged people to demand for their rights to be recognised and heard (Zuern, 2011), there is a risk that if people continue to be disappointed and ignored, the country’s fragile democracy could disintegrate. Therefore, making space for (and giving legitimacy to) forms of social and economic activities which are made invisible or diminished by capitalocentric discourses of development and the economy is of the utmost importance. A recognition of the politics of possibility located within the everyday actions of ordinary people in the community economy is a way in which “to include marginalised groups into social and political governance…[privileging] the participation of the needy themselves” (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2009: 25). Therefore, I would argue that the quiet encroachment of the community economy needs to be amplified: let’s get loud!

The power of being seen: Using video

Deciding to experiment with using video in my project was a way of thinking about how to “get loud”; of how to envision the people I collaborated with as doing development in their own right. I hoped that bringing together the narratives of the participants and enabling them to share these with each other would begin to build a common discourse around what they were doing and demanding through their everyday actions. I hoped they would thrive on the power of being seen. In similar stead, in 1999, as part of an action research project, Gibson-Graham organised a video-conference across three Australian states, where members from several different community organisations “spoke for ten minutes about their histories and activities” to an audience “of activists, community members and academics” (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 22). They found that:

The video conference created a space where a conversation about economic revaluation could take place and where community members could see themselves as economically innovative and politically powerful (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 23).

Indeed, although our meeting in Cape Town in July 2014 was more informal and much smaller (it included just the people I researched with, not the wider community), gathering to
watch the videos we made together was an extremely powerful and exciting experience. Not only did the co-researchers get to meet each other and hear each other’s stories, but they also had a space in which to share encouragement and inspiration. For instance, towards the end of Stefan’s video message he appealed to the other participants:

What you guys do is amazing. I’d just mainly like to encourage you, and to say that, ah, you shouldn’t scorn humble beginnings, if it just feels like a little thing you are doing. Ja, your stories can be powerful. The little things you do and the ways that you do things may not seem…you may not be in a fancy magazine, or make millions of rand. But just people seeing your examples and seeing the difference in value that you have…hopefully that will make a significant difference in their lives and their value systems will shift and they’ll want to follow your example.

(Stefan Louw, video message, 25 March 2014)

Chwayita shared inspiration through her video message too:

This was a very cool platform [the video], because I feel like we…there are unsung heroes out there who do the simplest things which mean a lot to other people. I think we don’t have a platform so we can share and stuff. You [Emma] told me about this guy who is doing the gangsterism thing – it’s such a huge problem and I have no idea how we are going to solve it. I’m just praying on it “an idea, God, please give me something” because I feel like I really want to do something. And through you [Emma] I know someone who is actually doing something…these things should be exposed. And I’m willing to help out, anyway I can.

(Chwayita Wenana, video message, 22 March 2014)

To me, their words resonate with the idea that being seen and being able to see can be an empowering experience, one which is paramount to envisioning what development might look like beyond the post-development moment of critique. Producing, performing and inventing knowledge for an audience (who then re-produce, re-perform and re-invent that knowledge), then, could be seen as building an ethical being-in-common, a community and sharing hope (Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2006). Chwayita directly noted the need for a platform to amplify the actions that ordinary people are making and Stefan too emphasised that sharing even the smallest story with others can have great effect. As I have previously quoted\(^\text{42}\), Plummer (2005, in Chase, 2011: 428) argues that “for narratives to flourish, there must be a community to hear”. As we watched the messages together, several of the co-creators noted that now their stories had been shared with others, acknowledged and supported, carrying

\(^{42}\) See Chapter 3, page 51
them out felt more important and held a stronger sense of responsibility. As Appadurai (2004: 82) writes, expanding the horizon of credible hopes is “not just [about] wishful thinking, but thoughtful wishing”. In this light, I contend that the way in which the video-space enabled the participants to claim, capture, refine and define the narratives about what they did, as well as to inspire others is one of the most important contributions of this research. It is my hope that the fostering of such a space might also contribute to post-development’s work of destabilising hegemonic discourses of development, encouraging us to rethink (or reshape) the ways in which we conceive of “doing development”. Getting loud was a way in which to cast visible those actors and activities which are sustaining and supporting community wellbeing, allowing for self-led and community inspired movements for transformation, rather than relying on top-down approaches.

