

**Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo:
music, agency and social transformation**

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Declaration

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Abstract

Using different concepts that include Arjun Appadurai's (2004) "capacity to aspire", Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) "habitus", Clifford Geertz's (1973b) "thick description" and Christopher Small's (1998) "musicking", this thesis focuses on reimagining discourse on transformation in post-1994 South Africa in terms of socio-economic empowerment through music. The research presents a case of how culture (specifically music) has been used by Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo musical group, viewed as social actors, as a capacity for social transformation. Drawing from the ongoing discourses on transformation, as well as the recent university student uprisings in South Africa (the *fallisms* "#RhodesMustFall" and "#FeesMustFall"), this thesis argues that culture is a "web of significance" and a "logic" that holds the potential for a holistic transformation of post-1994 South Africa. The research suggests that transformation and social development must be located in the lived experiences of ordinary people, especially the historically disadvantaged. Discourse on transformation, including musical discourse, should be focused on empowerment strategies of South Africans at grassroots level.

Opsomming

Met die aanwending van verskeie konsepte wat insluit Arjun Appadurai se (2004) “kapasiteit om te strew”, Pierre Bourdieu se (1990) “habitus”, Clifford Geertz se (1973b) “digte beskrywing” en Christopher Small se (1998) “musicking”, poog hierdie tesis om die diskoers oor transformasie in post-1994 Suid-Afrika te herfokus met betrekking tot sosio-politieke bemagtiging deur musiek. Die navorsing wys hoe kultuur (meer spesifiek musiek) gebruik is as a kapasiteit vir sosiale transformasie deur Dizu Plaatjies en die Amampondo musiekgroep in hul hoedanigheid as sosiale rolspelers. Die tesis werk met voortslepende diskoerse van transformasie, sowel as die onlangse universiteitsproteste deur studente in Suid-Afrika (die *fallisms* “#RhodesMustFall” and “#FeesMustFall”) en argumenteer dat kultuur ’n “web van betekenisgewing” en ‘n “logica” daarstel wat potensiaal inhou vir die holistiese transformasie van post-1994 Suid-Afrika. Die navorsing suggereer dat transformasie en sosiale ontwikkeling ontstaan in die belewenisse van gewone mense, by uitstek in die lewens van histories benadeelde mense. Diskoerse oor transformasie, insluitende musiekdiskoerse, behoort dus te fokus op bemagtigingsstrategieë van Suid-Afrikaners op grondvlak.

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Chapter One

1.1. Introduction to the study

In the early hours of 2015, I witnessed a form of student protest at the University of Cape Town (UCT) that is quite different to what I am used to in my country, Nigeria. The issues highlighted by the protests – “inequality”, “poverty” and “white supremacy” – caught my attention in a way that I could not resist or ignore. As a foreign-based music student at UCT, I joined various rallies, lectures and discussions organized by students and learnt from these discussions that the practical and ideological manifestations of poverty and inequality, as well as the romanticization of colonial cultural practices as more important than others, are general problems facing many post-independence African countries. These problems manifest differently in different African societies. The most intriguing aspect of the South African context, it seemed to me, was that these challenges seemed more complex than in other African societies in which I had lived and studied. The presence and power of colonial history, and the deep divisions and distribution of political and economic power in South Africa against the background of the particular impact of apartheid and its demise, created a unique usage of the notion of “transformation”. It also seemed to me as if the discourses of the students signalled a radicalization that had moved away from the positive aspirations of transformation to the wielding of the term as a weapon or a term of abuse. My work finds itself positioned uncomfortably at a historical moment when the patience for transformation has reached new lows, and the appetite for learning lessons from the past has dwindled in the anger and frustration of current crises.

The research presented here focuses on decoding the term “transformation” in South Africa after 1994 from an interdisciplinary (musicological and anthropological) perspective as an attempt to refocus music research on discourses of socio-cultural and economic development in Africa. This research is not concerned with the study of music as signs and symbols, nor of its study in the context of institutionalized performances. Rather, through the lens of music, the aim is to shed new light on issues of social cohesion and socio-economic development. I intend to explore “transformation” through the lived world and musical practices of Dizu Plaatjies and the

Amampondo, as representatives of musicians who created livelihoods and commercial success from structurally marginalized positions.

1.2. Research aims and objectives

The central aim of this thesis is to consider the role of culture (specifically music) as a capacity for social, cultural and economic transformation in South Africa. My understanding of culture follows Mann's (2012) explanation of culture as the material, religious, linguistic, artistic and educational realities (as well as the ideologies governing them) that define the lived-world of a society. These realities, I suggest, are in constant flux through direct or indirect assimilation and adaptation of contrasting realities and ideologies. The hypothesis of this study is that music makes a unique contribution to social, cultural and economic transformation in the country and that music research therefore has a role in documenting this contribution. The aims of the study are:

- To refocus the discourse on music and transformation to one of socio-economic empowerment of disempowered people in South Africa;
- Through the lens of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo, to critically evaluate discourse on music and transformation in South Africa as a socio-political phenomenon;
- To document the activities and the roles of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo during the apartheid era, including their role in popularizing marimba through their indigenous music performances and educational programmes in South Africa.

1.3. Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo

The idea that Africa is poor, backward and underdeveloped and therefore needs help, education and empowerment from so-called "civilized" nations is a corrosive residue of colonialism. This idea, which Roger Kessing called the invention of a "radical alterity" (1994), necessitates new forms of social and humanities research that will reimagine Africa within its own terms. According to Kessing (1994: 303), "radical alterity" denotes the reified and essentialized fallacies of anthropologists, traded for profit in the academic marketplace. It is an anthropological (and later ethnomusicological) invention of the "Other" as radically different and lesser to "Us" (*ibid.*, 301).

On this basis, its creation feeds Euro-American needs to travel to and extend help to Africans (Kessing 1994; Agawu 2003 and Nzewi 2012).

Contrary to these constructions, African people (both young and old) have developed and are still developing various strategies for social, cultural and economic empowerment. These strategies, particularly as they pertain the functions of music in empowerment, have been the subject of scholarly enquiry. In their studies of hip-hop in Africa, Shipley (2012) and Watkins (2012) provide insights into how hip-hop music, through the agency¹ of African youths and young adults, offers the musicians a new form of agency in engaging the socio-political inconsistencies in their societies. Of special interest and relevance is Watkins's explanation of how "hip-hop has made a noticeable inroad in major cities such as Johannesburg and Durban and in the smaller towns of the Eastern Cape province". His intention "to provide an impression of the general state of hip hop in South Africa and, through hip hop; an understanding of how South Africa is faring" (*ibid.*, 59), makes this work exemplary of the kind of research that seeks to connect musical practices to understanding of the socio-political condition of South Africa.

Music scholarship of African scholars has also interrogated the notion of Africa's poverty. Kofi Agawu and Meki Nzewi have disputed some Euro-American assumptions about African rhythm, metre, harmony and time, as well as issues regarding context and representation. Watkins's work builds on and contributes to this scholarship through his engagement with people and their social condition. This thesis continues this work by engaging transformation discourse in and through music research in South Africa after 1994. Although many possible examples could be identified as suitable practices and musicians, I have chosen in this study to discuss how Dizu Plaatjies and Amampondo draw on music and culture as empowerment strategies for themselves and their society. My choice of Plaatjies and Amampondo is partly pragmatic, and partly theoretically motivated. Regarding the former, I have worked with Plaatjies as a student and assistant, and therefore my understanding of music as an empowerment strategy is profoundly informed by his

¹ Bourdieu's (1990 [1977]) perspective on agency suggests that individuals are completely free in their choices and always have an array of alternatives. This theorizing of agency references the role of the individual in taking responsibility for his/her social condition. Following this theory, in this research, agency refers to people: the musicians and audiences in relation with the social structures in their society. In other words, I suggest that music is a capacity that people draw on to assert and negotiate their place within the asymmetric social and economic relations in African countries, especially South Africa.

practise. Because of my relationship with Plaatjies, I have also found it practical to locate my research within the trust relationship that pre-dates this study, as building such relationship are both important for research and time consuming. With regards to the latter, theoretical motivation, my knowledge of Plaatjies and Amampondo was important in shaping my ideas about music as an empowerment strategy, and the unique and largely undocumented contribution made through their work to the establishment of marimba culture, meant that I could engage the idea of how what is regarded as “indigenous” can itself be the product of transformation driven by socio-economic forces. I am motivated in my choice of subject also by my interest in understanding socio-political, cultural and economic transformation in Africa. That is, beyond sound, aesthetics, rituals and performance contexts, I am eager also to understand how political and economic development in the twenty first century Africa can be engaged through research in music.

As Watkins explains, regarding hip hop musicians and their strategies of empowerment in South Africa, many Africans, both young and old, have also devised self-empowerment strategies for themselves and their society through musical activities. These strategies, I suggest, constitute a way of creating a space for themselves amidst limiting social and economic resources propelled by the political inconsistencies in many African countries (Meredith, 2005). During the apartheid era in South Africa, there were several stories of self-transformation, through the engagement of music as a capacity to aspire, from the townships to world fame. Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela are perhaps the most famous examples. But so are the subjects of this study, Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo music group, who were able to transcend the institutional and social barriers of their time. Following Appadurai’s (2004) argument that culture is the “capacity to aspire”, I argue that music has brought about socio-economic empowerment and propelled social transformation through the activities of many marginalized youths in African societies (Shipley, 2012; Watkins, 2012 and Christopher Waterman, 1990). This is also true in the case of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo music group from Langa Township, Cape Town.

Led by Plaatjies, the Amampondo music group transcended various economic and social barriers of apartheid law by approaching culture as a “capacity” for social, economic and cultural transformation (Dargie, pers. Comm., 29 September 2015). Dizu Plaatjies and Amampondo therefore provide a musical lens through which socio-economic development could be understood

in South Africa after 1994, making them relevant to ongoing discourses on transformation. In this research, I argue that Plaatjies and the Amampondo music group could suggest one kind of model for empowering disempowered South Africans through music, thereby contributing to discourses on social transformation and social development in South Africa and Africa at large. This thesis moves away from the idea that the exposure and dismantling of some external notion of “whiteness” or “white monopoly capital” is the panacea for South Africa’s problems. My research sees this move, theoretically, as yet another way to make the disempowered beholden to its various contexts of oppression. Dizu Plaatjies and Amampondo, I suggest, indicate a way forward, through music, to think about empowerment that is fundamentally positive and self-valuing. I argue that “holistic” (Malinowski, 1922) developmental, educational, social, cultural and economic narratives be approached through the lived-world of people. I suggest, people must be the analytical lens of any transformation- centred discourse in South Africa today.

1.4. Discourses on marimba music, Dizu Plaatjies and transformation: literature review

1.4.1. Marimba music and Dizu Plaatjies

Marimba has since the mid-1980s become a national culture in South Africa. As explained in the previous section, I understand culture to mean the material, religious, linguistic, artistic and educational realities (as well as the ideologies governing them) that define the lived-world of a society. The presence and prevalence of marimba in South Africa’s artistic, musical and educational landscapes suggest that it could be regarded as a national South African culture. Many schools now have marimba bands, and there are many South Africans earning money through marimba music performances in, for example, the tourism industry. There are also international marimba festivals, local competitions and companies focusing on reproducing and promoting South African marimba music. South African marimba music has become commonplace, as there exists various local performing groups in the townships and schools around the country. This research will build on Andrew Tracey’s (2004) history of marimba, published online, and aims to contribute to discussion on South African marimba as a music performance culture in academic literature. Apart from a few scanty online entries and album covers on Dizu Plaatjies’s biography by his music promoters, there is no academic literature on Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo. In

this respect, this thesis will provide pioneering contexts for future research on Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo.

1.4.2. Social transformation

Transformation is a concept (and process) that pervades every aspect of human life (Bourdieu, 1990; Geertz, 1973 and Tyler, 1871). Its scope is wide and fluid. Transformation could include growth of living and non-living things, positive or negative developments in society, change of different sorts, mobility, ideological reform, political and economic change, education, and so forth. Thus, transformation is an ongoing process of change, development and growth of people, ideology, society, organization and nation (Appadurai, 2008; Barber, 1997; Coplan, 2008; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999). One could suggest that almost all academic fields of study are in one way or another subject to transformation (development, change and education). In this study, I will limit my focus on transformation to the social sciences, humanities and educational fields of study. The extensive scope of these fields is reflected in the equally vast literatures on transformation on socio-cultural development, change and education. These literatures exist in books, dissertations, articles, newspaper articles, on social media platforms and websites. They also exist in magazines and archives accessible to the public.

Sociologists, ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, historians, and others, have conducted extensive research on social and cultural transformation in South Africa and Africa at large. Large numbers of these studies focus on the historical development of social life, cultural development, sociopolitical changes and educational reforms. Much of the extant research focuses on “people” as being acted upon by larger structural forces (social, cultural and economic) instead of seeing people as shaping such structures. That is, rather than analyzing social, cultural and economic transformation through the lived agency of people, scholars tend to limit the analyses of these structures to institutional frameworks that determine the behaviour of people. Despite the recent changes in the field of (ethno)musicology, anthropology (and others) from the notion of “indigenous” lives (the primitive “Other”) to urban or metropolitan narratives (Allen, 2003; Eriksen, 2004), the reliance on structures as determining people’s behaviour, is pervasive. Without suggesting that structure has no place in social transformation, the argument of this thesis is that

structure is created, managed and reproduced by people. My concern is very specifically to ensure that the potential for transformation and the improvement of life is located firmly within the agency of individuals and not made beholden to structures. I view this as a necessary and fundamental theoretical move, essential to the empowerment of people. This perspective is relevant to Barth's (1959a) idea of "transactionalism" in social development – a theoretical model that places social actors at the centre of analysis without assuming that integration is a necessary outcome of social interaction. Barth's theory proposed that social transformation "is built up and maintained through the exercise of a continual series of individual choices", not in collective sociality (*ibid.*, 2).

Academic publications on contemporary urban music forms like kwaito and "Y-Culture" (Coplan, 2005; Nuttal, 2007 and Steingo, 2005) have reproduced discourses of race, music and social change in ways that do not address adequately the complexity of "selves-in-process" (Santos, 2013). Some musicological and anthropological research on South Africa (Ballantine, 2012; Bruinders, 2011; Meintjies, 2003 and Watkins, 2012) have painted a more nuanced picture, using musical experience to reveal the complex dynamics of race, class, gender, ethnicity and transitional politics at work in the making of South African identities.²

In her 2003 ethnographic report on the production of a *mbaqanga* album in early 1990's Johannesburg, Louise Meintjies explores, through thickly descriptive ethnography, the dynamics at work in the replication of common-sense categories of race alongside other kinds of social relations and identities. She reveals the complexity of what lies behind the making of the deceptively straightforward ethnic markers of an "authentically" Zulu *mbaqanga* album. *Mbaqanga*, the hugely popular sound of 1970's and 1980's South Africa (and a key influence on the development of kwaito later in the 1990's), played a big part in the popularization of Zuluness as an identifier of self (Santos, 2013:37). Meintjies reveals the inherent complexities of intercultural exchanges in processes of making what has been termed "authentic" Zulu music, *mbaqanga*.

² For detailed accounts of youth cultural imagination, social identity and politics of belonging inherent in music making in Cape Town, see Martin (2013), *Sounding the Cape: Music, Identity and Politics in South Africa*, and Field *et al* (2007), *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town*.

For Meintjies, what was at stake in the making of an ideal “deep Zulu” as an authentic self, was the mobilization of traditional values and beliefs as means to engage with the contemporary world: “deep Zulu values informed a popular image while being molded by it” (2003:8). The relevance to critical analysis of socio-cultural transformation in Meintjies’s work, resides in her illustration of how multiple gender and racial identities were at work in the studio, where white Afrikaans soundmen bantered with rural Zulu guitarists in the process of enacting an “authentic Zuluness”.

Racial, gender and cultural dynamics in social transformation and identity production are also explored in Nadine Dolby’s (2001) ethnographic report on youth, identity and popular culture in South Africa. Dolby explores the inter-racial and cultural dynamics of South African high school after 1994. She focuses on music as an analytical tool to understand musical taste as a marker of distinction and a way to make alliances. Dolby’s exploration of how ideas about race and belonging are both reproduced and challenged through the modality of dance music amongst racialized factions within a high school population, illuminates the dynamic nature of identity and its relationship to wider social processes in South Africa. What is striking about Dolby’s ethnography is the speed at which racial factions and alliances form and dissolve as the post-apartheid landscape takes shape, altering the demographics and dynamics of the school correspondingly. Meintjies’s and Dolby’s research valorizes Christopher Small’s (1998) concept of “musicking” in South African contexts, in that they illustrate how music and dance created platforms for identity negotiation, and how socialization processes were negotiated and on occasion resulted in racial, cultural and social boundaries being dissolved. Meintjies and Dolby’s perspectives and approaches to transformation, specifically with regard to social and cultural developments, are valuable. However, in my view, they tend predominantly to construct people as socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic *subjects* rather than *agents* who determine and facilitate social changes or development.

Christopher Small’s (1998) concept of “musicking” grounds musical meaning not only in sound, but in the performance and act of doing or experiencing a piece of music. Music’s meaning is contextual as much as it is about sound itself. For Small, to understand the affective qualities of music, analysis of the music aesthetics and structure must be supplemented with analysis of the context of its production and reception. Small’s “musicking” is a concept that encompasses all

kinds of musical activity, from being at a concert to singing while doing housework. The term “musicking” was coined by Small in the late 1990s, but a similar idea had been explored by John Blacking in the 1970s. Blacking’s (1973) *How Musical is Man?* pre-empted Small’s notion of musicking, in that it aims to reveal how music-making informs social and cultural organization in societies.

Drawing from his extensive research on music and symbolism among the Venda of South Africa, and secondary research on the music of many other African cultures, Blacking turned from the institutionalized framework of music description, aesthetic and analysis of music to the pan-human question of the nature of musicality. For Blacking, *How musical is man?* was “not a scholarly study of human musicality” (*ibid.*, ix) in the sense of rhythmic elements, aesthetic parameters or performance practices, but an innovative advancement on and rethink of issues, concepts and ideas that laid down the framework for ethnomusicological study (Reily, 2006). In so doing, Blacking drew from the social dimensions of music to show that music, music-making and the society are mirrored images of one another. He demonstrated this through his ethnography of Venda music-making; by summarizing Venda concepts of music, musicality, musicianship, and music-making, as well as how they intersected with Venda social and cultural transformation. Blacking posited that the functions of music centre around connecting people through shared experiences within their social and cultural framework (Blacking, 1973:35). Corroborating Blacking (1973), Reily (2009: 61) further explains that musical performance allowed the Venda to engage with one another in a range of distinct and overlapping social spheres, and through their communal activities, alliances were forged and reinforced. For Reily, musical behaviour among the Venda was far more than a “cultural frill enhancing social life; rather, it provided the very means of structuring and fostering a ‘soundly organised’ social world” (*ibid.*). These perspectives link well with Small’s idea of “musicking” in South African contexts, especially in relation to how students draw from shared experiences and embodied history, through songs, a ‘soundly organised social world’, to negotiate and transform discourses surrounding “transformation” in contemporary South Africa.

Within their respective contexts, Small’s concept of “musicking” and Blacking’s approach outlined in *How musical is man?* are prophetic in the ways they envisioned a possible theoretical

turn that necessitates a rethink of music as an “open” phenomenon through which social realities can be understood (Muller, 2016). It is this understanding of music not as a “fixed” thing, but also as an activity and process through which social relations and transformation are enacted, that informs how music is represented in this thesis – as a lens to understand and engage social transformation. More specifically, this understanding prompts me to interrogate (i) the role of music-making in social transformation and how music-making, through the agency of students, transformed discourse on “transformation” in South Africa after 1994, and (ii) the activities of Dizu Plaatjies and Amampondo as a social transformation project. This research is therefore not “music research” in the narrow sense of the word, but rather research conducted *through* music, as it concerns itself with socio-political and social transformation discourse rather than musical aesthetics, rhythm or sound transformation. This is not to say that the latter is not desirable or possible, but only that it is not the project presented here. This study “thinks with music” in pushing towards an understanding of the making and transformation of society (Santos, 2013).

1.5. Research Methodology

The methodology for this research is based on ethnographic and historical analysis. Drawing from anthropological and ethnomusicological frameworks for data collection, the study uses both classic and contemporary forms of data collection to provide substance to transformation discourse in South Africa after 1994. The ethnomusicological method emerged from anthropological frameworks, where the focus is the study of the “Other”, or non-European peoples and their music (Meriam, 1964). Classic anthropological research method entails fieldwork and participant-observation, usually set within definite limits of one to two-years stay. The researcher then leaves and may never return to the field site, writes a definitive ethnography based on her/his field experiences using theoretical frameworks canonized by the university academy (Bruinders, 2011 :32).

More contemporary approaches such as “social media ethnography or “digital ethnography”, create competing understandings of ethnographic knowledge and ways of knowing in the present time, and these approaches have been broadly defined as internet ethnography (Postill and Pink,

2012; Varis, 2014 and others). Contemporary approaches or internet ethnography seeks to find new routes to ethnographic knowledge and understandings, flexibly adapting and developing new methods and modern technologies to new situations, yet retaining a reflexive awareness of the nature of the knowledge produced and of its limits and strengths (Postill and Pink, 2012: 4). In other words, the contemporary approach does not replace the long-term immersion in a society or culture or to produce classic ethnographic knowledge. Rather, it creates deep, contextual and contingent understandings through intensive and collaborative sensory, embodied engagements often involving digital technologies in co-producing knowledge (*ibid.*). According to Postill and Pink (2012: 5), social media ethnography makes a good example of internet ethnography because it brings new routes to knowledge which are specifically opened up through online/offline engagements. These new approaches and contemporary forms of data collection inform how data was collected on transformation discourse in this study. In this thesis, a contemporary form of ethnography is therefore marshalled to collect data on discourse and opinions on transformation in South Africa after 1994, and a form of classic ethnography was used to collect data on Dizu Plaatjies. These approaches are further explained below.

Contemporary Approach to Ethnography: Online Data Collection

Ongoing technological development and globalization are transforming typical ways of life everywhere (Eriksen, 2004:5). New forms of sociality are emerging, and “satellite, television, cell phone networks, and the internet have created conditions for instantaneous and fiction-free communities” (*ibid.*). These conditions have complicated the idea of a “place”, “making of a place” and “people” – as laid down in the classic ethnographic framework of Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski. As culture changes and societies develop, so does ethnographic approaches to cultures change (Varis, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to rethink the idea of a “fixed community” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997:5-9) to include digital culture, digital communication and virtual communities as a research site (Postill and Pink, 2012). The ongoing technological revolution has placed digital culture at the centres of sociality.