A different kind of subjection

The argument that Gibson-Graham (i.e. 1996) make about community economies involves creating a discourse of the diverse economy which makes visible a plethora of viable and valuable non-capitalist activities, bringing into question capitalism’s perceived hegemony. In this vein, they argue that “a politics of the local…will go nowhere without subjects who can experience themselves as free from capitalist globalisation” (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 14). However, their argument hinges not on a “liberation” from the subjection of the capitalist economy, but rather “creating new discourses that subject in different ways, thus enabling subjects to assume power in new forms” (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 14, emphasis original). I hope that the way in which I carried out the interviews was a step towards this resubjectification. The creation of a conversational space through the sharing of video messages was another. The creation of this space enabled the people I worked with to practice and perform their own agency and identity, to be recognised and affirmed and to recognise and affirm others. In this sense, the notion of growing the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004) is resonant with Gibson-Graham’s conceptualisation of resubjectification. Zuern (2011) uses the notion to argue that racially and economically marginalised people in South Africa were empowered through materially-motivated mobilisation to realise that their actions mattered and change the terms of recognition. In much the same way, I contend that the video-space enabled the participants to transcend barriers of place, power and recognition to depict themselves as they wanted, asserting their agency and capabilities.

43 In particular, as I have dealt with in Chapter 4
Hence, encouraging the participants to reflect on and share their thoughts on their agency and subjection could be seen as a way of disrupting comfortable assumptions of who gets to say what, particularly in a country where democracy and voice are nascent, yet often compromised. For instance, as I have previously reflected, Chwayita was astounded when I asked her if she would like to participate in my research and share her story through video with others. Although she perceived the need for what she was doing, she was amazed that others may think her voice and ideas were significant or credible. Mama Bokolo was excited to share aspects of her daily life that she was particularly proud of – her car and garden beds and the spread of green (“ever since I started this project, hundreds of people are up and down, busy, making sure their gardens are up to scratch”, she said) (Mabel Bokolo, video message, 24 March 2014). I think that the narrative methodologies that I drew on encouraged a disruption of assumptions, casting pragmatic, everyday ways of resistance and development as important and portraying them so as to encourage aspiration and credible hopes for future. They were a way of expressing solidarity and support. I see video as a potentially powerful tool with which to do this - to be seen, to make their encroachment loud – within development research and practice. The conversational interviews too offered a space for people to reflect on what they were doing, why it was important, and how they might continue to grow it, with an audience in mind. Through sharing their narratives and beginning to perpetuate alternative discourse of development and the economy, the people I worked alongside could be understood as participating in active citizenship and promoting a democratically engaged and progressive politics.

Interestingly, beyond their own resubjectification, each of the participants was passionate about broadening the horizon of opportunities and credible hopes so that others might be resubjectified too. Although they were not verbally counter-hegemonic or mobilising directly, they wanted their actancy to go beyond simply their own material needs (Ballard, 2005; Zuern, 2011). Rather, they envisioned themselves as catalysts of change, charged with the role of inspiring others to act. Each of the four co-creators I conversed with spoke about the desire to inspire others to dream bigger, to “paint the skies of opportunity”, to cultivate the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004). Wandisile voiced his vision for a common conscientisation strongly throughout his interviews:

We should really never limit our dreams; we shouldn’t let things like gangsterism hinder our future. Let’s make sure we open up the road as wide as we can for everybody to travel on and reach their dreams. Once we open that door, other
people can follow. Just make sure you break that door down, so that other people can come through and also become successful.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 19 February 2014)

He also expressed the pressure he felt of needing to inspire others:

It makes me think, “Now you really have to be successful, Wandi, all these people are looking up to you, now you really need to be succeed to make sure these kids [of Khayelitsha] look upon you and they’re gonna do something greater than you.” I feel like the whole point is to be great, but you really need to develop other people to be greater beyond you. It’s cool to be a teacher, but once the students surpass you, you know that you’re a really great teacher.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, personal interview, 19 February 2014)

Similarly, Chwayita made a comment which resonated with the notion of acting beyond the self, towards the resubjectification of others:

I was actually rooting for other people in the Innovate the Cape competition, because I was like, “ah, I really like those guys, their ideas just make me want to dance!” It was an awesome experience. It was one of the best things that happened.

(Chwayita Wenana, personal interview, 28 February 2014)

Also, Mama Bokolo seemed to be driven by a longing to share the goodness, experience and opportunities she had with others, so that they too might reimagine their agency:

Mama Bokolo: When you are a child you are given milk, you are given the food that the rest of the family eats. And then your time comes to for you to go out there and be on your own. So, I will not grow old being the baby to Abalimi.

Emma: So, are you saying that you don’t want to rely on Abalimi forever? That you want to go out and do this work and share these things you have learnt so that more people can learn from you?

Mama Bokolo: Abalimi they like what I do. Usually they are dealing with the community and helping them to go out and spread the word. I am there, doing what Abalimi envisions. But when you are grown and given a chance to express, you need to go out there and share it with the people around so that everyone will get the chance, the moment to express. Abalimi they made me a driver, now I am a driver. So, as a driver I won’t just sit and do nothing. I was made a driver to go out there and help people. I can’t just sit down.

Ludwe: She is a driver; she was given the opportunity to drive and go out there and help people. So basically, she is pointing to her car out there [chuckles], she can walk around, helping, buying seeds and go...ja, she is talking about that. That’s why now she can’t just sit down; she has to be out there.

(Mabel Bokolo, personal interview, 5 March 2014)
These narratives evoke a sense of Ubuntu; to me, they are embodied demonstrations of being in-common with and inextricably bound together with, the lives and actions of others around them. Each of the participants was endeavouring to connect with those around them, to foster linkages and to care for others. Many of their stories were deeply personal, but they somehow understood that engaging in solidarity and vulnerability with others was a way in which to grow the (non)movement of transforming their communities and conquering new spaces (Bayat, 2010; Lindell, 2010). In a sense, their actions were considered pointless without a community to receive, mobilise and grow them. Appadurai (2004: 82) argues that “the capacity to aspire provides an ethical horizon within which more concrete capabilities can be given meaning, substance and sustainability” and through which the marginalised may begin to cultivate voice. Therefore, not only did the use of video help to bring together, grow and give voice to the ordinary, but politically progressive and powerful actions that the participants practised every day, but it also provided a platform for them to cultivate the hope and potentiality of others. In this way, the participants’ narratives might be seen as “dynamic moments of becoming” and so began to illuminate the strands of connection between each of us, as well as the wider community, and how we might expand and amplify them (Dilley, 2000; Cupples, 2009).

Conclusion

Wandisile’s wise words provided the inspiration for this chapter and so it feels right to begin the conclusion with them:

We really need to expand our thinking and we really need to grow our dreams into…dream of, phew, being…you know, I want Khayelitsha to have billionaires. I want Khayelitsha to have manufacturing companies. We need to expand our thinking, we must not limit our thinking. Let’s jump! Let’s paint our own skies, you know, let’s just paint the skies!”…Basically, we must be Michelangelos of our own destinies. Once you take the necessary steps, I think those are the most incredible times, the most amazing. If I could actually paint my sky and become something really, like a successful entrepreneur, then I am sure a lot of other young entrepreneurs out there will also want to paint their own skies. I am not saying that they are all entrepreneurs but they should do something that they love.

(Wandisile Nqeketho, video message, 24 March 2014)

In this chapter I have attempted to paint the skies of possibility with a vision for how we might sustain and grow the community economy in terms of the ideas put forward in the previous chapters. Whilst I am no Michelangelo, I hope that my contribution (and those of
the people I collaborated with) might be constructive in working towards acknowledging the actors in the community economy as part of a progressive urban politics in Cape Town and beyond.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 27: “Painting the sky” - the 18 Gangster Museum gangsters! (Wandisile on the right)
Source: Big Issue, October-November 2013

I grounded the debate in some contemporary discussions about social movements of the poor in South Africa so as to give you, the reader, a sense of the turmoil and complexity of political practice in the country. Importantly, I argued that we cannot reduce or simplify the kind of politics people produce, especially that of people on the margins. Movements that look messy, local, particular and chaotic have the ability to shape progressive political change and enrich notions of democracy in South Africa. With these context-specific discussions as a backdrop, I went on to argue that in much the same way, we cannot reduce the politics of the community economy. Although not being counter-hegemonic in dramatic, revolutionary ways, the community economy and actors within it are powerful in the way that they embody a quiet encroachment of the ordinary, silently and elusively conquering new spaces through hybrid and subversive means. They are imagining different, humble and pertinent ways of doing development outside of the binary frame. The community economy then might be better understood as a social (non)movement, working beyond the realm of mobilisation to build, develop and transform the urban space into a desirable future.
Lastly, I have questioned how we might sustain and amplify the diverse economy in a productive way, drawing on the notions of resubjectification and the capacity to aspire. Sharing messages with each other through video was a way for the people I engaged with to claim, define and reimagine their space and identity, as well as to be subjected to an alternative, diverse discourse of the economy. This was not simply a personal resubjectification however, as the participants were particularly concerned with “painting the sky” of credible hopes and possibility for their communities too. In light of these debates, in the following concluding chapter I will question what the scholar’s role might be when engaging with such diverse practices, where the role of ethnography and activism might be seen as related and supported endeavours. I will argue that encouraging resubjectification will require the creation of spaces for meaningful dialogue and conversation and for methodologies to be realised as part of a broader movement towards transformation and change. It is in these spaces that the possibility of cultivating a capacity to aspire is located, entangled up in the production of knowledge.
Concluding remarks: A collection of thoughts on how to make sense of the messy entanglements of this research

The journey of my thesis

I wept as I wrote the introduction to this thesis.

I felt a profound sense of hopelessness and despair at the state of post-Apartheid South Africa. I grimaced at my own complicity as a wealthy, white South African. I struggled to think beyond the harsh segregating lines of the city that I grew up in. However, as I browse over the conversations and videos representing the people and actions which were the inspiration for this thesis, as well as thinking back over what I have conceptualised and grappled with during this year, I realise that there are firm grounds for optimism and hope.