Digital culture has changed ways of life and sociality and human interaction, and sociality is gradually shifting from taking place in a physical community to happening in a virtual community (Eriksen, 2004:4-5; Varis, 2014:14-16). For example, the effect of digital culture, through

Facebook and Youtube, is evident in ways in which South African students draw on this new form of sociality to raise awareness and sustained energy and interest into what is now known as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student movements in South Africa. Through technological mediation, changes in communicative environments have necessitated changes in the shape and functions of people's communications (Varis, 2014:14). This speaks to how social media are increasingly central to contemporary everyday life in South Africa, and how the student movements and activists engaged social media (specifically Facebook, YouTube and Twitter) in their quest for transformation in the higher education community in South Africa. These changes in communication and sociality, in the case of student uprisings and transformation discourse in the higher education community, inform the data collection method for Chapter Two. "Digital ethnography" (Varis, 2014) or "social media ethnography" (Postill and Pink, 2012), I argue, is particularly appropriate to engage a complex and sensitive topic such as "transformation" in South Africa after 1994. Nonetheless, social media [or digital] ethnographic practice cannot be defined as an approach that exclusively takes place online, as there are off-line considerations to its formation and understanding (Postill and Pink, 2012; Varis, 2014). In this study, my concern is with internet related data, not social media or digital ethnography per se. This approach, I hope, will aid my understanding and provide new perspectives to discourses on transformation in South Africa after 1994. This form of data collection also minimizes the ethical implications of data collection on a complex and sensitive topic such as the one under discussion, steering it away from interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and using the public digital space as a self-declared open space of positioning and self-expression.

Regarding ethical considerations, I have decided not to interview prominent figures in the higher education community, the public, media, politics and student movements about how they understand "what they are doing". Partly, of course, this decision was pragmatically informed in the light of what is possible within the time and presentational constraints of research on this level. But its implications for ethics considerations, and minimizing ethical risks, were important. Instead of interviews, my research depends on relevant online materials for its data collection. This includes blog posts and posts on social media platforms (mainly YouTube) and online news sites. Data gathered from various events and staging of discourse (debates, documentaries, news and discussions during various academic settings) indicate how transformation is being perceived and

understood by many South Africans. It also shows how race was placed at the heart of transformation discourses, and reinforced as a primary form of identification within the changing contexts of cultural capital and demographics in South Africa. The data collected in this matter aimed to provide a “mapping” (Ross, 2010) of perspectives on transformation, after which the activities and lives of Plaatjies and Amampondo were used as a theoretical lens through which to refocus transformation from political to socio-economic empowerment of people in South Africa.

Classic Ethnographic Approach: Music Performance and Apprenticeship as a Research

Method

In his explanation of the anthropology enterprise, Geertz states that “what the practitioners [anthropologists] do is ethnography” (1973:5), and ethnography is defined as the description of behaviour in a culture, typically resulting from fieldwork (Eriksen, 2004 and Jacobson, 1991). Some ethnomusicologists have included other techniques like music performance, apprenticeship and community music making as research tools in their ethnographic fieldwork (Berliner, 1978; Bruinders, 2011; Koning, 1980; Baily, 2001 and others). For example, Koning (1980) explains that the research technique of musical participation induces informants to apply to the fieldworker those roles with which they are familiar, and which seem to suit the fieldworker’s behaviour best. For Koning, both the overall completeness and the efficiency of any ethnomusicological research into music culture will benefit greatly when the researcher is thoroughly and actively involved musically in that culture. As such, Participant-observation may yield a large amount of structured data, and active musical participation may yield data that probably cannot be collected with the use of any other technique (Koning, 1980:428-429).

Koning’s perspective applies to data collection for this study. My participation in music performances, music classes and concert performances with Dizu Plaatjies brought about a deeper connection and relationship between fieldworker and informer. Part of Chapter Four of this thesis relies on my participant-observation over one year (May 2014 to September 2015) among black South African students at the South African College of Music’s African music programme at the University of Cape Town. In addition, I spent another four months (September 2015 to December 2015) of apprenticeship with Dizu Plaatjies in Langa Township, Cape Town. Through these experiences, I gained insights into important and long-standing music practices of South African

black culture in Cape Town. In addition to these ethnographic experiences, I also conducted interviews with Dizu Plaatjies. These were non-directive (non-structured) interviews through open-ended questions and discussions on topics relating to my research. Music was the “place” where my Nigerian identity and Plaatjies’s South African identity engaged, mingled and entangled. Our relationship, predating this research, has not been that of a researcher and her/his subject, but that of “African brothers” working together positively to contribute to social transformation in Africa through research in music. I was and still am a marimba student of Plaatjies. This relationship yielded discussions that provided data that is directly relevant to my research, and sharing of information relying on an established relationship of trust. In this sense, my interactions with Plaatjies were not those of a typical outsider to insider, or empowered academic versus disempowered subject. Plaatjies, as an Associate Professor of African Music at the South African College of Music at the University of Cape Town, was also a particularly informed research subject, in many ways resulting in an inversion of the power structures inherent in mainstream anthropological and ethnomusicological frameworks (Agawu, 2003; Nyanmjoh, 2012 and Nzewi, 2012).

Using music performance and apprenticeship as research methods created a platform to understand ways in which music symbolically articulated spaces of resistance, independence and new forms of sociality in the apartheid era. Specifically, the transformative power of music in the making of self and empowering the society were often emphasized by Plaatjies. According to him, music education, rooted in African culture, can change society for good. This position, though not often explained by (but) often experienced and understood by those of us who performed with Plaatjies, can serve as a point of departure to understand “why music as the glue that held together social spaces ... could challenge the powerful paradigms of race and separation operating in South Africa” (Santos, 2013:301). This power of music, I suggest, operates through the agency of social actors such as Plaatjies. Plaatjies is both an example of how music is a powerful agent for change in society, and generative of a theory of social change through music. This is not to say that Plaatjies is the only such example, or that only his practise can be theory generating in this way, but for the pragmatic and theoretical reasons outlined above I focus on Plaatjies to allow for a clear research focus. In conjunction with the ethnographic approaches outlined above, archival sources,

secondary literature, interviews, memos and historical data are triangulated to argue the case for music as a strategy of socio-economic transformation in the music of Plaatjies and Amampondo.

Note on Ethical Considerations

This research follows Stellenbosch University's research ethics guidelines on research relating to human subjects. According to Varis (2014), one rather uncontroversial feature of contemporary form of ethnography is that it addresses complexity. It does not, unlike many other approaches, try to reduce the complexity of social events by focusing a priori on a selected range of relevant features, but it tries to describe and analyse the complexity of social events comprehensively. I consider the digital spaces (Youtube and online news) as a meeting point with my research participants. Also, I consider the information gathered as their "voices", and my own engagement with these voices as ethnographic constructions of their sociality and presence on the digital space (Berliner, 1978; Bruinders, 2011; Geertz, 1973; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). I acknowledge that transformation is a complex issue in South Africa. As such, the opinions presented in this study are my own construction of the discourse. According to Geertz (1973), all anthropological (as well as ethnomusicological) writings are interpretations, and thus fictions in the sense of something made, or fashioned. In this sense, this study is my construction of Plaatjies's constructions, as well as a reconstruction of the various perspectives presented on transformation. The information on Plaatjies as presented in this study is used with full informed consent of Plaatjies, who has been given an opportunity to read, comment on and correct my text on three different occasions. The various perspectives on transformation were generated in the public domain, and as such I am not liable to any violation of rights in that the information is used within the contexts in which they were made available in the public domain.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

According to Eriksen (2004: 61-63), social sciences theories and concepts may be compared to a large crossroads with busy traffic and a few temporarily employed traffic police who desperately try to force the unruly to follow the rules. Eriksen's metaphor is a synchronic view of the social sciences, but a more diachronic view of the way in which the social sciences evolve is also possible. While referencing classic sociological and anthropological concepts and theories of

social and cultural transformation, this thesis uses Geertz's (1973) notion of "thick description" and Small's (1998) "musicking" to provide new perspectives on transformation discourses in contemporary South Africa. Bourdieu's (1990) notion of "habitus" and Appadurai's (2004) notion of the "capacity to aspire" are used in positioning Plaatjies as an instance of best practice, as well as an agent through which to rethink transformation as a social empowerment project.

The terms "development" and "social transformation" have evoked many theories, and since the mid-twentieth century these theories have been fiercely debated and challenged at various levels by social scientists and natural scientists (Eriksen, 2004, Sherry Ortner, 1984). There are classical theories and concepts of culture, identity, development and social transformation and from these theories, other contemporary (economic, developmental, identity-related, social, cultural and other) theories and concepts have emerged. In the field of sociology and anthropology, Franz Boas's "cultural relativism" and "historical particularism", Malinowski's "holism", A.R. Radcliffe-Brown's "structural-functionalism", and Marcel Mauss's "reciprocity" have, since the early twentieth century, laid the platforms on which many social scientists position their theories and concepts. The works of these disciplinary founding fathers provided a platform for theoretical innovations of later social scientists like Geertz, Bourdieu and Appadurai (Eriksen, 2004). I will briefly discuss the contributions of these pioneers and thereafter focus on the works of Geertz, Bourdieu and Appadurai, and how they will be used in this study.

For Boas, cultural relativism is the view that every society or every culture must be understood on its own terms, from within, and that it is neither possible nor particularly interesting to rank societies on an evolutionary ladder. Boas regarded the belief that certain societies were objectively more advanced than others as an ethnocentric fallacy, a view governed by prejudice and an unconsidered belief in the superiority of one's own culture (Eriksen, 2004:13). On the other hand, Boas's historical particularism consists of the view that every society has its own unique history, which is to say that there are no "necessary stages" that societies pass through, in that it is impossible to generalize about historical sequences as they are all unique. All societies have their own paths towards sustainability and their own mechanism of change. According to Eriksen, "these views have always been controversial among anthropologists, but they have been deeply influential up to the present" (Eriksen, 2004:12-13).

Malinowski's notion of "holism" is relevant in some respects to ideas surrounding social transformation. For Malinowski, every part of social life contributes to human development; thus, to understand development and social transformation, researchers must take into account the socio-cultural, economic, educational, political and religious lives of "natives" (Malinowski 1922:7-9). In classical functionalist anthropology, holism refers to a theoretical frame for describing the connections of social phenomena to each other, and in relation to their connectedness with institutions in an integrated whole. As mentioned earlier, this perspective has been rigorously debated by other social scientists. For example, Leach (1982) has argued that societies are far from being in an integrated equilibrium. According to him, societies are unstable, and within them are located changes, competing ideologies, myths and origins of identities that often necessitate tension and asymmetric relationships between its actors, leading to processes of social transformation (Bourdieu 1990). Eriksen (2004:38) later elaborated on Malinowski's perspective and explained that holism does not necessarily mean that societies or cultures hang together in a perfect, logical or functional way. According to him:

It [holism] may be a way of thinking which assumes that phenomena are connected to other phenomena and create some kind of entity based on interconnections and mutual influence between its various elements, without taking for granted that this entity should be of a lasting character or encompasses an entire society or an entire population group (*ibid.*).

Malinowski suggested that the best way to understand "native" lives is to see them from "native points of view" (Malinowski, 1922). By native point of view, he suggested that social realities are best assessed through the live world of social agents, and that researchers should immerse themselves in the culture of people and societies they are researching. I regard Malinowski's perspective as relevant to understanding transformation in South African after 1994, and formulating an approach to studying transformation through music. Closely related to Malinowski's holism is Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalism, a theory that argues that all the parts, or institutions of a society, fulfil particular functions, roughly in the same way all bodily parts contribute to the whole (Eriksen, 2004:16).³ The emphasis of these theories is on the fact that

³ Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalism was premised on the notion that "a structure consisting of a set of relations amongst unit entities, the continuity of the structure being maintained by a life-process made up of the activities of the constituent units" (Radcliffe-Brown 1935: 395-400; 1958:40-41).

every sector or part of society contributes to overall development and transformation of such society. Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown encourage a multi-focused approach to analysing and understanding social transformation in societies.

Related to Malinowski's notion of "holism" is Mauss's reciprocity. Mauss's reciprocity summarizes and brings together all the concepts and theories of development and social transformation above, and constitutes a ground-breaking contribution to social and human sciences. For Mauss, reciprocity is "the exchange of gifts and services, which is the 'glue' that ties societies together in the absence of a centralized power" (Eriksen, 2004: 17-18). As mentioned above, my focus is not on Mauss's reciprocity per se, nor any of the early originators' concepts. Rather, these classical theories are referenced to create platforms for understanding later developments in social and cultural theories and concepts. More important to the theoretical work conducted by this research is Bourdieu's notion of "habitus", Appadurai's phrase, "capacity to aspire", Small "musicking" and Geertz's "thick description". These concepts are more relevant to the South African situation, and by extension to notions of empowerment, social cohesion, cultural and social transformation of the nation.

Bourdieu (1990) explains "habitus" as the embodied knowledge, habits and skills of the body through history, which are taken for granted and are hard to change. He explains social reproduction as asymmetric power relations within structures, which reproduce culture and dynamics within systems of social relation in societies. Considering the latter, *Plaatjies* and the *Amampondo* are used in this research as a lens through which I explore what happens when individuals apply embodied knowledge through music to change their lives. In other words, I propose to take seriously the challenging of asymmetric power relations through music (both in the activities of *Plaatjies* and *Amampondo*, and how South African students transform discourses on transformation) as acts of self-empowerment and drivers of transformation.

This embodied knowledge, according to Appadurai (2004), can become a "capacity to aspire". Drawing from his research on how youths in Mumbai, India, draw on embodied history as empowerment strategy in transforming their lives and society, Appadurai views embodied history and culture as mechanisms through which aspiration is performed. He further explains that

aspiration constitutes navigational capacity that is nurtured by the possibility of real-world conjectures and refutations – which thrives and survives on practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture and refutation. Drawing from Appadurai’s perspective on embodied history and culture as capacity to aspire, I explore how Plaatjies and Amampondo converted embodied knowledge and history into mechanisms for aspiration. I also consider how South African student movements drew on embodied history in aspiring towards transformation and changing transformation discourse in South Africa after 1994.

Considering the above perspectives on embodiment as a mechanism for aspiration, this study uses Geertz’s (1973) “thick description” to bring substance to discourse on transformation in South Africa after 1994. In explaining thick description, Geertz argues that what we (researchers) call our data, are our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are “up to”. It is therefore not just an observational task, but an interpretive one (*ibid.*, 9). He makes his argument clearer by giving an example of a twitch, wink and parody, suggesting that the difference between thin description and thick description is the ability to distinguish the twitch from the wink. According to Geertz, thick description is a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which activities are produced, perceived and interpreted and without which they would not exist (*ibid.*, 7). Analysing discourse and engaging the diverse perspectives on transformation in South Africa after 1994 requires thick description.

1.7. Chapter Layout

This thesis is divided into four chapters. While documenting for the first time the contributions by Dizu Plaatjies, Amampondo and their marimba music (Chapter Four), the thesis is organized to refocus discourse on transformation after 1994 in South Africa from political to socio-economic concerns. The next chapter (Chapter Two) presents a broad overview of transformation as a concept. Taking sideways glances to contemporary socio-political and socio-economic discourses in South Africa, the chapter concludes with a discussion on refocusing such discourses (in Chapter Three) to that of socio-economic development of South Africa after post-1994, with particular

focus on historically disadvantaged people. I am concerned with rescuing from the radical and seemingly intractable antagonisms of recent years, a notion of transformation that is responsible and productive and that does not replicate the damaging binary that locks the powerless into a dependent relationship with those who are perceived as powerful. While I recognize the importance and significance of the campus protests in South Africa in 2015/2016, I am concerned to find alternative discourses to those that lead to destruction and conflict.

The third chapter refocuses discourses on transformation to address the socio-economic empowerment of the so-called disempowered in South Africa. Drawing from discourses and dynamics on transformation in South Africa, the chapter critically engages with issues of race, identity and culture in the South African context. Chapter Three argues that holistic social development is a product of responsibilities and exchanges between social actors, rather than an ultimate conflict between mutually antagonistic subjects of historical and structural forces. Throughout, I argue that people are not victims of history, but its agents, and that music plays a role in allowing individuals to exercise that agency.

Chapter Four presents the activities of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo musical group as an instance where transformation through music can be observed as a source of social transformation and empowerment in South Africa. The chapter provides a biographical background of Plaatjies, constructed in large part from primary materials, and describes the social history and development of Amampondo as the progenitor of South African marimba music.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Five, summarizes and connects key points of the previous chapters. This chapter considers how Plaatjies and Amampondo can be thought of as agents of empowerment and engagement with transformation. Chapter Five argues the case for the role of music in the holistic socio-economic transformation of South Africa after 1994, including the curtailment of poverty, unemployment and inequality. It argues that discourses on transformation, also with regard to music, should be refocused to socio-economic development of South Africans rather than dwell on refuelling old and intractable antinomies. In this sense, the thesis is a work of idealism, written by a Nigerian who sees much positive value in a situation that many South Africans seem to have abandoned to the conflict and violence of a zero-sum game.

Chapter Two

The Idea of “Transformation” and the South African Situation: An Overview

2.1. Perspectives on transformation in higher education and in public discourse

The word “transformation”, as it is popularly used in South Africa after 1994, is shaped by diverse understandings and language registers. Although “transformation” is a concept that affects every sphere of South Africa’s society – including politics, economics, culture and education – there seems to be no fixed interpretation of the term in South Africa. My own consideration of the term will focus on transformation in higher education. When asked about his concept of “transformation” in South African higher education, Xolela Mangcu from the University of Cape Town explained that there is an urgent need for equity in the professoriate in higher education. He further argued that although there is ongoing mass representation of “blacks” in higher education, the old apartheid structure remains dominant in contemporary university life. From the latter, one could conclude that Mangcu’s concept of transformation in higher education is primarily one concerned with the inclusion of black academics in tertiary institutions.⁴

Panashe Chigumadzi, a student activist and member of the Transform Wits movement, states that students demand that universities become African, and that means “we need to change everything from who writes the text books, who teaches the content of the texts books and how the courses are structured”. She further explains: “but importantly, you cannot decolonize the universities if you have not decolonized South Africa”.⁵ Chigumadzi’s position represents a much broader view of “transformation” compared to that of Mangcu, who seems mostly concerned with staffing. Chigumadzi’s views are supported in a different context by Ramabina Mahapa, the Student Representative Council (SRC) President of the University of Cape Town (UCT) from 2014 to 2015. In his address at the University Assembly on 25 March 2015, Mahapa, addressing institutional symbolism at UCT, said:

⁴ Xolela was interviewed on SABC Digital News. [//www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ue0tz5obeM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ue0tz5obeM).

⁵ This is one excerpt from the “Big Debate on Rhodes Must Fall”, on the Big Debate South Africa’s YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFIp9h4znyc>.

[I]t is not only the statue [of Cecil John Rhodes] that is problematic; this very same hall is very much problematic! Look around you ladies and gentlemen! What do you see? Do you see a black (African) person? Do you see a coloured person, do you see an Indian person!? When we come here for the graduation ceremonies, we hear a Latin song that is sung here! We can't identify with that song! Our living and learning spaces should be diverse and inclusive for us all.⁶

Chigumadzi's argument was expressed by Mahapa through rhetorical questions that were in themselves calls for a need to change "everything" at UCT. These perspectives form part of ongoing discourses on an African-centred education in South Africa.⁷ Additionally, there are views from students who see "transformation" as the total removal of "apartheid remnants" from universities, including changing the language of instruction in higher education. For example, Sikhulekile Duma, a spokesperson for the student Open Stellenbosch movement, argues that race and language are the major tools of excluding "black" students at Stellenbosch University.⁸ Duma explains that:

We [black students] find ourselves in an environment that still has the element and remnant of apartheid; with higher amount of institutional and direct racism, but most importantly, we are dealing with a university that uses tools such as language to exclude students. For example, bringing students of colour from different cultures to university and enforcing Afrikaans upon them even though they don't understand Afrikaans; lecturers telling students because they don't understand Afrikaans that they shouldn't be here. We said no. No student should be forced to learn or be educated in Afrikaans (*ibid.*).

For Duma, the idea of "transformation" would be an inclusive environment for "black" students. In the same vein, Majaletje Mathume, another spokesperson for the Open Stellenbosch movement, also supports the view that Afrikaans is a colonial symbol, necessitating institutional transformation through language policy changes.⁹

⁶ I was present at this meeting while a student at UCT, the coverage is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlnFLNN7swI>.

⁷ See for example Suren Pillay's (2015) "Decolonizing the University", published online by *Africa is a country*. <http://africasacountry.com/2015/06/decolonizing-the-university/>.

⁸ This was the Open Stellenbosch interview at Contraband Cape Town. The interview is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0bGLKFns-c>.

⁹ See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x624KDhyl50&t=156s>.

Apart from the various perspectives within and about academic institutions on the concept of “transformation”, there seems to be divergent views between the higher education community and the lived experiences of ordinary South African citizens. In a debate on “transformation” in South Africa, the journalist Buhle Ndweni focuses on economic transformation and the frustration of the youth.¹⁰ Mienke Steytler, head of media and public affairs at the South African Institute of Race Relations, and Xhanti Payi, lead economist and researcher at Nascence Research Insight, support Ndweni’s view of “transformation”. Ndweni notes that:

South African blacks remain marginalized in all economic participation, unemployment is increasing instead of decreasing...this is what the young ones out there are concerned about and they are frustrated; and that’s why you see them doing what they are doing [protesting and vandalizing school properties] (refer to footnote 8).

In response to Ndweni’s position, Steytler explains:

... the student movement’s position (RMF) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) does not address the bigger issue, but is definitely a start of much bigger conversations on transformation: unemployment, inequality, education and job creation (*ibid.*).

Clarifying the student uprising further, Payi says:

The ways in which curriculum is presented do not make them [the black students] feel as part of the system; teaching and learning method in the university is very important and crucial to social, economic and cultural development of black people, and in moving the nation forward (*Ibid.*).