Undertaking this research has enabled me to see openings, to work in-between, broaden my horizons of possibility and to engage in persistent pursuit of freedom and Ubuntu. I hope that a sense of this journey has been portrayed to you through the contemplations in this thesis.

Grounded in the experiences of four people living in Cape Town, I have attempted to address the limits of capitalocentric economic and development discourses through a celebration of diverse narratives of being, acting and engaging in the economy. To me, this was a critical project to undertake in a country whose leaders conceptualise mainstream economic growth as the remedy to all ills, where raw histories of inequality shape everyday life and democracy is fragile and contested (Oldfield, 2014). At this conjuncture, my thesis aimed to interrogate the categories and binaries we use and to foster a space for reimagining the possibilities for transformation and for realising a more just future. From a post-structural feminist perspective, drawing on the narratives of my collaborators I began (in Chapter 4) by challenging the binaries of capitalist/non-capitalist informal/formal, which pervade the public discourse in South Africa, through a privileging of diverse ways of thinking about and acting in the economy, inspired by Gibson-Graham’s (2006) diverse economies framework. From a stance of uncertainty, contingency and support I reflected on the ways in which Chwayita, Mama Bokolo, Stefan and Wandisile conceptualised their ability to make genuine change and
inspire hope despite being cast (by dominant discourses) as marginal, poor, uncredible and invisible (Santos, 2004). Their ways of acting in and thinking about the economy facilitated a discussion on how we might reimagine and recreate the economy as hybrid, multiple and entangled in everyday life.

The experience of these community economies in Cape Town was complicated by notions of place, space, identity and agency which acted in tension, incongruity and negotiation with each other in both public narratives and in the threads of conversations and engagements I had with the collaborators. In this stead, in Chapter 5 I traced some of the linkages and connections that people articulated and employed on a daily basis so as to foster a sense of place beyond dualistic notions of scale and politics. Drawing on the work of Doreen Massey (2005, 2007) and using the geographical tool of ANT, I endeavoured to represent the collaborators as mobile and connected (rather than isolated and bounded to place), occupying multiple, relational sites of possibility, which could be categorised as neither global nor local. Through this reframing of space as socially constituted and practised, I hoped to reinsert spatially and economically marginalised people and places into implications in broader issues (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011). Consequentially, this was a way in which to recognise, promote and value the agency and autonomy of ordinary people who were performing, dreaming, acting, connecting and enabling a broad horizon of opportunities and possibilities for transformation.

While I have made the epistemological decision not to dictate solutions or conclusive answers to the complex debates at hand, In Chapter 6 I conceptualised how we might go about expanding the community economy, so as to enable the mobilisation ordinary citizens to articulate their own sense of the world, reclaiming their agency to make a difference. With the backdrop of rampant protest as well as more covert organised political action in post-Apartheid South Africa (Ballard, 2005; Zuern, 2011), I contended that if we are to appreciate the community economy as a significant and persistent site of struggle, there is a need to understand politics as happening beyond the horizon of direct mobilisation. Indeed, I have argued that diffuse, decentred, everyday acts of subversion, compliance and negotiation cannot be reduced, but that these are significant sites of struggle and of making do (de Certeau, 1984; Bayat, 2010). Returning to some of my methodological toolkit, I have suggested that in order to be sustained and flourish, the discourse of the community economy needs an audience to receive it. I reflected on how my video methodology and narrative interviews provided a platform for my collaborators to reconsider their agency in the
economy and to comprehend themselves as subject to a diverse economy (rather than a solely capitalist one) through sharing their stories with others (Gibson-Graham, 2003). Fostering a space for self-representation in this research encouraged the participants to reflect on their assets, capabilities and strengths. Furthermore, each of the participants re-appropriated the space to their own ends: to inspire, encourage and paint the skies of opportunities for others.

The main contributions and implications of my research

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to foster a space in which non-conventional economic and political practices are acknowledged as valid and relevant sites for action and with the potential to contest dominant discourses and power relations in more-than-local terms. To do so, I have drawn on and entangled various strands of theoretical debate coming from geography, development studies and the wider social sciences, as well as literature and ontologies coming from South Africa itself, with personal narratives and conversations. Following various trajectories of discussion, this thesis questions the notion that capitalism is natural and all pervading, so as to contribute to the project of making visible diverse ways of being and acting in the economy. This is, I think, an imperative and urgent matter to address in post-apartheid South Africa, where the “informal economy” of alternative means of survival and wellbeing is marginalised and removed from implications in broader processes of transformation. Thus, this thesis contributes to the growing fields of autonomous geographies and community economies in South Africa in its fostering of a space “where there is questioning of laws and social norms of society and a creative desire to constitute non-capitalist, collective forms of politics, identity and citizenship” (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010: 476).