These authors are unanimous in interpreting transformation in broad-based economic terms, with special emphasis on the importance of creating employment for young people. Job creation, they argue, should not be the government’s responsibility alone, but should also be the concern of the “business fraternity”. At a SABC TNA business briefing in Durban, panel members Ben Ngubane (Chairman of Eskom), Mncane Mthunzi (President of the Black Management Forum), Nazeem Howa (Chief Executive of Oakbay Investments), Mohale Ralebitso (CEO Black Business Council) and Toyko Sexwale (Businessman and ex-minister of Human Settlements) discussed

¹⁰ Fine week Money Matters: Young, black and angry – SA’s economic transformation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hmeXHyrIZI>.

transformation.¹¹ For the majority of the audience members, who were largely “black” South Africans, “transformation” meant returning the land to black people, creating jobs and creating black entrepreneurs and business owners. Job creation and business empowerment programmes were seen as key to eradicating inequality and poverty in the country. Yet another perspective on transformation privileges the rhetoric of exclusive “black” South African nationhood.¹²

The most pertinent issue connected with the transformation discourses cited above and not confined to campus politics and concerns, is unemployment, a position often articulated in the rhetoric of inequality based on racial privileges. For the community outside of higher education, basic amenities like food, shelter and sustainability seem to be essential to the notion of transformation.¹³ Fiona Ross (2010) has documented in *Raw life, New Hope*, how poverty renders the historically disadvantaged people of the Cape vulnerable, with little or no changes in their social and financial circumstances, even after the demise of apartheid. For working class South Africans, transformation means to have a dignified life in terms of shelter, food, education and empowerment, and to hold government accountable and responsible.

The views cited above constitute only a small fraction of the multifarious understandings and expectations connected with the notion of transformation. It is important to state that the lack of consensus on the notion of transformation in South Africa does not discredit any of the understandings associated with the term. I would like to suggest that the term “transformation”, as it is used in South Africa, could be seen as a unique lemma in the South African social lexicon. It is, in other words, a word used within a discursive context to express diverse, but related sentiments. It could mean economic freedom for some, while it could mean socio-cultural equity, political change, gender equality or racial equity for others.

¹¹ See *Transformation of SA economy: What are the obstacles?* Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNRqhhOaJme>.

¹² For example, Irvin Jim’s (president of the National Union of MetalWorkers) notion that South Africa’s economy only favours “white” people. He argues that the economy and the labour force do not “transform” the lives of “black” workers. See for more detail: *Big Debate on Workers’ Rights* at *Big Debate South Africa* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXbgtVb-YvQ>.

¹³ I have lived in most suburbs of Cape Town while a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT) between 2014 and March 2016. I also lived in Langa township between July 2015 and January 2016, and have performed as a musician in and around other Western Cape townships.

2.2. Perspectives on transformation from socio-political discourse

Apartheid dynamics were defined on the grounds of political, racial and ethnic tensions. The after 1994 situation in South Africa, through its inherited history and contemporary challenges, are locked in the “web of complex power” relations (Bourdieu, 1990; Ortner, 1983), generally characteristic of post-colonial African states (Meredith, 2005).

According to Scheidegger (2015:1), these post-1994 South African “complexities” resulted from different agendas and conflicting interests among liberation veterans who became the new political leaders of South Africa. There has been increasing ambivalence about the commitment of these political leaders to serve the South African people (Meyiwa *et al*, 2014:5), a circumstance that directly affects notions of “transformation”. In their report detailing twenty years of South Africa’s development, Meyiwa *et al*, note the level of corruption among politicians and government officials. They explain:

[P]oliticians are among the most highly paid individuals in the public sector. (During the course of the 20 years of democracy, despite being in the public sector, some politicians have been accused of and sentenced for corrupt activities.) Ordinary ward councilors earn more than do schoolteachers or clerks. Cabinet ministers are the most wealthy and glamorous politicians in South Africa. They drive the most expensive cars; they have bodyguards for their safety, and the State pays not only them, but also their bodyguards. This state of affairs in South Africa has a powerful effect on a number of social aspects of ordinary lives (*ibid.*, 3).

This dynamic has consequences on how transformation is perceived. Amidst a sharp slowdown of broad economic growth and rapid capital flight, government overspending and rising criticism from black South Africans under the presidency of Mandela’s successor, Thabo Mbeki, (Ballantine, 2004:106), “transformation” has also become part of a newly racialized discourse. Black government officials and their associate political caucus have increasingly responded, in a defensive manner, through the use of provocative racial statements¹⁴ that threaten the South African nation-building and racial reconciliation project (*ibid.*, 3). White South Africans would

¹⁴ See Lambrechts (2012:1) for details of how the then ANC Youth League President, Julius Malema, and his followers’ hate-speech invoked fears of racial polarization and renewed outbreaks of racial tension and violence.

often be tagged as racists whenever they express their discontent over the state of affairs in the country, and this would also be equated with anti-transformational politics.¹⁵

From a socio-political perspective, the extent to which South Africa has been transformed after twenty-two years of democracy is therefore unclear and contested. Following the 1994 democratic election, the ANC-led government implemented the 1992 Ready to Govern (R2G) discussion document as one of many plans for social and economic transformation of the new South Africa.¹⁶ According to Gumede (2013:1), the R2G document provides a robust analysis of social and economic development, and the perceived challenges, that South Africa was to confront in pursuit of a new political-economic order after 1994.

Soon, as a result of sustained pressure from the Western world (Britain, Germany, Italy and others), the new South African government abandoned the socialist elements in its economic policies, giving up on nationalization and submitting to the imperatives of neo-liberalism and the Euro-American idea of the free market (Scheidegger, 2015; Meyiwa *et al.*, 2014; Maloka, 2004; Ballantine, 2004). Consequently, in 1996, the ANC-led government announced its new neo-liberal economic programme, known as Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). This change, according to John Saul, was a “tragedy”. He argued that there is absolutely no reason to assume that the vast majority of people in South Africa would find their lives improved by the policies being adopted in their name by the ANC government (Ballantine, 2004:113). While Saul’s position was perhaps overly pessimistic, it seems that he was not incorrect considering the living and economic conditions of most historically disadvantaged South Africans. In *Transformation from below*, Scheidegger (2015), advancing from a political perspective, argues that “in spite of radical political change and various development plans of the ANC-led government, many South Africans still live under poor conditions; lacking running water, electricity, housing and sanitation” (*ibid.*, 5).

¹⁵ For example, see the State of the Nation (SONA) 2017, how a white DA representative was publicly tagged as a racist after expressing his discontent with the various alluded corruption of president Zuma.

¹⁶ For more information on the Ready to Govern (R2G) discussion document, see Williams (2000), Gumede (2013), and Abib and Padayachee (2000).

In their examination of the political and economic changes in South Africa, Habib and Padayachee (2000) have outlined some major developments and challenges facing South Africa's economy, explaining the reasons underlying the shift in economic policy and its possible effect on the nation. In their analysis, they outline unemployment and low social and physical infrastructure delivery to the disadvantaged majority as major problems posed by GEAR (*ibid.*, 256-257). Supporting Habib and Padayachee's position, scholars have also argued that post-apartheid development does not amount to economic freedom, but only favours political transformation, as well as opening a new form of struggle (Ballantine, 2011; Maloka, 2014; Molefe, 2009 and Ross, 2010). This "new form of struggle" could be interpreted as a decline in public sector employment in the early years after 1994, which in turn necessitated increase in the unemployment rate in South Africa.

According to Habib and Padayachee (2000: 257), progress with respect to social and physical infrastructure delivery to the disadvantaged majority in the first few years of freedom was painfully slow. They explain that this was an area in which the ANC promised significant improvement at the time of the 1994 elections. While agreeing that some progress has been made in respect of electrification and water and sanitation services, not all of this can be fully attributed to the after 1994 policy initiatives (*ibid.*). In their report, they also outline positive changes in South Africa after 1994:

[E]lectrification targets were exceeded in 1996 and 1997, with 800 new households being added each working day. By 1997 the Community Water Supply and Sanitation Program had provided basic water supply to almost two million people. Safe water was brought to 8.9 million people and sanitation to about 100,000 people. Over 1.2 million previously unserved people have been supplied with water... [R]ural health services have also improved following the introduction of free primary health care to under-fives and mothers (*ibid.*).

Habib and Padayachee's analysis provides an important qualification to the perspective that social development among historically disadvantaged South Africans has been lacking. However, it does seem that the GEAR economic policy has not addressed the high poverty level among previously marginalised citizens. Failure to meet economic expectations after ten years of democracy intensified divisions within South African communities. Meyiwa *et al*, (2014) and Habib and Padayachee (2000) argue that lack of clarity of the policy makers, mismanagement and corruption have all combined in setting back the delivery of social and physical infrastructure in the new

South Africa. According to H.J. Kotze's (2000) *The state and social change in South Africa*, the consequence of the economic instability influenced by GEAR increased the unemployment level in 1998/1999 by nearly 20%; increasing the number of jobless South Africans by 1.2 million to approximately 4.5 million (*ibid.*, 90-91).¹⁷

Maloka (2004) agrees with Saul's position regarding the negative influence of the ANC-led government's economic programme. Maloka gives a detailed report of the first ten years of freedom (1994-2004), according to which the biggest challenges facing South Africa are described as economic challenges. The most pressing economic challenges, in their turn, are located in combating poverty and inequality. Although South Africa has made remarkable progress in its ten years of freedom, Maloka writes that efforts to improve the conditions for ordinary people have to continue. Political freedom has not meant that the living conditions of average South Africans have changed according to expectations in the post-Apartheid era (*ibid.*).

Meyiwa *et al*, (2014) acknowledge that after twenty years of ANC government the living conditions of the average black South Africans have not changed compared to the apartheid era (*ibid.*, 1). They explain that historically disadvantaged South Africans still lack basic amenities and that inequality, poverty and unemployment are the daunting challenges facing South African communities (*ibid.*, 5). According to this report, although government policy has made attempts at addressing these "three social evils", the negative effect of this condition is overwhelming in South Africa after twenty years of freedom, and participatory democracy has been "obfuscated by lack of clarity on the respective roles and responsibilities of national, provincial and local spheres of governance" (*ibid.*, 4). According to them:

Policies have been made with a view to improving the lives of ordinary citizens. In spite of these changes, many South Africans still live under poor conditions, lacking running water, electricity, housing and sanitation. Local government, the sphere of government responsible for service delivery, faces a myriad of challenges, such as the lack of integrated planning and inefficient delivery, lack of capacity, underspending on projects, bureaucratic bottlenecks, wasteful expenditure, and corruption in protracted and inefficient consultation processes, all of which have eclipsed its capacity and ability to perform its functions optimally and effectively...[t]hese problems have been exacerbated by factors such as the loopholes in the national laws, and the lack of accountability and responsiveness among politicians and public officials (*ibid.*, 5).

¹⁷ For further information on this analysis see Kotze (2000). *The state and social change in South Africa*. UNESCO. Blackwell Publishers.

This overview on the economic and social context of after 1994 South Africa is important to understand when considering calls for “transformation”. All of the perspectives presented here outline three particular challenges in the South African body politic: unemployment, inequality and poverty. These, I suggest, are the “unholy trinity”¹⁸, challenging the progress of South Africa after 1994. The “unholy trinity” has informed the occurrences of xenophobic¹⁹ attacks in some South African societies. Often, explanations for these attacks on other African nationals living in South Africa, hinge on perceptions that the latter are responsible for the impoverished condition of black South Africans because they are taking away their jobs (Mbembe, 2015; Sharp, 2008). In a HSRC 2008 research report on xenophobia and immigrants in South Africa, some respondents explained:

Government is fighting against us, employers are fighting against us, and foreigners are fighting against us. That is why we fight against them (foreigners), because they are near. They don't support us in our struggle. [from another respondent:] One thing I noticed is that this fighting started when the food prices went up. Then South Africans started acting in the wrong way. They started thinking since the foreigners are here, let's just blame them before the food and other resources run out. They then started acting in wrong ways, pushing them out of the country and beating them up (quoted in Sharp, 2008:45).

While the dynamic of xenophobia in South Africa invites multiple interpretations, the social implications of a free South Africa, opened to other African communities, created a complex problematic in the light of expectations surrounding “transformation” and the enduring economic inequalities in South Africa after 1994. Xenophobia, it has to be said, transcends class boundaries, and is also found among the South African elites in academic institutions and multinational companies (Sharp, 2008).

¹⁸ This term is borrowed from Agbiboa and Okem (2011). The term was used in decoding the inherent political divides in the Nigerian mainstream politics. Specifically, they outlined ethnic, religious and regional divides as the “unholy trinity” facing Nigerian politics. Here, I adapted the concept to further explain unemployment, inequality and poverty as major challenges facing South Africa after 1994.

¹⁹ A full engagement of this phenomenon in the development of post-1994 goes beyond the scope of this thesis. For more information, see Sichone, Owen (2008). “Xenophobia and xenophilia in south Africa: African migrants in Cape Town”. In Werbner, P. (ed.), *Anthropology and the new Cosmopolitanism: Root, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives*, Oxford: Bergs Publishers, pp. 309-332; Sharp, John (2008). “‘Fortress SA’: Xenophobic violence in South Africa”. In Sharp, J. (ed.), *Anthropology Today*, 24 (4): np.; Achille Mbembe (2015) “Xenophobic South Africa”. <http://africasacountry.com/2015/04/achille-mbembe-writes-about-xenophobic-south-africa/>.

According to Mugo (1999:218-219), education is one of the most political institutions of a society, and as such it cannot be regarded as neutral (in the sense of not having a social vision, mission or agenda). Education facilitates and directs social and economic structure, and it perpetuates the cultural values of the system (Bourdieu, 1990). In addition, social class, wealth, privileges and power are reproduced and managed through education (*ibid.*). This makes education an important context to consider when contemplating the meaning of “transformation” in South Africa after 1994, and emphasizes the significance of the 2015/2016 student protests. In other words, the way in which the discourse on transformation was used and, in many instances, rejected by radical student voices, indicates a fundamental shift in the possibilities and aspirations associated with the term.

Adam and Moodley (1986) argue that state institutions and symbols like education, the national anthem, history books, immigration laws, land sales and boardrooms of the private sector all represent the state’s interest and dominance (*ibid.*, 30-31). Against the backdrop of colonialism and apartheid that denied the black majority equal educational opportunities and outcomes, Badat and Sayed (2014:127) explain that the after 1994 educational condition is predicated on the principle of equality of opportunity in relation to provision, access and outcomes. They argue that as a consequence of policy, the doors of learning remain firmly shut to the majority of South Africans after twenty years of independence. Through what they term a “social justice perspective” that encompasses a number of theses, they explain that the educational condition of after 1994 South Africa still leaves intact the systemic crisis of education that especially affects South Africa’s historically disadvantaged and marginalized peoples (*ibid.*, 128). They also hold that, after 20 years of democracy, there has been a wide array of “transformation”-oriented initiatives:

Ultimately, South Africa’s educational failings are neither entirely technocratic nor managerial: they are political, associated with a government increasingly mired in short-term electoral politics that fails to distinguish between party and state. The government appears to lack the will to act courageously and decisively to address problems at the levels of policy, personnel, and performance when it is clear that the apartheid legacy in schooling remains entrenched. As Gill Marcus, Governor of the Reserve Bank, an ANC stalwart, puts it, “South Africa faces significant challenges” that “require a coordinated and coherent range of policy responses”; “the government [needs] to be decisive, act coherently,” demonstrate “a coordinated plan of action to address them” and “exhibit strong and focused leadership from the top.” Doing so “will go a long way to restoring confidence, credibility, and trust.” The heady days and promise of “People’s Education for People’s Power” are long past. Many prominent anti-apartheid activists have mutated into technocratic bureaucrats, and

critics of the broken or forgotten promises have been marginalized or have fallen silent. Teacher unions and the government are simultaneously in alliance and at an impasse, and the anomie at various provincial education departments is a serious hindrance to change. Popular mass and civil society formations have disappeared and sometimes been replaced by professional NGO bureaucracies, and there has been a steady decline of popular participation in educational issues (*ibid.*).

The “Concept paper”, a report from the second national Higher Education Transformation²⁰ Summit [HES] (2015),²¹ explains that higher education has shifted, in substantive respects, from a fragmented and structurally racialized system of 36 public and more than 300 private institutions in 1994 to a relatively more integrated “system-like” formation of 26 public universities (traditional, comprehensive and universities of technology) and 95 private higher education institutions in 2015. In outlining the major after 1994 developments, and drawing from the MHT’s 2013 Statistics,²² the paper also explains that 990 000 students are enrolled in the public higher education sector, and 120 000 in private institutions in the same sector. The report agrees that despite major shifts in South Africa after 1994, “transformation” in education remains “painfully slow” and real and meaningful “transformation” is yet to be addressed (*ibid.*). In identifying the major higher educational challenges of the after 1994 era, the report further explains that:

South African universities face many critical transformation challenges that have been studied, described and researched through academic papers, commissioned and other reports. The common challenges are: —disempowering and alienating Institutional cultures; poor equity profiles; poor staff qualifications; poor high-level knowledge; and skills production; an imitative approach to knowledge production; poor understanding of the nature of our students and staff; failure to confront the politics of epistemology and a pervasive culture of passive resistance to transformation. All these challenges are linked to “recalcitrant colonial-apartheid values and whiteness culture (euro centrism)”.

The two perspectives above on the after 1994 educational context address and outline South African educational challenges, especially in higher education. However, there seems to be divergence in their analysis of these challenges. Badat and Sayed’s (2014) analysis focuses on

²⁰ The Ministerial Oversight Committee on the Transformation in [the] South African Public Universities (TOC) was established on 10 April 2013 in terms of notice in the government gazette (vol. 574, no 36356). The purpose of the Committee is to monitor progress on transformation in public universities and to advise the Minister of Education.

²¹ Higher Education Summit (2015). *The Transformation of South African Higher Education*. A publication of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in South African Public Universities, Annexure 8, np.

²² Ministry of Higher Education and Training (2013). *White Paper on Post School Education and Training*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

government policy structure as being responsible for the challenges in education. The Higher Education Transformation Summit [HES] (2015) report focuses on the South African academic institutions' practices – institutional structure, representation and curriculum content – as being responsible for the lack of “transformation” in the higher educational institutions. While these positions are not mutually exclusive, they represent the chasms that characterize the South African society after 1994 (Ballantine, 2004 and Ross, 2010). These different interpretations are ingrained in the deep-rooted social, ethnic, racial, structural, and institutional cultures and histories that constitute the “new challenges” of South Africa (Ballantine, 2004; Maloka, 2004; Meyiwa *et al*, 2014 and Scheidegger, 2015). They also resonate with other perspectives on social and economic conditions discussed in this chapter, and reinforce the proposition that “transformation” stands at the centre of widely differing strategies and understandings of the challenges facing South Africa.

2.3. “Transformation”: a contemporary perspective of music-making, human agency and social change

In the video documentary, *Amandla!*, Hugh Masekela explains that the only social activity of black people that was not hindered by the apartheid government was music-making. While this position is not unproblematic, it references the history in which musicians were banned, and some went into voluntary exile due to the political implications of their music. Masekela's pronouncement has to be read with some caution. Although black popular musicians like Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba took overtly political positions in their music and may in retrospect have interest in a discourse of exceptionalism regarding music, there were also musicians like Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo, whose music speaks to different encounters with the apartheid state and different registers of resistance. I will return to this in Chapter Three.

Considering the importance of music in South African societies (Blacking, 1973 and Joseph, 1982), music-making can function as a negotiating tool, through which social dramas or social unrest were and still enacted in South Africa before and after 1994. Music-making manifests in various ways and in diverse contexts, as music functions as an extension of daily life, articulating the daily challenges of black South Africans. According to Abdullah Ibrahim, such negotiation

manifests a self-liberation strategy. For Ibrahim, music-making was not an attempt at liberation from the oppressor or government, but a means to console and liberate the music-makers by themselves.²³ While the latter perspective is valuable, it does not replace the role of music to express the rage, frustrations and unpleasant experiences this music-making embodies. For example, some of the acts of vandalism that accompanied the recent #FeesMustFall protests occurred as a response to rage and frustration propelled embodied history through songs. This is partly because these songs and dances perform the function of memory that brings back and perpetuates historical events and traumas for future generations (Joseph, 1982 and Msila, 2011).²⁴ The embodiment of historical events in South Africa are often invoked through music. When this happens, music becomes a capacity through which major historical trauma is invoked in order to resist or negotiate current socio-economic conditions of many South African students within higher education. This music-making or “musicking”, creates platforms through which contrasting sentiments are “mixed” (Santos, 2013). Such mixing creates the conditions for transformed discourse on transformation in South Africa after 1994.

Small’s conception of musicking necessitates a holistic view of music making within a space or structure:

... musicking covers all participation in a musical performance, whether it takes place actively or passively, whether we like the way it happens or whether we do not, whether we consider it interesting or boring, constructive or destructive, sympathetic or antipathetic (1998:9).

Small conceived of musicking within the context of orchestral performance or any formal concert setting as being inclusive of social actors. Thus, given the mutual and symbiotic privilege that Small ascribed to musicians, audience members, backstage managers, cleaners, drivers and participants in the music-making process, I suggest that Small’s proposition could be usefully adapted to understand moments of (musical) protest as important to any discourse on “transformation”. Such moments of musical protest include the various student protests in South

²³ *Amandla!* A Revolution in Four Part Harmony.

²⁴ For more insight on this see Msila (2011). “Mini and the song: The place of protest song in history”. A paper presented at the *ANC 100th anniversary Conference*. September 20-24, 2011. Johannesburg. South Africa.

Africa after 1994. Drawing from embodied history, *toyi-toyi*²⁵ of the 1980's, the #RhodesMustFall 2015 and #FeesMustFall 2015/2016 student movements used songs, dances and various cultural forms of music making as a capacity to voice out current predicaments. This music-making, often confrontational with respect to university managements (and, in some cases, including the vandalization of university property), prompted responses from the law enforcement agencies. These responses also attracted defensive responses from the student movements. In many instances, this “conversation” would lead to physical fights and harmful behaviour²⁶ between students and law enforcement agencies. In other words, I wish to posit that the singing and dancing activities in these events and the provoked responses from law enforcement agencies were constitutive dynamics of the processes of social “transformation”. Here, these events are theorized as a category of musicking within the context of “transformation” in South Africa after 1994. This musicking, in the South African context, is an important phenomenon influencing socio-political change in South Africa.

Michael Mann, in his analysis of social power, explains that the key to social power lies in the collective organization of the infinite variety of social existence. He argues that collective organization can provide significant patterning, generate collective action as in large-scale social structure and, as a result, can alter situations or structures. For Mann, collective organization is “the generalized means” through which human beings make their own history (Mann, 2012:128). This is important in considering the dynamics of the recent South African student protests: #Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) and #Fees Must Fall (FMF). Both collectives animated discourses on “transformation” and in both, music played no small part. RMF emerged at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in March 2015, while FMF emerged from Wits University in October 2015. Their emergence spread to other universities across South Africa and forced the removal of monuments like the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT and the historic shutdown of higher education institutions nationally. Through the activity of these two movements, “transformation” took a

²⁵ The origin and etymology of *toyi-toyi* has been a subject of academic and public discourses (Gilbert, 2007; Nevitt, 2010; Vershbow, 2010 and others). Vena, an activist, explains that Zimbabweans were the originators of *toyi-toyi*. He further explains that *toyi-toyi* came to South Africa through the South Africans who were sent for paramilitary training by the ANC in Zimbabwe in the 1980s. Since *toyi-toyi* has been discussed within the developmental processes of the apartheid era, here I concentrate on it as a means through which students were and are still expressing their sentiments, and a social dynamic through which “transformation” is being negotiated.

²⁶ The students mostly throw stones at the law enforcement agencies to defend themselves, while the law enforcement agencies use guns with rubber bullets to scare students away and glass shield to protect themselves.

central position in the national discourse, and their public positioning often went hand-in-hand with different forms of musicking. According to Habib (2016), these student movements became the largest and most effective social movements since the dawn of South Africa's democracy in 1994, as "it shook up the state, changed the systematic parameters, and began the process of fundamentally transforming our higher education sector" (*ibid.*, np).

These uprisings led to the removal of statues and a suspension of fee increases, which were the students' response to the need for "transformation". But these issues, statues and fees, were also symbols that embodied transgenerational sentiments and economic frustration among historically disadvantaged students. At the heart of these campaigns lays deep-rooted issues like race, land, decolonization, "privilege", gender, representation and notions of black South African nationhood. Poor black students remain confronted with structural violence as they have to experience the consequences of inequality, poverty, corruption and unemployment, even after graduation. Given this situation, it is understandable that students responded aggressively to the ineffective situation of "transformation" in South Africa after 1994. Student calls for "transformation" were often expressed through *toyi-toyi*, singing and dancing activities. University authorities, in order to protect public property, would respond with force through the imposition of a militarized atmosphere that worked against the immediate interests of the students, and the legitimacy of their actions. The motivation for the uprising was also challenged. I regard both the protest actions and responses of the authorities, and the effect and responses that the events provoked in the country, as "musicking". That is, an implied communication, negotiation of power between students and university authorities and government agencies within a broad discourse, all of which animated and redefined the discourse on "transformation" in South Africa after 1994. As such, I view the campus events of 2015/2016 as musically-framed, performed, perspectives on transformation.

How, it can be asked, did song and dance contribute to the negotiation between students and institutional authorities concerning issues of transformation? Collective singing and dancing represented the students' collective voice, while the response of the law enforcement agencies represented the voice of authority. The interplay between these two groups created tension that would often result in violence, and such violence, I hold, became a force that animated change. This process should be understood as negotiation, and this negotiation, through the agency of

music, becomes musicking. I do not consider music in and of itself to express or mean violence. Rather, what music offers, in this case, is an opportunity to locate how social actors negotiated their place within the social hierarchy. As such, music allowed students to take responsibility in fixing and transforming their own lives, and in turn provoking a change in the society. In the context of apartheid South Africa, in his explanation of the role of toyi-toyi in the 1980's, Vena argues that singing, in the hands of the youth, was a tool for war. He explains:

We didn't have weapons, toyi-toyi for us is like a weapon. We didn't have guns, tear-gas and other ammunitions of war. The only weapon we have is toyi-toyi; for us, toyi-toyi is like a weapon, a tool for war.²⁷

Considering these perspectives, toyi-toyi could be understood to be a mechanism that facilitates communication and negotiation between student movements, university authorities and the government on “transformation”. Phenomena like toyi-toyi call for attention and “order” in negotiating for power. With “order”, I reference toyi-toyi as a social mechanism that alters an existing structure. For example, many higher institutions of learning were shut down for months partly as a result of the vandalising triggered by students' protests. This constituted an alteration of certain educational and social orders. The contents of songs and dances embodied historical trauma and suffering, and hence propelled the anger that led to acts of vandalism. Such “order”, I suggest, has negative and positive effects. It's negative effect in the case of the student uprisings of 2015/2016 includes acts of vandalism that forced the shutdown of some universities. On the other hand, these developments forced university authorities and government to consider compromise and accept dialogue with “protesters”. Ingrained in the former and latter perspectives is a “transformation” project that tends to transform an existing socio-economic “order”. Toyi-toyi therefore functions as both a destructive and problem-solving tool, as it tends to favour destruction and problem-solving as a capacity for creating new “order”. In other words, the sound, “noise” (music and dance) produced in toyi-toyi should be understood as a resistance mechanism that enters into negotiation with an existing “order”. In *Sonic Warfare*, Steve Goodman (2011) explains that noise can be used as a tool in resistance movements to overpower the existing order. He further

²⁷ *Amandla!* A Revolution in Four Part Harmony.

explains how technologies like long-range acoustic devices are used by police in crowd-control to counter the noise of public discontent with a greater noise.²⁸ In the same way, toyi-toyi can be interpreted as a device used to create a greater noise than the existing “order” in that it can alter existing social order within a specific time frame. Through students’ collective energy, music-making became a negotiating tool that redefined discourse on “transformation”.

Jacques Attali (1977) suggested that “changes in the cultural sphere often precede and presage transformation in the material”.²⁹ Just as Attali proposed that in every network, as in every message, “music creates order” (Drott 2015:725-733), one could suggest that toyi-toyi (a communication tool in the hands of the students), transformed discourse on “transformation” in South Africa after 1994. “Order”, in Attali’s theory, represents a creation that transforms an existing system (*ibid.*), a force that provokes tension within a system and in so doing redefines the nature of such organization. In this way, students’ musical protests should be understood as a tool for communication through which they contributed to discourse on “transformation” in South Africa after 1994, and a tool through which power was being negotiated. Attali’s proposition calls for a review of the roles cultural phenomena like toyi-toyi or protest music-making play in social development. *Musicking*, in the context of the 2015/2016 student uprisings, brought social agents together in negotiating for “transformation”. This mutual social performance, *musicking*, became a platform through which students’ voices were heard in discourses on “transformation”. That is, redefining the path to “transformation” in South Africa after 1994.

In recognizing the importance of discourse on transformation and its multi-faceted nature, as well as the role played by music in contemporary events concerned with transformation, I wish to set up a background for an alternative and less polarized approach to transformation through music in the case of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo. My intention is not to judge contemporary events as either good or bad, but to affirm that music continues to be a powerful force in grappling with social, economic and political challenges. From this understanding, I wish to retrace the steps of music’s possibilities of transformation through the self-empowerment of individuals rooted in their

²⁸ For further information, see Goodman, S. (2011). *Sonic Warfare*.

²⁹ *ibid.*

societies, a perspective that I feel has been overshadowed by the radical contemporary turn of events.

2.4. Summary and Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, it was suggested that the word “transformation”, as it is popularly used in South Africa after 1994, is shaped by diverse understandings and language registers. There seems to be no fixed interpretation of the term in South Africa, as it means different things to different people in different contexts. Considering the various perspectives on transformation presented in this chapter, the former seems to be the case. The various perspectives from higher education, media, the business community, socio-political contexts and the student protest movements, suggest that an “unholy trinity” – unemployment, poverty and inequality – are the major problems currently facing South Africa.

Understanding these “three social evils” (Meyiwa *et al*, 2014) brings us closer to what “transformation” could mean in South Africa after 1994 by providing the background against which the diverse perspectives on the term are expressed. Hence, I suggest, “transformation” should be viewed, analysed and measured in the context of the eradication of unemployment, poverty and inequality, as well as the lived experiences of the historically disadvantaged people of South Africa. In addition, I suggest that the present discourse on transformation, though plausible, limits the possibility of a comprehensive transformation of South Africa after 1994. Therefore, the plausibility of a holistic transformation depends on refocusing these discourses to a unified reference point, which could mean socio-economic empowerment of the disempowered in society.

Music-making (and toyi-toyi in South Africa’s case) provide a unique lens to understand implied communication or negotiations in complex societies. Given the multiplicity of opinions and approaches on transformation outlined in this chapter, the next chapter grapples with the notion of a holistic “transformation” of South Africa after 1994, and how this can be achieved.

Chapter Three

REIMAGINING AND RE-THINKING “TRANSFORMATION” AS A LOGIC FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

This chapter argues for the refocusing of discourses on “transformation” to socio-economic empowerment of the so-called disempowered in South Africa. Advancing from the various perspectives on “transformation” in the previous chapter, this chapter argues that holistic social development is a product of responsibilities and exchanges between social actors, that is: people who operate in institutionalized structures and in the public at large. In so doing, this chapter creates a platform for understanding the activities of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo group as a model for transformation through music, as well as a model for socio-economic empowerment of historically disadvantaged South Africans.

3.1. Introduction

Post-colonial Africa struggles to manage and sustain development.³⁰ Meredith (2005) explains that, even after sixty years of independence, almost all African countries are unable to enjoy socio-economic and political freedom due to self-inflicted problems. This view is further explored in Jean Francois Bayart’s detailed account of post-independence African political development. Socio-economic and political instability in African States, according to Bayart, is as a result of “politics of the belly”, or the self-centeredness of African leaders (Bayart, 1993:1). This dynamic, according to Achille Mbembe’s (2001) interpretation of post-colonial politics in Africa, manifests as a result of conspicuous consumption, gluttony and greed of African leaders, muting social and

³⁰ Future Learn (2015/2016), *Africa: sustainable development for all?* By the University of Aberdeen <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/africa-sustainable-development/3/todo/3526>

economic development in African societies and aggravating the level of poverty, crime, unemployment and social unrest in these societies.³¹

The same can be said for the process of “transformation” in South Africa, as set out in competing interpretations and contestations of the term in the previous chapter. It is important not to continue to address “transformation” as a political phenomenon, but as one that concerns primarily socio-economic development and empowerment of South Africans – most importantly, the previously marginalized people of South Africa. The point here is that “in a world increasingly recognized as being multilevel, solutions must be as well” (Cash *et al*, 2006), as the top-down approaches to transformation are too blunt and insensitive to local constraints and opportunities (*ibid.*). Social organization through the arts is not only a concern or function of “cultural” categories or responses to material conditions, but the arts become the media of instruction, organizing the ways in which the world appear to members of these societies, and the ways in which members of these societies could imagine themselves and improvise action for sustainability (Ayorinde, 2015 and Calhoun, 2006). Art (and music) as media of instruction, I suggest, creates the social ground on which an exchange of ideas, goods, dialogues and social ethics works as a mechanism influencing socio-economic development. In the same way, understanding peoples’ perspectives, as well as including how historically disadvantaged people can contribute to socio-economic development of South Africa, could bring substance to transformation in South Africa after 1994.

This chapter aims not to read current discourses on transformation (as was done in the previous chapter), but to refocus transformation discourse through theorizing it as a process in the socio-economic development of South Africa. In so doing it explores key terms in higher education discourses on transformation, before refocusing this discourse from a political to a socio-economic discourse concerned with the empowerment of disempowered South Africans.

³¹ See also, Mamdani, M (1996). *Citizens and Subjects. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press and Rodney, Walter (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle- L’Ouverture Publications.

3.2. Decolonization and racism

Colonization, decolonization and racism have become the tools of explication in the discourse on South African transformation. Michael Yellow Bird defines decolonization as follows:

As an event, decolonization concerns reaching a level of critical consciousness, an active understanding that you are (or have been) colonized and are thus responsible to life circumstances in ways that are limited, destructive, and externally controlled. As a process, decolonization means engaging in the activities of creating, restoring, and birthing.³²

Racism can be defined as relating to discriminatory attitudes, unexamined assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours, societal and organizational practices that result in exclusions, restrictions, preferences, psychological distress, negative stereotypes, and distinctions for individuals or groups that are “othered”.³³ By extension, “othering”, in this context, includes the process of making distinctions between groups on the basis of race, skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, and country of birth, ancestry, culture or other socially constructed differences.³⁴ Race has been essentialised in discourses on transformation in South Africa as a signifier, and educational institutions have played a critical role in affirming racial distinctions and also rationalizing resistance to this distinction (Ballantine, 2011; Cross, 1992 and Santos, 2013).

This condition is evident in discourses on transformation in South Africa after 1994 (Ballantine, 2011). As such, the essentialization of race or ethnicity as a logic for transformation could limit the potential for comprehensive and real transformation. A critical approach to transformation necessitates a new form of engagement; one that would lend itself to empowerment of the South African people rather than relying on racial categories. Critical approaches would entail a discursive framework that defies race as signifier, and a transformation of discourse on “transformation” in the higher education community. Badat (2009) offers an explanation on the

³² Michael Yellow Bird’s position on decolonization was discussed as part of the *Embracing A New Normal At Stellenbosch Skills For Staff*, a presentation of the Transformation Office and Equality Unit, and Disability at Stellenbosch University, 2-5 November 2016. Pamphlet page 12.

³³ *ibid.*, 18.

³⁴ *ibid.*

condition of post-1994 South African universities, and why they are still grappling with the concept of “transformation”. He explains:

[i]nstitutional change in post-1994 South African higher education has been characterised by stasis in certain areas and great fluidity in others, as well as continuities with the past in some areas and discontinuities in others. There has been stasis with respect to the challenges of the decolonising, de-racialising and de-gendering of inherited intellectual spaces, and the nurturing of a new generation of academics who are increasingly black and women, new institutions to govern and steer higher education, and the emergence of a new institutional landscape and configuration of public universities. The troublesome continuities in conditions and institutions include (to select only a few): limited access to students from working-class and rural poor social origins; the social composition of academic staff which remains largely white (*ibid.*, 466).

Badat’s position is problematic, as it runs the risk of reifying an exclusive black-centred higher education structure. Also, most of the “stasis” and “ruptures” outlined by Badat are often analysed in the academe as consequences of apartheid and racial dynamics in South Africa, and they reference the institutionalization of education in South Africa as Eurocentric. While these positions are not untrue, essentializing them in discourses on “transformation” recreates the event these discourses intend to address in a new context. Thus, the danger becomes that every attempt to fix these challenges re-enacts the opening of a wound, as apartheid features large in discourses on transformation in a way that blurs the reality of South Africa after 1994 within global development processes. This is not to suggest that history should be forgotten, but rather that history should serve the purpose of a lens for enabling a progressive future.

In moving towards a more holistic strategy of transformation in post-1994 South Africa, from a musicological perspective, I wish to suggest that approaches to transformation in the higher institutions of learning may not produce positive outcomes until the ideas of “whiteness” and “blackness” have been demythologised. Ramaley (2014:5) has suggested that for academic institutions to retain their value in society, its agency must support collective action to address large societal challenges. For Ramaley, it is most crucial for academic institutions to rethink their roles in the larger context of their nations. This position is relevant to South African academic institutions, where, in my opinion, transformation and the developmental process of the country after 1994 cannot remain a racial affair. In corroboration with Ramaley’s position, but with focus on knowledge production and decolonization in South Africa, Mbembe (2016) argues that

decolonization is not synonymous with deracialisation; hence, both have nothing to do with “getting white people out of our land”. Mbembe opines:

Many still consider whites as “settlers” who, once in a while, will attempt to masquerade as “natives”. And yet, with the advent of democracy and the new constitutional State, there are no longer settlers or natives. There are only citizens. If we repudiate democracy, what will we replace it with? ...[O]ur white compatriots might be fencing off their privileges. They might be “enclaving” them and “off-shoring” them but they are certainly going nowhere (*ibid.*, np).

Practically, Mbembe’s position is that transformation of South Africa after 1994 may not have anything to do with race, but with socio-economic development and the wellbeing of people. Advancing from these perspectives, it is necessary to refocus the discourse on transformation to address deep-rooted socio-economic issues in South Africa. These deep-rooted issues, like poverty, inequality and unemployment, remain the major problems that still need to be solved in South Africa after many years of freedom (Maloka, 2004). Transformation of South Africa after 1994 should be a holistic transformation that cuts across every sphere of the society. Given this perspective, while Badat’s (2009) position above remains a valid concern for transformation, there seems to be more socio-economic issues in society that require urgent academic responses. Clark’s (2012) study of youth violence explains that while structural violence constitutes a significant contextual cause, a more proximate and specific cause inheres in young people’s exposure to direct violence in their schools, homes and communities.³⁵ Just as Bowers (2014), in exploring the causes of youth violence in South Africa, argues that every social ill cannot be blamed on apartheid, Clark outlined “direct violence” and “structural violence” as part of the major problems facing post-1994 South Africa. According to Clark, the prevalence of structural violence in the form of poverty and inequality “helps to explain the country’s high levels of direct violence”; thus, “poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic issues form a ‘backdrop’ to youth violence” (Clark, 2012: 80-81). Drawing from Ramaley’s (2014) perspective above, I suggest that discourse on transformation in universities could more productively concern itself with creating long-term solutions to socio-economic issues. One could argue that, up to now, discourses on transformation have privileged the elites in South Africa, including those who campaign for transformation in the universities. In this elitist discourse on transformation, there has been a tendency to essentialise

³⁵See Clark, J.N., (2012). “Youth violence in South Africa: the case for a restorative justice response”. In *Contemporary Justice Review*, 15 (1): 77-95.

black and white identities as well as gender disparity as homogenous categories and signifiers for transformation. This view on transformation resists a more egalitarian notion of transformation in contemporary South Africa.

In the recent past, discourses and organised protests on transformation have animated the idea of decolonization and bolstered racial binaries in the institutions of higher learning.³⁶ The idea of decolonization and racial binaries were used by black student protesters as negotiating tools.³⁷ According to Foucault, power is distributed in social relations; it is not limited to economic forms characterized by a legal or judicial character. Rather, “power forms a dispersed capillary woven into the fabric of the entire social order. Thus, power is not simply repressive, it is productive” (Baker, 2008: 92). Foucault’s notion of power was theorized against the backdrop of the twentieth century’s French social dynamic, but when considered within the context of discourses on transformation in South Africa, Foucault’s perspective on power shows how protest perpetuates and reproduces culture. Decolonization and racial discussions that inform transformation processes are “productions” that nurture power. Such discourses are interlaced in “generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them” (Foucault, 1980: 136), thereby reproducing their dynamics afresh in new contexts. Thus, I suggest, these discourses may also be a mechanism that keeps reproducing the status quo.

Drawing perspectives from Fanon’s (1961) notion of “coloniality”³⁸ and Biko’s (1978) “black consciousness”,³⁹ Ramugondo (2015) explains “occupational consciousness” as an ongoing awareness of the dynamics of hegemony and recognition that dominant practices are sustained through what people do every day, with implications for the creation of more equitable privilege on personal and collective levels. She explains that the “occupational consciousness” in post-1994 South Africa points to the country’s ongoing struggle with negotiating long-standing dynamics of

³⁶ For example, see *Decolonising the University: Charting a path forward for anti-sexist and anti-racist scholarship and activism* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCKXeMaaSwU>. This was a panel discussion hosted by the Van Zyl Slabbert Visiting Chair, the then Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and UCT’s SRC and was moderated by Prof Xolela Mangcu on Thursday 23 April 2015.

³⁷ More heated debate on decolonization surrounding the John Cecil Rhodes statue was titled: *Decolonising South African universities*, hosted by “The Stream”, an Aljazeera online media. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxPQGm1Z1T0>.

³⁸ See Fanon, F. (1961). *The wretched of the earth* (R. Philcox Trans.). New York, NY: Grove Press.

³⁹ See Biko, S. (1978). *I write what I like: A selection of his writings*. London: The Bowerdean Press.

power that were laid down during colonialism, and maintained under black majority rule (*ibid.*, 488). This perspective links well with Foucault's (1980) notion of power in that it explains how agencies⁴⁰ who are also oppressed, propagate hegemonic structures through their daily activities in order to retain their partial privilege in the system. This understanding draws attention to the asymmetric subjectivity that informs the notion of transformation in South Africa after 1994 at both national and institutional levels.

The above position also speaks to Babat's opinion that stasis with respect to the challenges of the decolonising, de-racialising and de-gendering of inherited intellectual spaces in higher education still continues in the after 1994 university structure (*ibid.*, 466). This stasis, it can be argued, is socially created and maintained through the agencies involved in higher education. If this is indeed the case, power production can be understood beyond racial identity as a strategy for the powerless to accumulate and retain partial privilege (Ramugongo, 2015:488-489). Given this position, the response to Badat's diagnosis would be to transform "the things people do every day, individually and collectively", which "sustain systems and structures that support and promote certain occupations or certain ways of doing, to the exclusion of others" (*ibid.*). In other words, the idea of transformation in post-1994 South Africa, especially in higher education, should rather focus on the socio-economic development of the South African people, instead of the interest of the black elites who propagate the structure for their own gain (*ibid.*).

I suggest that it is essential that discourse on transformation be purged of racial sentiments; being "white" or "black" in post-1994 South Africa should not be the motivation for transformation, but such motivation should rather be informed by the general wellbeing of South African citizens. As mentioned earlier, transformation cannot be a racial affair in South Africa after 1994 (Mbembe, 2016).

⁴⁰ This term is used with reference to sociological understanding of people and their relations within societies and organizations, especially in relation to Bourdieu (1990) *The Logic of Practice*, trans Richard Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

3.3. Demythologizing “whiteness” and “blackness”: transforming the transformation discourse

According to Thomas (1997), myth could mean collective beliefs or falsehoods that contain elements of untruth and relativity. Myths could be interpreted in different ways at different times. Thomas explains that myth could be understood from diverse perspectives, that is, sociologists and anthropologists may use the word to refer to anything that embodies the essential features of a culture, while historians and political scientists may use the word in reference to untruths (*ibid.*, np). Thomas explanation of myth is relevant to understanding social categories of race, specifically regarding the creation of these categories in social sciences as racial and political signifiers (Kessing, 1994:301). Myth is understood in this section as collective belief or as tales based on fact but lacking logical evidence as a reliable social category. Pragmatically, myth represents unattainable reality; like culture, its reality lives in the human imagination (Geertz, 1973: 25).

In the context of South Africa after 1994, and especially discourses on transformation, race or racial dynamics manifest as ethnic signifiers that act as closed political labels. Being “white” or “black” has become a discursive and performative construction in everyday narratives. More importantly, these labels have also been commodified as socio-political and economic commodities that serve as negotiating tools in accessing power and privileges. In recent times, the performance of what is “black” or “white” has gained more impetus in the various discourses and protests on “transformation”. Barker (2008) explains that racialization is founded on the argument that race is a social construction and not a universal or essential category of biology. Thus, race does not exist outside of representation, and in most cases, this manifests as spurious appeal to essential biological and cultural difference (*ibid.*, 247). These spurious, essential biological and cultural differences are constitutive of and translated as material and social hierarchy (Keesing, 1994). The use of labels such as “white”, “black” or “coloured” in South Africa after 1994, especially in discourses on transformation, contribute to myth-making. Such myths fix identity as unchanged within an historical continuum. I would go further, however, and argue that “whiteness” and “blackness” fulfil the same functions.