To these ends, this thesis depicts a detailed insight into the ways in which the four people I collaborated with were living in ways “simultaneously against and beyond the capitalist present, whilst at the same time dealing with being very much in it” (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010: 475). It challenges the way that these hybrid, non-conventional and re-appropriated ways of doing development and acting in the economy are cast invisible and uncredible by prevailing neoliberal globalisation discourses. To do so, I experimented with using ANT as a method of representing and tracing the multiple trajectories and identities that people drew on in their daily lives. I hope that this use contributes to advancing ANT’s methodological application as a geographical tool. The representations it enabled provided a more nuanced understanding of marginalised areas of Cape Town (such as the Cape Flats), often simply
defined by their lack, violence, poverty and need, as sites “where innovative and more appropriate alternatives to shape the economy and development are being crafted” (Palomino-Schalscha, 2011: 244). Despite beginning with a bleak outlook on the current state of South Africa, this thesis takes a more optimistic and hopeful stance, reframing the debate so as to foster a transformative space of possibility. Therefore, its empowering celebration of the diverse activities that people in Cape Town were employing to cultivate community, well-being and togetherness is a significant contribution.

These contributions also support the generative aspect of post-development, moving beyond critique to recognise and inspire actions which have not formerly been acknowledged by popular development discourse. As post-development is often critiqued for washing its hands of theorising alternatives (Storey, 2000), this is an important contribution to moving forward and fostering other spaces and ways in which development might be appropriate. This thesis is in part a response to Gibson-Graham’s (2005: 6) challenge to “imagine and practice development differently”. I suggest, in line with Matthews (2007: 133), that there is a need for development to shift towards “accompanying popular dynamics; seeking to build upon communities’ ways of addressing their problems…[acknowledging] that many poor and oppressed communities are indeed actively and effectively responding to their situation” without necessarily requiring us to play a role in their struggles. I also hope that this work supports Gibson-Graham’s (2005) argument for development practice which not only makes a diversity of practices visible, but works to strengthen, sustain, amplify, enlarge and celebrate them.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this contribution was the fostering of a supportive space for the people I collaborated with to reflect on and give meaning to their initiatives, daily lives and concerns. Methodologically, the narrative interview and video messages opened up a space for reflexivity, curiosity, negotiation and the reformulation of subjectivities. Some of the participants had not had the opportunity before to speak about their initiatives in terms of their capabilities and strengths, or to reflect on the transformative and political potential of their everyday actions. This was a way in which for me to contribute to the work they were doing, as well as to encourage them to think about how their practices could “exceed place and the limits of the local to signify something bigger than themselves in the broader struggle for social change” (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010: 483).
I hope that through my use of video, this thesis might contribute to the advancement of visual methodologies. The co-production of video messages supported the people I collaborated with not simply to articulate their sense of the world and more-than-capitalist lives, but also to inspire and connect with others, to capture the public space of debate and do some “thoughtful wishing” (Appadurai, 2004). I used video messages and narrative interviews with the aim of empowering the participants to represent and recreate themselves, acknowledging that research is an overtly political intervention that not only represents, but creates, reality (Cameron & Gibson, 2005). While there is no shortcut to empowerment, I think these collaborative methods allowed the participants to claim, capture, perform and reimagine their subjectivities as agents of change, as well as to encourage their audience to do the same. The novel platform that the video space provided was a way in which to nurture, enlarge and celebrate what ordinary people were doing in their communities every day and to encourage their active citizenship and subjectivity in a diverse economy. I hope that this thesis might add to the conversation about the need for methodologies to be realised as part of a broader movement towards transformation and change.

In this sense, my thesis has drawn attention to the significance of dialogue, performance and audience in working to build the future in the present and reformulate identities so that people might envisage themselves as agents of change. Importantly, this discussion brings to attention what the scholar’s role might be when “engaging with diverse practices and knowledges of activists and movements that bring into view a wider set of urban political practice...contexts in which activism and ethnography can be seen as parallel, related and potentially supportive endeavours” (Oldfield, 2014: 2). I think that Chwayita was particularly perceptive to this question in her video message:

**Chwayita:** We all really want to make a difference inside, but it’s actually when we talk to someone, and then that’s when the magic starts. It’s through those meaningful dialogues that this world is able to change…We might be stuck in a problem for decades without a change. The *minute* someone says “I can do something about this” and the second person “hey, I can do this”, and the third one - it’s going to grow. Surely there will be a difference, even if it’s a small one.

**Emma:** What can help people, do you think, to start making a difference?

**Chwayita:** I think, initially, just conversations like we have.

(Chwayita Wenana, video message, 22 March 2014)

Her words, and the arguments of this thesis, resonate with my conviction that there needs to be a concerted effort from development and geography researchers to encourage meaningful
dialogue about the political potential of diverse, ordinary practices and for methodologies to be realised as part of a broader movement towards transformation and change. Thus, this thesis should be read as a contribution to the construction of more “inclusive geographies”, which highlight “the need for a shift in the nature of engagement and the nature of ethical commitments that will reveal and celebrate the myriad processes and dynamics that are hidden and silenced by mainstream development and globalisation discourses” (Oldfield, Parnell & Mabin, 2004). Acknowledging and privileging popular, everyday epistemologies and ways of doing and being has the potential to reinvigorate research, shift the focus of development and to decentre and relocate knowledge production outside of the academy or the “expert”. This potentiality, for the scholar to act as a citizen too, “jointly challenging broader social systems” along with participants, is exciting to me as it points to a “new space” in which development practice, research methodologies and diverse actions of ordinary people intermingle and entangle with each other, where they could become one and the same (Oldfield, 2014: 3).

Limitations and suggestions for further exploration

Notwithstanding the contributions that this thesis has made, there were several limitations and difficulties in its creation and conduction, particularly in the way that knowledge was produced.

Although I have mentioned frequently throughout this thesis the notions of collaboration and co-production, achieving such intentions was a challenging and impossible pursuit within the limitations of institutionalised academic research, writing and process. I selected the project before “entering” the field, wrote the majority of it far away from the people whose knowledge and experience it is based on and selected, cut and rendered their narratives and experiences to fit into the academic “mould” of a thesis. I have attempted to address some of these difficulties through my unconventional thesis structure and methodological choices. However, these are not free in any way from contradiction and unequal power. So, while collaboration was an ideal I strived for, I am aware that in reality it was not enough to surpass unequal research relationships and issues of power in the production of knowledge. Emerging from this thesis, then, is the need for a continued pursuit of better ways of conducting fair, equal and emancipatory research in the social sciences.
That being said, I perceive my research methodologies to be a principle contribution of this thesis and they certainly shaped my ideas and arguments in profound ways. However, if time were allowing, I think that they might have performed a larger role in my thesis. I mention this in particular reference to the slightly haphazard way in which I employed video as a method. Using a visual methodology was somewhat of an afterthought, an experiment; at the time of planning and carrying out my fieldwork, I considered it to be a side-bar, out of which something interesting might emerge. As it turned out, what emerged from these co-produced video messages has shaped many of the reflections and arguments in this thesis. To this end, I feel that the scope of this thesis did not allow me to follow these trajectories and threads of thought and theory in adequate complexity. I have spoken of the desire that this thesis would contribute to transformation, that it would spread Ubuntu and empower diverse actors in the community economy to reclaim their agency. These are the aims of an action research project – one that was beyond the scope of this study to pursue.

Therefore, despite the collaborative nature of my research and the achievements that it has made in using methodology towards broader change, I think that a worthy avenue for further research (which I would like to follow) would be to consider Cape Town’s community economy through a project which is explicitly action-research and participatory in focus. Based on this, I think it would be a fascinating project to continue to explore the ways in which visual and action-research methodologies, such as I have touched on in chapter 6, might suggest in-themselves a way in which to pursue development outcomes. Continuing to foster a platform through which the actions of ordinary people are amplified and supported is an exciting endeavour for future research and could form a worthy contribution to post-development’s generative potential.

Similarly, while I think that my use and exploration of ANT as a methodology was very successful, the extent to which I could follow trajectories such as the more-than-human was limited. In particular, it would have been interesting to trace how the natural environment, the land and spiritual beings played a role in the participants’ contesting of dominant strategies of power, place and the economy. For instance, the narratives and actions of Mama Bokolo, Stefan and Chwayita were intricately embedded in and connected to their understandings of God, the ancestors and land. For instance, Mama Bokolo described how she was a body through which the ancestors worked. This spiritual understanding complexly transcends the local and the position of subjected citizen. Using ANT to trace these linkages would have enabled a privileging of the co-creation of place by human and more-than-human actors, such
as spirits, ancestors, green plants and the land, as well as expanded the terrain of political transformation and possibility. Such an understanding might also contribute to more nuanced, culturally sensitive, humble and imaginative ways of practicing and thinking about development. As Wright et al. (2012: 51) argue, such an “enlivened understanding of the world generates deeper and more expansive terrain for political, ethical and moral consideration in scholarship”. While I think that the more-than-human is a significant site of study and could have proffered a useful slant to this research, I decided that it was too great a task to tackle in this thesis, especially as I felt the human aspect of structural inequality in South Africa demanded a caring, nuanced and profound focus. However, I think this would be a particularly interesting site for further research.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, growing a discourse of a diverse economy is a prolific site of study and there are many avenues of inquiry to be taken. This thesis has revealed to me the need for a continued and urgent effort to reimagine the economy and development in ways that enable the well-being of the majority, rather than just the minority. This is a huge task which demands concerted work in thinking about (as well as reclaiming, representing and reperforming) the hybrid, connected and transformative ways that people act in the economy, challenging exclusionary capitalocentrism and neoliberal hegemony. This thesis lays the foundations for further research on and exploration of the implications of dialogues about the worthiness of place, the contestation and appropriation of hegemonic discourses, trajectories for progressive political change and demands for recognising the everyday as a significant site of struggle and study. These are conversations which need to be sustained and grown through further research if we are to conceive of more just ways of “doing development”.