Mbembe discussed issues surrounding decolonization of the university and knowledge production in South Africa through a critical approach to decolonization and the ideas surrounding whiteness in South Africa. Reflecting upon the removal Cecil John Rhodes's statue at the University of Cape Town, he argues that Rhodes represents a kind of whiteness that believed that being black is a social liability. Hence, "his statue – and those of countless others who shared the same conviction – has nothing to do on a public university campus 20 year after freedom" (*ibid.*, np). He further explains that bringing down the statue of Rhodes is not to erase history: no one should "be asking us to be eternally indebted to Rhodes for having 'donated' his money and for having bequeathed 'his' land to the University" (*ibid.*). In explaining his position on demythologising whiteness in South Africa, Mbembe argues that:

[b]ringing Rhodes' statue down is one of the many legitimate ways in which we can, today in South Africa, demythologize that history and put it to rest – which is precisely the work memory properly understood is supposed to accomplish. For memory to fulfil this function long after the Truth and Reconciliation paradigm has run out of steam, the demythologizing of certain versions of history must go hand in hand with the demythologizing of whiteness. ...[T]his is not because whiteness is the same as history. Human history, by definition, is history beyond whiteness...[H]uman history is about the future. Whiteness is about entrapment. ...[W]e are therefore calling for the demythologization of whiteness because democracy in South Africa will either be built on the ruins of those versions of whiteness that produced Rhodes or it will fail. In other words, those versions of whiteness that produced men like Rhodes must be recalled and de-commissioned if we have to put history to rest, free ourselves from our own entrapment in white mythologies and open a future for all here and now (*ibid.*).

The Rhodes statue represents a continuous presence of white supremacy in a physical form, as well as the monumentalization of this presence. This relates with the way in which certain oppressive ideologies are propagated through colonial archives, curricula, strategies of inclusion and exclusion and normative notions of truth, knowledge and ethics. Just as Mbembe (2016) argues that decolonization concerns ownership of a space that is a public common good, decolonization agendas within transformation should be focused on the common good of South African citizens irrespective of their race, creed and ethnicity.

Implied in Mbembe's position is the commonly held notion among some black South Africans that every white person represents oppression, wickedness and therefore they are all racists. The major challenge facing the stasis in transformation in South Africa after 1994 is to dismantle this myth

that nurtures and dictates behavioural patterns in a way that resist whiteness as a possible agent of positive development. This myth could be destructive if allowed to direct social relations. Touraine asks:

... [c]an we avoid having to choose between two equally destructive solutions: living together and setting aside our differences or living apart in homogeneous communities which communicate only through the market or through violence? (quoted in Ballantine, 2004:105).

While the response to this question may not be a straightforward one, especially when considering South Africa's past, it is important for South Africans to draw on history to put into perspective current situations if the aim is to create a more promising future rather than to indulge in the politics of power:

Both must turn their backs on the inhuman voices which were those of their respective ancestors in order that authentic communication be possible. ... Why not the simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other (quoted in Ballantine, 2004:105).

This perspective is not to suggest in any way that history be forgotten; rather, it is a way to demythologise certain dynamics of the past in order to appreciate the humanity that post-1994 South Africa presents. Hence, demythologisation of this aspect of the past allows for a critical way of engaging transformation for the socio-economic development of South Africans. Kwa Pra (1999: 40) argues that the racial definition of an African has no meaning or value, and its scientific status is bankrupt:

... racial definitions as substitutes for cultural realities have meanings only for fascists. Racial definitions elevate biology over culture, when indeed, for humans, it is culture which makes us. It goes without saying that most Africans are black, but not all blacks have African cultural and historical roots (*ibid.*).

Discourses on transformation, I argue, should be refocused on intellectual solutions for the social development of post-1994 South Africa. Just as Ramaley (2014) argues above, universities in South Africa also need to demythologise whiteness through their discourses on transformation, and decolonise this ideology. The other side of this argument, is the imperative to demythologize blackness as a powerless position. This perspective needs to be rigorously challenged by academe,

as people keep casting their gaze on government grants and “white charity”. The danger of this myth is also the destructive view of compatriots from (other) African countries as competitors. While Africans from around the continent are working to make a good living in South Africa, some black South Africans keep waging war against them (Mbembe, 2015). The excuse for such attacks, as stated earlier, has often been that (other) Africans are taking the jobs and women of South Africans (Sichone, 2008). The belief that blackness is synonymous with poverty, lack and backwardness is a myth, an ideology that discourses on transformation need to address critically.

Mythologization of whiteness and blackness should be understood as repressive intergenerational stasis that stands in the way of refocusing transformation on the socio-economic development of South Africa after 1994. Academic institutions have an important role to play in this process, which, I suggest, will herald the possibility of a more productive interaction with the potential of transformation. My interest in Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo stems from realizing that although challenging the status quo in terms of mythologized racial categories bolstered by historical narratives can result in interventions and negotiations of the positions of power (as happened in the students protests of 2015/2016), it cannot progress beyond politics to the pragmatic requirements of transforming the lives of disempowered South Africans. To appreciate what lies beyond these politics, I hold, it is helpful to step back from the radicalization that contemporary events has imposed on those concerned with transformation. Again, this is not to imply that music in contemporary campus politics does not play a transformative role, but to probe towards less essentialized and therefore less confrontational engagements with the status quo through music.

3.4. Summary and conclusion

What constitutes transformation in South Africa after 1994? A strategic way of answering this question is to identify what transformation is not. It is in providing such a negative answer, that this chapter has attempted to lay the foundation for considering a way forward. Dismissing racial binaries, the essentialization of ethnicity, occupational consciousness, the politicisation of privilege and chauvinistic approaches to power are prerequisites to empowering all social actors

to see themselves as a potential agent of socio-economic development in South Africa. Creating an open social structure challenges and motivates every actor to participate creatively in the developmental processes of the society.

The driving force of such an approach could centre on the understanding of culture as social capital. By culture I mean the material, religious, linguistic, artistic and educational realities (as well as the ideologies governing them) that define the lived-world of a society. These realities are in constant flux through direct or indirect assimilation and adaptation of contrasting realities and ideologies. Decolonization of education and public space, as well as the socio-economic development of South Africa after 1994, depend on transforming ideologies underpinning discourses on transformation. That is, refocusing these discourses on how social realities and identity could be transformed to economic forces that would reduce inequality, unemployment and poverty. Culture and various social realities would then become sources of social and economic empowerment for people. Myths that reinforce repressive ideologies are best put to rest, and in this regard, I maintain that upholding the validity of race or ethnic identity functions as an impediment to transformation. Rather, differences could more productively form the substance that engenders innovative approaches to a holistic transformation and sustainable development of post-1994 South Africa. Refusing further intellectual or trade in categories like “white”, “black”, “whiteness” and “blackness” is the beginning of a holistic transformation of South Africa after 1994.

How could culture become a force in the socio-economic eradication of poverty, unemployment and inequality in post-1994 South Africa? In answering this question, the next chapter will focus on presenting a case for such transformation using the experience of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo music group from Langa, Cape Town. A story of transformation through the use of culture as “capacity” to aspire (Appadurai, 2004) from a disempowered position in Langa Township to world stages, presents an example of transformation for South Africa after 1994, especially in empowering the previously disadvantaged people of South Africa.

Chapter Four

DIZU PLAATJIES AND THE AMAMPONDO: A CASE STUDY OF MUSIC, AGENCY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter works with an understanding that the youth constitutes an important shaping force in the cultural and economic existence of African cities and urban centres. Employed or unemployed, within private and public space, “either socialising or participating in organization of urban living, young men [and women] are everywhere” (Fuh, 2012). Their creative and artistic sensibilities have contributed to creating diverse music cultures that have linked national aesthetics and blurred ethnic boundaries (Allen, 2003; Ballantine, 2012; Coplan, 2008; Meintjies, 2003 and Shipley, 2012). Through transnational cultural products like music, arts, fashion and technological advancements, many youths are actively seeking alternative responses to socio-economic problems facing them and their societies. Through the use of music, many African youths are rewriting their histories, influencing their societies and in the process, repositioning themselves from one social class to the other (Coplan, 2008; Fuh, 2012, Shipley, 2012 and Waterman, 1990). From Johannesburg to Cape Town, from Nairobi to Lagos, and from Accra to Cairo, creative innovations like *Marabi*, *Kwaito*, *Kwela*, *Juju*, *Highlife*, *Fuji*, *Rai*, *Soukous* and *Afrobeat* have contributed to the transformation of Africa’s soundscapes, its social ideologies and economies (Ballantine, 1993; Coplan, 2008; Shipley, 2012). These musical innovations have also laid the foundation of, and produced a framework for subsequent creations. As they embody the indigenous, popular and what is known as “higher” cultures in African societies, they have also become a lens through which the particularities of Africa can be viewed (Barber, 1997). These creative innovations also serve as mechanisms to transform lives and communities. In this chapter I narrate the story of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo musical group from Langa Township in Cape Town. I do so because I believe this story holds important lessons and poses particular challenges to the kinds of engagement with music that is so important to youth across Africa. My concern with the youth is a political rather than disciplinary one. My work is motivated by articulating positive and productive ways of transforming social realities through music, and in

focusing on Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo I do so not to imply that they are somehow representative of the youth, or in some way directed towards the youth as a demographic, but to articulate what I regard as an exemplary approach that could function as an alternative for the displeased contemporary youth that have disrupted the complacency of South African campuses in recent times.

The story of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo shows them to be representative of what Gladwell (2008) termed “Outliers”, as well as fitting Stanford Business School’s definition of “social innovators”. In *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Gladwell draws from psychological, sociological and biological studies and stories of success to argue that anyone can succeed and make a long-lasting and valuable contribution to society if they try hard enough. His position suggests that most people who are successful and contribute to social development do so not because of their personal gifts, genius or skills. Rather, he suggests that successful people are products of their environment; that is, their society lays the foundation and provides them with the tools needed to make tangible contributions to the developmental processes of their community. Gladwell’s position resonates with perspectives on culture as a mechanism for human and social development (Appadurai, 2004), in that he posits success as a result of cultural capital. Stanford Business School, meanwhile, explains social innovation as the act of creating “novel solutions to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than current solutions. The value created accrues primarily to society rather than to private individuals”.⁴¹ This links well with Gladwell’s notion of *Outliers* in that a social innovator draws on cultural capital as a “capacity to aspire” in their attempt and approach to creating a long-lasting solution to social problems (*ibid.*).

It is within this understanding that Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo can be read as *Outliers* and social innovators because of the way they drew and continue to draw on indigenous musical influences. Through this, indigenous African culture has become a mechanism for social development. Against the backdrop of apartheid and the myth that portrayed Africa as the dark continent and its cultures as primitive, Dizu Plaatjies and Amampondo engaged their “deepest” African realities. What is meant here, is what Plaatjies describes in a discourse that references the importance of ancestors in the preservation of cultural materials. Through their communication

⁴¹ See <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/faculty-research/centers-initiatives/csi/defining-social-innovation>.

with the past, they discovered their present realities, and through these realities, they created a future of musical culture that is unique to South Africa, and yet belongs to world music culture. This chapter presents the history of Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo musical group. It is a story about South African marimba music, African drumming, dancing, chanting, bow music and other arts, that were made known and popularized in South Africa and around the world through their activities. By writing this narrative, this chapter also sheds light on the contributions of Dizu Plaatjies and Amampondo to the developmental processes of pre- and post-1994 South Africa, and argues that transformation through music can also occur through self-confirming and non-combative expressions of value that heal rather than divide.

4.2. Dizu Plaatjies

Zungula Plaatjies, popularly known as Dizu, is an African concerned with the preservation of African arts and cultural forms. As mentioned above, the characteristics of “Outliers” is their ability to provide creative and innovative responses to deep-rooted social problems. This holds true for Plaatjies and many South Africans. Plaatjies is from Mpondoland in the Eastern Cape, an area historically incorporated into the apartheid Bantustan that was known as the Transkei, and home to the Amampondo clan of the Mpondo people. He was born on 5 February 1959 in the town of Lusikisiki. In 1965, he moved with his father, Mzoloxo Shadrack Plaatjies, to attend the Thembani Lower Primary School in Langa, Cape Town, and later returned to Transkei for his high school education in the early 1970’s. Plaatjies’s mother, Louisa Ntombiza, was born in 1926 and died in 1964. Ntombiza was a school teacher, and her love for teaching later re-emerged in Plaatjies’s teaching career. As a young boy, Plaatjies began practicing indigenous art forms through the encouragement of his father, a traditional healer. His training in musical arts began when his father took him along to ritual performances to participate in the singing and drumming.

4.2.1. Growing up, from the Eastern to the Western Cape

Plaatjies's youth was spent between the Eastern Cape and Langa Township in the Western Cape, where his father had migrated to in search of a better life. In the Eastern Cape, between 1972 and 1975, Plaatjies attended Colosa high school, a Catholic mission school in Idutywa, where he served as the cook for all the students in the school. In 1976, he attended Zwelethemba Trade School in King Williamstown, where he studied building with a focus on bricklaying. Plaatjies explains his focus on bricklaying at the trade school as a means to connect with his dream of becoming an architect. However, this dream was compromised as he could not finish his studies at the school due to the 1976 student riots, during which he was jailed by the apartheid government. In the same year, after he was released, Plaatjies decided not to return to school due to what he explained as unfair treatment by the apartheid government. Plaatjies remembers the event:

From prison, going back to the trade school to fetch my belongings, I went to see my instructor, Mr. Randall. I told him I am going back home because my life is not safe here, he cried because now, I was his top student in the class, a very respectable student in the school. From my instructor, I went to the dining hall to say goodbye to my fellow students. I saw a man standing addressing the students about the problems that were arising in the country, especially the Bantu education, at the time. This man was Steve Biko. The last word that I heard from him was, "when am free, it would not just be for me, it would be for you and me". I just listened, I was afraid to attend those meetings, because I was just coming from prison. If ever the Boers find me in those meetings, I will go to jail for a long time. I only saw Biko for three minutes, and the year after he died, in 1977. That's why I composed a song for Steve Biko in my latest album, which the album became no. 1 in England, and later became no. 4 in world music category around the world (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 29/ 4/2017).

Plaatjies's indigenous African perspectives and skills in musical arts were the products of participation in weekly ritual performances, initiation school,⁴² and family influences while growing up with his maternal family in the Transkei. He learned to play indigenous Xhosa musical instruments like the *uhadi* bow and *umrhubhe* mouth bow from his aunt and grandmother. Though most of these instruments are generally played by women, his aunt and grandmother forced him to learn them through various tricks. This, according to Plaatjies, was because of a unique

⁴² The initiation is an age long tradition of the Xhosa people, and other black South African and African societies. It is a process whereby boys, who are approaching maturation, are camped in a secluded place to teach them about deep values of being a man in their cultural context; and this also include the circumcision of these group of (the to be) young men. Like any African traditional ritual, the success of this exercise thus leads to celebration by the families and their community.

characteristic they saw in him while he was growing up. This characteristic was attached to his name Zungula, which means a traditional hunter. The name Zungula was initially the family name but it was given to Plaatjies at birth, as a carrier of the indigenous traditions of the family. According to him, the musical instrument learning tricks were tied to music related errands. When asked about his learning experience,⁴³ Plaatjies explained:

These instruments are used for making babies sleep, for ladies' games and to communicate with the ancestors; and they are only played by the women. My elder sister would always want me to play, and in most cases, she would have tricked me to play. That is how I got interested in them and I started playing without a special lesson from her. I learnt by observing my sister whenever she and other women were playing (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 15/11/2015).

In Cape Town, Plaatjies joined Boy Scout Headquarters (a firm that provided goods for the Boy Scouts), as a store man. His assignment with the firm included making flags, hats and insignia for juvenile scouts. Through these experiences, Plaatjies learnt how to design and make clothes, as well as how to construct indigenous musical instruments with recyclable materials like tin, plastic, pipes and leather bags. While still busy with his daily job, he did not quit music-making, as he was always making music for leisure after work hours.

While growing up in Langa, Plaatjies was playing with bands in the surrounding townships and also had the opportunity to learn Western musical instruments like the trumpet. This experience, especially the dignity accorded to performing a Western instrument, made him feel good, but eventually he stopped playing with those bands and focused on indigenous African musical arts, which he felt would make him relevant in the community. This relevance, it seems, concerns the place of music in the initiation rituals that pertained in the township. Plaatjies ascribes his desire to make a contribution to his community in this way as deriving from his passion and love for his indigenous African culture and the creative sensibilities inherent in his African roots. Even when indigenous African music and traditions were seen to be backward by his fellow, "enlightened" African intellectuals, Plaatjies stayed committed to his love and passion for indigenous African culture. The "enlightened" African intellectuals included politicians, teachers and civil servants who understood indigenous African culture as primitive in their aspiration to "middle-class status

⁴³ See David Dargie (1988 and 1997) for full information on Xhosa music, instruments and their social contexts.

of the apartheid era” (Cross, 1992: 62-65). Plaatjies remembers these “enlightened” African intellectuals to be those who only identified with urban life styles and ways of doing things, especially in relation to being “civil”; a dynamic similar to not being black or white, but signifying a liminal status (Fuh, 2012 and Nuttal, 2007).⁴⁴

4.2.2. “The most powerful weapon is culture”

In 1979, Plaatjies went to initiation school in Ku Jence village in Tsolo in the Eastern Cape. It was in this year, after the “school of manhood”, that Plaatjies started collecting items like car-oil cans, skins from slaughtered oxen, cowbells, old handkerchiefs, needles, old pieces of cloth and rugs, bicycle wheels and wooden rods. He was using these items to produce self-made drum, tie-dye materials in African outlook and representation. He further designed African outfits which were sold and from which the income was reinvested in other African art materials like beads and shakers. Back in the Western Cape, his perception on life began to change in his commitments to his Langa community, and was also reflected in the way he started to dress. Plaatjies associates these changes with the education he received during his time at the initiation school:

When I came back from the initiation school, coming to Western Cape, in my mind, the only thing that was ringing was the music that I was taught at the initiation school; how to behave, how to respect the elder people, and when you are a man you got to do things as a man. And, fortunately during our time, you know, at the initiation school we had our own traditional healer, you know, who will tell us things that we should do when we go out. Because, it’s like when you pass adolescent stage you go to certain stage, now we were in a stage whereby I could easily get a wife and I will know how to take care of my family, because all the teachings I got from the initiation school, songs and dances and so on, I learn from there. That is when I came back here in Cape Town I started my own band, Amampondo through all those experiences from Tsolo where I did my initiation. So, when I came back everything just changed my life totally because I was into music and we were having divinal ceremonies here on Saturdays and Sundays. What I learnt from Eastern Cape and what was happening here blend. Then I was forced to form a band, Amampondo, but now, before I started with Amampondo, I jammed with some other friends of mine which I grew up with, you know, because I was buying instruments and making some instruments, and then later in 1979, that is when I started meeting the members of Amampondo (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 15/11/2015).

⁴⁴ Within the framework of popular culture in Africa, these scholars explain liminal status as the creation of a middle-class in semi-urban societies, with particular focus on material consumption, the idea of good life, and living a life that reflects what they (the Africans) perceived as cosmopolitan.

Plaatjies noticed that in most of the popular ceremonies like marriage, burial and celebration of boys' and girls' initiations, urban popular songs were replacing indigenous songs attached to these celebrations. As a result, he decided to start what could be termed "a one-man band" that would provide an indigenous context for these ceremonies. He made himself a drum and took the lead role as singer and a drummer at ceremonies in the townships. This was possible because he had been taught repertoires that expressed indigenous African social values, and his mastery of drum patterns, styles and singing skills which were all a product of his childhood experiences, distinguished him in his community. His unique style was also influenced by his experiences from the indigenous African education at the initiation school. Through this initiative, Plaatjies became popular as a performer in the community.

As time passed, Plaatjies recruited Simphiwe Matole, Michael Ludonga and Blacki Zandisile to work with him, and they established themselves as a musical group that provided singing and drumming for social and cultural ceremonies in the townships. Their initiatives and performances received wide acceptance within and outside their community. Given this popularity, the communities started referring to them as the "Langa drummers". Throughout, Plaatjies innovated and worked towards maintaining the popularity of the group. Their performances were no longer restricted to indigenous ceremonies, but included church crusades and festivals within and around township communities. The commitment to indigenous culture during a time when it was politically complicated to take this position, would play an important role in transmitting and maintaining traditions and musical heritage from the rural Transkei, to the urban townships of Cape Town. Contrary to the heavily politicized anti-apartheid narratives from musicians in exile, Plaatjies and his group demonstrated that a positive commitment to tradition and an embrace of African values were important in fostering a sense of community for black South Africans, and that it was possible to do so in the most adverse of political conditions. This approach was a positive one, and attracted a response in Glasgow's *Evening Times* after one of Plaatjies's performances during a European tour in 1988: "These musicians have proved to Glasgow that it isn't all bad news from South Africa".⁴⁵ This kind of response also shows how it might not have been politically popular for Plaatjies to be doing what he had set out to do, as it complicated the anti-apartheid narrative.

⁴⁵ Music reviews in *Glasgow Evening Times*, 17 May 1988.

4.2.3. The social and cultural activism of the Langa Drummers

In the 1980's, the black youth in South Africa was heavily politicized (Coplan, 1985 [2008]: 326-329). This phenomenon was evident in the popular music scene and other performing arts cultures, and is best understood as part of the struggle against white supremacy. Coplan states that young popular musicians of this era were not so keen to make careers in the performing arts. Much of their musical activities was channeled to support the liberation struggle (*ibid.*). Those who had the intention of making a living from the arts, often had to navigate between avoiding government censorship and placing their art in service of the anti-apartheid movements. This “service”, in most cases, was without reward (*ibid.*). The activities of Plaatjies and his group, the “Langa drummers”, constituted political activity that was different to the politically-directed arts activities required by the struggle for liberation. First, Plaatjies's priorities were focused on cultural, rather than political, emancipation. He believed that African cultures and their associated beliefs are powerful tools for empowering people in society. Because Plaatjies is the son of a sangoma, his immersion in Mpondo, Xhosa culture stretches further than his musicianship. He is also a custodian of stories and of remedies, myths, legends and rituals, making him a multi-faceted performer that brings the past to life through music and various other art forms. His efforts were aimed at reintroducing African sensibilities (like rhythm, proverbs, dance, fashion and language) through music, arts and indigenous education in society because he believed that these sensibilities, alongside those associated with global cultures, were important in maintaining a sense of self in apartheid South Africa. Second, as he had learnt from his family, Plaatjies believed that the most reliable and stable way towards value and dignity is through cultivating an understanding of one's culture. In this sense, culture becomes the most potent tool of resistance and freedom. This became his message, through pronouncements and musical performances:

Music comes to life through the expression of feeling and the art of living. Simplicity is the key. We are not politicians; our message is one of love and peace. We are here to celebrate the haunting beauty of Africa. A promise of peace, a plea for the past (Plaatjies in *The Star*, Friday February 9, 1990).