**Final remarks**

So, what is it that I am trying to say to you, the reader, through this messy assemblage of thoughts, ideas, theories, stories, voices, pictures, texts, videos, narratives and conversations? I suppose what it comes down to is that ordinary people are doing amazing things which often go unrecognised and un-affirmed. By no means are these actions free from contestation, power, or critique. They may be small, human and local; they are often quiet and very ordinary. However, these qualities should not be a basis for reducing or simplifying them. Rather, through retelling and reimagining these actions in geographically nuanced and supportive ways a space is created for them to be recognised as powerful, progressive, hybrid, exciting, political, appealing, positive, transformative, mobile and empowering forms
of doing development. In their own rights, Chwayita, Mama Bokolo, Stefan and Wandisile are recreating, expanding and transforming development and the economy at local and more-than-local scales. They are building community, Ubuntu and a sense of being humbly together.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Accompanying videos

Included in this hardcopy in disk format,

1. Mama Bokolo’s message part 1 (24 March 2014)
2. Mama Bokolo’s message part 2 (24 March 2014)
3. Stefan Louw’s message (25 March 2014)
4. Chwayita Wenana’s message (22 March 2014)
5. Rescue for Nature’s message (22 March 2014)
6. Wandisile Nqeketho’s message (24 March 2014)
Appendix 2: Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Community economies: Local, global and everything in-between

Researcher: Emma Hosking, School of Geography, Earth Sciences and the Environment, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. The project I am undertaking aims to think about the economy as made up of many different diverse activities, which are not just monetary or market-based. I am especially interested in thinking about how place, networks and connections impact on how people interact in this diverse economy. This research project has received approval from the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting people who are engaging in diverse economic activities, such as someone working in a cooperative, strengthening their community or planting gardens, to participate in this study. These people (of which there will be 6-8 altogether) will be asked (separately) to engage in 3 conversational interviews with me, which will be recorded on audio (or only in notes) with the permission of participants.

The first interview will involve telling me more about what has brought you to be where you are and what makes you the person you are. I am interested in your upbringing, childhood, work, family and life experiences. The second will be a conversation about your ideas about the economy and your place in it – about some of the things you do, interact with and think about on a daily basis. In the last interview I hope to take a “video tour” of your daily life – I would like to spend part of the day with you and capture it on video. I will encourage you to do some of the filming too, should you so wish. On this last day I will also give you the opportunity to film a short message to the other participants about some of your thoughts about the economy to create some common knowledge between us, if you wish to do so. The use of video recording is an entirely optional aspect, which you can choose not to participate in.

Each interview should take between 1-2 hours of your time, depending on how much you like to talk, as well as your time and availability. There will be no set questions, but I will guide the topic of the conversations. We will decide upon a location for each interview together, so that you can feel comfortable, safe and private. I understand that this is a demanding time commitment, and so I am open to negotiate the number/length of interviews.
Should you want to withdraw yourself or any information/transcripts/video or audio footage from the project you may do so, without question and at any time, before 1 May 2014. The transcripts and videos will be returned to you after the interviews; so that you can make sure you are happy with them and how you have represented yourself. Should you want one, I will send you a copy of my thesis once it is completed, as well as any transcripts and videos. You will also receive the recorded video messages from the other participants, should they choose to share them.

The conversations we have will form the basis of my research (I will quote from them at length), and I hope to include some video excerpts too. You will have the choice to attribute the comments and opinions to yourself or to remain confidential. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Geography, Earth sciences and the Environment and deposited in the University Library.

It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals and I may present the thesis at an academic conference. All data pertaining to this research will be securely stored on my private computer under password protection and will be completely destroyed 5 years after project completion.

If you have any further questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at +64 21 959309 / hoskinemma@myvuw.ac.nz or my supervisor Marcela Palomino-Schalscha at +64 4 4635899 / marcela.palomino-schalscha@vuw.ac.nz.

Thanks for choosing to participate in my research and I look forward to starting the conversation!

Kind regards,
Emma Hosking
Appendix 3: Informed consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of project: Community Economies: Local, global and everything in-between

Researcher: Emma Hosking, School of Geography, Earth Sciences and the Environment, Victoria University of Wellington

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may withdraw myself (including video footage, audio recording, transcripts, or any other information I have provided) from this project before 1 May 2014 without having to give reasons.

I understand that any information I provide will remain confidential to the researcher and their supervisor unless I consent to attribution (the comments and opinions I make will be linked to my name). Should I consent to attribution, I understand that the published thesis will use my name, comments I have made in the interview will be attributed to me and footage may identify me. If I choose to remain confidential, I understand the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me. I understand that if I should choose to remain confidential, any video or audio footage which identifies me will not be published, and will be kept for the researcher’s use only.

I understand that I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of interviews before publication, and that I can choose whether or not to participate in the video component. I understand that the comments I make in interviews and video footage may be used in the researcher’s thesis, a copy of which will be stored in the University’s library. I understand that I will have the opportunity to film a video message to share with the other participants, should I choose to do so, and with my review and consent. I understand that I can choose not to share video footage with any other participants if I do not want to.

I am also aware and consent to this data being used in a possible journal article and presented at academic conferences. I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without my written consent and will be deleted completely 5 years after the completion of the project.
☐ I agree to take part in this research.

☐ I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research (do not tick if you prefer your identity not to be disclosed)

☐ I would like to participate in the video recorded aspect of the research project (the video tour, and a short video message), and understand that it might be used in the final thesis. I understand will have a chance to review the recording before it is used.

☐ I would like to share a short video message of learnings/ideas with the other participants, once I have reviewed the clip and am happy with the content.

☐ I would like the tape recordings and video footage of my interview returned to me at the conclusion of the project

☐ I would like to receive a copy of the thesis at completion

Signed:                                           Date:

Name of participant:

Email:

Postal Address:
Appendix 4: Interview Guide

The interviews I am conducting will be unstructured and conversational, so as to allow the conversation to go in a variety of directions.

The broad guide for each interview is as follows:

**Interview 1 (recorded on audio/notes only)**

This will be a life history; broadly aiming to get an idea of how the person has come to become involved in the kinds of work they do. We will cover topics such as upbringing, childhood, family, work and life experiences. We will talk about the activities that they associate with as work and how they have come to be involved in them. More specifically, I will ask about what has motivated/motivates them and what/who has triggered certain interests and passions. I will ask them about the instrumental people, moments, places that have brought them to be whom and where they are, as well as the memories and emotions that might be attached to these. We will also talk about their vision for the future: their hopes, dreams and goals for the coming years in their own lives, and also that of their communities.

**Interview 2 (recorded on audio/notes only)**

Based on the first interview, the second will engage in a deeper discussion of the person’s understandings of the economy and how they relate to, with it and with other economic beings. This discussion will be based on the premise that the economy is not only singularly capitalist, but is composed of all the diverse activities that people participate in to achieve well-being. I will be encouraging thought about how all the different activities people engage in could be seen as part of the economy. We will speak about the various activities they participate in on a daily basis, and how these might be economic. I will also ask the participant about the connections and networks which enable these economies. We will speak about their notions of “community” – whether they conceive it as their neighbours, their broader networks or perhaps even global connections. We will also think about how these connections might strengthen/enable such a diverse economy, as well as some of the perceived constraints to engaging in a diverse economy.

**Interview 3 (recorded on video [with consent] or just notes/audio)**

In the last interview I will spend part of the day with each participant, following their routines and connections, as well as engaging more deeply with the places that they spend time in or pass through.

This will take the form of a “video tour” (should they consent), where I will ask them to guide me through certain places/spaces, whether it be their home, workplace, street, neighbourhood or particular area of the city where they spend time (this will be negotiated with the participant, but I would like it to be the place where they feel they are most “economically active”). The camera will be passed between me and the participant; so that it is a collaborative process and that we capture diverse viewpoints. I will ask them to tell me about certain spaces, things and people that we come into contact with along the way and to
point out things of interest/that may be important to them. I am interested in the people, objects, places and spaces they interact/come into contact with and how these might be linked to their perceived role in and perception of the economy. The video tour will be used to further engage with and observe some of the activities they participate in in these spaces and to gain a better understanding of their networks and connections, much of which are embodied.

There will also be the opportunity for each person to “talk back” to the camera, about their ideas and thoughts, to make short video messages to be shared with the other participants for inspiration, learning and building networks of understanding. These could be planned or spontaneous messages.
Appendix 5: Memorandum from Human Ethics Committee

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<tr>
<th>TO</th>
<th>Emma Hosking</th>
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<tr>
<td>COPY TO</td>
<td>Marcela Palomino-Schalscha</td>
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<tr>
<td>FROM</td>
<td>Dr Allison Kirkman, Convener, Human Ethics Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>24 December 2013</td>
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<td>SUBJECT</td>
<td>Ethics Approval: 20409</td>
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<td>Community economies. Local, global and everything in-between</td>
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Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 1 July 2015. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Allison Kirkman
Human Ethics Committee
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