The clear understanding that music has a different register and function to politics, and that resistance politics should therefore not be all important in creating music, makes Plaatjies's voice a unique and courageous one in the overwhelmingly anti-apartheid discourses associated with black music making during apartheid, and an equally instructive one in the radicalized student politics of contemporary South Africa. The sense that what was valuable and precious about the South African experience was not located in opposition politics, but in the values and aesthetics of traditional communities, would remain the driving force for Plaatjies, and would propel his music from the township to global platforms.

4.2.4. Journey to the University of Cape Town

In the early 1990's, Plaatjies followed one of his friends, Simphiwe Matole, who was then hired as part-time instructor at the South African College of Music (SACM), University of Cape Town (UCT), to work at the SACM. Matole was not particularly interested in teaching, and Plaatjies ended up doing a lot of the tasks associated with the position. Through this, he later became the African music instructor at the college, as his friend, who never liked the job, left the department. At the time, the cultural boycott made it difficult for Plaatjies to travel abroad and to perform in South Africa, but his institutional involvement now made it possible for him to travel to universities and schools throughout Southern Africa to teach and perform. Given his wealth of experience and knowledge of African musical arts and culture, Plaatjies was encouraged by Deirdre Hanson, the former head of the African music section of the college. As a result, James May, the then director of the college, in conjunction with other academic staff, advised him to attend various undergraduate classes to get him acquainted with academic language and training in European teaching pedagogies. Plaatjies accepted this offer, and gradually he enrolled in the various undergraduate programs at the SACM.

After completing his Honours degree in 1999, Plaatjies graduated in 2005 with a master's degree in music, with ethnomusicology as his specialty. This achievement led to Plaatjies being promoted to a senior lectureship at UCT in 2006, establishing African music courses that became popular with exchange students from America and Europe. In these courses, he developed innovative ways of teaching, performing and repackaging African musical culture and arts for social development.

Notable among these innovations at UCT was his introduction of African indigenous instrumental music performance to the graduation ceremonies, and marimba performances at the Vice Chancellor's annual concert. Traditionally, performances at the Vice Chancellor's annual concert were limited to Western classical music and jazz:

I introduced the marimba much earlier, maybe around 1997, to the VC concert, then the graduation. It was when some of my students were graduating I decided that. Then I had about 40-piece band of Kudu horns, including community students [his personal students from the townships] and the university students. Then I fused all of them, you know, we became one big group. You know, you will feel very good when you walk past this row of honour of Kudu horns. It was something new which the university have never experienced. Around 1999 the Kudu horns were ready, when I graduated some of my students were also graduated while others were performing (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 27 /12/2015 and 29/4/ 2017).

With regard to teaching, Plaatjies developed notation for instructing students in the playing of African indigenous instruments, while his innovations in performing and repackaging African music entailed his movement away from the idea of "pure" African music to the use of Western instruments and styles in developing hybrid musical forms. Perhaps his most lasting and influential contribution, was his role in the establishment of what is now called South African marimba music, which will be discussed later in this chapter. These initiatives contributed to changing the institutional culture at UCT. Plaatjies explained this initiative as a peace and unity project among the historically disadvantaged students at the SACM and those in the townships:

During the time when I introduced all these traditional instruments to the students, even the jazz musicians, students from other sections of the department, some guys who were studying jazz, a lot of guys from Johannesburg and all over South Africa, we formed this very unique thing that has never happened to any university in the country. What I was trying to do, was to find more peace and unity among the students, because during the apartheid time things were not just easy. My fourth-year students, I always tell them how I grew up and how I used to learn from all these places, once you pass your first year going to second year, the first years must be taught by the second years as much as the third years must teach the second years, and fourth year students must also go and teach the third years. Now the African students, they started to have this bond of unity. Also, at that time, here [his house] I used to have parties every weekend because we were all together, you know, not one student was injured or had problems, we were all together all the time. The language that we were using was music, sometimes we take the jazz songs, arrange it with other songs. Then all this arrangement of indigenous music started when I started working with the students. So, that was my aim, for the people to understand each other much better. And I was the very first African lecturer at the South African College of Music, I am the first, they have never had an African lecturer, and being the first person to do that you got to come up with new things and so on. We were performing at all the functions, and my students

at the college and my community students, we were working together, you could not come or penetrate in between us. I established something that no one could take off (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 28/12/2015 and 29/4/ 2017).

African indigenous music has for centuries been seen as a primitive kind of music and subsequently it has been denied status in universities in Africa (Hornbostel, 1928; Jones, 1959; Kidula, 2006; Nzewi, 2012; Mapaya, 2014 and others). In South Africa, when Plaatjies and his group Amampondo began performing, they contributed to changing perceptions about the status of this music. When Plaatjies was later appointed a senior lecturer at UCT, this status was also institutionally confirmed. The presence of Plaatjies and his creative work at the College of Music broke the silence surrounding this music at an institutional level. That is, his innovative and creative approaches brought about a fresh understanding about African music at UCT. Despite the fact that African music still occupied a lower hierarchical position at the institution, students had the chance of associating these music cultures with something other than its colonial stereotypes. In addition, he has and is still contributing to primary and secondary schools and academic institutions like Stellenbosch University and UCT. He also gives talks, concerts and teaches at seminars, symposiums and conferences in South Africa and in different countries around the world.

Having started his teaching and performing career in the township, teaching at UCT represented a new phase in Plaatjies's teaching career, one that was not without opportunities and challenges:

For me [the teaching at the College] was something new. You know, from the streets of Langa going to College of Music, teaching students. You know, well, teaching is one of my favourite things, but I was only teaching in the community. So, when I went to the College to teach, it was even much easier. You know, because these ones [the students] from here in the townships, they catch things just like a wink of an eye, and then, at the College of Music, because some of the students are trained in classical music and different other genres of music, it [the teaching and learning] was not so fast like these ones [the township students]. So, I was always looking at the situation, saying to myself that I must have different methods of teaching when I am at the College and when I am in the township. You know, and it really helped me to create and discovered a lot of things [styles and methods of teaching] that I could use (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 26/12/2015).

Plaatjies approached the teaching of African music through a framework he described as a “performance-centred approach” through which he could teach an understanding not only of African music, but also of the social contexts that define its creative processes, performances and education. His aim was “to teach any student, I am teaching that student to be a performer – at

times it's different when a person [student] comes from different university and wants things [content] in a more theoretical approach, then it's okay. But I always teach all my students to be a musician". This idea of musicianship extended for Plaatjies beyond African music to include the culture that defines such music. He further explained that his teaching was steeped in the premise that African music cannot be fully taught nor understood "based on paper work" – that African music only serves as an appendage and intersection to a vast body of cultural expressions that are themselves frames for understanding the music as a cultural force.

Plaatjies explains his teaching and content approach in terms that remind strongly of Malinowski's "holism": "I was and am still teaching xylophone, marimba, bows, akadinda, dance, songs, drums and stories about each of these instruments, dances and songs". He arranges his teaching method and content with specific reference to the social function of the song or instrument in question. In the case of songs, societal issues are embedded in the text and mood, while tone relations and bow accompaniment are taught in relation to associated dances, choreographies or gestures. In most cases, instrumental classes also follow this method. Some instrumental classes are however detached from associated contexts due to technical challenges like the development of particular aural and rhythmic competencies. The Ugandan akadinda (as shown in Fig: 4-1 below) is an example of a musical instrument taught without particular reference to its social context. Plaatjies explains the role of this instrument to be that of supplying a pedagogy relating to aspects like rhythm, aural and creativity for jazz and classical music students who need to be trained in broader African techniques and musical sensibilities. The rhythmic benefit inherent in akadinda performance, in particular, is valuable for these students.

Given Plaatjies's experiences in African musical instrument making, he has also at various times included instrument building in his lectures. This include musical instruments like marimba, xylophone and Ugandan akadinda and bows:

...we used to do that at the College. That College of music, we used to teach people how to make xylophone, marimba, akadinda and everything and so on. But the problem, they've got to pay, because it's something extra, it's a career on its own, you know, and at times because we are teaching that, we've got to invite people from outside that we know, people like Laurence [his friend], to come and teach. When they [the student or the school] say they don't have money what do you do? (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 26/12/2015).

Reflecting on his experiences as a teacher, performer and musical instrument maker, and the future of indigenous African music education, Plaatjies highlighted the following as a possible way to further document, teach, perform and repackaging African music for posterity:

.... apart from teaching in school, students should also learn how to build and maintain African musical instruments. That is, construction of African musical instruments and maintenance should be part of African music education. In addition, storytelling is a good way to teach African music, it gives the students overall picture and the place of that music in the society. It connects the students to the music and makes the learning productive, and in return empowers students to engage and positively contribute to their society. Storytelling, making music, performance, making musical play: there are so many stories people can make. We've got a lot of stories to tell as Africans: dramatize that and add music, singing and other possibilities that could make it interesting to the society. And you take these little kids they will get so hooked, they would imagine and say I want to be an actress or actor. Now you are giving skills to these ones from early age. They won't need to wait until they pass matric to know what they want to do [as a career choice]. Because they've got to start this thing [music education] from child use (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 26/12/2015).

Plaatjies's teaching approach references indigenous African approaches to musical arts education, and constitutes a reflection of his childhood musical training:

.... Just like any other child in Africa who just plays any instruments, I have already been teaching in townships, teaching and playing many instruments with community students, and I happened to like what I was doing, you know, somethings [when you are] teaching you [can also] learn so much. And I happen to do a lot of that [teaching and performing] almost every now and again even at the College. You know, but things are changing now, so I also need to find a way of making African music lively and enjoyed by my students. You know I was just doing it [teaching and performing] music for free [first at the College] for the love of music. I was not paid, no payment because I was also learning a lot of things from the College, and when I was later appointed, I started experimenting with various ideas in my teaching of African music. You know, you got to be very open to change and development to teach those students (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 26/12/2015).



Figure 4- 1: Plaatjies's music class at the South African College Music, University of Cape Town (Ayorinde, 2017).

4.3. From Langa drummers to the Amampondo

In 1979, Plaatjies started what the township dwellers called the “Langa drummers” by reintroducing indigenous songs and drumming styles to initiation ceremonies. By 1981, through their efforts and determination, the Langa drummers had transformed to become an established music group in Cape Town. At this time, the group members had increased from four to six. The members of the group were Plaatjies, Simphiwe Matole, Michael Ludonga, Zandile Mbizela, Xola Mlambo and Mzwandisile Qotoyi. When asked about how the Langa drummers became Amampondo, Plaatjies explained that the name Amampondo was adopted in 1980 at one of their engagements, a church crusade in Langa:

You see, Ayo, we are now popular in all the townships, and everyone was enjoying our music. We never planned the name, it just came. There was an American Pastor that organised open

crusade in Langa that year and we were invited as guest performer. So, as it was getting to our turn to perform, when we are the next item on the program, the announcer quickly ran to me, saying “Dizu! Dizu! Dizu!, you guys are going on stage now, what is the name of your band?” And, I said “Yoo! Guys, what is our name?” They were very confused, and the announcer was in hurry. Immediately I just told him Amampondo! Then the man went to announce our performance as the Amampondo music group. Even after the performance we all loved the name and it became our group’s name (Plaatjies, Pers. Comm., 15/12/2015).

The commitment of the Amampondo to what they perceive their “African roots”, but more so, what Plaatjies describes as their love and passion for the music, contributed to making the group a success in Plaatjies’s opinion. The story of Plaatjies and Amampondo in the apartheid era is similar to the lived experiences of black South African workers who commuted between townships and urban centres, those transported by the coal train from rural villages to the cities in search for better earning potential or work, and whose lives were spent in indentured labour creating the wealth of the mines. The lives of these young men were maps that mirrored black South African experiences, and their music was inseparable from these realities. It was this embodied history and bitter experiences of their people, more than anything else, that they took to the streets at home and stages around the world. They did not do this in protest, but in affirmation of certain wisdoms, dignity and values of their culture, community and country. This was the backdrop to the creative and innovative contributions of Plaatjies and Amampondo.



Figure 4- 2: Members of Amampondo in 1980 (Courtesy of Plaatjies) [taken from an unidentified newspaper].

4.3.1. Marimba and the “Amampondo Spiritual Roots”

Prior to 1979, the St. Francis Catholic church at Langa, a mission station of the Lumko Catholic mission, Transkei, Eastern Cape, had started using traditional African instruments in the church masses. This was partly as a result of the efforts of Father David Dargie, who had done research in the Transkei and Zimbabwe on African indigenous instruments and songs. Father Dargie encouraged his congregation to focus on their “roots” (African music) through preaching, by making the instruments, practicing as well as teaching indigenous instruments to his church members, especially young people. In 1979, Father Dave Dargie introduced marimba to St. Francis church in Langa and it was here where Plaatjies and the other band members discovered and learnt to perform on the marimba.⁴⁶ At that time, marimba was new, and its performance was limited to playing hymns in the church. Plaatjies, who was not Catholic but only a member of Father Dargie’s marimba class, was fascinated by this new instrument. He embraced it and adapted it to the musical styles and techniques with which he was familiar: indigenous African music from Mpondoland. It was at the marimba class that Father Dargie encouraged his pupils to stick to their African “roots” in their music practices. In his email correspondence, Prof. Dargie related what he remembered about his first marimba class:

As I told you, I taught the first Cape Town marimba group at Langa Catholic Church in 1979. I worked there for a few weeks, first learning to play the marimbas myself, and then working out accompaniments for church songs for a marimba mass. I also worked out an accompaniment for

⁴⁶ In 1977, the Lumko institute imported the first set of marimbas from Bulawayo to South Africa. The marimba was developed in the mid-twentieth century as a new national instrument in Zimbabwe (see Tracey, 2004 and Claire Jones, 2006). Marimba was institutionalized by the Kwanongoma College of African Music, a school credited with the foundation of what is known as Zimbabwean marimba (Ibid). Kurt Huwiler, who used to be the head of Kwanongoma College, moved to Mthatha, South Africa in the late 1970s; there he set up a small factory at the Ikhwezi Lokusa School for the Catholic Church, Lumko in Mthatha. It was through Huwiler’s marimba productions that the then Father Dave Dargie started introducing marimba to churches and youth clubs, and creating new liturgical music for marimba. He started introducing marimbas to the Xhosa speakers in Catholic churches in the Cape Province and later to other communities in the country. Dargie and Andrew Tracey reworked the tonal tuning of the marimbas to suite the Xhosa harmonic series; a whole tone apart; as used in the Xhosa bows and vocal music. Furthermore, Dargie reworked the tuning of the marimbas to E flat, which contrasted the initial C tuning of the Zimbabwean marimbas. Dargie explained the reason for this changes to me that it was a way to accommodate general singing and possibility of playing marimba with other tempered Western musical instruments. This innovation, Xhosa-centred South African marimbas, was first introduced to the Catholic youth club at Langa in Cape Town. It was from this Catholic youth club that Amampondo discovered marimba and they took it (out of the church) to the streets of Cape Town, and later it spread to schools, churches and clubs all over the country. But it was the Amampondo that popularize the marimba through their performances in clubs, concerts and festivals. Hence Tracey’s assertion marimba music in South Africa that, “the first band to achieve renown was “Amampondo”, led by Dizu Plaatjies, in Langa, Cape Town” (Tracey, 2004, np).

Ntsikana's Great Hymn (UloThixo onkhulu), which is also in traditional Xhosa style. With these there were the songs of the "Missa Zimbabwe" arranged into Xhosa, Molefe's "Masithi – Amen", and some other songs. It took two and a half weeks to find some who could manage to learn to play, and then it took them only a few days to learn all the songs. Of those four who played the first marimba mass at Langa, three (Blackie, Simphiwe and Kulile) then joined with Dizu Plaatjie and two others to form the group Amampondo. They raised money to buy a set of marimbas, which were made at a small factory run by Brother Kurt Huwiler in Mthatha. The factory was set up by Lumko Institute, for which I was working, and which was then near Lady Frere (Dargie, 2015).

For Dargie, African "roots" meant preservation of the indigenous Xhosa music that he was researching at the time. Plaatjies recalled how they started learning the marimba:

Around 1977, Simphiwe Matole was the first African man to be introduced to the marimbas by Father Dargie. Then, in 1979 when Father Dargie kept coming [from Transkei to Langa], because he was a Roman Catholic priest, and he was coming, so he would come and give more exercises to Simphiwe. Because I was not a Roman Catholic but an Anglican, but because I went to Roman Catholic school, the songs were very familiar, I knew the songs but not to play them on the marimbas. Then I joined. Father Dargie was the one who really forced us to learn the marimbas, and Simphiwe as the first member, the first young man to play marimba in Cape Town and I would say in South Africa – and he became the best soprano marimba player you can find in the whole of South Africa. Me and him we composed many songs for Amampondo and Michael Ludonga, you know, Father Dargie played important role to us, of empowering us with instruments and skills we never had. After Father Dargie, it was Andrew Tracey. Father Dargie was so amazed at how we were catching up, you know, he was happy and he kept coming to teach us (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 18/12/2015 and 29/4/ 2017).



Figure 4- 3: "Marimba players at Lumko, 1980" (Dargie, 2015 [email correspondence]).



Figure 4- 4: “Thembinkosi Tyambethyu teaching himself to play the marimba”, Lumko, 1980 (Dargie, 2015 [email correspondence]).



Figure 4- 5: “Fr (later Bishop) Oswald Hirmer (far left) with Andrew Tracey at the workshop at Lumko in 1979 at which the Lumko marimbas were launched. These marimbas were made at a small factory set up in Lumko in Mthatha, under Brother Kurt, formerly of Kwanongoma College, Bulawayo” (Dargie, 2015 [email correspondence]).



Figure 4- 6: “Marimbas ordered from Kwanongoma College, Bulawayo, at a music workshop at Lumko, Dec. 1977/Jan. 1978. The players are students from Kwanongoma. The one in purple playing marimba is a Xhosa lady, Rosalia Nguza, now retired from working in the Eastern Cape (Arts & Culture) Government” (Dargie, 2015 [email correspondence]).

In the use of marimba for their performances, Plaatjies and Amampondo adapted indigenous repertoire for the capabilities and techniques of these new instruments. Because they were not able to use church marimbas for their township shows, the group first had to acquire their own instruments. They had no money to do so, and the prevailing socio-economic conditions imposed by apartheid meant that they struggled to find jobs that would enable them to fund the purchase of new instruments. They went into major streets and urban centres in Cape Town, busking to raise money to buy their own set of marimbas. They knew this was a huge risk given apartheid conditions, but they persevered and went ahead to busk, playing for pennies from passers-by. Plaatjies remembers that they were the first street buskers in the history of Cape Town. While this might be difficult to prove, it shows how proud Plaatjies was of this initiative and how he saw it as a historically important one. This line of action also became an income-generating strategy not only for the purchase of musical instruments, but as a means of economic sustainability for the musicians and their families. Plaatjies recalled Amampondo’s busking experience:

We used to make more money on the streets of Cape Town than club gigs and shows. Our instruments were bought from busking. We used to feed our family, pay our bills, and take care of our family with busking. When we need the final money from peoples' pocket, yoooh !!, Ayo !!!, whenever we need to get that final money from people, we normally switch from dancing to acrobats to get the last money from them. We were making a lot of money then (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 10/12/2015).

Adopting this course of action was a defiant act when considering the regulation of public space in South Africa in the 1980's. Busking around Greenmarket Square in Cape Town in 1980, Amampondo was noticed by Jerry Dixon, the then owner of Scratch Night Club. Dixon was captivated by their passion and uniqueness, and he began arranging gigs for them at his club and at other venues. Amampondo's popularity grew among both black and white audiences in Cape Town, the uniqueness of their music blurring the lines between apartheid's constructed racial categories. In Plaatjies's opinion, Amampondo's music was increasingly taken to as an important and unique contribution to the social life of the city. He explains:

Even though we had no marimba then, we never stopped busking, you know, because we were "Langa drummers", we never had marimbas, we were just busking with drums. The interest that made Gerry Dixon to book us was because he wouldn't come near us when we were playing in the streets of Cape Town. Tourists were outflowing, our performing space and its surrounding were always filled with people from all over the world. People wouldn't move they would stand still maybe for three hours and we could not eat we were just drinking water, finish doing all that...that really proved that if you want to do something, and you are passionate about it, you will do it and nothing can stop you. So, that was the power that we got from our ancestors and the power that we had; and the Cape Town people and people from the rest of the world were really supporting us. Most of our jobs abroad came from the street when we were busking. The first time we went to Israel we were spotted by another executive producer who was living in Israel but always coming to Cape Town (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 15/12/2015).

Amampondo's busking and its social effect in Cape Town was also described in many daily newspapers of the time:

Just have a look! Something's happening here! The usual Saturday morning vibrancy of central Cape Town has been taking on a new tone – vague drumming sounds penetrate the traffic noise like rain on a rooftop. Scores of shoppers abandon their chores and follow the growing sound of drumming, chanting, whistling. It leads them to Exchange Place; an open square where several hundred people have gathered. In the clearing a half-dozen men in tribal costume are bashing, picking, shaking, blowing, at a bewildering array of instruments.... A policeman steps forward – for a half drumbeat nodding heads freeze – and throws a coin into the collection basket. His grin blends into the beaming faces around him. It is music for everyone, music for everyone,

music for the spirit, and everyone is smiling (Arthur Goldstuck, *FRONTLINE*, December 1983).⁴⁷

Their uniqueness stemmed from the fact that the popular music of the time, the late 1970's to early 1980's, took the form of Euro-American and African hybrids (Coplan, 1985 [2008] and Martin, 2013), and Amampondo came up with a different musical art, namely a modern approach to indigenous African performances. It was during one of Amampondo's gigs around Adderley Street in Cape Town that the journalist, Bruce Gordon, witnessed their performances. Gordon, who had grown up listening to indigenous African music in rural Zimbabwe, identified strongly with the group. He eventually became their manager. Being able to earn a semi-regular income from performances, Amampondo was eventually able to purchase their own set of marimbas. Soon they were performing in and around Cape Town, this time with a full set of instruments. In addition, because of Gordon's contact with the press, they made headlines in the daily newspapers in Cape Town. Plaatjies explains how the Amampondo bought their first set of marimbas:

What we did, from the money we raised from busking, we kept it in the bank until it was exactly the money of the marimbas. Then, we drove to Transkei, but during that time, when we bought our first marimbas we had a white manager, Bruce Gordon, who was working for the *Cape Times*. Bruce Gordon was the only one with a license who could drive, and most of us, we couldn't drive, so we drove to Transkei to buy the instruments from brother Kurt Huwiler's marimba factory and then we came back (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 15/11/2015).

Through the influence of Gordon, Amampondo started touring major cities, giving concerts in theatres, concert halls and popular night clubs. It was during this period that they made their first appearance at the Grahamstown Festival in 1983. The Grahamstown National Arts Festival (NAF) of 1983 also became the turning point in Plaatjies's and Amampondo's musical journey, as it was the place where they met the ethnomusicologist and African music specialist, Andrew Tracey. Plaatjies added that "we were also spotted at the Grahamstown festival by another director, Mani Manim, who booked us at the Johannesburg Market theatre" (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 29/4/2017).

After attending Amampondo's performance at the NAF, Grahamstown, Tracey invited its members to his house, and also introduced them to the International Library of African Music

⁴⁷ Arthur Goldstuck, *FRONTLINE*, December 1983, p. 42.

(ILAM) in Grahamstown.⁴⁸ It was during this time that Tracey introduced Amampondo to other African indigenous musical instruments like the Zimbabwean *mbira*, the Ugandan *akadinda* and the Mozambiquean *timbila*. Tracey did not only teach them how to perform on these new instruments, he also helped them to improve their existing technique on other African indigenous instruments. After having come under Tracey's mentorship, Amampondo started performing at major concerts and theatres in South Africa and in other African countries. During the course of their travels, they started collecting musical instruments and borrowing and merging styles from numerous African cultures.

The relationship between Amampondo and Tracey during the 1980's could provide a counter narrative to popular perceptions among marginalized South Africans that white people were unsympathetic to their cause. When asked about the problematic dynamic between black and white South Africans, Plaatjies explained to me that not all the white people walking on the streets share the same ideology, and therefore not all of them are "bad":

You see, in the same way that we have good and the bad side of people, we have very good white people in this country and we also have those who are bad. Also, we have some bad black people and good ones. Ayo, it was the white people who actually took the pain to document African indigenous music and instruments. They are the ones trying to preserve our music. And this is why I will never forget Andrew Tracey. He was the one that taught me all these instruments [pointing finger to the indigenous musical instruments hanging on the wall]. Without him I don't know if I will be able to play all these instruments or know their histories. In fact, yoh! Andrew Tracey is a great person, free-of-charge, he camped Amampondo in his house. He trained us, gave us lessons, and he taught me how to build most of these instruments. Not all white men are bad, our music was transformed by Andrew Tracey (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 10/ 12/2015).

In 1983, as a result of the new skills and exposure gleaned from Tracey, Amampondo began touring South Africa with renewed energy, becoming a sought-after musical act in established theatres and concert venues. The reviews of their performances subsequent to meeting Tracy helped to establish Amampondo as a novel development in the larger South African musical scene. This was, in no small part, because of their musical innovation in using the marimba, new to South Africa at the time:

⁴⁸ ILAM was founded in 1954 by Hugh Tracey, the father of Andrew Tracey. ILAM is the greatest repository of African music and musical instruments in the world. ILAM is also a research institute devoted to the study of music and oral arts in Africa. For more information on Andrew Tracey and the ILAM, see <https://www.ru.ac.za/ilam/ilam/aboutilam/>

If you have yet to get closer to Africa and her sounds, Amampondo – the people of Pondoland – will start the hairs on the back of your neck standing on end. Their sound is so different, so special and so exciting that only your modern sense of decorum precludes you from leaping out of your seat at Baxter and joining the uninhibited few who let go at the back of the concert hall as the rhythm reaches a crescendo – an awe-inspiring sound that makes you join in the rhythmic hand-clapping totally and spontaneously. The skill of Plaatjies, Simphiwe Matole and Mzwandile Qotoyi and their friends on the marimbas is breath-taking. There is a new kind of magic which becomes hypnotic the longer you hear it and see the blur of the hands as they spin the fabric of the music on those seven marimbas – one of which, from Uganda, must be close to two metres long (Patrick Marshal, *The Cape Times*, Thursday, February 23, 1984).⁴⁹

This new development in music making, in Plaatjies’s opinion, also marks a beginning of a new era in South African music, and this new beginning was what the journalist, Vusi Kama, referred to as “the era of marimba-mania” in South Africa.⁵⁰ Amampondo’s creation of what could be seen as a new South African music emerged from their initial aim of preserving what they saw as a dying culture. Through their openness to and adaptation of diverse musical forms from the continent, they created a musical expression that stood in lively relation to both the past and the present. This original voice proved resistant to being classified as traditional or popular, as its aesthetic blurred the lines between what is popular music and indigenous or traditional music. In his explanation of Amampondo musical arts as neo-African music, Tracey engaged the questions as to whether Amampondo belonged to traditional or popular African musical forms:

Amampondo members use several other African instruments, like the mbira dza vadzimu, the ritual instrument of the Shona of Zimbabwe (sometimes called thumb-piano), a timbila xylophone of the Chopi of Mozambique, and many other rattles and bells. They fall with delight on any new African instrument that comes their way, and, unlike the natural tendency of many musicians, they are always keen to discover the original music that belongs with it. Now perhaps we can answer the question as to whether Amampondo are traditional. In my opinion they are, and in theirs [the Amampondo], and in their audience’s, but not because they [Amampondo] have, in most cases, learned their music directly from traditional performers or reproduce the music exactly as they learn it. Obviously, they represent a certain step away from the tradition, just like so many other neo-African musics, in terms of sound alone and in social function. But in terms of the processes which go into African music, its aesthetic rationale, its feeling for energy-sharing and movement, they are right in line (Tracey, in *Heart Beat of Africa*).⁵¹

⁴⁹ Patrick Marshal, *The Cape Times*, Thursday, February 23, 1984, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Kama elucidated on the uniqueness of Amampondo as a new brand of South African music – especially in connection to the popularization of marimba in South Africa (Vusi kama, *Weekend Argus*, February 18, 1989).

⁵¹ Tracey, in *Heart Beat of Africa* liner note, 1995.

Tracey's opinion above is insightful and relevant to the understanding and categorization of Amampondo's music as belonging to neo-African and traditional music.⁵² His idea of neo-African music is rather vague, and to classify Amampondo's music as based on "its feeling for energy-sharing and movement" is somewhat problematic, as these traits are also found in jazz, pop and some Western classical music. His views should be read from the perspective that his relationship to Plaatjies and Amampondo was that of a teacher, mentor and adviser. This means that he articulated his views from a particular position of power and what can be felt as a desire to categorize the music in terms that he understood and approved. Arguably, Plaatjies and the Amampondo's music was more fluid than these remarks allow.

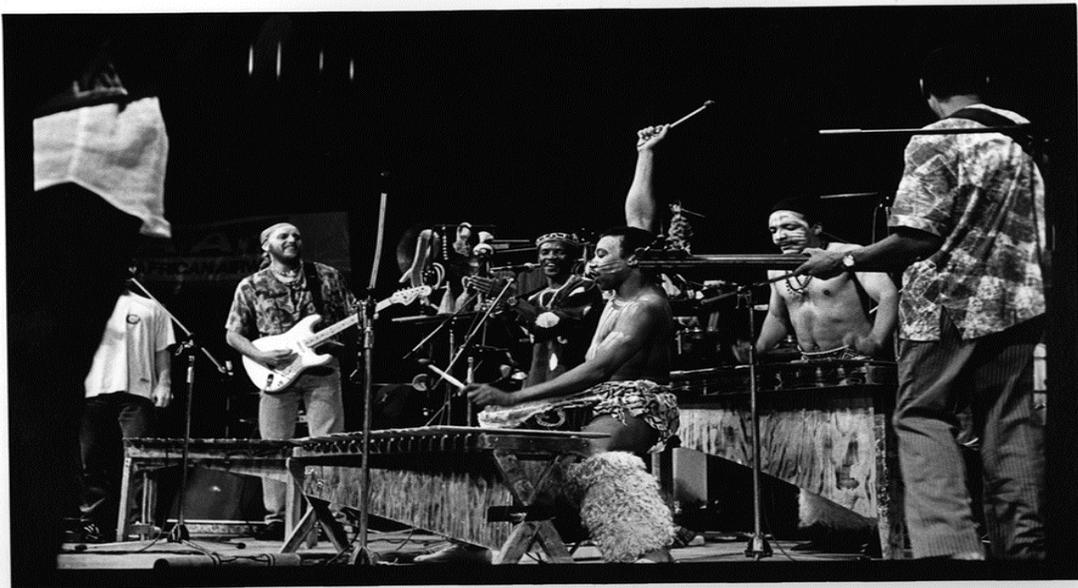


Figure 4- 7: The final concert of the 1994 Outernational Meltdown Project at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town. Source: <http://www.melt2000.com/outernational-meltdown/>.

Due to their various collaborative music projects with jazz, classical and pop musicians around the world (for example, the music project, Intsholo),⁵³ the nature of Amampondo's musical

⁵² According to Akin Euba (1988: 126), the neo-traditional types of music, in their original forms, are those created entirely from traditional elements and have no stylistic affinity with Western music.

⁵³ Intsholo, a transcultural music project, brought Amampondo and the Solid Brass Quintet, a section of Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, together as one in 1995. This union brought a world of sounds together, fusing the sound of the Western brass music and the sound of the South African marimba, percussion and songs.

performances continued to resist fixed classification in the 1990's. Performances included new approaches to song arrangements, instrumentation and re-interpretations of popular songs on the marimba. Increasingly, Amampondo was being referred to as a marimba band rather than as African drummers and dancers, as they were described in their early years. Barber's (1997) explanation of African popular culture could help in understanding the importance of resisting classification when considering the music of Amampondo. She explains:

There is a vast domain of cultural productions which cannot be classified as either "traditional" or "elite, as "oral" or "literate", as "indigenous" or western in inspiration, because it straddles and dissolves these distinctions...[V]arious popular and semi-local forms have emerged ..[t]hese genres are no repository of some archaic "authenticity". On the contrary, they make use of all the contemporary materials to speak of contemporary struggles. But they are not mere products of "culture contact" either, speaking about and to the West that has "corrupted" them. They are the works of local cultural producers speaking to local audiences about some pressing concerns, experience and struggle that they share (Barber, 1997:2).

For Barber, a popular culture is determined not by its historical status, but its functions in society, especially in connection to how such culture is being assimilated within social realities. Given this position, there is an argument to be made for Amampondo's music as a kind of South African popular music, especially in relation to the popularization of South African marimba and how the group was received in Cape Town and later around the country.



Figure 4- 8: Album cover of the Insholo Project 1995 (courtesy of Dizu Plaatjies).

By the mid-1990's Amampondo had influenced change and made contributions to some aspects of social life in South Africa. One such contribution was the creation of a unique South African marimba musical culture. Plaatjies recalls:

We decided to form the group in order to preserve our culture because if we don't the younger generation will live and die without knowing what our culture is all about...[but] we wanted to come up with something of our own, hence the first marimba band in the country (Plaatjies, in *Weekend Argus* February 18, 1989).

What is known today as South African marimba music, as well as its institutionalisation as a culture (See footnote 55), was born in the early 1980's, particularly when Amampondo was booked in 1983 for a two week show at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. These two weeks eventually became twelve years of performances, workshops and teaching of marimba in and around Johannesburg. Plaatjies would normally introduce the group with a poem, a voice-over that read:

I would like to introduce the concept of Amampondo to you. Amampondo is an ethnic group from the bundus of Transkei, the original land of the Xhosa kingdom. Being the younger generation of Amampondo, we felt it was important to work towards preserving our culture in an art form. Because music becomes true music when rhythm and sound become alive through the expression of feeling and art of living. We are here to share our experience with the children of Africa and people from all over the world. Peace to you all. We wish you love.⁵⁴

During these twelve years, they taught marimba in many schools in Soweto, Durban, Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, as well as to general communities in South Africa.⁵⁵ Given their innovative approach to musical performance at the time, Plaatjies believes that Amampondo became a unique institution:

We composed songs just like the American standards of jazz. Because, now you can go anywhere in the world groups will never finish their African marimba music performance without using 5 or 6 songs of Amampondo. You know that means that if we were a white group, you know backed by white people, by now we would be very rich just like the Beatles. But it's a shame that in our schools and in our universities people don't learn about Amampondo. Because, Amampondo, I would say, is an institution. You know, Amampondo is an institution in a way that I have never come across in South Africa; of a group that created a music and composing and creating the standard songs for that same music (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 29/4/ 2017).⁵⁶

It is indeed the case that through teaching and performance activities, Amampondo's musical arrangements and songs for the marimba became standards for learning marimba in some southern African societies,⁵⁷ with the possible exception of Zimbabwe. This is because marimba came to

⁵⁴ Dizu Plaatjies, *Heart Beat of Africa's* world tour.

⁵⁵ The consequence of these efforts has made marimba a social phenomenon in South Africa. In most elementary and high schools, marimba serves as a socializing tool through various marimba bands, festivals and competitions across the country. For example, the Cape Town Marimba Festival, an annual arts and cultural event of the Woodwax Marimba Company in the Western Cape, and the activities of the Education Africa, especially its annual International Marimba festival in Gauteng. At the university level marimba serves as a cultural unifier, especially at graduations in schools like University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University. Though marimba is not a South African indigenous culture, but the popularity of South African marimba musical culture nationally and internationally could perhaps suggest it as a South African national culture. In recent times, marimba has threatened the place of various indigenous South African musical instruments and assumed the position of an indigenous culture among many youths in the country. This is because marimba has been customized in schools as authentic indigenous instrument, and often packaged and commercialized for tourists as an authentic indigenous South African culture. For instance, at the Waterfront in Cape Town, the activities of many marimba bands busking, and the way these activities are portrayed to tourists' privileges marimba as a unique South African musical culture over other indigenous instruments like the *Uhadi* bows. Thus, marimba has been adopted as a national symbol by many social organizations and educational institutions in South Africa.

⁵⁶ Dizu's position corroborates Ketketso's explanation below (see foot note 57).

⁵⁷ Ketketso Mahlo Bololo further explain to me the roles of marimba in township churches. Ketketso, an exceptional South African marimba player and teacher, explained to me that he came in contact with marimba at his church in the township. He told me that marimba was the only available music instrument when he was growing up in the township in the 1990s. According to him, "marimba to us in the township is what piano is to the white people. The

South Africa through Zimbabwe,⁵⁸ and Zimbabwean marimbas were structurally and aesthetically different to that of South Africa. This difference is explained by Andrew Tracey as follows:

He [Dargie] and I worked out a suitable tuning for use by the Xhosa people, closely based on the two-harmonic series, a whole tone apart, as used in their music. The Zimbabwean marimba, on the other hand, was tuned at first to something resembling a mbira scale, with the semitones of a western scale enlarged and the whole tones decreased. Marimbas in Zimbabwe are now tuned to the tempered western scale. Among the changes Dave Dargie made was to tune the marimbas in E flat, as against the C tuning used in Zimbabwe, because this is a much better general-purpose singing key (Tracey, 2004, np).⁵⁹

According to Plaatjies, Amampondo's conception of South African marimba music was inclusive of diverse musical styles:

We came with a music that was not there, new, and after that we composed these standard songs. Like taking traditional songs and Miriam Makeba's songs to the marimbas. We were the first group that did that and all the rest of the world started doing that, we could arrange any music we like for marimba and drums. People were always on their feet during our performances, because they could not resist our sound and rhythms, it was something very unique; we made use of every available sound we knew (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 27/ 12/2015).

It could be suggested that South African marimba music drew from its church roots, Xhosa-centered musical sensibilities and a constellation of various African indigenous musical styles. As Plaatjies confirms, this marimba style was also influenced by South Africa's popular musical styles of the late 1970's to early 1980's, including Miriam Makeba's albums. Most significant for the concern of this thesis with transformation, South African marimba music remained open to adaptation.

songs that were used for learning marimba were those of Amampondo. And, that is why, up till present time, three of any five songs played by any marimba band would surely be Amampondo songs. They created the culture through their songs, and those songs are the standard repertoires of marimba in South Africa" (Bolofo, Pers. Comm., 22/3/2017).

⁵⁸ For full classification and analysis of the Zimbabwean marimba music, see Claire Jones (2006) *From Schoolboy Stuff to Professional Musicianship: The Modern Tradition of the Zimbabwean Marimbas*, PhD Dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

⁵⁹ In addition, Ketketso explained to me that South African marimba music is aesthetically different to Zimbabwean marimbas because of its church root. He further explained that South African marimba started from the Catholic church, and since there is no organ in those churches marimba serves as the organ to the township churches. As a result, we were playing fast and groovy African songs and slow songs on the marimbas with drums" (Bolofo, Pers. Comm., 22/3/2017). These ways of using marimbas in place of organ or piano in township Catholic churches were in his opinion what makes the South African marimba music style unique and distinct to Zimbabwean marimba music style.



Figure 4- 9: Joint students' marimba music performance at the Cape Town Marimba Festival 2016, at the Baxter Theatre (Ayorinde, 2016).



Figure 4- 10: National Development Project in the Cape Province, delivered through Nyanga Arts Development Centre at the Mzamomhle Primary School, Phillipi Township, Cape Town (Ayorinde, 2017).

By the late-1990's to the early 2000's, Amampondo had performed and received favourable reviews in countries like Australia, Scotland, Sweden, France, Taiwan, Japan, Austria, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, the USA, Israel, Italy and Sweden. The reception of their music was traceable to the beauty of African music, especially the energy of the marimba and the African drumming of Amampondo. Since their first international tour to Israel, Reunion and Taiwan in 1985 (on which I write more below), Amampondo had become known internationally for their cultural and educational oriented performances, specifically including teachings of African values and dignity through musical performances.

Without denying the problems at home, the group focused on promoting the culture of their country and the inherent value and beauty of their kind of African music. One of the reviews read:

Amampondo openly bear the suffering of South Africa's oppressed, but they choose to enrich us with the dignity and beauty of African culture. Their performance is a joyous thanksgiving to life (Howard Donaldson, *The Guardian UK*, Saturday June 18, 1988).

According to Plaatjies, even when on tour, Amampondo remained true to its initial goal of giving voice to the beauty of Africa and its people. For Plaatjies, Amampondo's messages remained that of hope and love.

While Amampondo were still busking in Cape Town, they had made connections with many art promoters from countries around the world. It was through these connections that they had their first international experience, which was a performance tour in 1985. This tour led to an imposition of a semi-boycott⁶⁰⁶¹ against them, a result of their performance in Israel and Taiwan, as these two

⁶⁰ The purpose of the cultural boycott was to isolate South Africa culturally, thereby forcing the then apartheid government into negotiation (*Jive*, March 1989, p. 23).

⁶¹ "The cultural boycott of South Africa also became an important aspect of the anti-apartheid movement in most countries around the world. For example, in 1961 the British Musicians Union adopted a policy decision that its members should not perform in South Africa as long as apartheid exists. In 1976, Equity in Britain decided to introduce a policy of refusing permission to sell programmes featuring its members to South African television. By late 1970s to early 1980s other nations, including African States, had joined the campaign. The cultural boycott was already very active in South Africa from the early 1980s to the end of apartheid. In South Africa, the cultural and academic boycott were conceived as important aspects of the ANC's strategy for the total isolation of the racist minority regime. After intensive campaigns, conducted by the movement and other anti-apartheid movements, with the support of the world's anti-apartheid forces, the United Nation (UN) and other international agencies, cultural,

countries were said to be supporters of apartheid. Stung by this reaction, Amampondo members approached the ANC cultural desk in London and apologized, saying they had not known that they were not allowed to perform in those countries. Plaatjies explained:

We went to them about clearance of what we had done because we did not know artists were not allowed to go Israel. It was such a heavy thing. We did not know what to do. We went everywhere trying to clear it (Plaatjies, in *Tribute*, September 1992).

Their touring continued in 1986, and they embarked on another nine-month tour to Western Europe, Hong-Kong and Scotland. During this tour, members of the group approached the ANC cultural desk in London again, and they received a letter that granted them permission to perform in any country.

In 1988, Amampondo joined the Mandela seventieth birthday concert at Wembley Stadium, and they were well received at the celebration. In 1989, despite their performance at Mandela's birthday, a total boycott had been imposed against them in South Africa. They approached the ANC again, but were told that the permission they received earlier was no longer valid. Given the historical developments of the South African cultural boycott (as discussed in footnote 63 above), Amampondo seems to have been occupied with affirmation of dignity and values of their culture and community, but were somewhat innocent of the political implications of their chosen form of cultural assertion. Their forms of cultural assertion were not necessary in alignment with what was understood as appropriate forms of resistance within the mainstream anti-apartheid struggle. The recognized form of resistance or cultural assertion was that of a clearly focussed political anti-apartheid narrative (Coplan 2008:326-329). The possible reason why permission had been given, and then revoked, was explained to be as a result of communication break-down between the South African ANC and in the party's exiled wing (Andrew Molefe 1989). According to the ANC Cultural Boycott Decree, "Democratic and anti-racist South African artists, cultural workers,

sporting, academic and other contacts between the international community and apartheid South Africa reduced the strength of the apartheid regime to a bare minimum. These campaigns also resulted in the exclusion of official South African sports teams from every world sport body; the virtual exclusion of South Africa from international entertainment circuits; the cutting off from international academic networks of South African academicians and scholars; and the stigmatisation of artists, cultural workers, sportspersons and academics who continue to foster links with apartheid South Africa" (Excerpt from <http://www.anc.org.za/content/some-important-developments-movement-cultural-boycott-against-south-africa>).

sportspersons and academics – individually or collectively – who seek to perform, work or participate in activities outside South Africa should be permitted to do so without fear of ostracism or boycott”.⁶²

The boycott brought Amampondo’s international performances to a halt, and they were under embargo for three years in South Africa. In 1992, the embargo was lifted, as the ANC and other anti-apartheid political groups were unbanned. The boycott was the source of division between many South African-based artists and the exiled political leadership of the ANC. Andrew Molefe wrote about it as follows:

To some, it is not clear why Amampondo was picketed on their first overseas run, while a red carpet was laid out for Mbongeni Ngema’s *Sarafina*. While Brenda Fassie with her bubblegum music, was embraced by the likes of Miriam Makeba and other anti-apartheid forces, is a question being asked at home...[U]ntil the question of who is responsible for implementing the boycott is clear, until anti-apartheid movements abroad stop taking decisions without consulting their South African counterparts, and until artists themselves are allowed to fully participate in the decision making, the cultural boycott issue will continue to be the Frankenstein monster it is (Andrew Molefe, *Jive*, March 1989).

To Plaatjies and other members of Amampondo, the 1989 boycott led to a disillusionment with the ANC, as they regarded themselves as also fighting for the cause of South Africa as a country and an inclusive nation. Plaatjies explains:

We were so disappointed, because we have worked for the good of this nation. We have done shows to raise money for various ANC projects and the people of South Africa. For example, at the Mandela 70th birthday we were scheduled to play for 10 minutes but we played for more than 30 minutes. People kept shouting for more. Do you know how many millions we made in that show? Very huge amount. You know what, we donated the money and the royalties to the ANC, for them to have more money to finance all those people in exile who needed money to survive. You see, we have worked for this country, but these politicians are something else. We made this country proud, and that’s why Mandela was trying to give us performance opportunity, but when these guys came they just spoiled everything. But you see, Amampondo worked for this country (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 18/12/2015 and 29/4/ 2017).

⁶²Excerpt from <http://www.anc.org.za/content/some-important-developments-movement-cultural-boycott-against-south-africa>

Later, after Mandela's release, Amampondo would become "rehabilitated" in the eyes of the ANC. Plaatjies remembers his interaction with Mandela, and the subsequent favour he and his group enjoyed for a number of years:

When Amampondo was invited to perform at a national event in Cape Town in 1995, as we were performing, I saw President Mandela greeting people and he was walking down to where we were playing. Then I tapped one of the Amampondo members, Michael Ludonga, I said "Michael, look at what I am going to do when the President gets to our stage". And Michael said "Yes! Yes! Dizu we must tell him how his ANC members treated us badly while we were helping our country". And I was waiting, the president was coming, dancing to our stage, then he started greeting us in Xhosa language, you know we are from the same place. As he got to my side and I was trying to whisper to his ear, yoohh!! Ayo, before I said two words the president had replied [to] me. Instantly he told me that "Dizu, I have read about you guys while I was in the prison. I am very proud of you. I also heard how you made my birthday celebration at Wembley stadium in 1987 a memorable one. Thank you very much". He stood with me for about 5 to 10 minutes, he had already heard about us and everything we have been doing around the world. That is how we became his favourite band, and were the ones playing whenever he had programmes. Mandela promoted us as ambassadors of South African music. Also, he nominated us to represent South Africa at the opening ceremony of the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. In fact, he publicly announced us as his band, and through that, we were getting shows here and there; even up to the time of Thabo Mbeki we were still getting shows from the ANC. We were also made cultural ambassadors to Japan during a bi-lateral cultural exchange programme between South Africa and Japan in 1995 (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 28/12/2015 and 29/4/2017).

The privileged position Amampondo enjoyed throughout the Mandela and Mbeki years did not last, impacting on their chances of getting opportunities to perform. Although the group was still playing local gigs, these were not regular and most of the group members had to take on other jobs to fend for their families. With the political tide turning away from the kind of positive message that Plaatjies and Amampondo had been identified with over many decades, Plaatjies decided to re-establish himself as a solo artist in the early 2000s, releasing his first solo album, *Ibuyambo*, in 2003. Plaatjies also felt that he needed to end his involvement with the band, as some of the group members were not willing to diversify their music practice. According to him, this diversification in music making and performance constitutes a means to transform group identity to a more marketable commodity by exploring other forms of electronic music, especially through their collaborations with other musicians. For Plaatjies, the idea was not to change Amampondo's established form, but to transform it, making it more up to date and addressing contemporary market realities. The group continued without Plaatjies for a few years, and was later disbanded.

Plaatjies went on to create a new musical group with a new name, Ibuyambo, meaning rebirth. Since 2008, Ibuyambo, based on the same structures and values as Amampondo, has been travelling the world and performing with renewed energy and innovation. In addition, the creation of Ibuyambo was also informed by Plaatjies's exposure to different academic institutions, collaboration with various artists around the world and, more importantly, his continuous search for innovative approaches to music compositions, performances, instrument making and teaching styles.



Figure 4- 11: Ibuyambo in New York, Carnegie Hall, November 2014 (courtesy of Dizu Plaatjies).

4.4. Summary and conclusion

As the progenitor of South African marimba music, Amampondo presents an example of transformation through music. The story of Dizu Plaatjies and Amampondo provides a counterpoint to the highly politicized demands for transformation outlined in the first two chapters of this thesis. It is not a narrative that lends itself to political expediency in contemporary South Africa. This is because it touches on sensitive areas of traditional (rather than cosmopolitan) African values, the importance of hard work rather than victimhood. The belief in humanity

transcending the constructed categories of race, the limited use of maintaining “whiteness” or apartheid as original evil, the courage of not subscribing to the political injunctions of parties and ideologues. Also, the commitment to South Africa as something more than a powerplay between apartheid-era races. Something about the approach followed by Plaatjies moves beyond the restrictive political definitions of what transformation is, and suggests a possible way towards societal change that dispenses with political opportunism and focuses on socio-economic empowerment. Because of this, it is hardly surprising that Plaatjies and Amampondo at one point also fell foul of political events and expectations. The scale of their achievements (the establishment of marimba musical culture, the institutional reforms at the SACM and at UCT, the economic support of their families and the ambassadorship of their performances in foreign countries) was such that the music could not easily be co-opted into the kinds of political narratives that jostle for power in terms of flattened binaries. In the world of Nelson Mandela’s South Africa, this sort of achievement was recognized and celebrated precisely because it expanded the limiting options of political retribution and division. Subsequently, as also happened during the 1980’s, the political mood has hardened again, and seems to have little patience with creative endeavours that do not adopt the tone and register of revolution. Despite this, in the context of post-1994 South Africa, I hold that the case of Plaatjies and Amampondo is exemplary, and could point the way – practically and theoretically – to an approach embracing a holistic transformation that takes unemployment, poverty and inequality seriously. Plaatjies’s approach could also be valuable in addressing the challenge of curriculum reconstruction, as it is less politically inspired than socio-economically and with regard to heritage considerations.

Chapter Five

REFOCUSING TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1994: AGENCY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

5.1. Introduction

Music makes a unique contribution to understanding the social, cultural and economic development of society and thus has a role to play in documenting and contributing to these spheres of activity in South Africa and Africa at large. This thesis has deliberately moved beyond the understanding of music as signs, symbols and performance in the context of institutionalized European understandings of music research. Rather, through the lens of music, it attempted to interrogate the discourse on transformation in South Africa after 1994 by documenting a version of transformation that embraces music as a capacity for empowering strategies and self-affirmation of African cultural practices.

In the first two chapters of the thesis, perspectives on transformation in South Africa after 1994 were explored. Specifically, the idea of transformation as articulated in higher education, the media, socio-political discourse and student movements was considered. These perspectives, it was shown, reference transformation as being tied in one way or another to a history of racial discrimination and investment in ethnic difference, rather than developing a after 1994 national project focusing on the equal empowerment of all South Africans. Some of these perspectives tended to understand transformation as a decolonization project strongly invested in the racialization of subjects.

At various levels, these perspectives show different interpretations of the “three evils” facing South Africa after 1994: unemployment, inequality and poverty (Meyiwa *et al*, 2014). Views in higher education were concerned with issues surrounding inequality in the professoriate and other positions in the university’s structure, while issues surrounding language, African-based curricula and the removal of colonial statues were also associated with transformation at universities. Media

perspectives included references to unemployment and youth empowerment as key areas needing transformation, while the business community also expressed unemployment as a major concern of transformation. Perhaps most importantly, issues surrounding land and the repatriation of land to the black people of South Africa were expressed as important to transformation. Perspectives from socio-economic discourse, while acknowledging inequality and unemployment, concerned poverty as a major area needing transformation.

Students' perspectives and calls for change were very much invested in addressing historical traumas, poverty and inequality as priorities for transformation. When regarded as *musicking*, the students' protest music-making (including *toyitoyi*), could be regarded as mechanisms and tools for the demands for transformation. I proposed that the music-making, the vandalization of property and the provoked responses from law enforcement agencies created a kind of violence that animated and redefined discourses on transformation. This performance of power is what I described as *musicking*. In this way, *musicking* could be viewed as students' unique contribution to the discourse on transformation, infusing it with action staged in the confined sphere of university campuses. The issues thus brought to the critical attention of the South African public included the transformation concerns of leaders in higher education, as well as matters of importance to politicians such as black nationhood and the repatriation of land as tangible instances of transformation.

Considering the multiplicity of political perspectives on transformation, Chapter Three focused the concept on unemployment, inequality and poverty. This chapter engaged the language register underpinning the discourse on transformation in higher education, and argued for the refocusing of discourses on transformation to the socio-economic empowerment of the so-called disempowered in South Africa. Drawing from Mbembe's (2016) perspective on demythologising whiteness, issues surrounding race, identity, and culture in South Africa after 1994 were critically discussed, and the argument was presented that the call for the demythologization of whiteness and blackness be seen as the first step towards a holistic notion of transformation in South Africa after 1994. This chapter suggested culture as a form of social capital for empowering historically disadvantaged South Africans. Through an understanding of culture as material, religious, linguistic, artistic and educational realities (as well as the ideologies governing them) that define

the lived-world of a society, it proposed that the first approach to transformation should be to embrace a social and cultural ideology that empowers every social actor to see themselves as potential agents of socio-economic development in South Africa. In relation to the after 1994 South African context, the refocusing of social ideology from racial essentialization to socio-economic empowerment strategies was proposed as a concrete strategy of refocusing discourses on transformation to respond to the socio-economic development of people, especially historically disadvantaged people.

Chapter Four presented a concrete historical example of what such a theory of transformation could entail. It introduced Dizu Plaatjies and the Amampondo musical group that he established in 1979. As the pioneers of South African marimba music, Plaatjies and Amampondo present a model and example of transformation through their music activities. The chapter explained cultural ideologies and interpersonal relationships that blurred racial and ethnic prejudices through social capital (music). Dizu Plaatjies and Amampondo's transformation of traditional music had social, cultural and economic effects, and created a unique South African marimba music. Marimba music became, and still is, a tool of empowerment to many South Africans. The practice of South African marimba has also become a socializing tool that blurs racial and ethnic lines in South Africa after 1994. More importantly, the chapter revealed how music, history, language, dance, arts, dress and indigenous education served as "capacity" for Plaatjies and Amampondo in their aspiration to a life with dignity during apartheid South Africa and beyond (Appadurai, 2004). By refusing to be alienated from the values embedded in these cultural inheritances, Plaatjies and Amampondo also became a lens through which the aesthetic qualities and dynamism of African arts and culture were experienced around the world. The story of Plaatjies and Amampondo could serve as a model for thinking concerned with empowering historically disadvantaged South Africans. In the context of transformation, their story is relevant to reducing unemployment, inequality and poverty in South Africa after 1994.

5.2. Socio-economic empowerment through the lens of Plaatjies and Amampondo

Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 963), in relation to social change, explain agency as “a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented towards the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)”.⁶³ Taking as a point of departure iteration, projective and practical evaluative elements of agency, outlined in Emirbayer and Mische’s theory, Fuh (2012) explains that iteration refers to how actors establish order and stability through a process of selectively reactivating past actions and thought patterns in iteration of current practical ability. According to him, the projective element is focused on actors’ activities in imagining and reshaping futures, through an incorporation and reconfiguration of past actions, thoughts and structures. The practical evaluative element focuses on an under-theorized aspect of agency, namely addressing actors’ capacity to respond to current predicaments through the manipulation of alternative trajectories of action (*ibid.*, 505).

According to Fuh, the importance of Emirbayer and Mische’s theory transcends constant reflexivity, deliberation and a creative imagination of actors in dealing with current practical problems; rather, the importance lies in actors’ efforts to create a stable future order, which actively speaks to both the past and present through constant incorporation and (re)configuration of old elements in new ways (*ibid.*). This theorizing of agency and its explanations is useful for understanding the agency of Plaatjies and Amampondo in the context of South Africa’s developmental process and how they took advantage of their marginal position in the apartheid era to engage culture as capacity for reshaping their individual and collective lives. This agency is best understood in terms of the concepts “cultural capital”, “social aspiration” and “social capital”.

Plaatjies’s empowerment can be traced to his participation in weekly ritual performance ceremonies, initiation school, and family influences while growing up in the Transkei, Eastern Cape. Despite being marginalised within the apartheid socio-economic structure, Plaatjies developed indigenous African perspectives by learning to play indigenous Xhosa musical

⁶³ Quoted in Fuh (2012: 505).

instruments like the *uhadi* bow and *umrhubhe* mouth bow from his aunt and grandmother. Through this, he gained knowledge of stories and of remedies, myths, legends and rituals embedded in indigenous African beliefs. These processes, I suggest, constitute indigenous African education, transgenerationally transferred to Plaatjies through oral histories by his family and environment. This dynamic of an embodied history is what Bourdieu termed “habitus”:

The habitus-embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world ... (Bourdieu, 1990: 56).

Bourdieu’s habitus implies that there are various historical peculiarities that dictate our present reality (Ayorinde, 2017: 23). Habitus, in relation to Plaatjies, can be described in terms of indigenous music, arts and historical knowledges acquired from his families through direct or indirect experiences. This experience, I suggest, created the platform for Plaatjies and Amampondo’s transformation of their own and their socio-economic realities. Through other social influences (people, space and time) this embodied knowledge was transformed into cultural capital, i.e. capital for social transactions that served as basis of value assessment. The value of cultural capital lies in its interactions with other social and human dynamics. For Plaatjies and Amampondo, their aspirations – based on their transgenerational oral histories and indigenous African music culture – entailed recognition of past values and the recognition in the present.

Against the backdrop of apartheid restrictions, Plaatjies’s aspiration to a dignified life and hopeful future was enabled by cultural capital. For him, this served as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities in a constrained social structure. Aspiration, in Plaatjies’s case, also referenced respect for one’s self and culture, irrespective of opposition:

If you want to do something, and you are passionate about it, you will do it and nothing can stop you. So, that was the power that we got from our ancestors and the power that we had, and, the Cape Town people and people from the rest of the world were really supporting us. ..[W]e used to make more money on the streets of Cape Town than club gigs and shows. Our instruments were bought from busking. We used to feed our family, pay our bills, and take care of our family with busking (Plaatjies, pers. Comm., 15/12/2015).

Considering Plaatjies explanation of the esoteric importance and practical value of his musical activities, it follows that aspirations are formed and developed in interaction with one's cultural milieu and access to an "archive of concrete experiences with the good life" (Appadurai 2004: 69). "Good life" is not meant pejoratively as an advanced capitalist consumerist ethic, but as a fulfilling life based on self-respect and respect for others. A dignified life and hopeful future formed the basis of Plaatjies's aspirations, and cultural capital became "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2004) to such a life for Plaatjies and Amampondo. Given their marginal position in the apartheid era, aspiration necessitated a certain kind of "respectability" (Bruinders, 2011) that valorizes culture as a navigational tool in society. Appadurai explains aspiration as "a navigational capacity which is nurtured by the possibility of real-world conjectures and refutations [and]... thrives and survives on practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture and refutation" (*ibid.*, 69). For Plaatjies, practice, repetition and exploration of his cultural capital created a platform from which other social actors and like-minded people could become resources to help fulfil his aspirations. This platform – a melting pot of cultural capitals by diverse social actors with a unified interest – exists through a process of negotiation described as "terms of recognition" (*ibid.*). Music, in constituting a meeting point of social values, served as a capacity that contextualized past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment through social actors (Fuh, 2012).

It was these "terms of recognition" that connected Plaatjies to Simphiwe Matole, Michael Ludonga and Blacki Zandisile and other members of Amampondo. The same could be said of the important relationships Plaatjies and Amampondo had forged with Dave Dargie and Andrew Tracey, who empowered them with instruments and skills they never had. Similarly, the support they attracted from Bruce Gordon and Gerry Dixon, as well as their performances in South Africa and around the world, were responses to their multi-layered connections with their society. These "terms of recognition", by extension, connected Plaatjies to opportunities at UCT. Therefore, the aspirations of Plaatjies and Amampondo were lent support by collective efforts of a broad spectrum of social actors and (institutions). Given these connections, through a collective responsibility based on cultural capital and aspiration, Plaatjies and Amampondo took advantage of their marginal position in the apartheid era actively to engage culture as capacity for reshaping their individual and collective lives, thereby contributing to social development in South Africa. To be sure, this did

not entail (and does not require) describing all of these networks as supportive in the sense that they were not somehow also compromised or self-interested. The point is not to argue for the possibility of individuals of standing outside their own political, ideological and systemic embeddedness. Rather, Plaatjies and Amampondo show the extent of what is possible of that embeddedness does not become the essentialized limitation of what can be achieved when working together. What is being transformed in such a case, is not only the lives and futures of the protagonists (in this case Plaatjies and the Amampondo), but also the scope and possibility for change of the supporting actors (institutions and empowered, supportive white individuals). Perhaps the expanded possibilities that result from this can be ascribed to the fact that this strategy does not imply a tug-of-war around a perceived limited cultural capital that attached itself to power, but the liberatory realization that so much cultural capital exists that can enrich and benefit everyone if it is harnessed appropriately.

Against the backdrop of Bourdieu's habitus, and in relation to Plaatjies's and Amampondo's empowerment, Appadurai's explanation of aspirations as navigational capacity references an understanding that "everyone aspires, but circumstances can enhance or diminish the capacity to navigate from where we are, to where we would like to be" (Prodonovich *et al*, 2014:175). Aspirations do not deliver us from a start point to an end point; rather, they require an understanding of how to navigate the "dense combination of nodes and pathways" (Appadurai, 2004: 69) that lie between the present and an imagined future. The more we get to practice and explore our aspirational maps, the more robust and realistic will be our capacity to navigate the future (Prodonovich *et al*, *ibid.*). Plaatjies and Amampondo are exemplary illustrations of perseverance in doing that, and in so doing providing a constructive, non-politicized content to the notion of "transformation".

Plaatjies's aspirations and development were ingrained in a consciousness that privileged culture as a tool for social integration and development. According to him: "we are not politicians; our message is one of love and peace. We are here to celebrate the haunting beauty of Africa. A promise of peace, a plea for the past".⁶⁴ Embedded in this position is a notion of social development that promises to navigate the impenetrable intersections and chasms of society, rather than deepen

⁶⁴ Dizu in *The Star*, Friday February 9, 1990.

them. Amampondo's activities constituted a transcultural development project, in that their enterprises blurred constructed racial and ethnic boundaries. It is this multi-ethnic centeredness of Amampondo's musical enterprises, I suggest, that qualifies them as social innovators. Plaatjies and Amampondo's engagements with culture, people and society constitute a model or framework for empowering people. The strategic engagement of cultural capital and aspirations created a unique social capital that lay the foundation and provided them with the tools needed to make tangible contributions to the developmental processes of their country.

I wish to suggest that such personal and societal transformation successes as were achieved by Plaatjies and Amampondo, manifested against the backdrop of a "web of significance" (Geertz, 2001), including conditions created by the apartheid era. That is, the complexity of multiple identities and cultures of the apartheid era provided contexts for Plaatjies's and Amampondo's empowerment and success. Through understanding and creative (rather than political) application, culture created platforms for aspirations to self-liberation. This self-liberation, through collective efforts, was enabled by a three-in-one tool of socio-economic empowerment: cultural capital, aspiration and social capital. As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, unemployment, inequality and poverty are major challenges facing South Africa after 1994. In addressing these "three social evils" (Meyiwa *et al*, 2014), the example of Plaatjies and Amampondo suggests locally-based solutions that draw from the everyday realities of people. In Plaatjies's case, such a locally-based approach was found in musical culture and oral histories. This is not to say that music and tradition constitute a panacea in South Africa after 1994 for all disadvantaged people. Globalization, it is understood, is constantly threatening local realities. But a locally-based approach not founded in victimhood offers a development mechanism structured on the everyday realities of people. This thesis presents the development of South African marimba culture as such a mechanism. In general, social interaction mechanisms like music, communication, arts and education (not necessarily mainstream schooling) constitute more productive avenues for the implementation of transformation than politically driven top-down initiatives. The first step to a holistic transformation of South Africa, I hold, is the understanding of cultural capital as a resource and mechanism for social, cultural and economic development of South Africans.

Irrespective of social or economic class, people aspire to a good life in South Africa. On the negative side of this aspiration, where there is little or no cultural capital to be used as “capacity to aspire” (Appadurai, 2004), stifled aspirations lead to frustration and anxiety. In such cases, unemployment, inequality and poverty incapacitate social actors’ hope for a good life. Frustration could propel alternative means of survival and consolation, including crime, terrorism and social unrest of the kind that characterized the student unrest in South Africa in 2015/2016. Transformation discourses as outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis, I suggest, do little to provide positive aspiration to disempowered social actors. To be sure, they are necessary and acute expressions of the malaise afflicting society, and in their own right constitute a radical example of musicking that includes violence and the discomfort of disrupting the unthinking continuity of political failures. But it is also necessary to recognize that on the other side of an obsession with “whiteness” and “blackness”, lies an inability to let go of the categories “white” and “black”. This is ultimately a cul-de-sac, whereas on the positive side of aspiration, Plaatjies’s example shows how cultural capital can serve as “capacity to aspire” for social actors.

Basic human needs – shelter, food and clothing – are fundamental to a holistic transformation of South Africa after 1994. These basic needs are not incompatible to the recognition and development of cultural capital. Providing for these basic needs, I argue in these pages, depends on the empowerment of social actors as contributors to social and economic development of their society through strategies of holistic transformation. This thesis argues that it is necessary to refocus the discourse on transformation in South Africa to recognize and put to work the cultural capital of peoples’ social realities. The success (or not) of transformation in South Africa after 1994 has to be measured by its effects and results for historically disadvantaged South Africans. By this measure, the musical practices of Dizu Plaatjies provide a lens that could inspire and instruct initiatives for empowering historically disadvantaged South Africans.

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